



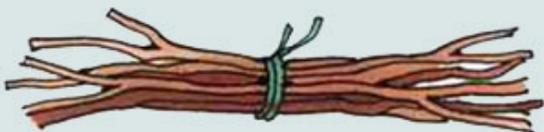
# 2013 Conservation Easement Programs At A Glance

## Why Create a Conservation Easement?

- ✔ **Preserve the place you love for future generations and ensure that your land remains unchanged.**
- ✔ **Benefit from your farmland's market value without giving it up to non-farm use.**
- ✔ **Protect the community food and water supply as well as wildlife habitat.**



### What is a Conservation Easement?



A conservation easement is a voluntary land use agreement between a landowner and a public agency or a non-profit organization working in the public interest. It is a recorded deed that allows a **landowner to retain ownership of the property**, while giving up (by selling or donating) certain rights.

**Imagine that you are holding a "bundle of sticks" with each stick representing one of the rights you have in your land.** These rights or "sticks" can include the right to possess, sell, farm, hunt, construct buildings on, mine minerals from, and restrict access to the land.

When you place a conservation easement on a property, you hand a few of those sticks to another party (such as USDA-NRCS) to hold in trust either for a term of years (term easement) or permanently. **This other party usually cannot exercise these rights, but simply preserves them for the public good, thereby "restricting" their use.**

In a conservation easement, these restrictions could include limiting the right to subdivide the land, build houses or stores, or cut timber in a wetland.

## Did You Know ...

**According to the National Resources Inventory, Virginia is losing an average of 12,150 acres per year to development. Easements can protect these vital farmlands and wetlands.**

### Fast Facts about NRCS Easements

- NRCS coordinates the easement acquisition process. The survey, title work, and closing are completed at no cost to you.
- Payments are issued in a lump sum or installments to the landowner (except where rental payments apply).
- Though the property remains subject to the restrictions of the easement, you can still sell, mortgage or otherwise transfer it.
- The public does not have access to your easement land. You can still grant public access at your discretion.
- NRCS monitors the property periodically to ensure that current and future landowners honor the terms of the easement but will provide advance notice before visiting the property.

## NRCS Easement Options

**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program:** Provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, NRCS partners with state, tribal or local governments and non-governmental organizations to assist with the acquisition of conservation easements from landowners. To qualify, farmland must be part of a pending offer from a state, tribe, or local farmland protection program; be privately owned; and contain significant prime soils or historic resources.

**Grassland Reserve Program:** Emphasizes support for grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses. Participants limit future

development and cropping uses of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations related to the production of forage and seeding.

**Wetlands Reserve Program:** Offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help with restoration efforts including establishing long-term conservation and wildlife practices. The goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled.

**For More Information ...** Visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) for Programs and to find a local USDA Service Center. NRCS staff will be happy to help you.

Easement Programs	Program Options	Conservation Practices	Owner Compensation
<p><b>Farm &amp; Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)</b></p> 	<p>Permanent Easement</p>	<p>Conservation Plan required</p>	<p>NRCS provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the easement. The landowner may make a charitable donation of a portion of the fair market value.</p> <p>Cooperating entity provides at least 25 percent of the fair market value or 50 percent of the easement purchase price.</p>
<p><b>Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)</b></p> 	<p>Permanent Easement or Rental Contracts (10, 15 or 20 Year)</p>	<p>Pasture and hayland planting, fencing, troughs, pipeline, water well (drilled)</p> <p>Management and maintenance of conservation practices is required.</p>	<p>Permanent easement compensation payment or rental payments for 10, 15 or 20 year contract.</p> <p>Based on the lowest of the following: Geographic Area Rate Cap or landowner's bid.</p>
<p><b>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)</b></p> 	<p>Permanent Easement or 30-Year-Term Easement or Restoration Agreements (10 Year Minimum)</p>	<p>Shallow Water Management for wildlife, wetland enhancement, wetland restoration, tree and shrub planting, conservation cover.</p> <p>Management and maintenance of conservation practices is required.</p>	<p>Permanent easement compensation payment.</p> <p>Based on the lowest of the following: Geographic Area Rate Cap or landowner's bid.</p>