

LAND PRESERVATION

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a private legal agreement between a landowner and an easement holder that protects land and its conservation values permanently. Together the landowner and holder craft the legal easement document to protect the significant natural attributes of the land while retaining reasonable building allowances. The landowner still owns their property and may retain a division right for future planning, but the conservation easement is a permanent legal document that gets recorded with the property's deed and travels with the property even when the property changes ownership.

In Virginia, there are several financial incentives to pursuing an easement. Landowners who donate a conservation easement may be eligible for the Land Preservation Tax Credit (LPTC) equal to 40% of the value of their donation. These tax credits can be used to directly pay the landowner's Virginia income tax liability, and as a result, each \$1 of credit is actually worth \$1 to the landowner. Landowners may also sell their state tax credits using a tax broker who specializes in LPTC.

Every land trust will be able to provide you with a list of these brokers. On average, tax credits can be sold for a net profit of about 80-85 cents on the dollar. Conservation easement donors also may be eligible for a federal income tax deduction. This deduction would be equal to the value of their easement donation, minus the value of any state income tax credits, such as the LPTC, received in exchange for the donation.

For a complete listing of federal, state and non-profit programs in Virginia, visit the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation:**
dcr.virginia.gov/land-conservation/landcon-organizations



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Many of the homes that dot our landscape are historic and tell the story of past generations. The best organization for researching and maintaining your historic structure is the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), a federally mandated State Historic Preservation Office that oversees the laws related to the preservation of cultural resources. The staff has a wide spectrum of knowledge including information on potential funding and grants that could aid in the restoration of your historic home. Contact **VDHR's Northern Region Preservation Office:**
(540) 868-7033 or visit dhr.virginia.gov.

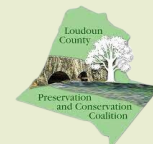


INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?
PLEASE CONTACT US FOR A FULL COPY OF THE
RURAL LANDOWNER MANUAL:
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE NORTHERN PIEDMONT

(571) 246-5029

OFFICE@PFHCONSERVATIONFUND.ORG

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT YOUR EFFORT TO CONSERVE AND IMPROVE YOUR NORTHERN PIEDMONT PROPERTY

LAND PRESERVATION

Local Funding for Conservation Easements

Easement holders charge a variety of fees for their services and there are costs you will incur from working with your attorney, appraiser, and possibly surveyor. Depending on the complexity of the easement, the financial burden can be significant. Luckily there are numerous programs available to help offset your costs, including The Bondi Family Land Conservation and Battlefield Preservation Fund, Deborah Whittier Fitts Battlefield Stewardship Fund, Malcolm Baldwin Farmers Fund, Loudoun County Conservation Easement Assistance Program, The Piedmont Environmental Council, and the PFH Conservation Fund (PFHCF). For more information, refer to the full RLM or contact **PFHCF: office@pfhconservationfund.org; (571) 246-5029.**

PDR Opportunities

The Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program allows landowners to enter into agreements to sell the development potential of qualifying property to the County while maintaining the right to continue to own and use the property. The purpose of the PDR Program is to protect farmland and retain the agricultural industry's critical mass. Requirements include that your property must be in excess of 50 acres, must currently be zoned Rural Agricultural (RA) or Rural Conservation (RC), and must not currently be under conservation easement or pending consideration for conservation easement or otherwise restricted from development. Questions about the program should be directed to the **Fauquier County Agricultural Development Department: (540) 422-8280.** As of 2023, Loudoun County is considering the adoption of a similar PDR Program in compliance with their Comprehensive Plan.



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are defined as practices or methods that are the most effective in preventing or reducing the amount of pollution generated by non-point sources.

Cost-Share Programs

There are many conservation programs through federal, state and local agencies that provide cost-share programs or tax credits for landowners who would like assistance in designing and installing BMPs, including fencing for livestock exclusion from streams, water trough installation, tree planting, and more. Your local Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) acts as a clearing house for these programs and they will assist in the creation of your property's overall conservation plan: **Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District: (571) 918-4530; suzie.brown@lswcd.org | John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District (Fauquier): (540) 422-8490; johnmarshall.swcd@vaswcd.org.**

Riparian Buffers

Riparian Buffers are the areas of grass, shrubs, and trees along the banks of rivers and streams. They are critical to filter nutrients, sediments, and other pollutants to protect our water quality. The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and Goose Creek Association (GCA) offer free riparian area plantings including the trees, design, and volunteer workforce. **PEC: (540) 347-2334 | GCA: (540) 687-0373.**

Grasslands and Mowing

Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL) has conducted research surrounding Virginia's grasslands and the native wildlife that depend on this ecosystem. VWL has partnered with the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and collectively coordinate the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative, offering financial incentives for farmers willing to adopt these practices. Visit **vagrasslandbirds.org** or contact **VWL: (607) 229-6255 | PEC: (540) 347-2334.**



ENGAGING IN THE RURAL ECONOMY

There are a number of ways to appropriately economize your land, with opportunities for every property size. As you prepare for your entrepreneurial debut consider whether you want to do the labor yourself, hire employees or lease out your land to a trusted local professional. Remember to determine whether your enterprise is compatible with your neighbors, local community, and zoning. Your local extension office will have numerous resources to assist you, as well as the following organizations: **Fauquier Extension Office: (540) 341-7950; fauquier.ext.vt.edu | Loudoun Extension Office: (703) 777-0373; loudoun.ext.vt.edu | PFHCF: pfhconservationfund.org | OCHCF: ochcf.org.**

Nutrient and Wetland Mitigation Credits

There are instances where instituting best management practices and improving conservation values on your property can actually generate income. A nutrient bank is created when a landowner converts non-forested land to forest through tree planting to reduce nutrient loads to waterways. A mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other water resource that has been restored or preserved to provide compensation "for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources permitted under state or local wetland regulation." Regulators require developers to purchase nutrient credits from sellers located within the same sub-watershed as the proposed development. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) maintains a list of approved nutrient credit sellers, which is revised periodically as nutrient credit banks are created, nutrient credits within a bank are sold, and nutrient credit banks are removed for falling short of regulatory requirements. **DEQ's Northern Regional Office: (703) 583-3800; communications@deq.virginia.gov.**

