

A Survey About You and Your Land: Whychus Creek Watershed

SUMMARY SHEET

Private Landowner Attitudes and Interest in Conservation Easements Spring 2016

This factsheet summarizes responses to the questionnaire titled "A Survey About You and Your Land: Whychus Creek Watershed" administered to private landowners during the summer of 2015. This survey is part of Ashley Vizek's thesis project focused on how information, attitudes, social interactions and place connections influence private land conservation actions

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

As of November 1, 2015 we received 257 responses, yielding a response rate of 41%. The average age of respondents was 64.5 years and the average length of property ownership in the Watershed was 18.3 years. 68% of respondents reported that they live on their property for more than nine months out of the year and 69% reported that the primary use of their property was a residence. Most respondents reported that they had at least a four year college degree and a household income of \$75,000 or greater.

INTEREST IN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

13% of respondents reported that they were *Likely* or *Very Likely* to place a conservation easement (CE) on their property; 39% were *Neither Likely nor Unlikely* and 48% were *Unlikely* or *Very Unlikely*. An important component that may be impacting landowners' interest in CEs is the amount of risk they perceive to be associated with CEs. Approximately 50% of landowners thought there was a high risk of CEs causing difficulty in the future sale of the property, while 40% thought CEs posed a high risk of future regulatory burdens. However, those risks appeared to be outweighed by a number of potential benefits.

The percentage of respondents who were *Very Likely* or *Likely* increased from 13% to about 50% if they were offered one of the following types of incentives:

- 1 Tax benefits
- 2 Property rights assurances
- 3 Paid the value of the CE

The overall percentage of respondents who were *Very Likely* or *Likely* did not change if there were no financial costs or benefits to the landowner or if the landowner was asked to make a donation to support the land trust's management of the CE.

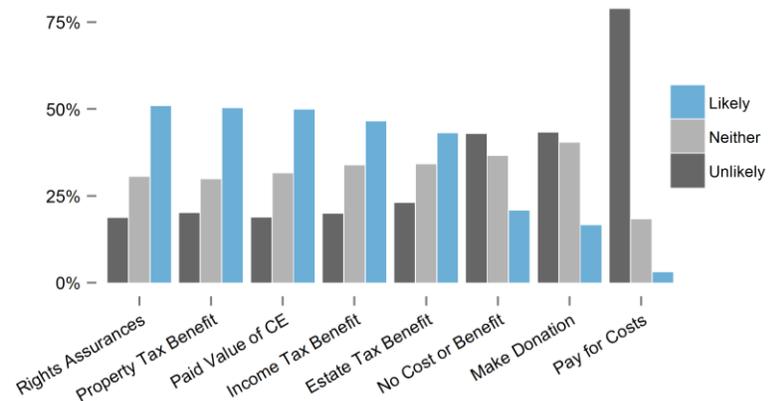


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who were likely, neither likely nor unlikely or unlikely to place a CE on their property under specific conditions

Comparing Groups

In order to take a closer look at the differences among respondents, we grouped respondents based on their likelihood of placing a CE on their property in general. Those that were *Very Likely* or *Likely* formed the **Yes Group**, *Very Unlikely* or *Unlikely* formed the **No Group** and *Neither Likely nor Unlikely* formed the **Maybe Group**. 25% of respondents in the **No Group** shifted to *Likely* or *Very Likely* if they were offered one of three incentives above. Under these same conditions 50% of respondents in the **Maybe Group** shifted to *Very Likely* or *Likely*.

AWARENESS OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Survey respondents were moderately aware of CEs—over 60% said they knew at least a little about CEs. However, respondents showed low awareness that CEs 1) may provide financial benefits, 2) do not require public access and 3) give the right to monitor and enforce property restrictions to an eligible entity. **Respondents in the Yes Group showed the highest levels of awareness, whereas the Maybe Group showed the lowest levels of awareness.** Awareness of CEs may be a limiting factor for landowners in the Maybe Group.

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

In general, respondents held positive beliefs about many of the characteristics of CEs. However, the majority of respondents reported a neutral belief as to the adequacy of financial incentives provided by CEs. When asked about their attitudes towards CEs, survey respondents generally reported a neutral attitude. The Yes Group held the most positive attitudes towards CEs, while the No Group held the most negative attitudes.

PEOPLE AND PLACE CONNECTIONS

When asked about how they connected to the Whychus Creek Watershed, more respondents had a positive connection than a negative connection. **Respondents in the Yes Group were more positively connected to the Watershed than respondents in the No and Maybe Groups.** Connection to place may be an important component of a landowner interest in CEs. Respondents also had a positive connection to their social community Watershed.



Sense of Place

- 1 High emotional connection
- 2 High self-identification
- 3 Lower levels of behavioral dependence

Sense of Community

- 1 High levels of membership
- 2 High emotional connection
- 3 Lower levels of having an influence

Approximately 50% of respondents reported talking to their neighbors about the use/management of their land or conservation in general at least once a year and 30% of respondents reported helping a neighbor with the management of their land at least once a year. Greater than 80% of respondents reported that they take note of how their neighbor manages their land sometimes, often or all the time.

LAND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SOURCES

The TOP FIVE sources that respondents received land management information from included **1) land trusts, 2) government agencies, 3) neighbors, 4) environmental organizations and 5) soil and water conservation districts.** The TOP THREE *Highly Trusted* information sources included **1) spouse, 2) land trusts and 3) extension staff.** The TOP THREE *Moderately Trusted* information sources included **1) neighbors, 2) soil and water conservation districts and 3) extension staff.** When asked who were the three or four individuals or institutions whose opinion they would most respect when struggling with a difficult land management problem, 21% of the responses were neighbors, 17% were spouses, 17% were affiliated with a government agency and 10% were friends. However, when asked to list the one opinion they would be most likely to follow, the TOP THREE included **1) spouse, 2) land trusts and 3) professional consultants.**

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