Groundswell Conservancy Policy

Name: Land Management Planning and Funding

Approval: Approved by Executive Committee June 8, 2006
Amended by Executive Committee February 9, 2018

Standard 12. Fee Land Stewardship
A. Funding Land Stewardship. 1. Determine the immediate financial and management implications of each conservation property acquisition and estimate the long-term implications. 2. Anticipate and track costs associated with long-term land management, stewardship and enforcement of conservation properties.

B. Land Management and Stewardship. 1. Develop a written land management plan for each conservation property within 12 months after acquiring the land to: (a) Identify the property’s conservation values, including any significant cultural and natural features or those that have significant community value; (b) Identify the overall management goals for the property; (c) Identify activities to achieve the goals and to reduce any risks or threats to the conservation values; (d) Specify the uses that are appropriate for the property, in keeping with the property’s conservation values, any restrictions and donor or funder requirements; provide public access opportunities as appropriate to the property and the land trust’s mission. 2. Manage each conservation property in accordance with its management plan, and review and update the plan as necessary. 3. Perform administrative duties (such as paying insurance, filing required forms, keeping records) in a timely and responsible manner. 4. Maintain the property in a manner that retains the land trust’s public credibility, manages community expectations and minimizes risk.

Standard 6A5. Fiscal Health. Build and maintain dedicated or restricted funds sufficient to cover the long-term costs of stewarding and defending the land trust’s land and conservation easements. If funds are insufficient, adopt a plan to secure these funds and a policy committing the funds to this purpose.

In advance of the acquisition of property Groundswell Conservancy intends to hold in fee ownership for the long-term, Groundswell Conservancy develops a conceptual management statement (specifying general management goals and/or near-term management needs) and determines an amount of money to be set aside to pay for the long-term maintenance of the property. If these funds are not secured by the time the property is acquired, Groundswell Conservancy creates a plan to secure these funds in a certain period of time.

A full management plan will be developed within 12 months after a property is acquired. The management plan must consider at least the following: management vision and goals, the property’s conservation values, inventory of natural resources and cultural features, management considerations and constraints, management actions, appropriate uses of the property, public access and opportunities for visitors of all abilities, and prohibited activities. Groundswell Conservancy will consult with appropriate experts as to the management of unique natural, cultural, and agricultural resources.

Groundswell Conservancy will manage its properties in accordance with its management plans. It will maintain properties in a manner that retains Groundswell Conservancy’s public credibility and minimizes risk.

The amount of funds to be set aside is calculated according to estimated costs of the management of the specific property. The amount is calculated prior to acquisition of the
property and is considered when the Executive Committee and/or the Board of Directors reviews the costs of the project prior to deciding to accept or reject the project.

Activities to be considered in calculating the amount of funds required to be set aside include but are not limited to:

- Development of a land management plan
- Property taxes (consider if Groundswell Conservancy should apply for a tax exemption)
- Activities necessary to control use of the property (signs/fencing/gates, etc.)
- Liability insurance
- Restoration and maintenance of vegetation (including management of invasive plant species)
- Trails and kiosks

Where possible, the costs for ongoing activities (including controlling access, property taxes, prescribed fire, trail maintenance, etc.) should be financed from growth or replenishment of funds set aside for those purposes. One-time costs of durable installations (such as kiosks, trails, and initial habitat restoration activities) may come from the set-aside funds or could be raised as needed.

When Groundswell Conservancy takes fee-title ownership with the intent to hold the property only temporarily, this policy is waived.

Groundswell Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Policies may be updated to reflect changing accreditation standards and practices, as well as changing local organizational needs.