CONSERVE
LAKE COUNTY
Healthy Land for a Better Life

Managing Natural Areas in Developments

Increasingly, land that contains important natural resources is being considered for development. Some of this land has natural resources that need to be protected and maintained forever. Conserve Lake County is launching a **Natural Areas Assurance Program** to provide assurance to the municipality, regulators, future occupants and the community at large that the natural areas and open space within a new development is **protected**, and that the natural resources and functions will be **maintained forever.** These projects become a partnership between Conserve Lake County, developers, municipalities and regulators such as the Village, County or Army Corps of Engineers.

- Assurance that the land is permanently protected
- Funded, long-term management of the natural areas
  - Written into the conservation easement documents
  - Property owner assessments with Special Service Area backup
  - Overseen by an independent, knowledgeable conservation organization
  - Includes funds for monitoring, contract management and education
  - Five year cycle of site evaluation, management recom-mendations and assessment adjustment to adapt to changing conditions
- May be requested by the Army Corps of Engineers, County regulators, municipalities, or developers

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Natural Areas Assurance Program for Developments

The Natural Areas Assurance Program for Developments provides assurance to the municipality, the regulators, the future occupants and the community that the natural areas and open space within the development is protected from further development and that the natural resources and functions will be maintained forever.

Increasingly, land that contains important natural features is being considered for development. Some of this land has conservation values that need to be protected. On the other hand, some contain degraded or virtually non-existent natural environments. *We believe that the development process offers a wonderful opportunity to protect and restore natural areas.* In other words, our interest in working with developers is to be able to *increase* the conservation values of the natural areas within the development and to educate new homeowners on the environment.

To participate in the Natural Areas Assurance Program:

- The conservation easement will be tailored to protect the specific natural values and functions of the land.
- An easement defense fund is required. This fund will pay the annual costs of monitoring the easement and the costs to defend the conservation easement, if necessary, in court. We will consider the easement area's size, complexity and risk when assigning a value for the fund. This is typically paid by the developer prior to obtaining permits.
- A fund of $10,000 is required upfront to pay for Conserve Lake County's legal costs to establish the conservation easement. If Conserve Lake County's legal bills are less than $10,000, a refund will be made for the difference. If Conserve Lake County's legal bills are greater than $10,000, no additional funds will be required from the developer.
- Management (and restoration if necessary) in order to bring the entire conservation easement area up to a sustainable level (Floristic Quality Assessment Index of 35+) is required.
  - This restoration, typically funded by the developer, will cover all existing and created natural areas.
  - The Landscaping Plan and Short-Term Management Plan for this period will be reviewed and approved by Conserve Lake County.
  - There needs to be coordination between contractor responsible for the restoration of the natural area and any other construction or landscaping that is done within the development.