



Conservation Options for Your Land in Vermont

Your land is part of your legacy.

Planning what will happen to your property after you are gone is a critical component of being a good steward of your land.

Making decisions about the future of your property can be overwhelming, but here are a few beginning questions to ask yourself:

- 🌲 What are your goals concerning the future of your land?
 - 🌲 To see your land remain undeveloped forever?
 - 🌲 To ensure financial security?
 - 🌲 To preserve flexibility for your heirs?
 - 🌲 To maintain family harmony?
- 🌲 Do you want to continue to own your land into the future?
- 🌲 Do you want to determine the future management of your land?



Important Professionals to have Conservation Conversations with:

- Licensed Forester
- Estate Planning Attorney
- Certified Public Accountant
- Land Protection Specialist from Conservation Group

Several of the conservation options listed here can be used simultaneously on a property. For example, a landowner can be part of the Use Value Appraisal Program **and** have a conservation easement on the property.

As a landowner, you have several options when conserving your property, including both short-term and more enduring programs.

Future Ownership

If you don't want to continue owning your land, you can sell it to a conservation organization and use the proceeds to achieve your goals.

If you are not ready to sell, but want to plan for who will own your land, there are some methods to help you formalize your plan:

- 🌲 Using a Will and sharing your goals in a Legacy Letter
- 🌲 Using the type of land ownership to determine future owners: Direct Ownership or Indirect Ownership (such as with a Limited Partnership, Trust, or Limited Liability Company (LLC))
- 🌲 Protecting it with a Conservation Easement now to ensure it is never developed

Future Use

Land Stewardship Activities: Forest Management Plans

A **forest management plan** can help guide the stewardship of the land in the future. This is an essential way to communicate your goals for, the knowledge of, and the past management that occurred on the property. Communicating this information to your family can help the next generation become good stewards of the land.

If you are interested in developing a forest management plan, a list of licensed consulting foresters is available here:

<http://www.vermontwoodlands.org/certified-foresters.asp>

Temporary Conservation Options: Use Value Appraisal Program

The **Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program**, or **Current Use**, is a state program that reduces your property taxes in exchange for actively managing your forestland. This program is a temporary conservation option that is in effect until you, the landowner, or a subsequent landowner, decide to remove the property from the program (for a fee).

- 🌲 If you are interested in enrolling your property in UVA, visit the Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation website at: http://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/your_woods/use_value_appraisal or contact your County Forester.

Permanent Conservation Options: Conservation Easements and Fee Transactions

A **conservation easement (CE)** is a legal agreement that extinguishes some, or all, of the development rights of the land forever but allows other rights – such as farming, forestry, and recreation – to continue, while maintaining your ownership of the land. The CE is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values.

- 🌲 If you are interested in a CE and have an ecologically sensitive site, contact **The Nature Conservancy** at (802) 229-4425 or vermont@tnc.org
- 🌲 If you are interested in a CE and have land within a Wildlife Corridor or Linkage Area, contact the **Vermont Land Trust** at (802) 223-5234 or info@vlt.org
- 🌲 You can also search for local land trusts on the state and county level at the **Land Trust Alliance** website at www.findalandtrust.org

A **fee transaction** occurs when landowners would like to conserve their property but are interested in giving up their rights to the property in exchange for income or tax deductions. This can happen through a **donation**, a **sale**, or a **property transfer** of your land to a land trust or another conservation-based organization.

- 🌲 If you would like to sell or donate your land and believe there is significant wildlife or natural community value to your property, please contact Jane Lazorchak with **Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife** at (802) 505-0561 or jane.lazorchak@vermont.gov

The **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** will provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a **wetland reserve easement**. These easements can last for 30 years or on a permanent basis. Contact Obe Racicot at (802) 951-6796 or Obediah.Racicot@vt.usda.gov

Organizations to contact to learn more about selling or donating your land include:

- 🌲 Vermont Land Trust, (802) 223-5234, info@vlt.org
- 🌲 The Nature Conservancy, (802) 229-4425, vermont@tnc.org
- 🌲 Trust for Public Land, (802) 223-1373, vermont@tpl.org
- 🌲 Upper Valley Land Trust, (603) 643-6626, ContactUs@uvlt.org
- 🌲 Lake Champlain Land Trust, (802) 862-4150, info@lclt.org
- 🌲 The Conservation Fund, (703) 525-6300, webmaster@conservationfund.org
- 🌲 Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife, (802) 877-2777, info@vtcoverts.org
- 🌲 Vermont Woodlands Association, (802) 747-7900, info@vermontwoodlands.org