

## Benefits for Landowners

Landowners have found that conservation easements offer great flexibility, yet provide a permanent guarantee that the land will not be developed. For example, an easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, while one on a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An easement may apply to only a portion of the property, and need not require public access.

A landowner may sell a conservation easement, but usually easements are donated. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement. Placing an easement on property may or may not result in property tax savings.

Perhaps most importantly, a conservation easement can be essential for passing land on to the next generation. By removing the land's development potential, the easement lowers its market value, which in turn lowers estate tax. Whether the easement is donated during life or by will, it can make a critical difference in the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.