



## Conservation Easements

**What is a conservation easement?** A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization in which the owner agrees to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on the property. Conservation easements provide:

- Protection of natural habitats for wildlife, plants and fish
- Protection of important natural resources
- Preservation of heritage and traditional uses including agriculture, timber harvest, hunting and fishing

**How does an easement work?** Conservation easements are tailored to the values and characteristics of the landowner and property being protected, as well as the conservation goals of the organization. A conservation easement allows a landowner to retain ownership of the land and control access while conveying some rights to protect the land and wildlife habitat. Typically, activities that diminish the conservation value of the property, like development, are limited in the agreement. After identifying what land to include and what rights will be retained or relinquished by the landowner, the conservation easement will be recorded as a legal document in the county records. Easements are granted in perpetuity. That means that if the property is ever sold, the easement will remain in force, guaranteeing that the land will remain as the original landowner intended for generations to come.

**What are some benefits to the landowner?** Landowners benefit in a variety of ways. In addition to the environmental significance of the easement, there are a number of monetary incentives for the property owner. Landowners who enroll their lands in a conservation easement may:

- Substantially lower income, estate and property taxes
- Control land use on the property in perpetuity
- Preserve family heritage and values

### Steps in the conservation easement process

- Landowner works with a tax advisor to determine financial benefits associated with an easement.
- A landowner interested in donating a conservation easement contacts NWTF.
- After determining that the property's resources meet the NWTF's mission, negotiation of the terms of the easement begins.
- Landowner has an attorney update the title and provide NWTF an Attorney's Opinion of Title (a title policy is not required) and legal description.
- If applicable, landowner conducts a survey to identify the portion of the property that may not be included in the easement.
- Landowner identifies and hires a qualified appraiser to prepare an appraisal on the property for tax purposes.
- Landowner has a baseline documentation report completed by a qualified professional to document the property's condition, improvements and conservation values at the time of the donation.
- Landowner provides a tax-deductible contribution to the NWTF stewardship endowment fund to cover monitoring costs to ensure that the terms of the easement are upheld in perpetuity.
- Landowner and NWTF execute conservation easement.
- Landowner receives financial benefits associated with an easement.

If you would like to protect your land while reducing your tax burden, contact the National Wild Turkey Federation at 1-800-THE-NWTF ext. 7508 or write Joel Pedersen, NWTF, P.O. Box 530, Edgefield, SC 29824 or email [jpetersen@nwtf.net](mailto:jpetersen@nwtf.net).