



STEWARDSHIP OF PROTECTED LANDS

Conservation Easement Stewardship pertains to all aspects of Eastern Shore Land Conservancy's (ESLC) management of a conservation easement after the acquisition, including monitoring; landowner relations; recordkeeping; processing landowner notices; requests for approval and amendments; managing stewardship funds; and enforcement and defense. Finalizing a conservation easement is only the beginning of ESLC's long-term commitment to care for our preserved lands. ESLC views stewardship responsibilities as a cooperative effort between ESLC and easement landowners. Described below are the fundamental aspects of our stewardship program –what easement landowners can expect from ESLC and how we can work together to uphold our shared commitment to land stewardship.

Annual Monitoring Visits: The foundation of the ESLC stewardship responsibility is the annual monitoring of every property under easement. The purpose of these annual visits is to ensure the terms of easements are met and provide an opportunity for regular communication between landowners and ESLC. Monitoring is done by ESLC Stewardship staff, Maryland Environmental Trust (co-held easements only), or trained Volunteer Land Stewards (collectively referred to as "Monitors").

Snapshot of our Monitoring Process

- Easement landowners receive a letter in the spring and a subsequent phone call during monitoring season to schedule a visit (the average monitoring season runs from April to November).
- Prior to the visit, the Monitor will familiarize themselves with the preserved property by reviewing easement terms, previous monitoring reports, photographs, and maps of the property.
- The Monitor arrives at the Property at the designated date and time to meet with the landowner or another representative such as a property/farm manager.

The monitoring process involves walking the boundaries or areas of the property that are not easily seen (Please note that monitoring can be done by motorized vehicle if permitted) and photographs are taken in order to record the present state of the property at the time of the visit. Important photograph documentation points include but are not limited to changes in the property conditions (e.g. new construction), boundaries, and required buffers. The Monitor discusses with the landowner any concerns, questions, or future plans the landowner may have regarding the property. The Monitor can provide appropriate referrals and resources for additional professional expertise on land management and opportunities for enhanced conservation practices.

Upon completion of the monitoring visit, the Monitor will document the site visit in a monitoring report, which includes photographs and a photo documentation map. The report is filed at our Easton office. Copies of the report can be sent to the landowner upon request. Copies of monitoring reports are sent to co-held agencies (e.g. Maryland Environmental Trust).

If follow-up is required, the landowner will be contacted by ESLC's stewardship manager and additional site visits may be required to address specific questions or concerns.

Resources for Enhanced Conservation Practices: ESLC encourages landowners to use best management practices under the guidance of a Forest Management or Soil and Water Quality Conservation Plan. Certain easements may require



these plans. ESLC can refer you to the appropriate professionals who can complete these plans and offer additional suggestions for enhanced conservation practices for your property. ESLC will work with landowners and our partner agencies to identify new opportunities for the creation or restoration of wildlife habitat, or to develop wildlife management plans. If your property contains areas of active agriculture, ESLC can provide resources for best management practices and highlight your efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay. Please contact ESLC if you are interested in learning more about these programs.

Communication: Successful, long-term stewardship of preserved properties depends on regular communication between ESLC and easement landowners. In addition to our annual monitoring visits, ESLC communicates with landowners through our stewardship newsletter, *The Monitor*, which highlights pertinent information such as new legislation, financial options, land management resources, and partner organizations.

- It is also important for landowners to communicate with ESLC. Therefore, we ask that our landowners do their part by doing the following:
Provide notice to ESLC for plans such as subdivisions, reserved residence location and construction, new accessory structures, etc. Even if this is not required, a quick phone call to ESLC can provide peace of mind and avoid any misunderstandings.
- Contact ESLC if they plan to sell or transfer an easement property. An easement disclosure to the buyer, and notice to ESLC and MET is required.
- Discuss ownership options with ESLC – we may be able to help you locate a conservation-minded buyer for your property.

For more information, additional resources, or a confidential consultation, please contact Eastern Shore Land Conservancy at 410-690-4603.