



# Conservation Easement Monitoring

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GROUNDSWELL  
CONSERVANCY

# Background

- Groundswell has been protecting land since 1983
- We hold 77 individual conservation easements
- 44 of these preserve farmland
- In total, we monitor 91 easement properties
  - Due to allowed subdivisions
- Our protected easement lands are primarily in Dane, Green, and Rock Counties

# Monitoring Process

- Two staff physically inspect each easement annually
- We walk roughly 1/3 easements each year
- IMPORTANT - We meet with as many landowners as possible
- Staff splits monitoring into two seasons each year: half monitored in spring and half in fall
- Staff documents a "monitored condition" for each easement covenant (highly individualized) – as opposed to a general form
- This process is made far easier with technology
  - Landscape, aerial/satellite imagery, drones, etc.

# Easement Issues and Violations

- Updating conservation plans
- New dumping on property
- New buildings or structures
- Unauthorized commercial tree harvest
- Large scale land management without a plan

Largely, easement violations occur when the landowner has forgotten about the conservation easement.

# Funding

- We fund easement stewardship through our Easement Enforcement Fund
- This endowment fund is held by Madison Community Foundation
- When a landowner conveys an easement to Groundswell, they are required to pledge a contribution to this fund (\$8,000 or \$10,000)
- Landowners contribute the lower amount when Groundswell has easement enforcement partners (co-holders)

# Future Challenges

Some future challenges are requiring more staff time to resolve

- Landowner succession
- Agricultural entertainment and tourism
- Renewable energy uses