

# Policy on Acceptance of Land or Conservation Easements

Adopted December 2, 2008

## 1. Scope

This policy document describes the conditions under which the Prairie Land Conservancy will accept full title or a conservation easement over land.

## 2. Purpose

The Mission of Prairie Land Conservancy is to preserve wildlife habitat, open space, natural areas and sustainable agricultural land within west-central Illinois. Acceptance of conservation easements is the primary method of protecting lands, but other options such as land donation or bargain sale of land can be considered.

## 3. Basic Acceptance Criteria

- a. The property is consistent with the PLC mission, goals and conservation priorities.
- b. A conservation easement on the property meets the IRS standards as well as the Standards and Practices for land trusts.
- c. The property does not contain any encumbrances, hazardous wastes, pre-existing easements or restrictions, potential environmental or ecological threats, or other circumstances that would seriously impinge upon PLC's abilities to own the land or hold a conservation easement and/or manage the natural resources on the land.
- d. Resources [financial, technical, man-power] are available to maintain the natural communities or other conservation value of the land based on its assessed needs.

## 4. Procedures

Whenever a land owner contacts the PLC for consideration of a conservation easement or land donation, the following sequential procedures shall be followed:

1. The initial contact information is documented in a standard format determined by the stewardship committee.
2. Staff will conduct a site survey with the owner.
3. Alternative methods of preserving and managing the land shall be discussed.
4. A stewardship committee will present a preliminary report about the property to the board for a preliminary decision.

5. Staff will follow the “Step-by-Step Procedure for Conservation Easements” format.
6. The owner will provide specific information as requested.
7. Staff shall prepare a preliminary list of conditions of acceptance for review by the Stewardship Committee and the owner.
8. If agreement is reached on the preliminary list of conditions of acceptance, the proposal will be forwarded to the Prairie Hills RC&D Council for preliminary action.
9. Formal agreements will be drafted by the PLC’s legal counsel and reviewed by the Council and the owner.
10. Upon satisfactory completion of the process, the Council shall approve and appropriate officers shall execute the formal agreements with the owner.