



Conserve Land

Scenic Rivers Land Trust conserves and protects land in Anne Arundel County within the Herring Bay, Bodkin Creek, and the Severn, South, Patuxent, Patapsco (within Anne Arundel County), Rhode and West River watersheds. We work with landowners who have 10 or more acres of land appropriate for conservation to permanently protect their property from major development through the use of conservation easements, or voluntary legal agreements that limit future development on a property in order to protect its environmental features.

Land that is appropriate for preservation meets one or more of the following conditions:

- High functioning natural habitat, ecosystems or natural features
- Endangered, threatened or conservation priority species
- Connected to other open space lands important for movement of wildlife between habitats or through developed corridors
- Wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, bogs or other lands significantly important for the protection of water quality
- Open space that contributes to the scenic enjoyment of the public when viewed from a public road or navigable waterway and provides a significant public benefit
- Open space that is in furtherance of a local, state, or federal conservation policy and provides a significant public benefit
- In active agricultural or forestry use
- Ecosystems of educational or scientific value

Why does Scenic Rivers conserve land?

Land conservation is integral to the things our community values: clean water, healthy food, exercise, recreation and relaxation, and in some cases, our livelihoods.

Land protection is not inherently anti-development. We all hope for comfortable homes, nearby shops, good schools, and local religious institutions that are essential to a healthy and thriving community.

Land conservation ensures future development and growth can take place, while still protecting the places we need and love so we can continue to enjoy them.

We conserve land because

- Ample green, open spaces are critical to our community's economic and social vitality and resiliency.
- Healthy undeveloped lands, such as forests, wetlands, meadows, and shorelines, manage stormwater runoff, protect groundwater sources, buffer streams, filter pollutants, clean the air, provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for recreation and add to the overall beauty of our surroundings.
- Protected agricultural lands allow us to value the agrarian roots of our county.
- Lands that expand parks and other open spaces offer quiet refuge and places for community members to gather and enjoy the outdoors.



Land Stewardship

When Scenic Rivers accepts a conservation easement on a property, we are making a long-term commitment to the land. Conservation easements are perpetual and binding and require an investment of time, energy and resources to properly steward the land.

Baseline Assessment

Consistent and capable stewardship begins with conducting a thorough baseline assessment of the properties that we consider for easement. The Baseline Documentation Report documents the condition of a property at the time when a conservation easement is finalized, including a legal description of the boundaries, conservation value descriptions, existing structures, maps and photographs. This document informs future annual monitoring visits and reports.

Landowner Communication and Education

Maintaining clear, open lines of communication and serving as a resource for landowners is also essential to stewardship. Scenic Rivers staff are always available to answer landowner questions and advise on any issues landowners may encounter with the stewardship of their land.

Annual Monitoring Visits

Scenic Rivers conducts annual monitoring visits and reporting for each of our conservation easements. This is our opportunity to track what is happening on the land, ensure all activities conform to the requirements of the easement and identify potential issues before they advance. These site visits and reports are a critical component of our commitment to the properties under easement with Scenic Rivers and ensure that we maintain regular, consistent communication with landowners.

Taking Action

When we encounter a violation on a property under our protection, Scenic Rivers is prepared to take action. Fortunately, our consistent communication with landowners means that this is rare, but when it does happen we have policies and procedures in place to work with landowners toward a resolution. Legal action is always a last choice.

To prepare for expensive legal action, we purchase conservation defense insurance with Terra Firma for all of our conservation easements.



Healthy Forests: Invasive Plant Removal Program

Scenic Rivers' Healthy Forests Program engages community volunteers to help protect the long-term vitality of our largest conservation easement, Bacon Ridge Natural Area.

Located in the heart of Anne Arundel County and at the headwaters of the South River, Bacon Ridge Natural Area's 1,000+ acres of forest, meadows, wetlands, and streams are under threat from encroaching invasive plant species, including English ivy, oriental bittersweet, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive, Japanese barberry, Japanese stiltgrass, and wavyleaf basketgrass.

Invasive plants can be incredibly damaging to forest ecosystems.

From invasive shrubs that shade out native understory plants to invasive vines that can choke and pull down towering native canopy trees, invasive plants threaten the health of the forests and natural lands we are working so hard to conserve.

Program History

In 2020, Scenic Rivers took action to remediate and control the threat that invasive plants pose on the health of Bacon Ridge Natural Area.

We began by working with teams of volunteers to map and identify invasive plant infestations along Bacon Ridge's 15+ miles of publicly accessible trails. Then in spring 2021, we launched our first season of volunteer workdays to clear and remove invasive plants from along the trails.

To date, dozens of community volunteers have helped to remove nearly 3,000 pounds of invasive vines, shrubs, and grasses across 15 acres, clearing the way for a sustainable, healthy forest for the entire community to enjoy.



Education

Scenic Rivers is dedicated to educating the Anne Arundel County community about the value of land protection and its many environmental, economic and quality of life benefits.

Educational Events

We host a variety of educational events throughout the year for landowners, the general public and professional services professionals such as realtors, attorneys and financial advisors.

Our annual educational events include:

- **Breakfast Briefing for Professionals.** Scenic Rivers is a resource for local professional services providers who advise landowners in the county. We host an annual breakfast briefing with a panel of experts to inform professionals on the latest legal and tax guidance and land protection opportunities for their clients.
- **Conservation 101 for Landowners.** These workshops for landowners interested in preserving their land are hosted biannually. Landowners with 10 or more acres to conserve learn the basics of conservation easements and how they can benefit from conserving their land. Staff provide information, options and answer questions about [Anne Arundel County's Forestry and Forested Land Protection Grant Program](#), which can provide a \$3,000 per acre incentive to encourage easements on forested land or land that could be planted in forest.
- **Jan Hollmann Environmental Education Award.** The Jan Hollmann Environmental Education Award, established in 1994 by people who worked with Jan in preserving the environment, recognizes an individual or organization that has been especially effective in achieving environmental education in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Scenic Rivers is a proud partner of this important annual award recognizing the value of environmental education.
- **Walk for the Woods.** Our annual event celebrating families exploring the outdoors, the beautiful [Bacon Ridge Natural Area](#) and the value of land protection. Attendees are invited to explore over 900 acres of woodlands, streams, meadows and trails on a variety of guided hikes or on their own.

Visit our [events calendar](#) for more information on these events and others.

Resource for County Government

Given Scenic Rivers' more than thirty years of experience working in Anne Arundel County on land protection issues, we serve as a valuable resource to the County government. Scenic Rivers' staff and experts:

- Provide guidance on the ins and outs of conservation easements and land preservation policy and can help the County evaluate property purchase opportunities;
- Work with the County through their partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Trust to fund protection and reforestation eligible lands;
- Permanently protect land without the County having to take on management or maintenance obligations; and
- Advise policymakers to ensure key natural areas are preserved and protected.

Other Educational Activities

Scenic Rivers staff and board regularly participate in community events connected to improving the environmental health of our County, such as the [Anne Arundel County Watershed Stewards Academy](#) annual meeting. Staff are also available for speaking engagements, such as conferences and civic events, and personal consultation regarding the viability of conserving your property.

[Contact us](#) to discuss presentation opportunities for your event.