

## Conservation Easements

Botetourt County recognizes that conservation easements can be an effective method to protect land from development, be that working farms and forests or pristine habitat. The following resources are intended to provide an overview to interested property owners but are not an exhaustive list. Property owners are encouraged to contact appropriate partners and seek legal counsel to determine the best easement holder for their property.

### What are Conservation Easements?

Conservation easement are **voluntary agreements** between a landowner and an easement holder designed to protect a given property by restricting the development of land in a landowner-driven process. This ensures long-term preservation while still meeting the current and future needs of the property. Botetourt County does not hold the rights to the easement, nor do we negotiate on behalf of interested parties.

Conservation easements are perpetual, property can still be sold or transferred, but the easement remains in place regardless of ownership. . Landowners and the easement holder negotiate on appropriate reserved rights, such as building a home, erecting farm buildings, or continuing to use the property for agriculture or forestry. Ultimately, it is up to the property owner and the easement holder to decide what uses are appropriate on the property.

### Potential Benefits of Conservation Easements

There are many reasons property owners seek conservation easements. These reasons include:

- Federal and state tax incentives, including potential cash-in-hand from the sale of tax credits for donated easement.
- Income from the purchase of development rights.
- Preservation of land for a specific use, such as farming or forestry.
- Knowledge that their property will be protected from development in perpetuity.

### Eligibility & Partners

Botetourt County does not regulate or hold conservation easements. Instead, there are several organizations who may serve as qualified easement holders. The following list includes several of these organizations but is not considered an endorsement of one organization over another. Landowners are encouraged to conduct research to determine the best fit for their situation.

The Valley Conservation Council: [Conservation Easements - Valley Conservation Council](#)

The Virginia Department of Forestry: [Conservation Easements - Virginia Department of Forestry](#) :  
[Virginia Department of Forestry](#)

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation: [Open-Space Easements - Virginia Outdoors Foundation \(vof.org\)](#)

The Blue Ridge Land Conservancy: [BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY - Home](#)

The Conservation Fund: [The Conservation Fund | The Conservation Fund](#)

The Nature Conservancy: [The Nature Conservancy in Virginia](#)

The Trust for Public Land: [Home | Trust for Public Land \(tpl.org\)](#)

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/clinfo>