
For Immediate Release

Easement Database Is a Big Boost for Conservation Efforts

New resource provides a fresh and comprehensive view of private conservation easement lands

GREENVILLE, SC (October 10, 2011)—The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities today announced the release of the National Conservation Easement Database (www.conservationeasement.us), the first resource to offer detailed information on the nearly 18 million acres now protected by more than 80,000 easements across the United States. Until its development, land and natural resource practitioners and decision-makers lacked a single system for sharing, accessing, and managing nationwide information about conservation easements.

Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements through which landowners, public agencies, and land trusts protect essential natural resources like drinking water, wildlife habitat, and land along lakes, rivers, and streams. By bringing together easement data that was previously scattered and incomplete, the database serves conservationists, planners, and policy-makers across the country.

“For the first time,” said Carlton Owen, President and CEO of the Endowment, “it will be possible to see the location, size, and purpose of conservation easements on a nationwide basis. By having all this information in a single place, the easement database will save organizations precious time and money, because each won’t have to create their own system.”

The National Conservation Easement Database provides government agencies, land trusts, and conservation professionals with new insights for strategic conservation efforts. Users can search for individual properties by date, property size, and other characteristics, or view a State Report for a quick summary of the area. Map-savvy practitioners can benefit further by choosing to download geographic datasets for advanced analysis. This wealth of information identifies those who have conserved nearby lands, reveals critical lands that are not yet protected, and presents new opportunities for collaboration. Such information is essential, for example, in effective planning of wildlife migration corridors or prioritizing critical lands and waters to protect.

Senator Max Baucus of Montana noted “the easement database is a great example of government and the private sector working together to save money, increase efficiency, and deliver better results.” Sen. Baucus is an ardent supporter of conservation easements, which help ranchers, farmers, and other private landowners to continue working the land and building strong communities.

Combining the easement database with data on America’s public lands reveals the most complete picture yet of protected areas across the country. “We’ve had to work for years without information on privately held easements,” said Jim Hubbard, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry, U.S. Forest Service (USFS). “Creation of the easement database fills a critical gap of information that we need to make better ecological and financial decisions.”

The easement database balances public interests in land conservation and management with respect for the confidentiality and rights of private owners. The database currently has information on an estimated 60% of all easements, a percentage that will continue to grow.

Three federal agencies—the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U. S. Forest Service—partnered with the Endowment in support of the easement database. Other key partners include The Nature Conservancy, the nation’s largest private lands conservancy, and the Land Trust Alliance, which represents the views and concerns of the nation’s 1,700 land trusts.

“We think creation of the National Conservation Easement Database will serve everyone’s interests and needs,” said Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance. “Hundreds of land trusts rely heavily on volunteers, and have limited access to technology and planning tools. The easement database, a state-of-the-art technology available for free online, offers a new dimension never before accessible to local conservationists and planners.”

To create, design and implement the easement database, the Endowment assembled five conservation organizations with extensive local and regional experience working with conservation easements and data systems: Conservation Biology Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited, NatureServe, and The Trust for Public Land. These partners will continue to collaborate to maintain and update existing information.

Envisioned and funded by the Endowment, this important project received generous support from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, the Knobloch Family Foundation, the Graham Foundation, and the U.S. Forest Service. The easement database is online at www.conservationeasement.us. For related graphics, [click here](#).

For more information contact:

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation’s working forests and forest-reliant communities.

www.usendowment.org .

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The **Conservation Biology Institute** (CBI) is a conservation non-profit that provides scientific expertise to support the conservation and recovery of biological diversity in its natural state through applied research, education, planning, and community service. Through a growing staff of scientists, CBI works throughout the United States as well as internationally on important conservation issues. CBI has become a leader in addressing conservation problems using computer mapping technologies, and has managed the development and distribution of the PAD-US (CBI edition) since 1998. www.consbio.org

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Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With more than 1 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. www.defenders.org.

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Ducks Unlimited is the world's leader in wetlands and waterfowl conservation. Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people. DU has conserved over 12 million acres in North America. www.ducks.org

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The **Land Trust Alliance** is a national conservation group that works on behalf of America's 1,700 land trusts to save the places people love by strengthening conservation throughout America. The Alliance works to increase the pace and quality of conservation by advocating favorable tax policies, training land trusts in best practices, and working to ensure the permanence of conservation in the face of continuing threats. www.landtrustalliance.org.

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NatureServe is an international conservation nonprofit dedicated to providing the scientific basis for effective conservation action. Together and individually, NatureServe and its network of more than 80 member programs in the United States, Canada, and Latin America deliver detailed biodiversity conservation information and expertise about the plants, animals, and ecosystems of the Western hemisphere. www.natureserve.org

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The Trust for Public Land is a national land conservation organization dedicated to conserving land for people as parks, greenways, wilderness areas, and natural, historic, and cultural resources for future generations. Founded in 1972, TPL has protected more than 2.8 million acres nationwide. TPL depends upon the support of individuals, foundations, and corporations. www.tpl.org

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The **United States Forest Service** is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Forest Service manages public lands in national forests and grasslands, which encompass 193 million acres of land.

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