



Mission Statement:

“Sussex County Land Trust is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting natural, cultural, agricultural and recreational resources through land preservation, stewardship and education for today and tomorrow.”

Criteria for Conservation Projects

The following criteria guide the actions of the land trust. They were developed to ensure that the Board of Trustees acts in a manner consistent with its vision, land conservation goals, and the Internal Revenue Service’s regulations governing tax deductibility. The Board retains discretion over acquisition or disposition of projects and will evaluate each project proposal on its own merit after investigating the property, its resources and its public benefits.

Goals Criteria

The property must support the conservation values that the Land Trust was formed to protect. To qualify for selection, property must meet ALL three following criteria:

- a) Except for trade or income lands, the property is within Sussex County.
 - b) The property is of sufficient size that its conservation resources are likely to remain intact and sustained despite adjacent development or there is potential for adding more acreage in the future or sufficient neighboring property is either already protected or will be. For some types of resource protection, large parcels are preferred; in other cases smaller properties may accomplish the Land Trust’s purposes.
 - c) Protection of the property aids sound land use planning, promotes land conservation, and encourages careful stewardship of land and water resources.
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Public Benefit Criteria

Ranking: Rate the following criteria based on a scale provided for each criteria with the larger number being the highest/best score.

1. The property is part of a specific critical areas plan, management plan, local parks and recreation plan, or local resolution.
Score (0-5): _____
2. The property is or has potential to be part of county, regional, state, or national hiking trail or greenway or contributes to the scenic and passive recreational attributes of such a trail or greenway by its proximity.
Score (0-5): _____
3. The property is located in, adjacent to or near SCLT’s Grand Preservation Loop?
Score (0-20): _____

4. Project contains land that buffers or is contiguous with existing protected open land or buffers relatively natural wildlife habitat, exemplary or critical ecosystems, or natural features such as: old-growth forests, wetlands, wildlife migration routes, migratory waterfowl wintering areas, undeveloped bottom lands, exceptional natural communities.
Score (0-5): _____
5. Project contains natural features of educational or scientific value including land used, or likely to be used, for the demonstration of sustainable agriculture, horticulture, or silviculture practices or for education in methods of good land stewardship.
Score (0-5): _____
6. Project involves land in active agriculture or forestry use such as: property designated as prime agricultural land or as an agricultural preservation district, or farms significant for scenic beauty or historic resources.
Score (0-5): _____
7. Project contains important hydrologic features necessary for protecting water supply, water resources, wetland habitat or for providing natural flood control such as: wetlands, flood plains, waterways, riparian corridors, aquifer recharge areas, lake shores.
Score (0-5): _____
8. Land borders or affects the integrity of a significant stream or river, including those designated as natural, wild or scenic rivers or classified as outstanding or high quality resource waters and/or provides access to public land or public waters.
Score (0-5): _____
9. Project contains open space contributing to the scenic enjoyment of the general public (high visibility):
 - a) Has scenic attributes visible from parks, parkways and roadways, public foot trails, streams used by the public for recreation, or public use areas within state or national parks or national forests;
Score (0-5): _____
 - b) Is situated such that its development would obstruct or diminish scenic views from public use areas, interfere with views across already protected open space lands, or diminish the visual integrity of the community.
Score (0-5): _____
10. Public access for education or recreation is permitted, available and sustainable.
Score (0-5): _____
11. Project sets an important precedent for resource or open space protection in a targeted area:
 - a) Land that will serve as a primer for a larger land protection effort, abuts existing land-trust holdings, or represents highly significant natural resources.
Score (0-5): _____
 - b.) Land along the Bay to Bay Corridor: Great Marsh Area, Upper Nanticoke, Broadkill & Primehook Creek Connectors between NWR & Ellendale/Redden Forest complex.
Score (0-5): _____

- c) Land is located adjacent to or in close proximity to the Great Cypress Swamp or to the Trap Pond area or James Branch.
Score (0-5): _____
 - d) Land is located adjacent to or in close proximity to the Delaware Bay coastline or to the Inland Bays Headwater.
Score (0-5): _____
 - e) The property is located in an area of focus for The Nature Conservancy.
Score (0-5): _____
12. Land provides connection to other open protected or open space lands and is important for movement of wildlife between habitats or through developed corridors so that natural areas do not become isolated islands.
Score (0-5): _____
13. Land has recognized historic, archaeological, or cultural value, especially land included in, or adjacent to, designated historic properties, and necessary for the protection of the resources including land providing a buffer for properties of historical, archaeological, or cultural value.
Score (0-5): _____
14. Project involves open space valuable to Sussex County due to its proximity to developing areas or areas on which development appears imminent or due to its prominent role in how people perceive our county.
- a) Property provides a buffer for active agricultural or forestry use or wildlife habitats, wetlands, flood plains, or surface water and groundwater supplies, so that its protection would diminish the negative impacts of development.
Score (0-5): _____
 - b) Property offers significant relief from urban closeness and/or helps define Sussex County's form.
Score (0-5): _____
15. The property is being preserved for passive or active recreational purposes.
Score (0-5): _____
16. A threat to the resource is imminent and of high magnitude.
Score (0-5): _____
17. The opportunity to participate in a matching program is available.
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Local match of 100% or more: | 10 points |
| Local match of 50% or more: | 5 points |
| No match: | 0 points |
- Score: _____
18. Is there an income opportunity for SCLT associated with the property to offset stewardship?
Score (0-5): _____

Feasibility Criteria

ONE or MORE of the following factors MAY preclude involvement even though the property may meet the selection criteria favoring a land protection proposal.

1. Property is too expensive to be considered for acquisition at this time.
 No Yes
2. Property is part of a development proposal that could lead to conflicts of interest and/or problems associated with public perception.
 No Yes
3. Adjacent properties are being developed in a way that is likely to significantly diminish the conservation values of the site.
 No Yes
4. The property is in a development district and cannot be used for neighborhood-based recreational purposes or has existing infrastructure in place, or coming next year.
 No Yes
5. Project would be unusually difficult or burdensome to monitor, manage, and/or enforce in perpetuity.
 No Yes
6. Landowner insists on reserving rights or provisions in an easement or deed that would seriously diminish the property's primary conservation value or the land trust's ability to enforce protection.
 No Yes
7. Project may incur an unacceptable legal or financial liability because of a known threat to public health or safety or the expense of clean-up.
 No Yes
8. Legal, ethical, or public image problems are associated with the acceptance of the project. Issues to consider are whether:
 - a) There is a conflict of interest on the Board, interested transactions by board members or officers, or involvement in controversial projects with developers.
 No Yes
 - b) The project may jeopardize IRS non-profit status.
 No Yes
 - c) There may be a significant negative economic impact on Sussex County.
 No Yes

- d) There is opposition or no support from local property owners.
_____No _____Yes
- e) There is opposition or no county or political support.
_____No _____Yes
9. There is insufficient information available on the property or significant problems and/or defects in the title. Full information on all related permits, variances, or legal approvals for the development plans are not available.
_____No _____Yes
10. Multiple or fractured ownership, frequent incidence of destructive trespassing, fencing restrictions, irregular configuration, difficulty for using burning to maintain a fire dependent ecosystem, denial of permanent legal access to the property, or other unusual long-term constraints.
_____No _____Yes



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Criteria Score Sheet

Project: _____

Public Benefit Criteria

| # | Points Possible | Score | Comments |
|-----|-----------------|-------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | 5 | | |
| 2 | 5 | | |
| 3 | 20 | | |
| 4 | 5 | | |
| 5 | 5 | | |
| 6 | 5 | | |
| 7 | 5 | | |
| 8 | 5 | | |
| 9a | 5 | | |
| 9b | 5 | | |
| 10 | 5 | | |
| 11a | 5 | | |
| 11b | 5 | | |
| 11c | 5 | | |
| 11d | 5 | | |
| 11e | 5 | | |
| 12 | 5 | | |
| 13 | 5 | | |
| 14a | 5 | | |
| 14b | 5 | | |
| 15 | 5 | | |
| 16 | 5 | | |
| 17 | 10 | | |
| 18 | 5 | | |
| | 140 | | Subtotal Public Benefit Criteria |

Project: _____

Feasibility Criteria

| # | NO | YES | Comments |
|----|----|-----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | no | yes | |
| 2 | no | yes | |
| 3 | no | yes | |
| 4 | no | yes | |
| 5 | no | yes | |
| 6 | no | yes | |
| 7 | no | yes | |
| 8a | no | yes | |
| 8b | no | yes | |
| 8c | no | yes | |
| 8d | no | yes | |
| 8e | no | yes | |
| 9 | no | yes | |
| 10 | no | yes | |
| | | | Subtotal Feasibility Criteria |

“Yes” Responses: _____ x 5 points = _____ **Total Feasibility Criteria**

| Criteria: | Score | Points Possible | Rate |
|---|-------|-----------------|------|
| Subtotal Public Benefit Criteria | | 120 | |
| Subtotal Feasibility | | | |
| Total | | | |