

## NOTICE OF OWNERSHIP CHANGES

There are steps that can be taken before an easement is accepted, during an ownership transfer phase, and after a property has changed hands to ensure that you, the conservation easement holder, is always aware of ownership changes.

### Before:

When an easement is being drafted, two provisions should be included. To ensure that the easement travels with the deed, “require the conservation easement be referenced or incorporated in all subsequent deeds of transfer”, and require in writing that “the owner notify you when property changes hands”.<sup>6</sup> Your organization should always check and make sure the easement is correctly recorded in the land records.

### During:

Steward your easements properly. Have a strong cooperative relationship with the landowner and a timely monitoring schedule. Inspection and monitoring reports may be filed in the land records. Find out what the title search standard is and file your easement again when appropriate. Make sure they are properly signed, including both the names of the current property owner and of the easement holder.

### After:

After the property has changed hands the new owner should be treated like a new easement donor. The stewardship of the property needs to begin again. A new relationship needs to be forged. Begin by arranging a meeting to explain the easement, its restrictions, what it is about the property that requires protection, and describe the conservation goals of your organization. The property should be inspected and the report signed by the new owner. Let them know about any programs your organization provides. Are there any other easements in the surrounding area you can tell them about? Are there other owners with easements that you can introduce them to? Impart to them the feeling that they are a welcome part of your organization and try to involve them in it.<sup>7</sup>

If your organization has not had a stewarding program or your records are not current, there are ways to determine if the property has been sold. Check with the local tax assessor for the name of the current owner. Send a letter. Take the opportunity to reintroduce yourself and your organization. Start the stewarding process and watch for return mail.

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