





How Our Community Benefits from Protected Lands

- Lands protected from residential dev't cost less in community services (taxes)
 - Studies in Virginia show costs for residential development average \$1.30 for every \$1 collected in local taxes
 - Open space costs roughly 33 cents for every \$1 collected in taxes, saving community funding
- Protected lands preserves the beauty of Shenandoah County's rural landscape
- Protected lands keep space available for farming and forestry into the future

Why Put a Conservation Easement on My Land?

- Ensure it stays in farming, forestry or other open space
- Protect natural resources
- Extract some financial value from land while continuing to farm
- Help preserve rural character of Shenandoah County



What is a Conservation Easement?

- Voluntary, customized agreement between landowner and easement 'holder'
- Owner keeps property; places restrictions on how land can be used (limit development, protect natural resources)
- Farming/timbering allowed
- No public access requirement
- Land can be sold or inherited, but not divided
- Easement holder protects easement values for all current and future owners

What Does an Easement Do?

- Common easement requirements:
 - Limit the number & size of houses, buildings, and paved roads
 - Farming & forestry use a conservation plan
 - Land not subdivided
- Eased lands often have lower market value
- Difference between pre- and post-easement appraisal is called "Easement Value"
- Landowners who "donate" an easement may receive tax benefits for donated value



Easement Value Example

- Pre-easement appraisal: \$300,000
- Post-easement appraisal: - \$200,000
- "Easement Value": = \$100,000



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Purchased Easements and 'Bargain Sales'

- Limited funds available to purchase easements (federal, state, county)
- Most funding sources require matching funds
- Example of Bargain Sale easement (part donation, part sale)
 - Easement value = \$100,000

Landowner (donation)	Federal Grant	State Grant	County Purchase	Total
25%	50%	12.5%	12.5%	100%
\$25,000	\$50,000	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$100,000

- Tax benefits available for landowner donation portion

Tax Benefits from Donating an Easement*

- Federal Tax Deductions:
 - Donated easement value is deductible as charitable donation
 - Deduct up to 50% of AGI; 100% for farmers
 - Six years to deduct
- State Tax Credits:
 - 40% of donated easement value
 - 11 years to use up
 - Can sell credits to others

* Provided for descriptive purposes only. Not to be considered as tax advice.

Example of State Tax Credit*

- Donation of \$100,000 easement value
- VA tax credit: $40\% \times 100,000 = \$40,000$
- Credit can be used against owed taxes
- Unused credits can be sold/gifted to others



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How Do I Place a Conservation Easement on My Land?

- Contact easement holders, like County Conservation Easement Authority, state agencies, or area land trusts
- Consider what uses to preserve on the land, what restrictions should be in place
- Have appraisals performed (pre- and post-)
- Decide about donation vs. purchase
- Negotiate easement with holder(s)
- File deed of easement with land records

County Easement Program

- Contact Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority:
 - www.shenandoahcountyva.us/conservation
 - Conservation@ShenandoahCountyVA.us
- Fill out application
- Property will be compared to County ranking criteria
- CEA and Board of Supervisors will review

The image shows a screenshot of a web-based application form titled "Conservation Easement Application" for Shenandoah County, Virginia. The form is organized into several sections with green headers:

- Applicant Information:** Includes fields for "Applicant Name" and "Date of Application".
- Parcel(s) & Easement Information:** Includes checkboxes for "Donation" and "Sale", a "Parcel Address" field, "Total Acreage", "Zoning", and "Tax Map ID #".
- Owner Information:** Includes fields for "Owner Name" and "Owner Address".
- Additional Owner Information:** Includes a field for "Owner Phone #".