

Leave It Natural

Conservation Easements on Your Property



Cuyahoga
Soil and Water
Conservation
District

216-524-6580

Conservation
Easement
Boundary

Leave It Natural



Conservation Easements Explained

A conservation easement has become one of the tools that can be used to protect and preserve riparian zones and streams. Ownership of a piece of property can be described as a "bundle of rights". These rights include, for example, the right to occupy, use, lease, sell and develop the land. Easements are nothing new. They have been used for many years to provide government, utilities and mineral extractive industries with certain property rights. Today, easements are also being used to protect the environment. In granting a conservation easement, one or more of the rights of ownership is transferred from the landowner to an individual or organization that is committed to protecting the environment.



You, or your homeowners association, are responsible for maintaining the conservation easement on your property. The conservation easement itself is owned by the Cuyahoga SWCD. This relationship makes us partners in environmental stewardship. Understanding and cooperation on both our parts to implement the terms of the conservation easement is important to adequately protect these natural areas.

It is important to remember that your property does not exist in a vacuum. All land is part of a larger ecosystem. The conservation easement area on your property has been recognized as a critical resource with superior environmental value, not only to itself, but to the larger ecosystem of Northeast Ohio. The environmental aspects of the conservation easement protect the health of small streams, rivers, wetlands and natural upland areas located throughout your community.

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The conservation easement located on your property is a legal agreement that was voluntarily entered into by either you, or a previous landowner, and the Cuyahoga SWCD. This legal agreement contains permanent restrictions on the use or development of the land in order to protect its conservation value. The owner of the property is free to sell, lease, donate or bequeath the property. The easement remains, however, with the property, and must be honored by any new owner.

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Every stream, river and wetland in Cuyahoga County that can be saved, maintained or restored, is critical to the overall health of the Chagrin, Cuyahoga and Rocky Rivers, and, ultimately, Lake Erie. These water resources are dependent on the streams that feed into them to provide the fishing and recreational opportunities we all desire. Healthy streams cannot be saved or restored if the existing stream bank habitat (riparian zone) is destroyed. These riparian zones are critical for supporting and nurturing the health of our water resources.

Open space, woodlands, wetlands, babbling streams and wildlife are natural features that we all desire in our lives and communities. Yet, we continue to develop the land, eliminating natural areas in our pursuit of the American Dream. As a society, we have already removed the vast majority of these natural features in Cuyahoga County. This loss makes the remaining natural areas all the more important. The Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District (Cuyahoga SWCD) has been working on the preservation of natural areas to ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the "good life" that includes healthy water resources.



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Guidelines

As the current property owner, you are free to use the conservation easement area on your property for passive recreation. The restrictions in the conservation easement, however, prohibit all permanent structures, including sheds, compost piles, gazebos, barbeque pits, and children's play sets. No plants of any kind can be planted in the easement area without the written permission of the Cuyahoga SWCD.

If noxious weeds and grapevines are taking over the easement area, they can be controlled with the prior permission of the Cuyahoga SWCD. Trees can be removed only if they are endangering a house or other valuable property. If the danger is imminent, take a picture of it for the Cuyahoga SWCD and have the tree removed. If time permits, contact the Cuyahoga SWCD prior to having the tree removed.



If you have questions about the conservation easement and what you can do in the easement area please call the Cuyahoga SWCD office at (216) 524-6580. We are located at 6100 West Canal Road in Valley View, Ohio 44125.



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