

At the most basic level, conservation easements exist as a tool to preserve land for future generations. Entering land into a conservation easement agreement puts legal encumbrances on the land, typically limiting or conditioning certain types of extractive or development activities that may occur there, often in perpetuity. Because of strict limits on development, conservation easements are one of the most effective tools for private land conservation and one of the most effective tools for avoiding uncontrolled development near rivers and riparian corridors. Electing to put one's land into a conservation easement is a very personal decision and one that landowners take seriously; it is a powerful way to make sure land gets passed down through a family over time.

Beyond protecting land on a large scale and in a legally binding way, conservation easements can help protect other qualities of the land, including the water, forestry, wildlife, or agricultural resources. Additionally, landowners entering conservation easement agreements can often work with conservation organizations to enact land restoration or improvement projects that further enhance the conservation value of the easement over time. This is especially important because it allows land managers to target areas for conservation easement that contribute disproportionately to supporting big game wildlife, wildlife migration corridors, and other plant and animal species that need large landscapes, like Long-billed Curlew and Greater Sage-grouse.



The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Conservation Easement is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers about the important role conservation easements play in conserving habitat and wildlife species
- Defend our conservation easement laws that allow the protection of open space and wildlife habitat from subdivisions and unforeseen negative development
- Support the ability of state and federal agencies to hold conservation easements
- Support the ability of land trusts to hold conservation easements
- Support the use of permanent conservation easements as an option for land conservation that individual land owners may choose
- Support the ability of landowners to elect the donation of land for a conservation easement as a charitable tax donation