

Protecting Your Legacy Stewardship Gifts

You Love Your Land

If you didn't, you would not be working with us to protect its precious values: it's wildlife, it's forests and fields, it's scenic beauty, it's recreational opportunities. By placing your land under conservation easement with the Land Trust, you are entrusting us to make sure your land stays just the way you want it. Forever.

Long-Term Stewardship: Our Commitment to You

By signing the easement with you, we are committing ourselves to monitoring your property every year and defending your legacy at all costs. If, three generations from now, a future landowner tries to clear-cut your old-growth forest, we'll be there to make sure he doesn't succeed. If a neighbor's controlled burn gets out of hand and threatens your fields, we pledge to be there. If any other hazard poses a danger to the conservation values you wish to protect in your easement, we will be there to protect them for you.

Land Changes Over Time

Some changes are natural, some good, and others detrimental. Once your land is preserved, we will track its progress by monitoring it once a year (sometimes more frequently, in special cases) and comparing its current state to the condition it was in when you first protected it. We will always give you, or the current landowner, ample notice before we come for a visit, and we welcome you to join us. If we should encounter a problem or threat to your easement, we will notify you, or the current landowner. We will then work until the problem is solved.

Some of the ways in which we will protect your land's conservation values include:

- Photographing key locations on your land annually, and tracking any changes
- Traveling the extent of your property each year on foot or in a vehicle
- Flying over your property every few years and taking aerial photographs
- Compiling annual written reports on various aspects of your land's health
- Communicating with you and all future landowners throughout the year
- Educating future landowners about your conservation easement
- Negotiating to avoid or repair any damages to your conservation values, including:
 - illegal dumping or destruction of natural features
 - improper land clearing, unpermitted development or mineral extraction
 - condemnation by government entities for utility construction (if not permitted)

The Cost of Perpetual Stewardship

Federal Law requires that we maintain the resources necessary to monitor and defend our conservation easements. Our Stewardship Fund is a managed account with one purpose: to protect conservation properties like yours, and their easements forever. Each gift to the fund is 100% tax deductible and is used solely for this purpose.

We ask every landowner who places their land's precious values in our care to contribute to this fund in an amount sufficient to sustain annual monitoring practices and provide a portion of the potential defense costs. This gift is tax deductible, and counts towards Land Trust membership for the owner and his or her family.

A stewardship gift can be given all at once to maximize your tax deduction, or pledged over a two year period, if necessary. In the event that a landowner is unable to provide for their property's stewardship, our staff will work with the owner on a personalized, creative solution for raising the necessary funds.

Example of Costs

Annual monitoring costs, which include staff time before, during, and after the visit, transportation to and around the property, photographs and maps, equipment and supplies depend upon the size and complexity of the easement, as well as its distance from our home office. Some larger, more intricate easements require additional attention, while others are smaller and easier to manage.

To protect the stewardship fund's principal, which is reserved for mitigating any violations or damages, we draw only on the fund's interest (not to exceed 4%) to cover the cost of annual monitoring.

In the unfortunate event of an easement violation, mediation and litigation costs to repair the damages can quickly rise to \$100,000 or more. If your property is in jeopardy, we will draw from the entire pool of resources in the stewardship fund to protect your easement. We certainly do not hope that this will ever happen - but prudence dictates that we be prepared.

What This Means for You

As you entrust us to protect your land's cherished qualities, we ask that you enable us to carry out your wishes by donating a stewardship gift. A member of our staff can help you determine an appropriate amount, based on your property's unique size and characteristics. You, above all people, know just how special your land is. We admire your passion, and commend your desire to preserve it forever. Together, we will work to make your dream a reality and help you leave a legacy that will last for generations to come.