

Stowe Land Trust partners with willing landowners to ensure that land important to the Stowe area community stays intact, productive, and accessible for generations to come. There are several options for how we can work together to do this. Some options are charitable, others result in payment to the landowner, and some provide both income and potential tax benefits. For information about your personal situation, we encourage you to contact us.

Donating a Conservation Easement

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that limits development and subdivision, while protecting land for farming, forestry, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and/or recreation. Donating a conservation easement permanently protects the conservation values of your land while allowing you to maintain ownership. An easement may cover all or only a portion of your land. Easements travel with the land and apply to all future owners.

Conservation easement donations typically qualify as charitable contributions. The value of the easement and associated donation must be verified by an appraiser. Landowners also typically make an additional tax-deductible contribution to Stowe Land Trust to help cover the costs placing a conservation easement on their land.

Selling a Conservation Easement

Sometimes, Stowe Land Trust can secure funding to purchase conservation easements on land that has exceptional importance to our community such as working farms and large forest parcels that are visually prominent and/or open to the public for recreation. Often, a combination of competitive grants and donations from private individuals fund the purchase of conservation easements.

An independent appraisal sets the market value of an easement. Landowners may be asked and choose to sell their conservation easement at a price below its market value. The difference between the appraised market value and the “bargain sale” price to Stowe Land Trust is considered a tax-deductible charitable contribution. A bargain sale of a conservation easement can provide both income and potential tax benefits.

Donating Land

Donating land to Stowe Land Trust to be conserved or as an asset that can be sold to further our mission and work is a generous option with many potential tax benefits. Stowe Land Trust may keep donated land if we can use it in a way that supports our mission. If donated land meets our criteria for permanent conservation, but we decide

not to keep the land, we may place a conservation easement on it before re-selling it or giving it to another nonprofit or government entity for the public to enjoy.

Want to donate land, but continue to live on it? Through a gift of land with a reserved life-estate, beneficiaries have the right to use the property during their lifetimes. When the beneficiaries have passed away, control of the property transfers to Stowe Land Trust. Stowe Land Trust may require that a donor pay associated costs or elect to decline a donation of land or interest in real estate per the terms of Stowe Land Trust's Gift Acceptance Policy.

Donating Land or a Conservation Easement Through Your Will

A donation of land or a conservation easement through your will or living trust is another way to ensure your land's permanent protection and potentially reduce your estate tax burden. You can change your will at any time, and a bequest does not become effective until your death. This is a good approach if you need to keep the financial value of your property in reserve in case of unexpected medical bills or other needs but want to be sure the land will be conserved if you do not need to sell it during your lifetime. If you are interested in this option, we hope that you will work with us to develop the terms of the future easement and language for your will or trust.

Purchase of Land

When a property with exceptional conservation value is at risk for development and we can find funding, we may buy the land. Land that we would consider buying include places important for public recreation and/or community use, high-quality farms, or land of particular ecological importance.

Questions?

Please contact us at (802) 253-7221 or info@stowelandtrust.org