Easement Work by Valley Conservation Council

[**Valley Conservation Council's**](https://valleyconservation.org/) (VCC) Emily Bender shared the following information about property easements and some facts and myths about these agreements.

VCC is a local non-profit partner with close ties to FOMR through many common goals. VCC is a land trust with a big mission: “to protect the natural and cultural resources of the greater Shenandoah Valley region through land conservation, education, and experiences to preserve the life-enriching benefits our land and water provide.” The VCC staff and board are excited to work with Valley landowners to permanently protect their land with conservation easements.

Conservation easements are legal agreements between a landowner and land trust in which the landowner retains ownership, use and enjoyment of their property while conveying certain rights to the land trust. These agreements are specific to each property and can be flexible to meet the landowner’s goals while protecting conservation values including farmland, water quality, forests, wildlife habitats, and scenic landscapes. While they restrict the number of divisions and amount of development on a property, they also allow for farming, forestry, recreation, and other compatible uses.

Conservation easements are a great tool in the conservation toolbox but there are some common myths that we hear often. They include:

* You can’t farm, hunt, fish, or harvest timber.
	+ REALITY: All traditional uses are permitted.
* It gives government control of your land.
	+ REALITY: Actually, it may help to protect against eminent domain.
* You must have 100 acres or more.
	+ REALITY: Each property is judged on its merits, including parcels under 100 acres.
* It prohibits all development. You can’t even put up a dog house on an easement.
	+ REALITY: You negotiate the terms of the deed (including the divisions and dwellings).
* You can’t sell your land or leave it to your heirs.
	+ REALITY: You can, but the restrictions remain.
* You have to grant public access.
	+ REALITY: Not required. However, a landowner may request to allow public access.

If you are interested in learning more about how a conservation easement can work for you, please contact Emily Bender, Director of Land Protection at Valley Conservation Council at emily@valleyconservation.org or (540) 416 – 2759.