

## Conservation Easement Process

Typically conservation easements take 6-9 months to complete. Decisions about the future uses of a valuable and sensitive property are difficult, and they require substantial family discussion, legal advice, financial consideration and documentation. The Okanogan Valley Land Council makes every effort to be timely and professional, but the coordination required for each easement means that the process moves somewhat slowly.

Conservation easement development usually follows these steps:

1. Informal visit between someone from the Okanogan Valley Land Council and a landowner.
2. Formal meeting between landowner and an OVLC board representative where a non-binding letter of intent is signed.
3. Landowner and Okanogan Valley Land Council draft easement restrictions and draw zones on draft site maps. OVLC orders title report.
4. Appraisal ordered (if needed) to determine value of restrictions.
5. Legal advisors of landowner and OVLC review final easement document.
6. Landowner meets with family members to discuss easement.
7. OVLC land committee discusses grant funding (if applicable).
8. Funding for stewardship and conservation easement is established.
9. OVLC board and landowners give final approval.
10. Baseline survey of property completed.
11. Conservation easement signed and recorded with the Okanogan County Clerk.
12. Okanogan Valley Land Council monitors conservation easement once/year.



## **Commonly Asked Questions About Conservation Easements**

### **How will a potential buyer know if there is a conservation easement on a property that is for sale?**

Conservation easements are recorded with the County Auditor, and are attached to the property deed. Conservation easements appear with a title search for the property, and most realtors will inform their buyers of a conservation easement even before the title search occurs.

### **Do conservation easements change property taxes?**

Not necessarily. Okanogan County requires a separate application process to change tax designation, and while conservation easements may benefit the public by protecting open space, agriculture or forests, the Okanogan County Assessor's Office decides on all property tax designations.

### **Do all conservation easements have monetary value?**

No. Some conservation easements only consist of a management plan attached to a piece of property. Even when a landowner does not limit development rights there are other limitations that can help protect the land. In all cases, a conservation easement is a useful way to formally document conservation values and establish prohibited and permitted uses (such as guidelines for grazing, forestry, agriculture and development).

### **How does the Okanogan Valley Land Council get its funding?**

The Okanogan Valley Land Council raises the money to staff the office and negotiate easements through donations. The Okanogan Valley Land Council may receive grant funding from government agencies and private foundations for some conservation easement purchases and specific projects.

### **What happens if the Okanogan Valley Land Council disappears?**

Each conservation easement has a succession clause that directs which organization will hold the easement if the Okanogan Valley Land Council no longer exists. These organizations must be other 501c3 non-profits or government agencies, and some government grants require that the state is the ultimate successor organization.



**What are the next steps?**

After you've had an informal chat about conservation easements with someone from the Okanogan Valley Land Council, the next step is to schedule a formal meeting. At the meeting we will look at maps of your property, and give you a sample conservation easement to read through. We have additional information about conservation easements and stewardship, so please ask as many questions as possible. Your questions and involvement in the process will help us to do the best job possible tailoring your easement to your vision for your land.



## What is the Okanogan Valley Land Council?

The Okanogan Valley Land Council is a community based organization in eastern Okanogan county and is dedicated to maintaining the unique qualities of the Okanogan River watershed. OVLC was established as a private, tax-exempt charitable 501 (c) (3) corporation in December 2002. We work with private land-owners to help them protect their land, keep valuable agriculture and forest land in private ownership across generations and maintain open space and fish and wildlife habitat that makes The Okanogan unique.

### Long term Goals

- Maintain private lands as open space
- Maintain and enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- Provide options for private land-owners who don't want to subdivide their land
- Promote long-term responsible stewardship of public and private lands
- Promote economically viable private agriculture and forestry in the county
- Educate the public about the value of undivided private land
- Promote sustainable resource-based economic development in The Okanogan
- Enhance opportunities for fish and wildlife oriented recreation in the county
- Initiate and support conservation projects

### National Affiliation

The OVLC is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, an umbrella group that helps insure excellence and standardization between over 1,500 non-profit land trusts across the United States. For more information see [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)

### Other OVLC Sponsored Projects

- Aeration of Sidley Lake for fish winter survival
- Bluebird nest box construction for Oroville 6<sup>th</sup> grade camp at Lost Lake
- Funds for winter bird feed
- Sponsorship of Sinlahekin Foundation accepting donations for projects on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.

