



Term Sheet Crosswalk Forest Conservation Easement for Land Trusts 2026 (Round 5)

NOTE: A Conservation Easement Template is in Development - See RFA for details and contact us with any questions

Introduction

The purpose of this term sheet crosswalk is to help ensure awardees properly include all relevant elements of the term sheet and to facilitate review of the conservation easement drafts. The purpose of the term sheet is to provide guidance to applicants as to those conservation easement elements that New York State Department of Environmental Conservation ("DEC") requires, at a minimum, to be addressed in the final conservation easement document for the Forest Conservation Easement for Land Trusts program. Exact wording is given in the few instances where exact wording is required, otherwise the element should be worded as determined by the awardee's attorney and other professional advisors. DEC and The Land Trust Alliance (Alliance) will be reviewing the wording of the conservation easements. See [FCELT webpage](#) for a list of resources to assist with Conservation Easement drafting.

Conservation Easement must use the EXACT structure outlined below:

- Whereas Clauses
- Purposes Of The Conservation Easement
- Restricted Uses And Practices
- Grantee's Affirmative Rights
- Grantor's Permitted Uses and Rights OR Grantor's Reserved Rights
- Enforcement
- Administrative Provisions
- Definitions (may be an Appendix to CE)

Conservation Easement Minimum Requirements

Please Note:

- The parenthetical "(mandatory)" means the element must be addressed by the Conservation Easement and worded as determined by the awardee's attorney and other professional advisors.
- Exact language is required when indicated by ("exact").
- The elements labeled "(optional)" may be disregarded unless desired by awardee or the contemplated use will occur on the Protected Property (in which case the element must be addressed).
- For all other elements, awardees may draw from their own templates.

Term Sheet Crosswalk

Please provide the section number in the conservation easement (ie. IX.1.a.ii) where the following items can be found in your draft CE. If buried, please also highlight the language with a comment in the CE. **Both this Crosswalk and the CE should be submitted in MS Word by email to the Alliance.** Please check the FAQs on the [FCELT webpage](#) regularly to see if any of these Terms have been updated.

CE Element	CE Section
1) Whereas Clauses	
a. Describe the Protected Property subject to the Conservation Easement with a legal description in Schedule A [NOTE: the final CE legal description must reference the recording information of the survey], set forth encumbrances and exceptions to title in Schedule B attached to the Conservation Easement, and enter the recording information of the survey map (mandatory). NOTE: it is awardee's responsibility to record the survey sufficiently in advance of closing to be able to enter the survey recording information prior to recording the conservation easement.	
b. Set forth the intention to preserve and limit the uses and development of the Protected Property in perpetuity (mandatory).	
c. Provide that Grantee is authorized to accept and hold the Conservation Easement to protect property important to the conservation of natural resources under the provisions of New York State ECL, Title 3 of Article 49 (mandatory); and	
d. Include this clause: (exact) Said Conservation Easement is acquired with funding received by the Grantee under a grant funded by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund in accordance with Round 5 of the Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts Grant Program 2021 ("Grant"), Grant No. FCELT-RE-2021-(County#), from the Land Trust Alliance to the Grantee, awarded under contract C012269 between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance, for purposes of forest conservation. Upon recording of this deed, all use of the Protected Property is and shall remain subject to the terms and conditions described in the Notice of Grant Agreement attached hereto as Schedule _____ and recorded herewith.	
2) Purposes Of the Conservation Easement	
a. Prevent division and forest fragmentation (mandatory). To prevent division of the Protected Property to keep the Protected Property intact and under one ownership to prevent the fragmentation of the Protected Property.	
b. Limit use and development (mandatory). To limit the development of the Protected Property and prevent residential, commercial, industrial and Agricultural Uses of the Protected Property, except as permitted by the Conservation Easement and only if such uses are limited in such ways as to prevent or minimize impacts to Forestland and be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement.	
c. Preserve and Protect Conservation values (mandatory). To protect the conservation values associated with the Protected Property including: native flora and fauna and the ecological processes that support them; diverse forest types and conditions; wildlife habitat; soil productivity; Biological Diversity; water quality; and wetland, riparian, and other aquatic habitats as well as the scenic vistas of undeveloped land from public roads.	
d. Ensure Sustainable Forestry (mandatory) To allow for Forest Management guided by a Forest Management Plan on the Protected Property, while ensuring that the Protected Property remains in a healthy, forested condition.	
e. Prevent conversion of Forestland (mandatory). Prohibit conversion of forest to other uses.	
f. Ensure Agricultural Use is consistent (mandatory only for conservation easements that allow for agriculture) with the Conservation Easement. To allow for Agricultural Use consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement.	

Commented [JD1]: The highlighted text was incorrect in the RFA but have been corrected here. Please make a note of it.

3) Restricted Uses and Rights – Essentially, this section strips the property of all its rights and then the Permitted Uses and Rights (section 5 below) adds back the typical specific, limited reserved rights. Paragraphs in this section should all be built around central, broader use prohibitions or limitations. Exceptions to those prohibitions and limitations should be minimized in this section and detailed in the Permitted Uses section. Avoid restrictions that the land trust cannot monitor and enforce. Any exceptions to substantive prohibitions and restrictions must have been proposed in Grantee’s original grant application.	
a. Prohibit Forest Conversion (mandatory). Except as specifically provided by the Conservation Easement, the Forestland existing as of the conveyance date of the Conservation Easement (as must be clearly identified in the baseline documentation) shall be maintained as Forestland and not converted to non-forestry purposes.	
b. Prohibit residential, commercial, or industrial uses (mandatory,) except as permitted by the Conservation Easement (see section 5), to protect the Protected Property from conversion to other land use types.	
c. Prohibit recreation and education improvements (mandatory) except as permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
d. Extinguish development and building rights (mandatory) except as permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
e. Prohibit division or conveyance of rights (mandatory). Except as specifically permitted by the Conservation Easement, keep the Protected Property intact and under one ownership and prevent fragmentation and prohibit modification or conveyance of easements, right of ways or similar documents.	
f. Limit existing improvements, buildings and structures (mandatory) and prohibit new improvements except as specifically permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
g. Limit utilities and utility access (mandatory). Limit the construction or presence of utility improvements (including wind and solar power), and equipment (including towers), and access thereto and prohibit such new uses except as specifically permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
h. Prohibit all types of waste disposal on the Protected Property (mandatory) except, as specifically permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
i. Mining (mandatory). Prohibit surface mining and prohibit or limit the extraction of sand and gravel as specifically permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
j. Prohibit new dams (mandatory). Limit to existing use only.	
4) Grantee’s Affirmative Rights	
a. Right to enter and inspect (mandatory). Grantee shall have the right of entry to the Protected Property for inspections upon reasonable notice. No notice is required of the Grantee if monitoring via remote aerial monitoring). Grantee must be granted the right to enter the Protected Property for monitoring and inspections, including use of motor vehicles on existing paths, trails, and roads sufficient to support the motor vehicle use without damage to the Protected Property. If immediate entry is required to prevent, terminate, or mitigate a violation, then such notice shall not be required.	
b. Emergency actions (mandatory). Provides Grantee the right to enter the Protected Property in an emergency. Such right shall not impose any obligation or legal responsibility on Grantee, except as to conditions created by Grantee.	
c. Right to provide for public access and use (optional). May include but not be limited to hiking, biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, hunting, trapping, fishing, camping, snowmobiling, boating and use of motor vehicles.	
i. Non-motorized access and recreational uses	

ii. Motorized access and recreational uses – identify roads and trails iii. Public camping iv. Public hunting, fishing and trapping v. Public access to adjoining protected lands	
d. Public recreational amenities and improvements (optional). Right for the Grantee to construct, install and improve amenities for public use associated with the acquired recreation rights. Can include, but not limited to roads, lean-tos or weather shelters, boat launches, campsites, trails, bridges, signs, fences, gates and barriers, etc.	
e. Management of public recreational rights (optional). It is the responsibility of Grantee to manage the public recreation on the Protected Property. i. Recreation management plan may be prepared to manage public use ii. Include costs required for shared road maintenance.	
f. Grantee's duties and responsibilities for roads, trails, bridges, culverts, parking lots, boat launches and campsites open to public use (optional). i. Repair and correct those amenities solely for public use ii. Public use suspended due to weather iii. Public use suspended due to lack of funding	
g. Grantee's right to sand and gravel (optional). Allows Grantee to use sand and gravel, with defined size and location, from the Protected Property for construction and maintenance of any recreational amenities with Grantor approval. If the Grantor wants to take a tax deduction, there should be a prohibition on all surface mining, including for any sand and gravel extraction.	
5) Grantor's Permitted Uses and Rights – This section adds back specific, limited reserved rights by providing detailed descriptions of, and limitations to, any specific permitted uses and rights and exceptions to Restricted Uses and Rights found in section 3 above. The permitted uses and rights in this section typically should fit within the broader, otherwise restricted uses and rights enumerated in Section 3 above (if not, consider how it should be limited). Avoid permitted rights that the land trust cannot monitor and enforce. Any substantive reserved rights must have been proposed in Grantee's original grant application.	
a. Prevent or minimize impacts to Forestland (exact). Any permitted uses and rights must be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement, must prioritize the protection of the forest habitat conservation value over other conservation values, and must be located to prevent or minimize impacts to Forestland.	
b. Forest management activities (mandatory). Conduct Forest Management under a professional Forest Management Plan (FMP) consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement.	
i. Approval of Forest Management activities. Grantor's right to conduct Forest Management activities on the Protected Property shall be subject to the following:	
1. Forest Management Activities (Including any harvests or timber stand improvements) shall be carried out in accordance with (i) a third- party Forest Certification Program (i.e., Forest Stewardship Council, Sustainable Forestry Initiative; American Tree Farm Program), or (ii) a FMP and harvest plan prepared and overseen (including harvest managed) by a forester who is certified by the Society of American Foresters or successor organization as is later created, or has a bachelor degree in forestry from a school accredited by the Society of American Foresters, or a Cooperating Consulting Forester with the DEC, or a qualified forester approved by the Grantee in writing in advance. Harvesting operations will comply with the most recent New York State Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality or its equivalent. Provided however, that no third-party Forest Certification Program or FMP or harvest plan shall be required to harvest up to ten (10) standard cords of firewood annually for Grantor's personal use, to remove trees that have fallen, or are dead, diseased, or dangerous.	

2. Grantor shall be required to notify Grantee of any Forest Management activities and provide Grantee with a copy of the Forest Management Plan at least thirty (30) days prior to commencing Forest Management activities.	
3. Forest Management improvements (mandatory if such improvements are permitted). FMP must identify any new and existing improvements (e.g. staging areas, roads, sugar house, etc.) associated with Forest Management activities. Permanent Forest Management improvements (e.g. those improvements not to be moved or removed within twenty-four months after installation) require approval by Grantee.	
4. The FMP must identify the types of Forest Management activities the Grantor wants to conduct (e.g. selective cutting, thinning, invasive treatments, sustainable harvest, maple syrup production, etc.). Forest Management techniques must, at a minimum, prioritize Sustainable Forestry, promote the health of the Forest, and be flexible and adaptable to ensure that the Protected Property remains in a healthy, forested condition (e.g. address invasives).	
c. Agriculture (mandatory for conservation easements that allow for agriculture). Grantor may continue to use a portion, limited to no more than twenty-five (25) percent of the Protected Property for Agriculture Uses including Agricultural Use structures, as defined in 9 NYCRR § 577.2. The Agricultural Use of the Protected Property must not interfere with Grantee's Affirmative Rights and must be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement. Prohibit conversion of Forestland to agriculture even if agriculture not using 25%.	
d. Right to lease (optional). Any such leases must be for limited durations for outdoor recreation (such as hunting) or agriculture (and only on portion of the Protected Property where agriculture is allowed). Must be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement.	
e. Non-forestry improvements; building areas; access and utilities (mandatory). Identify all existing improvements, buildings, and structures and prohibit or limit any future uses. CE terms may include (if proposed in the original grant application) a building area/s, farm stand, maple syrup production, recreation or education structures, sustainable forestry, or other similar improvements, provided that any such use (and access thereto) must be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement. The Conservation Easement shall, where applicable, provide for the following:	
i. Existing or new residential buildings, garages, barns, utilities, roads, drives, and septic systems, etc. Identify existing or planned improvements within specific limited building areas, outside of forested areas or otherwise located to minimize impacts to forested areas and other conservation values.	
ii. Waterbody and wetland buffers for new improvements, buildings, and structures. Must comply with all federal, state and local laws/restrictions. No new improvements, buildings, and structures within areas designated as undevelopable, critical environmental areas or special resource areas (i.e. areas with unique geological features, wetlands or habitat for endangered species) as depicted in the baseline documentation report.	
iii. Access road, improvements and utility corridors. Existing rights-of-way to utilities, adjacent properties, and outparcels, or existing or new rights-of way to building areas and for Agricultural Uses and improvements, and for forestry access (for heavy equipment).	
f. Utilities (mandatory). Right to retain or construct utility improvements (including renewable energy improvements, if desired), and equipment (including towers), and access thereto for those uses permitted by the Conservation Easement.	
g. Waste disposal (mandatory). Waste disposal for forestry and agricultural handling of animal and vegetation waste shall be conducted in accordance with sound agricultural and forestry practices and in a manner consistent with a management plan and all applicable local, state or federal laws and regulations.	
h. Gates, barriers, fences; keys, combinations; marking boundaries (mandatory). Grantor retains rights to re-post boundaries, erect gates, etc.	

i.	Preserving water quality (mandatory). Grantor may take actions, including the maintenance or removal of existing dams and impoundments, to preserve and enhance water quality and reduce erosion with Grantee approval.	
j.	Right to sand and gravel (optional). Shall only be for use on the Protected Property of the Grantor and the locations of removal and use shall be approved by Grantee, exclude riparian areas, and prevent or minimize impacts to water quality. If the Grantor wants to take a tax deduction, there should likely be a prohibition on all surface mining, including for any sand and gravel extraction (monitor the latest guidance from the Alliance).	
k.	Natural resources benefits (optional). Grantor may, with Grantee approval, create and retain rights to ecosystem services benefits, credits, and compensation. The use must be consistent with the Purposes of the Conservation Easement (e.g., carbon credits).	
l.	Right to convey the entire Protected Property as one unit only (mandatory). Grantor may sell, transfer, or otherwise convey the entire Protected Property as one entire unit only, subject to the Conservation Easement (where conveyance of a portion of the protected property is contemplated in Grantee's original application such conveyances are permissible).	
6) Enforcement		
a.	Notice to cure (mandatory).	
b.	Dispute resolution (mandatory). Include language consistent with Alliance Standards and Practices that provides for mediation. Do not permit arbitration as a method of dispute resolution.	
c.	Force majeure/acts of third parties (mandatory).	
d.	Failure to act by Grantee (mandatory). Shall not be deemed a waiver of Grantee's right to take such actions in the future.	
e.	DEC right to enforcement (mandatory). DEC must be granted the same right as Grantee (but not be obligated) to inspect and enforce the terms of the Conservation Easement if Grantee fails to regularly inspect or enforce the terms of the Conservation Easement (or if Grantee is no longer accredited by Land Trust Accreditation Commission).	
f.	Restoration (mandatory). Grantee has the right to restore Protected Property	
7) Administrative Provisions		
a.	Construction and interpretation (mandatory). Distinguishes between titles for ease of document use and the Conservation Easement content/provisions.	
b.	Baseline documentation (mandatory). The requirement for a report of the current condition (baseline) of the Protected Property, at the time of closing, for monitoring purposes. In the event that seasonal conditions prevent the completion of a full baseline documentation report by closing, the Grantor and land trust sign a schedule for finalizing the full report and an acknowledgement of interim data [that for donations and bargain sales meets Treasury Regulation §1.170A-14(g)(5)(i)] at closing.	
c.	Notice, Review and Approval Process (mandatory). The procedure for review and approvals and who officially written notice should be sent to.	
d.	Regulatory Authorities, Compliance with Law (mandatory). Clarifies that the Conservation Easement does not replace compliance with laws.	
e.	Assignment (mandatory). Should the Grantee at any time cease to exist or become ineligible to hold the Conservation Easement for any reason, then a court of competent jurisdiction shall assign the Conservation Easement to another qualified organization.	
f.	Severability (mandatory). If any part of the Conservation Easement is struck down by a court, the remainder of the Conservation Easement stays enforceable.	
g.	Amendments or Modifications (mandatory). Allow for future amendments to the document with conditions and upon review and written approval of DEC and Grantee.	
h.	Proceeds and Extinguishment clauses (mandatory). Follow the latest Alliance guidance regarding United States Treasury Department Regulations.	
8) Definitions (may be an Appendix to CE)		

a. “Agricultural Use” (exact - only for Conservation Easements that allow for agriculture). Those activities necessary to: produce Crops, Livestock and Livestock Products; or use the Protected Property as a “Farm Operation” to the extent permitted by the Conservation Easement; or be actively enrolled in any federal or state or local program whose intent is to temporarily suspend (for a specified period of one or more years or crop seasons) the production of Crops, Livestock and Livestock Products for the stipulated purpose of soil and water conservation, wildlife habitat, or similar conservation purpose; or manage the Property or a portion thereof in a fallow or otherwise idled manner provided such management is contained in a conservation plan.	
b. “Biological Diversity” (exact). The variety and abundance of life forms, processes, functions, and structures of plants, animals, and other living organisms, including the relative complexity of species, communities, gene pools, and ecosystems at spatial scales that range from local to regional to global.	
c. “Crops, Livestock and Livestock Products” (exact - only for Conservation Easements that allow for agriculture) shall be defined pursuant to Article 25-AA of the AML (Agriculture and Markets Law 301), or such successor law as enacted or amended. In the event that this definition or all of Article 25-AA (and all such successor laws) shall be repealed, then the definition existing at the time of repeal shall serve thereafter OR (mandatory) insert the actual current definition wording.	
d. “Farm Operation” (exact - only for Conservation Easements that allow for agriculture). Shall be defined pursuant to Article 25-AA of the AML, or such successor law as enacted or amended. In the event that this definition or all of Article 25-AA (and all such successor laws) shall be repealed, then the definition existing at the time of repeal shall serve thereafter OR (mandatory) insert the actual current definition wording.	
e. “Forestland” (exact). Land covered with forest or reserved for the growth of forests.	
f. “Forests” (exact). An ecosystem characterized by a more or less dense and extensive tree cover, often consisting of stands varying in characteristics such as species, composition, structure, age class, and associated processes, and commonly including meadows, streams, fish, and wildlife.	
g. “Forest Management” (exact). Forestry practices, including thinning, invasive species removal, or harvesting of timber, planned as part of a deliberate forest management program, the construction, alteration or maintenance of wood roads, skidways, landings and fences, and related research and educational activities.	
h. “Forest Management Plan” (exact). A working guide, prepared by a professional forester, that allows the landowner to maximize a mix of forest benefits, including wildlife, timber, recreation, aesthetic value and other benefits.	
i. “Forest Certification Program” (exact). A market-based, non-regulatory forest conservation tool designed to recognize and promote environmentally responsible forestry and sustainability of forest resources. The certification process involves an evaluation of management planning and forestry practices by a third-party according to an agreed-upon set of standards. These standards include measures to protect water quality, Biological Diversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and forests with exceptional conservation value.	
j. “Forest Products” (exact). All products derived or extracted from the forest on the Protected Property, including, without limitation, ginseng, trees, logs, poles, posts, pulpwood, firewood, chips, seeds, pinestraw, stumps, seed cones, shrubs, herbaceous vegetation, barks, limbs, branches, gum, tree sap, and mushrooms.	
k. “Grantee” (exact). The Party identified as Grantee in the preamble, its employees, successors, and assigns.	
l. “Grantor” (exact). The owner(s) in fee simple of the real property that is subject to the Conservation Easement. The term "Grantor" shall include Grantor, its successors, heirs and assigns.	
m. “Protected Property” (exact). The lands subject to the Conservation Easement, more particularly described in Schedule A.	
n. “Sustainable Forestry” (exact). Forest Management activities that achieve sustainability by	

practicing a land stewardship ethic that ensures that the Protected Property remains in a healthy, forested condition and includes (individually or integrating a mix of) the following: conservation of soil, air and water quality, Biological Diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation potential, and aesthetics and/or the production of an economic return through sustainable production and/or harvesting of Forest Products. Forest harvest activities on the Protected Property are considered sustainable if long-term harvest levels, although variable, are consistent with appropriate growth and yield models in an approved Forest Management Plan or Forest Certification Program.	
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DEC in consultation with the Land Trust Alliance designed this material to provide accurate, authoritative information about the subject matter covered with the understanding that DEC and the Land Trust Alliance is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, tax, or other professional counsel. If a land trust or individual requires legal advice or other expert assistance, they should seek the services of competent professionals.