

Conservation easements in Pennsylvania



Grace Hydrusko's easement protects 335 acres of woods and wetlands in the Poconos © TNC

Grace Hydrusko, Pocono Mountains

PUBLIC BENEFITS

- Preserves open space
- Protects wildlife habitat
- Adjacent to the 2,000-acre Thomas Darling Preserve (open to the public)
- Contributes to ecotourism economy

LANDOWNER BENEFITS

- Preserves a large area surrounding a nature-based business
- Ensures long-term protection of the land

her lifetime. Grace promotes conservation to the guests at her B&B, the first “green lodging” in the region.

“I'd like to see it **stay natural and not be destroyed...for my children and my children's children and whoever else will be here...** My guests know it's a preserve.... They go into the woods to explore and they love it... **It's truly a personal thing... a gift from within.**”

– Grace Hydrusko

When Grace Hydrusko moved to the Poconos, lured by the mountains' natural charms, she opened a bed-and-breakfast, The Blueberry Mountain Inn. Next to the inn, Grace purchased 335 acres of woods and wetlands and, in 1991, donated a conservation easement on the tract to The Nature Conservancy. Grace is passionate about wildlife conservation and did not want to see the land developed. She was delighted to learn that through an easement, she could protect the property and its wildlife beyond

PENNSYLVANIA AT A GLANCE

3,054.5	acres under conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy
115,861	acres under conservation easement with other local and regional land trusts
134,900	acres of prime agricultural land lost between 1992 and 1997
2,565	farms protected through state easement program

ABOUT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Conservation easements are one of the most powerful, effective tools available for the conservation of private lands. Their use has successfully protected millions of acres of wildlife habitat and open space, and hundreds of miles of rivers, all while keeping property in private hands and generating significant public benefits.

Often, some of the most ecologically significant lands and waters in the country are those found in rural and agricultural landscapes. Easements have been instrumental in preserving these landscapes, from family farms to working ranches and timberlands. Between 1992 and 1997, more than 11 million acres of rural land in the United States were converted to developed use – an area five times the size of Yellowstone National Park. As people struggle to keep family farms together and preserve open space in the face of steep taxes and unpredictable markets, conservation easements are often the tool of choice.

Since its establishment in 1988, the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program has preserved 2,565 farms in the state totaling 295,447 acres. Pennsylvania leads the nation in farms and acreage preserved for agriculture through easements.

Public benefits of conservation easements

- Protect water quality
- Conserve wildlife habitat
- Preserve open space
- Preserve farmland, ranchland, timberland
- Maintain character of rural communities
- Buffer public lands
- Maintain landscapes for tourism
- Require less in public services, generate more in local revenues