



Delaware Highlands Conservancy

... a land trust working with landowners to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the Upper Delaware River region.

Records Retention Procedures

APPROVED February 10, 2016

The Records Retention Procedures provide details necessary to properly execute the requirements outlined in the Conservancy's Records Retention Policy as it relates to the organization, maintenance and retention of key files and documents.

Conservation Easement Files

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy has established the following procedures for keeping documents related to conservation easements. The Conservancy's staff members are responsible for all files related to conservation easement properties. For additional information, please refer to the Conservancy's Record Retention Policy.

Pre-Closing Conservation Easement Files:

Necessary documents (inquiry forms, conservation easement summary drafts, landowner correspondence, site visit photos, minutes of the Board of Directors meetings where the property is on the agenda) are filed as hard copy documents in the Conservation Easements in Progress working files and as digital documents on the electronic server under Conservation Easements in Progress.

Post-Closing Conservation Easement Files:

Documents are filed as hard copy documents in the office working files, as digital copies on the electronic server and as original hard copy documents in the off-site fire proof safe.

Assign Unique Number and Name: Once a conservation easement is closed, land protection staff members will assign a unique number and name to the conservation easement. The unique number includes a sequential number (0-999), initial of county name where the property is located and year of easement closing. The unique name will refer to an attribute of the property (landform, stream name) as opposed to the name of the property owner (ie. 031-W-2005 Baldwin Hill 2). If a landowner chooses to exercise his/her allowable right to subdivide and sell a portion of the protected property, the numeric portion of the unique name will then consist of an alphabetic addition. (ie. 031a-W-2005 Baldwin Hill 2a, 031b-W-2005 Baldwin Hill 2b).

Create and Label File Folders: Two hanging file folders for each conservation easement will be created; one for the office working files and the other for the fire-proof safe. In addition, folders for each hanging file will be created and labeled (refer to the below list of Land Protection Folders for names of folders and which folders need to be created for working files and fire-proof safe files.) Note: working file folders should be named with unique number and folder name (ie. 061-P-2009 Overview). Electronic file folders will be created and labeled in the same way as the working file folders (refer to the below list of Land Protection Folders).

Document Filing: All documents within Land Protection Folders will be filed in chronological order with newest documents on top. Electronic versions of final documents including standard correspondence letters, conservation easements and baseline report documents will be labeled with the date first (YY-MM-DD) the property name and the appropriate document title in capital letters (ie. 10-05-28 Baldwin Hill 2 BASELINE DOCUMENTATION REPORT). Other electronic documents may also be labeled with the date, property name and document title.

Electronic documents will be kept unless there is a signed hard copy in which case the draft version of the document (typically a Word document) may be relocated to a "to be 'trash'" folder and replaced by an

appropriately labeled scanned version of the signed document (typically a PDF document). The staff will periodically review old and new files to ensure that hard copies are backed-up in the applicable electronic files and that all filing systems are consistent.

If a hard copy file for a conservation easement is too large to fit in the working files, a note will be within the appropriate folder and will provide directions to where the oversized document is located.

Land Protection Folders

Major folders to be created for working files and electronic files are underlined. Colored file folders will be created only for working files and are shown in brackets where applicable. Files/folders to be included in the fire-proof safe are bolded and starred (*). Refer to Recordkeeping Procedures and the Record Retention Policy for further information. Note: Not all documents and/or sub-folders are required and/or applicable for all conservation easement properties.

Overview* [Orange Folder]

- Property Document & Folder Checklist
- Land Protection Checklist
- Project Selection Criteria Form
- Ownership/Professional History (*To be reprinted once per year from electronic database*)
- Current Property Deed/County GIS Inquiry Sheet (*To be replaced each year from county courthouse records – see Annual Property Deed Check Procedures*)

Property Info [Green Folder]

Baseline Documentation Report (BDR)* (*for a full list of documents included in the BDR, refer to the Table of Contents of the Baseline Report Template*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owner Acknowledgement | <input type="checkbox"/> Contemporaneous Acknowledgment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BDR Narrative | <input type="checkbox"/> Appraisal Summary (Full appraisal in fire-proof safe and in e-file if available*) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Easement Summary | <input type="checkbox"/> Title Report Summary (Full title report in fire-proof safe and in e-file if available*) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property Maps and Summary Tables | <input type="checkbox"/> Title Affidavit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property Photographs and Photopoint Map and Summary Table | <input type="checkbox"/> NYSDEC Endangered Species (or PA PNHP/PNDI) Letter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Directions to Property | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Assessment Summary (Full Environmental Assessment in fire-proof safe and in e-file if available*) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Conservation Easement and Recorded Amendments | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NYSDEC Registration | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Updates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Original Property Deed - at time of closing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Resolution | |

Active Contracts and Plans (sub-folder)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rights of Way | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utility agreements, etc. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leases | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas lease | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural lease | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management Plans | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Management Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife Management Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Conservation Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Subdivision Plan |

Easement

- Recorded Easements
 - Exhibit B (For NY)
 - Metes & Bounds (For NY)
- Recorded Amendments
- Re-recorded Easements (DHC will re-record conservation easements every 30 years)

Project Settlement

- Settlement Statement (if non-donated CE)
- Invoices

- ___ Title Report
- ___ Appraisal
- ___ Survey
- ___ Environmental Assessment
- ___ Other Professional Services

Receipts

- ___ Baseline Contract & Baseline payment
- ___ Start work payment
- ___ Recording Fee

___ **8283/8282***

___ **Mortgage Subordination***

Grants (A separate sub-folder for each grant will be created. Only grants directly related to the conservation easement property will be stored in the Land Protection File Folders. All other grant documents will be stored in Development and Awards)

- ___ Application
- ___ Approval Letter
- ___ Agreement
- ___ Reports

Monitoring [Blue Folder]

- ___ Directions to Property from NY and PA offices
- ___ Monitoring Maps (at minimum, the original Exhibit Map or a copy if the original is unavailable)
- ___ CE Summary
- ___ Property Updates

Past Monitoring (sub-folder)*

- ___ Annual Monitoring reports and Annual Letter to Landowner (filed chronologically)

Publicity [Red Folder]

Articles

- ___ Press Release
- ___ Web
- ___ News
- ___ Press Photos

Correspondence [Yellow Folder]

- ___ Inquiry Sheet
- ___ Emails - saved by date in chronological order (*only necessary emails will be stored here . Questions regarding emails of substance should be directed to the Executive Director*)
- ___ Meeting Notes

Standard Letters (sub-folder)*

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ___ Independent Legal Advice | ___ IRS/Appraisal |
| ___ DHC Attorney Review | ___ Baseline Complete |
| ___ Stewardship Thank You | ___ CE Summary |
| ___ Compulsory Pooling | ___ Final CE |

Board/LPC (sub-folder)

- ___ Minutes
- ___ Project Criteria
- ___ Site Evaluation

___ **Landowner's Will** (if a Legacy Leader) (**sub-folder**)

Financial Management Records

Each year all financial files and records that are to be retained as outlined in the Records Retention Schedule are to be packaged together and labeled with the year. At the conclusion of the retention time frame the packet of information is to be shredded.

Personnel Records

Inactive Personnel Files are to be segregated from the Active files and clearly labeled with the Termination date. Employment applications will be filed by position in chronological order. Files are to be shredded after reaching the time frame noted in the Records Retention Schedule. ..

Offsite Records Storage

Irreplaceable records, originals, critical business documents and essential conservation project documents are maintained at a secure, fire-proof, offsite safes located at VanGorder's Furniture Warehouse in Hawley, Pennsylvania. Keys for the safes are located in the office of the Executive Director. Letter providing access to the Warehouse is on file in the Conservancy and updated as needed. Employees are authorized by the Executive Director as needed.

Essential records will be placed in the offsite location in timely manner. Land Protection documents will be filed next business day after the closing of the transaction or after the completion of monitoring. Administrative paperwork will be filed quarterly. Executive Director will ensure that offsite files are reviewed annually. Documents that are maintained in the Offsite Records Storage are noted on the Records Retention Schedule

Electronic Back-Up

Files are retained on a central server in the Hawley office. Files from the server are backed up daily to the internet. Executive Director will ensure that back-ups are working on an annual basis in conjunction with technical support.

At the conclusion of each fiscal year the Conservancy's files including land Protection files related to protected properties, Financial Accounting System and the Donor Data Base will be backed up to an external hard-drive that will be stored at the Offsite location.

All data files and records are stored on a shared server and will be automatically backed-up daily to an online data protection system which is encrypted and conforms to HIPPA regulations. Electronic back-up systems are to be reviewed annually by the Executive Director to ensure that outdated electronic data is replaced.

A bare-metal back-up of the entire shared server including, data, records and programs will be conducted twice annually, once in June and again in December. This back-up will be saved to an external hard-drive that will be kept in a safe deposit box.

Sensitive Financial Information

Sensitive financial information such as credit card numbers, checks and checking information, payroll, and deposits folder are to be kept in the locked filing cabinet at all times. This would include the folders for donations "to be acknowledged" income that does not have to be acknowledged such as program fees, green lodging proceeds, payments from partner organizations etc. along with the folder marked "President" which may contain some of the above described sensitive financial information.

At no time is credit card information to be sent via email. The last four digits of the card may be included as a reference but complete credit card information is never to be sent via email or in an email attachment.