



Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

LAND RATING

adopted by vote of the land bank commission: April 1, 1996

amended through: December 15, 2025

Excerpted below is section five of the land bank law:

section 5. Interests in land to be acquired shall be situated in a member town and may consist of any of the following: (a) land to protect existing and future wellfields, aquifers and recharge areas; (b) agricultural lands; (c) forest land; (d) fresh and salt water marshes and other wetlands; (e) ocean and pond frontage, beaches, dunes and adjoining backlands, to protect their natural and scenic resources; (f) land to protect scenic vistas; (g) land for nature or wildlife preserves; (h) easements for trails and for publicly owned lands; and (i) land for passive recreational use.

The land bank commission receives many recommendations from its town advisory boards as to expenditures for contemplated acquisitions. Recommendations are presumed to be based on town master and open space plans, the Martha's Vineyard regional open space plan and the land bank's autumn public input sessions but sometimes their volume is high and difficult choices must be made. A conceptual priority guideline would be useful in sorting out these various recommendations.

Merely scrambling the nine types of land in section five into an ordinal listing from "most preferred" to "least preferred" would not be illuminative; performance criteria are needed in order to help the commission define any particular proposal's cost-effectiveness. Alternatively, arraying all possible types of proposals on a rigid continuum would be impossible, since any number of permutations is possible.

The commission hereby adopts the following list of "higher priorities" and "lower priorities." Performance criteria accompany each land type and should be viewed as ideals rather than edicts. Setting ideals should guide the land bank but should never discourage it from purchasing property that is a shade less than ideal but nevertheless beautiful, appealing or inspirational.

It is assumed that all "higher priority" land, by virtue of its size and other characteristics, is perforce good wildlife habitat or potentially good wildlife habitat.



This list is not a restraint on the commission's will. The commission may choose to use or may choose not to use this guideline in making particular acquisition decisions.

higher priorities (not arranged in any particular order)

- any vacant or virtually vacant coastal or pondfront property containing (i) more than 50 linear feet of water frontage and (ii) upland adequate to locate a 3-vehicle trailhead
- any vacant or virtually vacant property in excess of 20 acres
- any field or active or fallow farmland in excess of 5 acres visible from a public road or waterbody
- any trail easement connecting or potentially connecting land bank or other conservation lands
- any vacant or virtually vacant property in excess of 5 acres and bordering an existing land bank property

lower priorities (not arranged in any particular order)

- any property located in either (i) a business-commercial-industrial zoning district or (ii) a zoning district whose minimum lot size is 0.4 acres or smaller
- any property containing a building (i) that is not of foreseeable use to the institution and/or (ii) that cannot be conveniently subdivided off prior to acquisition
- any property fully or substantially subdivided to the maximum permitted by town code such that price is reflective of retail rather than wholesale value
- any property whose predominant natural features are, in the judgment of the land bank commission, adequately safeguarded by regulation, e.g., certain wetlands and marshes
- any single lot in a residential development that is to be acquired for the sole purpose of obtaining access to development amenities for the general public