



La Crosse Blufflands Protection Program

What is the La Crosse Blufflands Protection Program?

In December 2001, the City of La Crosse and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, a local nonprofit land trust, signed a formal agreement to join together to protect the community's blufflands for natural, scenic, and recreational purposes. The Conservancy will be the "broker" for the program, working with landowners to purchase lands and easements in the blufflands overlooking La Crosse.

What lands are eligible?

The project area extends from County Road B at its northern end to US Highway 14/61. The highest priority area is from County Road B to State Highway 33 with special emphasis on lands adjacent to Hixon Forest. All lands and easements are purchased from willing sellers at the appraised value for the property.

Where is the funding coming from for the Program?

For 2002, the La Crosse City Council approved \$200,000 for the Program. In subsequent years, the City has approved up to \$275,000 per year, and has committed to funding the Program through 2007. The Conservancy leverages this funding through grants from the DNR's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and private fundraising from local foundations and donors.

How did the La Crosse Blufflands Protection Program develop?

There has been growing concern with bluffland development in our community over the past several years. During the City of La Crosse's Comprehensive Planning process last year, the need for a formal program to protect blufflands grew with surveys showing local citizens citing bluffland preservation as a top concern in our community. The Conservancy first began working with the City of La Crosse on the La Crosse River Conservancy project in 1998. With the success of that public-private partnership (over 350 acres protected), the Conservancy and Larry Kirch, La Crosse Director of Planning, began determining how a local government and private conservation organization could work together to save this precious landscape and provide additional recreational opportunities for our community. The Mayor, City Council, Board of Park Commissioners, City of La Crosse staff and the Conservancy worked together to formulate the Program and the formal agreement that launched the Program in December 2001.

What will happen to the lands purchased through the program?

Lands purchased through the Program will be transferred to the City to be managed as park lands although the Conservancy will hold conservation easements on all properties in the Program. Easements purchased through the program will be maintained by the Conservancy due to their ability to monitor the easements in perpetuity. To date, over 250 acres have been protected.

How can I find out more about this program?

For landowners or other citizens interested in the Program, please contact the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, (608) 784-3606 or email mvc@centurytel.net.