



The land. Our future.

Conserving Your Land with a CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Landowners in Wisconsin and nationwide have a deep connection to their land and know that their properties provide clean air and water, fresh food, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty for all. As 5,000 acres of land in the United States are consumed by development every day, many landowners are taking a stand to safeguard the places they love – productive farms, forests, prairies, wetlands – for their families and future generations.

These special places can be safeguarded through partnerships with local land trusts to establish conservation easements. Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a local land trust dedicated to working with private landowners and local communities in southwestern Wisconsin. The Conservancy works in Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties to conserve native habitats and farmland for the health and well-being of current and future generations.

... for the health and well-being of current and future generations.



“People worry about giving up control of their land. The conservation easement is really about establishing control over the future of a property beyond your lifetime.”

VICKY SCHULTZ AND HER SON JON know that even with the onslaught of mining interest in their area, the amount of time and sweat they've put into the land, as well as the scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, and productive agricultural soils will remain intact, protected forever.



Learn more about
conserving your land.

Contact us for more information at:

Mississippi Valley Conservancy
1309 Norplex Drive, Suite 9
La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone: 608.784.3606

Fax: 608.784.0257

Email: Info@mississippivalleyconservancy.org

www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org



PROTECTING YOUR LAND LEGACY



“When we became aware of the ability to preserve and perpetuate all this, we jumped at the chance. The Conservancy made the process very easy and has demonstrated a willingness and ability to protect the terms of the easements into which landowners pour their hearts.”

JIM AND PHYLIS MUNSCH have developed and protected a rotational grazing operation to protect soil near Coon Valley, Wisconsin.



“I'm happy and proud to be able to leave at least one meaningful mark in this world: this quiet valley and the rocky goat prairies that overlook it will be here forever.”

LAURA COGLAN speaks of the biodiversity protected by her conservation easement with Mississippi Valley Conservancy.



Conservation Easements: *A partnership for the future*

A conservation easement is considered the nation's highest form of legal protection to permanently conserve land and natural resources. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust, such as Mississippi Valley Conservancy. The easement limits future uses of a property to prevent activities like residential development, subdivision, and mining while allowing for traditional uses such as wildlife habitat, forest management, or agriculture.

Easements are Flexible

No two conservation easements are alike; each one is tailored to a specific property. The landowner and land trust work together to identify land conservation goals and priorities.

The easement is customized to meet the expectations of both the land trust and the landowner. For example, the easement might limit the property to only one farmstead or residence, while allowing for future grazing, crop production, timber harvest and other uses.

Easements are Permanent

Conservation easements are recorded at the County Register of Deeds once they are finalized and signed by the landowner and the Conservancy. The land:

- Remains in private ownership
- Can be sold or passed on to heirs at the discretion of the landowner
- Is not required to be open to public access
- May continue to be utilized for habitat management, farmland, forestry and/or other purposes

All future owners of the land are bound by the terms of the conservation easement; it is a way to guarantee that a future owner cannot undo the habitat improvements a landowner has spent a lifetime establishing. The Conservancy is responsible for upholding the easement's conservation purpose.

Financial Benefits

Conservation easements may have impacts on both income and estate taxes. A landowner may be eligible for an income tax deduction with the easement value

determined by an independent, qualified appraiser. A conservation easement may reduce estate taxes for passing land on to heirs, helping keep family lands in the family. Property taxes may or may not be impacted by a conservation easement depending on whether the conservation easement changes the property tax assessment category.

Tax information in this brochure is provided for informational purposes only. Please consult with your tax advisor or attorney to learn how an easement may impact your finances.

The success of Mississippi Valley Conservancy's conservation easement protections depends on the ability to monitor and enforce the terms of all conservation easements, in perpetuity. To accomplish this, the Conservancy has a designated and restricted Conservation Easement Stewardship Fund that is supplemented with the acceptance of every conservation easement. Landowners are asked to consider a donation to that fund to help offset Conservancy expenses.

Working Together

Mississippi Valley Conservancy must determine that a property meets its criteria and eligibility for conservation. All conservation easements must meet easement requirements of Wisconsin law, the Uniform Conservation Easement Act, and the Internal Revenue Code.

The highest priority is given to lands that are part of contiguous corridors of protected habitat, are 200 acres or more in size, and have exceptionally diverse native habitats and species. The minimum project size is 40 acres, unless the land is adjacent to other protected lands.

The Conservancy has a waiting list of landowners interested in the next step of a site visit; expressing interest in an easement is a good first step for interested landowners to be added to the waiting list. At the site visit, staff will work with landowners to discuss their goals and objectives for the property, explain the process and answer questions. They will also hike the land to conduct a land use, habitat, and species inventory and evaluation and begin the conservation easement process.

Annual Collaboration

Mississippi Valley Conservancy, with the acceptance of every conservation easement, is accepting responsibility to ensure that the working farmland, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources remain intact. To fulfill this stewardship role, the Conservancy conducts annual property visits to talk with landowners and hike the property to identify any areas of concern.

The Conservancy also works with landowners to identify land management needs and can offer advice and assistance on a wide range of land management issues to help landowners steward and protect their property for future generations.

Your accredited local land trust.



Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited and member supported regional land trust that has permanently protected more than 21,000 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. The focus of the Conservancy is to conserve the bluffs, forests, prairies, wetlands, streams and farms that enrich our communities, for the health and well-being of current and future generations.



Contact us to share your vision for your land and request a packet of additional information about creating a conservation easement.