

THE ECOLOGICAL GIFTS PROGRAM

Since 1995 donations of ecologically sensitive land, or easements on such lands, have been eligible for special tax advantages from Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. In addition, since 2006 land donations certified under the Ecological Gifts Program are no longer subject to capital gains tax.

To receive enhanced tax benefits under the EcoGift Program the donation must meet two requirements. The property must be certified by Environment Canada as ecologically sensitive, and the fair market value of the donation must be certified by a national panel of qualified appraisers.

Once a donation or Conservation Easement has been finalized, MMLT will assist with the preparation of a detailed ecological assessment of the property for consideration by Environment Canada. If approved, Environment Canada will issue a "Certificate for Donation of Ecologically Sensitive Land". To fulfil the second requirement a qualified professional appraiser, recognized by the Ecological Gifts Program, will be contacted to determine the fair-market value of the property. In the case of a conservation easement, the appraisal will determine the value before an easement is placed on it and the value afterwards. The difference is considered to be the amount of the gift given by the donor to the land trust. The appraiser's report is forwarded to Environment Canada for their review. Once accepted, they will issue a Statement of Fair Market Value, which will be the value used by MMLT to issue the tax receipt. The charitable deduction resulting from an ecological gift may be carried forward for up to 10 years.



Friends of
the
Carp Hills

THINKING OF CONSERVING YOUR LAND IN THE CARP HILLS?

Why not have a conversation with a representative
from your local land trust. Call 613-253-2722.

mmlt.ca



The Carp Hills (or Carp Ridge) is an ecologically significant natural area in the western part of the City of Ottawa, formed by a wide band of mostly undeveloped Canadian Shield highlands that rise above fertile farmland. Roughly 3900 hectares in size, the Carp Hills consist of forested uplands interspersed with numerous shallow beaver ponds that create a large wetland complex with many ecologically sensitive habitats. One unique area, the Carp Barrens, is a sparsely vegetated outcrop of granite bedrock dotted with wetlands and fen that support plants uncommon or rare in the Ottawa area.

The Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust (MMLT), in partnership with the Friends of the Carp Hills (FCH), wishes to preserve as much of this special land as possible. By protecting a large contiguous area in the Carp Hills landowners can preserve the wilderness environment needed to maintain the plant and animal habitats that are valued for conservation and recreation purposes.

Carp Hills landowners have a number of options available to them, with tax incentives, to preserve the natural character of their property in perpetuity. This brochure describes the various options that a landowner may wish to consider when making a conservation decision. It also describes the property selection criteria used by MMLT to determine how it best needs to direct its resources.

As part of its strategic planning, MMLT has developed a list of evaluation criteria to assist in the assessment of a property's contribution to natural heritage features of the area.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR PROPERTY ACQUISITION

1. ECOLOGICAL QUALITY

- a) Wilderness Quality: High wilderness quality or potential for wilderness restoration.
- b) Old Growth: Old growth and near old growth forests with snags, canopy development.
- c) Quality of Ecodiversity and Biodiversity: Exceptionally rich ecodiversity (different habitats) and biodiversity (different species)
- d) Provincial or Federal Ecological Classification: Provincially Significant Wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest
- e) Rare Species: Lands where regionally, provincially or nationally rare species are found (alvars or calcareous seeps along lake and river shorelands, native Jackpine forests with their wild blueberry and sometimes prairie species).
- f) Regionally Rare Ecosystems: Bogs and Fens (these are rare in the MMLT catchment and often contain regionally rare species including species such as orchids, pitcher plants, sedges and many others)
- g) Quality Marsh and Swamp Ecosystems: Those with provincially or federally rare or threatened species, such as terns, herons, amphibians, fish, turtles.

2. SIZE AND LOCATION:

- a) Enlarge Protected Lands:
 - i) Lands adjacent to MMLT protected lands
 - ii) Lands adjacent to other protected areas that significantly enhance the ecodiversity and biodiversity of the protected area
 - iii) Corridors that connect areas of high ecodiversity or biodiversity
- b) Proximity to Urban Areas: Quality natural areas within the MMLT catchment area close to larger towns (Carleton Place, Arnprior, Almonte, Lanark, Perth or the City of Ottawa) and which would be suitable for outdoor education and nature appreciation activities through trail and facility development and other means.
- c) Ease of Access to Property: Properties with road frontage or unrestricted access via public lands are preferred since locked properties can present significant issues regarding right-of-way for monitoring, public events, etc.
- d) Size: Large properties (500 acres or more) are given high priority.

THE MEANING OF TRADER LAND

Properties that do not meet MMLT criteria can still be donated. These would be accepted as "trader land", that is, sold and the proceeds used towards the purchase or maintenance of priority properties. A tax receipt will be issued for the appraised value of the land donated. A property deemed ecologically significant, but for which MMLT cannot for financial or other reasons take on ownership, could be treated as a trader land. In this case it could be sold with a Conservation Easement on title to ensure the long term conservation of its high natural values. The donor would receive the tax receipt based on the value at the time of transfer but MMLT would receive a lower return given the restrictions of the conservation easement.

In both instances, the donor could consider retaining a life-long interest, achieving the tax benefits immediately but continuing to enjoy the properties.

In all cases, it is important that any potential tax consequences be discussed with an accountant.

The following are some examples of ways to conserve your land in perpetuity (provided it meets the property evaluation criteria outlined).

Land Donation

The simplest option is to donate your land to MMLT to be protected forever. The donor is consulted regarding the future management of the land.

Bequest

You can name a land trust as a primary or secondary beneficiary in your will. Your lawyer and the land trust will work with you to find wording that meets the needs of all involved.

Conservation Easement

A Conservation Easement is a legally binding document that places agreed-upon restrictions on title that bind all future owners in perpetuity. The donor continues to own and enjoy the land and remains responsible for all costs associated with the ownership.

Conservation Severance

You can choose to sever and donate just part of your property to a land trust. This could allow you to continue living in your home adjacent to a nature preserve maintained by professional land stewards, without the burden of personal liability.

Life Interest

You can donate your property to MMLT and continue to live there or use it through a Life Interest Agreement. The agreement can be for the remainder of your life or for a specified term.

Split-Receipt

If you donate part of your land and receive cash for the remainder it is called a split-receipt. A tax receipt will be issued for the donated portion. This option is available only if the land trust has the necessary funds.

CARP HILLS OPPORTUNITY FUND

If you can't donate land in the Carp Hills, but you want to contribute to land preservation, you can make a donation in cash or securities to the Carp Hills Opportunity Fund. Donations qualify for a charitable tax receipt. For more information, see the mmlt.ca website.