

## Land Conservation

New Hampshire is known for its beautiful landscape. Natural resources from its mountains, meadows, lakes, rivers and streams support working farms and forests, outdoor recreation, and the local economy. According to the [Lee Master Plan](#) (2016-2026), residents of Lee value the preservation of our rural character, agricultural heritage, and natural resources. The Master Plan calls for the balance between development and the core values of Lee.

Two approaches are available to Lee residents for conserving land:

**Current Use (CU)** is a state specific program for encouraging the preservation of open space and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural, and wildlife resources. In [New Hampshire](#), property owners with 10 or more acres of land which is left in its natural state (tracts of farmland, forest land, or unproductive land) may apply to put that land in current use.

A **Conservation Easement (CE)** is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner (Grantor) and a land trust or government agency (Holder) that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Landowners retain the right to own and use the land and to sell it and pass it on to their heirs. Land owners continue to pay property tax on conserved land at current use rates.

Every CE is unique, reflecting the special qualities of the land and the interests of the original Grantor, and ensuring the land is permanently protected through all subsequent changes in Property ownership. The CE is tied in perpetuity to the land and binds all future owners to its terms and conditions.

Landowner benefits of putting land into conservation easement include preserving the land for future generations to enjoy as the easement grantor designates and possible tax reduction. Public benefits include the preservation of open space in perpetuity and protection of natural resources such as forests, farm land, wetlands, rivers and scenic views.

The Town of Lee owns 20+ parcels, nine of which have conservation easements. For those properties with a CE, the town is the Grantor. The Holders of the conservation easements include Southeast Land Trust and Society for the Protection of NH Forests.

Additionally, the Town of Lee is the Holder of the conservation easements for 35+ private properties in Lee. When Lee agrees to hold an easement, it takes on a “stewardship” responsibility of the property under easement. The LCC has the ethical and legal duty to monitor and enforce a conservation easement in perpetuity.

The LCC monitors easements yearly to ensure that the conditions of the easements are being fulfilled. Monitoring reports strengthen communication between the LCC and the landowner and promote compliance with the terms of each easement.

For more information about what happens during a monitoring session, read these [updates](#) written by LCC Member Catherine Fisher. All are welcome on easement monitoring walks. To see the schedule, please visit our [event calendar](#).

*To learn more:*

[Conservation Easement Stewardship: A Guide for Landowners](#) by the Conservation Land Stewardship Program, State of New Hampshire

[Conserving Your Land: Options for New Hampshire Landowners](#) by The New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition