

Leaving a Legacy...

Pike County possesses a scenic rural character that is quickly becoming a rarity in many parts of our state. Your land may be a part of this great landscape. Whether your land is a “working” farm or forest, used for hunting, fishing or other outdoor recreation, or simply enjoyed for the privacy, peace and serenity it provides; it defines who you are. Yet, as you are probably well aware, Pike County is developing at a rapid rate.

In the next ten years we may see a 50% increase in our population. With this increase comes great pressure for housing and commercial development. If not properly planned, this land development poses a great risk to our natural resources. The good news is that you can ensure your land remains intact for your children and for future generations. You can leave a land legacy for yourself, for your family, and for your community.



“I have seen so many of Pike County’s farms and forests change in my lifetime, that Dick and I felt a great need to preserve some of the open space we have left. So we placed our 500 acres under a conservation easement to keep it safe for future generations”

*-Margaret Hunter
Pike County Landowner*



Photo by Dave Soete

You Benefit

Landowners agree to protect their property for one primary reason: to ensure that the land they love, with its scenic vistas, pristine waters, and productive forests and farms remain intact for future generations. Beyond this intrinsic benefit, there are additional incentives for protecting your property and leaving a legacy for your family. Many of the conservation options outlined in this brochure will provide you with tax benefits.



Photo by Dave Soete

*Open spaces, working farms
and forests, and healthy
watersheds improve the
quality of life for all
residents of Pike County.*

Where Can I Learn More?

This brochure is a brief overview of some methods you can use to protect the land you love. If you decide that one or more of these options is right for you or you want to learn more, please contact us.

For more information about Conservation Easements and other Conservation Options to protect your family’s land call:

Delaware Highlands Conservancy
P.O. Box 218 Hawley, PA 18428-0218 &
and P.O. Box 219 Narrowsburg, NY 12764
570-226-3164
info@delawarehighlands.org

**Pike County Office
of Community Planning**
837 Route 6, Unit 3
Shohola, PA 18458
570-296-3500
planning@pikepa.org

Pike County Conservation District
556 Route 402, Suite 1
Hawley, PA 18428
570-226-8220
pikecd@pikepa.org

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The Community Benefits

Preserving your property is a gift to the entire community. As landowners keep their property free from development, they protect the natural resources on that land. Forested watershed lands keep water clean. Intact wildlife habitats allow for continued diversity of species. Your land’s distinct characteristics spread far beyond your individual property. Protecting your property ensures that you and your neighbors will never have to pay for the expensive public services a new residential subdivision would demand. Utilizing the conservation options outlined in this brochure may motivate your neighbors to do the same. This will encourage the protection of much larger landscapes in our community.

*These lands define who we
are as a community*



Photo by Dave Soete

Your Land, Your Legacy...



Conservation Options For Landowners

Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Pike County Office of Community Planning
Pike County Conservation District



You and your land contribute to the scenic rural character that defines Pike County.

Enhanced Land Stewardship

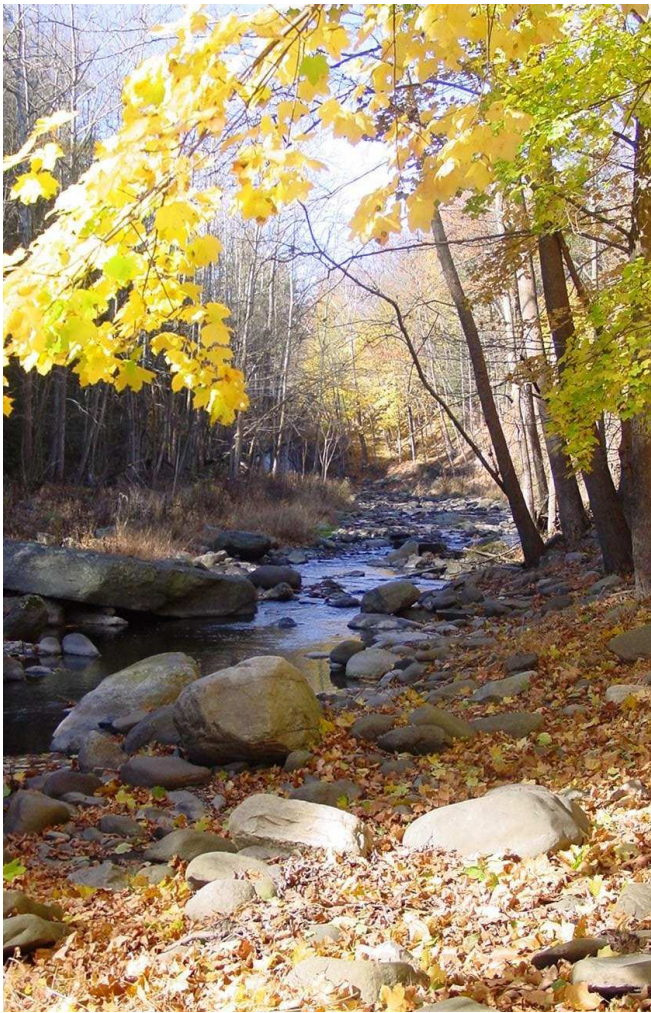
By caring for and managing the resources on your property you protect the land you love. Several Federal and State funded programs can assist you in further protecting the unique characteristics of your property.

- ◇ **Forest Stewardship Program** - A PA Bureau of Forestry service forester will help you develop sound forest management practices based on your needs and objectives, whether it's maximizing timber production, improving wildlife habitat or establishing riparian buffers to protect your stream or lakeside.
Contact DCNR Bureau of Forestry Pike County Service Forester at 570-895-4011.
- ◇ **Pennsylvania Landowner Assistance Program (PLAP)** - Regional wildlife diversity biologists will help you create a land management plan that ensures protection of the special species that call your land home. These site-specific management plans focus on forest, wetland, riparian and grassland habitats for species of special concern.
Contact the PA Game Commission Landowner Incentive Program Coordinator at 717-787-5529.
- ◇ **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** - This voluntary program offers the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on your property. Technical and financial support is available to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.
Visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or contact the USDA-NRCS office in Mayfield at 570-282-8732.
- ◇ **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** - Technical and financial assistance is given to help you establish and improve the fish and wildlife habitat on your land.
Visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or contact the USDA-NRCS office in Mayfield at 570-282-8732.

Permanent Land Protection

A conservation easement is a perpetual land preservation agreement that offers permanent land protection. This legal agreement is between a willing landowner and a land trust. It permanently protects the conservation values of a property, usually by limiting future development, although other restrictions may be included. Every agreement is unique and tailored to the property's characteristics and the landowner's goals.

The landowner continues to own the land, pay property taxes, and manage the land – subject to the restrictions detailed in the agreement. The land does not need to be open to public access. The landowners can sell the property or transfer it to their heirs at any time. Each subsequent landowner is bound by the same terms that the original landowner put in place. It is the land trust's responsibility to ensure that all future owners of the property abide by the terms of the conservation easement. The Conservancy or land trust ensures this with annual monitoring visits and also has the responsibility to enforce the terms of the easement and, if necessary, take legal action to uphold those terms. The landowner may benefit from a reduction in federal income tax and estate taxes. (See box to the right)



Conservation Easement Financial Benefits

Example: Jane owns a 100-acre parcel that under current zoning rules could be divided into 20 five-acre residential lots. The current fair market value is \$400,000. Jane places an Easement on the property that allows only two homes and leaves the rest undeveloped. With these restrictions, Jane's property is now appraised at a potential market value of \$250,000.

The property's value before:	\$400,000
Minus	
The property's value with the Conservation Easement:	\$250,000
Equals	
The value of the Conservation Easement:	\$150,000

Subject to certain IRS restrictions, Jane can claim the \$150,000 amount as an income tax deduction. Conservation easements can also yield significant estate tax benefits, helping to keep the land in the family. In addition, temporary additional incentives are in place for Easements placed in 2007. These allow for higher deductions and longer carry-over periods. Also, if Jane meets certain farming restrictions, under the new IRS Code she could deduct up to 100% of her adjusted gross income. (Unless the government extends this incentive though, it will only apply to 2007 Easements.)

Landowner Funding Resources

Although many people choose to voluntarily protect their land, not everyone can afford to do so. Following are some examples of programs that may pay you a portion of the appraised value of a protective conservation easement:

- ◇ **Pike County Agricultural Land Preservation Program** - The County will acquire conservation easements on eligible farm properties that lie within "Agricultural Security Areas." Contact the Pike County Office of Community Planning at 570-296-3500.
- ◇ **Forest Legacy Program** - This highly competitive Federal program will pay a portion of the easement value on sustainably managed forestland. Contact the Delaware Highlands Conservancy at 570-226-3164.
- ◇ **Scenic Rural Character Preservation Program** - This countywide program provides funding to municipalities for planning and acquisition of land or easements from willing landowners. Contact the Pike County Office of Community Planning at 570-296-3500.

Property Tax Relief

Act 319, Clean & Green, is a state program designed to provide landowners a tax break in exchange for agreeing to keep their properties as farmland, forests, and pastures. It benefits the landowner who owns ten or more acres of farm, forest, or open land. Once enrolled, your land is reassessed and taxed on the basis of its "use value" rather than its higher "market value." If, however, you decide to change the use of your property or develop it, you must pay roll-back taxes plus 6% interest on the part of the land you enrolled for the period of enrollment or the last seven years, whichever is less. Act 319 will reduce your taxes, but because you can opt out it does **not** preserve your land for future generations. You may want to take the next step and permanently protect it with a conservation easement.



Photo by Dave Soete