



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 22-312, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 6/15/2022

TITLE:

Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Program Review Update

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Present a plan to review the County's conservation programs, including ACE

ITEM TYPE: Regular Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Walker, DeLoria, Filardo, Rapp, Perkins, Maliszewski, Clark

PRESENTER (S): Maliszewski, Clark

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND:

Conservation Programs Review: On September 15, 2021, Community Development staff presented an overview of the County's easement programs to the Board of Supervisors (Attachment A). As part of the overview, staff noted that although the ACE program has been updated occasionally over the last two decades, the overall program design has not been altered since 2001. Current County initiatives to update the Comprehensive Plan and implement goals of the Stream Health Initiative, as well as the Climate Action Plan, provide an ideal time to review and assess the ACE program. Reviewing the ACE program in coordination with these other efforts will provide an opportunity to better align priorities and establish new goals for the future of the program. In March of 2022, following several references to the ACE program in budget discussions, the Program Review Timeline (Attachment B) was shared with the Board.

ACE Easement Acquisition: On September 15, 2021, Community Development staff presented preliminary appraisal information on the Campbell and Henley properties from the 2020 class of ACE easements. The Board directed staff to obtain final appraisals for both properties. Those appraisals were received in December 2021 and are valid through December 2022. They match the preliminary estimates reported to the Board in September: \$722,000 for the Campbell easement and \$133,500 for the Henley easement.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Natural Resources - Thoughtfully protect and manage Albemarle County's ecosystems and natural resources in both the rural and development areas to safeguard the quality of life of current and future generations.

DISCUSSION:

Conservation Programs Review: The ACE Program Review Timeline outlines a plan for evaluating the County's overall conservation programs, including ACE. Easement monitoring and enforcement will continue throughout the evaluation period. The status assessment phase of the evaluation has been completed, and the findings resulting from an analysis of the ACE program to-date are being presented. The next phase of the Program Review would be undertaken in concert with the Comprehensive Plan update that is currently

underway, with the goal of including updated programs in the final draft of the Comp Plan by mid-2024.

ACE Easement Acquisition: The Campbell and Henley properties are the only easement purchases currently under consideration. Appraisals are \$722,000 and \$133,500, respectively. There is currently \$75,619.00 available in the ACE program budget. A partial reimbursement grant is available for easement purchases from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), a source the County has used numerous times over the past several years. With the County Executive's signature on the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA), up to \$75,619.00 would be available as a 50% reimbursement on County easement expenditures. (VDACS earmarks an amount equal to the total funding the County has set aside for purchase.) The County would need to spend at least \$151,238 in reimbursable costs to receive the entire grant. If the Board is interested in purchasing either easement, it would need to identify a funding source for the additional \$75,619.00 and refer the appraisal(s) to the Appraisal Review Committee. After the Appraisal Review Committee's review, the Board may invite offers on and authorize purchase of one, both, or neither easement. The Board's invitation to offer can be at full easement value or a lower amount.

BUDGET IMPACT:

ACE Easement Acquisition: Easement acquisition would require the appropriation of County funds. Appropriating \$75,619 (making a total of \$151,238 available for easement purchase, when added to the available ACE funding of \$75,619) would allow the County to take full advantage of the VDACS grant, which would reimburse a portion of the funds.

RECOMMENDATION:

Conservation Programs Review: Staff requests Board input and feedback on staff's approach for evaluating the County's easement programs.

ACE Easement Acquisition: Staff requests Board direction on the acquisition of the Campbell and Henley easements.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A - September 2021 Conservation Program Documents
- B - ACE Program Review Timeline