

NeighborSpace of Baltimore County Annual Property Monitoring Procedures

Monitoring Visit Procedures

Monitoring visits (*aka*, Inspections) are conducted by members of the Stewardship Committee or trained volunteers, known as Site Stewards.

Monitoring visits must be well-documented and the data resulting from these visits archived to build a record for future monitoring and to document violations in the event NeighborSpace must defend its interest through litigation.

Monitoring should be conducted at approximately the same time of year for each property. In Baltimore County the optimal monitoring seasons are spring, summer, and fall.

Individuals conducting the inspection shall:

- Read and understand the Easement or Property Agreement, available to board members using the link from the NeighborSpace home page and then signing in to Google docs.
- Schedule the monitoring visit. Contact the landowner or Property Manager at least 2 weeks in advance of a monitoring visit and invite them to attend. Follow up with an email to the landowner or Property Manager about any scheduling arrangements. Send an email to members of the Board and invite them to attend; however, remember that the monitoring date is set to accommodate the needs of the landowner or Property Manager.
- Prior to the monitoring visit, the inspector should have a thorough knowledge of the property. This includes a review of the property file, previous inspection reports, and a discussion of the property with a staff member familiar with the site.
- If more than 1 NeighborSpace person will be present for the visit, the individuals must coordinate their activities to insure that a professional demeanor will characterize the visit.
- Upon arrival at the property, greet the landowner or Property Manager and inquire if they have any questions or concerns about the property.
- Walk the property starting at “photopoint 1” and continue numerically through the subsequent photopoints. The photopoints were set up to take inspectors through the property highlighting pertinent features such as areas with the greatest potential for easement violations or property damage, property lines, high activity areas, unique features, and restored habitats.
- Take a digital photo at each photopoint and note the photo on the aerial photopoint map.
- At each photopoint the inspector will note any observations and comments, obvious changes, problems, or possible easement violations.
- Take opportunities to praise the landowner or Property Manager for positive land management practices while suggesting ways that the property’s natural areas can be enhanced.
- Complete in full a NeighborSpace “Property Monitoring Form,” available on the NeighborSpace web site.

- Label and prepare inspection photographs for archiving, using one of the following methods:
 - Upload files from a digital camera to the NeighborSpace Picassa Property Management Site by clicking on the link provided on the web page. Then click on “caption” to label the photograph with the property name, photopoint location and date taken.
 - Print out the photos and the base map, noting approximately where on the map the photo was taken and labeling the map and photo accordingly (e.g. Photo 1). Scan the map and email the photos to the Executive Director for inclusion online; alternatively, provide her with hard copies for scanning.

Completion of the monitoring visit

- All monitoring records shall be kept in a secure place, known by all NeighborSpace staff. All paper documentation shall be printed on acid-free, archival quality paper.
- The Executive Director will review all completed monitoring forms. Compliance letters will be sent to each landowner or Property Manager following the monitoring visits. These letters will notify the landowner or Property Manager that the annual monitoring is completed and that the property was or was not in compliance with the easement restrictions governing it. Any issues or concerns will be listed in the letter.

Annual Review of the Property Monitoring Program

The Chair of the Stewardship Committee will submit a report once a year to the Board of Directors detailing the program and summarizing each property’s monitoring visit.

Reporting Possible Easement Violations, Damage, and Maintenance Deficiencies

If a violation of a conservation easement or property agreement, damage, or poor maintenance is found it must be documented on the Property Monitoring Form and reported to the Chair of the Stewardship Committee at once. The Stewardship Committee Chair will notify the Executive Director. If the Stewardship Committee Chair is unavailable the monitor is to notify the Executive Director directly.

If it is determined that a problem exists on the property the Executive Director will proceed according to the easement violation policy or other method to reconcile the problem.