

BMP: Conservation Easement

CE

DESCRIPTION:

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements that allow an individual or group to set aside private property to limit the type or amount of development on their property. The conservation easement can cover all or a portion of a property and can either be permanent or last for a specified time. The easement is typically described in terms of the resource it is designed to protect (e.g., agricultural, forest, historic, or open space easements) and explains and mandates the restrictions on the uses of the particular property. Easements relieve property owners of the burden of managing these areas by shifting responsibility to a private organization (land trust) or government agency better equipped to handle maintenance and monitoring issues.

Conservation easements are thought to make a contribution to protecting water quality, mostly in an indirect way. Land set aside in a permanent conservation easement is land that will have a prescribed set of uses or activities, generally restricting future development.

The location of the land held in a conservation easement may also determine if it will provide water quality benefits. Property along stream corridors and shorelines can act as a vegetated buffer that may filter out pollutants from storm water runoff.

APPLICATIONS

- Manufacturing
- Material Handling
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Construction
- Commercial Activities
- Roadways
- Waste Containment
- Housekeeping Practices

APPROACH:

- Conservation easements are typically done to preserve agricultural lands and natural areas that are facing development pressure on the suburban-rural fringe.
- By agreeing to give up or restrict the development rights for a parcel of land, a landowner can guarantee that their property will remain in a prescribed state for perpetuity while receiving tax benefits.
- States also use conservation easements and land purchase programs to protect significant environmental features and tracts of open space.

LIMITATIONS:

- No hard evidence that conservation easements actually do protect water quality.
- Another is that conservation easements are often not an option in more urbanized areas, where the size, quality, and cost of land can restrict the use of easements.



ADAPTED FROM SALT LAKE COUNTY BMP FACTSHEET

TARGETED POLLUTANTS

- Sediment
- Nutrients
- Heavy Metals
- Toxic Materials
- Oxygen Demanding Substances
- Oil & Grease
- Floatable Materials
- Bacteria & Viruses

- High Impact
- Medium Impact
- Low or Unknown Impact

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- Capital Costs
- O&M Costs
- Maintenance
- Training

- High
- Medium
- Low