

PRESERVATION OF OTHER LANDS

Beyond federal, state, and local laws to conserve and preserve lands, the greatest opportunity to protect and preserve water quality and natural resources rests with the landowner in how they manage their lands. Most of the land in the Watershed is private ownership. Seven main tools are available for land preservation in Michigan: conservation easements, purchase of development rights, open space/conservation development, public purchase, USDA Land Conservation Programs, PA 116, and land donations.

The land preservation tools are defined as follows:

- [Conservation Easement](#): a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust, conservancy or government agency that permanently limits the uses of the property.
- [Purchase of Development Rights](#) (PDR): compensates landowners for the appraised, fair market value of their development rights in exchange for a permanent agricultural conservation easement on the property.
- [Open Space/Conservation Development](#): usually results in smaller, clustered lots and an area of permanently protected open space.
- [Public Purchase](#): where a governmental unit purchases land. It includes a binding agreement authorized by a public body and recorded with the Register of Deeds for property to be removed from the tax rolls.
- [USDA Land Conservation Programs](#): land conservation programs through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service include Conservation Reserve Program, Wetland Reserve Program, Farmland Preservation Program and many more.
- [PA 116](#): PA 116, called the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program, is designed to preserve farmland and open space through agreements that restrict development for a temporary period, and provide tax incentives for participation.
- Land [Donation](#): total or partial gift of land, possibly with restrictions on future use.

Each land preservation tool can be configured to fit the landowner's idea of what to do with the land. However, each tool differs from the others in significant ways that must be kept in mind when making decisions about how to preserve land. Also, because the specific land conservancy or organization may have a specific mission in what type of land they protect, a discussion must be had to determine the best tool to protect the land.

Many organizations are willing to provide technical assistance to landowners on how to better manage their lands to protect natural resources and water quality. These organizations include Conservation Districts, MSU County Extension Offices, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Land Conservancies, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Agriculture, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.