



Protecting Land For Future Generations



Newsletter

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Tax Incentives for Easements Expanded

Southwestern Illinois RC&D Council

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New expanded federal tax incentives for conservation easement donations were included in recent legislation that was signed into law by the President. These changes will provide more financial benefits to those landowners who donate a conservation easement in 2006 and 2007. The new law:

- ◆ Raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their income in any year to 50% of their income.
- ◆ Allows qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- ◆ Increases the number of years over which a donor can take those deductions from 6 years to 16 years.



These benefits are available only in 2006 and 2007 so now is the time to proceed with your conservation easement to take advantage of these incentives.

The law also made reference to the requirement of having a "qualified appraisal" prepared by a "qualified appraiser in accordance with generally accepted appraisal standards." The definition of a "qualified appraiser" was also included in the new law. Contact our office if

you want to get further information and more details on the provisions of this new legislation that expands your tax benefits.



Wetlands provide valuable flood control services. Maintaining only 15% of the land area of a watershed in wetlands can reduce flooding peaks by as much as 60%. (The Wetlands Initiative, EPA)

Thanks to TLC Supporters

A special thanks to new members contributing to The Land Conservancy: Robert and Lois Gentsch, Darren and Carolyn Kehoe, Dave and Tamara Eustis, and Gene and Wanda Pitra.

Recreation Area Acquired on Chouteau Island

In July the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) joined together with the Southwestern Illinois RC&D in the acquisition of 89 acres on Chouteau Island that will expand recreational opportunities and conservation efforts in the region. The parcel, located in Madison County, was acquired from the Trust for Public Land with financial support from the State of Illinois and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. It will be managed by the IDNR.

This acquisition allows IDNR to offer more fishing, boating, and hiking opportunities for visitors while at the same time supporting animal and plant wildlife. It is another great example of the value of partnerships among landowners, dedicated conservation organizations, and state agencies. This property allows IDNR to begin habitat development at the north end of the island and opens this land for public use. The total cost for the acquisition was \$307,000 with the IDNR contributing \$207,000 along with a \$100,000 contribution from Southwestern Illinois RC&D.

Land Use Continues to Change in U.S.

Land use changes have important economic and environmental implications for open space, soil and water conservation, food and fiber production, and other policy issues. The USDA Economic Research Service 2002 inventory of major land resources presents the latest data on national land use.

The most consistent trends in major land uses (1945-2002) have been a growth in special-use and urban areas and a decline in total grazing lands. Forest-use has generally declined since the 1940s, but increased slightly from 1997 to 2002. Between 1997 and 2002, total cropland area reached a new 57-year low, continuing a downward trend since 1978. Between 1997 and 2002 total cropland decreased by 14 million acres nationally to its lowest level since 1945.

Urban land area quadrupled from 1945 to 2002 increasing at about twice the rate of population growth over this same period. Urban area increased by 13 percent between 1990 and 2002. Estimated acreage of rural land used for residential purposes increased by 17 million acres (30 percent) from 1980 to 1997 and by 21 million acres (29 percent) from 1997 to 2002. That is a conversion of over 4 million acres per year from 1997 to 2002.

The loss of cropland, forestland, and other natural areas in this southwestern Illinois region is also a significant issue. Over 5000 acres in this region are converted to urban uses each year and the rate is increasing. Saving our farms, forests, and other natural areas for future generations will require local programs and initiatives that will provide long-term protection and economic incentives to private landowners



Marty Kemper

New York State Enacts Conservation Tax Credit

Beginning next year, New York State landowners whose land is restricted by a conservation easement will get an annual refund of 25% of the property taxes paid on that land, up to \$5,000 per year. This first-in-the-nation tax credit for conservation easements is available to all owners of easement-restricted land, regardless of when the easement was created, provided that the easement was wholly or partially donated to a land trust or a governmental agency.

The tax credit runs with the land so that successor owners will benefit from it as well as the original easement donors. This not only recognizes the ongoing public benefits of private land conservation, but also helps ensure that new owners, too, will comply with their easements. Also, the Conservation Tax Credit does not reduce local property tax revenues, so there is no negative impact on town and county budgets.



Monsanto Fund Grant for Land Protection

The Monsanto Fund recently provided a grant of \$25,000 to the Land Conservancy to support outreach efforts and assistance in development of conservation easements. This funding will help to support operations through 2006 and into 2007. We appreciate the financial support of the Monsanto Fund and their interest in protecting our farms, forests, and other natural areas for present and future generations.

National Land Trust Rally Held in Nashville, TN

Steve Black, Land Conservancy Coordinator, recently attended the Land Trust Alliance National Rally in Nashville, TN on October 12-15. Approximately 1,700 people representing land trusts from throughout the nation attended this conference to learn more about land conservation efforts. Numerous concurrent seminars and presentations covered a variety of topics relating to conservation easements, new tax incentives, fundraising, information/outreach efforts and many other topics of interest to land trusts.

Volunteer and Help The Land Conservancy

Help The Land Conservancy preserve land and water resources in the metro east area. Would you be interested in helping with local information programs or in promoting the concepts of land protection in your community? What about serving on the Stewardship Committee to help guide the overall efforts of the Land Conservancy? You can make a difference in land protection in your area by becoming involved in our program. We need your help and your expertise to further the cause of conservation in southwestern Illinois. Skills or interests in photography, writing, computer work, newsletter mailing, and fundraising are just a few of the possibilities. Please let us know if you are interested in assisting. Contact Steve Black at 618-566-4451 Ext. 20 or e-mail black531@charter.net.

Become A Member of TLC!



MISSION OF THE LAND CONSERVANCY

To work regionally to protect agricultural, forest, and other natural lands in order to provide for open space, landscape diversity, sustainable agriculture, wildlife habitat, and conservation benefits for present and future generations.

The Land Conservancy is a member of the national Land Trust Alliance www.lta.org

You may have recently received our membership brochure in the mail along with a letter regarding our annual fundraising effort. We need your help in protecting our farms, forests, and other natural areas in this region. Please take the time to read the brochure and contribute to our cause. Your contribution will help us to spread the word on the value of land protection and to work with landowners who are interested in a conservation easement.

We are currently working with five landowners who are developing conservation easements to protect their lands for present and future generations. Help us to expand those efforts and reach more landowners in the region! Your tax deductible contributions go directly to supporting our outreach on easement activities.

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