



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

January 27, 2021

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.

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 a timely manner. Land Protection documents will be filed immediately following project file clean-up and 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 Conservation Land Transaction 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 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 kept in our files or 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.

Conservation Land Transaction Files

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

The Conservancy will complete a file audit of the archives and office files at least every ten years to ensure records are complete, and to be sure that documentary evidence, including photographic records and original documentation is not deteriorating beyond the point of usefulness. Complete audits were conducted in:

- 2010
- 2019

Pre-Closing Files:

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

Post-Closing 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 land transaction is closed, land protection staff members will assign a unique number and name to the conservation easement or fee simple transaction. The unique number starts with the type of land transaction (CE for Conservation Easement, TL for Trade Lands or FS for Fee Simple) and 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 (i.e., 031-W-2005 Baldwin Hill II). 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. (i.e., 031a-W-2005 Baldwin Hill IIa, 031b-W-2005 Baldwin Hill IIb).

Create and Label File Folders: Two hanging file folders for each conservation land transaction will be created; one for the office working files and the other for the fire-proof safe. Color-coded folders for office working files should be labeled (see Folder Labels Template) with folder name, unique number, and property name (i.e., PROJECT OVERVIEW 031-W-2005 Baldwin Hill II). Electronic file folders will be created and labeled in the same way as the working file folders. Refer to the Property Document and Filing Checklist for the folder structure and filing of documents in the office working files, fire-proof safe, and electronic files.

Document Filing: All documents within Conservation Land Transaction Folders will be filed in chronological order with newest documents on top. Electronic versions of documents will be labeled with the date first (YY-MM-DD), the property name, and the appropriate document title in capital letters (i.e., 06-06-28 Baldwin Hill II BASELINE DOCUMENTATION REPORT). Other electronic documents may also be labeled with the date, property name and document title.

Final electronic documents (typically a Word document) and an appropriately labeled scanned version of the signed document (typically a PDF document) will be kept. 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 Land Transaction project is too large to fit in the working files, a note will be placed in the appropriate folder providing directions to where the oversized document is located.

See *Property Document and Filing Checklist* for a list of documents and folder names.

Property Document and Filing Checklist

Project Name:

Please refer to the *Records Retention Procedures* for additional information. **NOTE:** The documents included in this checklist may not be required and/or applicable for all projects, and some projects may have additional documentation not included below. "N/A" may be used to denote items that do not apply to the current project, and new lines may be added to accomodate additional items, as necessary.

| Electronic Files | Office Working Files | Fire-proof Safe (Originals) | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Project Overview (ORANGE folder for Office Working Files) | | | |
| | | | Property Document and Filing Checklist (<i>THIS DOCUMENT</i>) |
| | | | Land Protection Project Checklist |
| | | | Project Selection Criteria Form |
| | | | Project Memo |
| | | N/A | Ownership/Professional History (<i>To be reprinted once per year from electronic database</i>) |
| | | N/A | Current Property Deed (<i>To be reviewed each year for Conservation Easements from county courthouse records – see Annual Property Deed Check Procedures, and replaced with new deed if ownership has changed</i>) |
| | | N/A | County GIS Inquiry Sheet (<i>To be replaced each year for Conservation Easements from county courthouse records – see Annual Property Deed Check Procedures</i>) |
| Property Info (GREEN folder for Office Working Files) | | | |
| | | | <u>Baseline Documentation Report (electronic sub-folder, binder for Office Working Files)</u> (<i>For a full list of documents included in the BDR, refer to its Table of Contents. Note that the original signed and recorded Conservation Easement will be located within the Baseline Documentation Report in the FPS</i>) |
| | | | Appraisal (<i>Original in Fire-proof Safe</i>) |
| | | | Title Report (<i>Original in Fire-proof Safe</i>) |
| | | | Title Commitment & Title Affidavit |
| | | | Title Policy |
| | | | Environmental Phase I Report (<i>Original in Fire-proof Safe</i>) |
| | | | Survey (<i>typically contained within BDR; keep large version of maps in office</i>) |
| | | N/A | <u>Active Contracts & Plans (sub-folder)</u> |
| | | N/A | Management Plans |
| | | N/A | Rights of Way |
| | | N/A | Leases |

Project Name:

| Electronic Files | Office Working Files | Fire-proof Safe (Originals) |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|

Easement (MANILA folder for Office Working Files)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | Conservation Easement (original signed pdf, and recorded/signed pdf), Restatements, Amendments |
| | | | Memorandum of Conservation Easement (to be recorded every 20 years) |
| | | | Recorded Amendments |

Project Settlement (BLUE folder for Office Working Files)

| | | | |
|--|--|-----|---|
| | | | Contemporaneous Acknowledgement |
| | | | Subordinations |
| | | | Settlement Statement |
| | | | IRS 8283/8282 |
| | | | Receipts (Baseline Contract & Baseline payment; Start work payment; Recording Fee) |
| | | N/A | |
| | | N/A | Due Diligence Invoices (Title Report, Appraisal, Survey, Environmental Assessment, Other Professional Services) |

Correspondence (YELLOW folder for Office Working Files)

| | | | |
|--|-----|-----|--|
| | N/A | N/A | Inquiry Intake Form |
| | | N/A | Meeting Notes/Memos |
| | | | Emails/Letters |
| | | | <u>Standard Letters (sub-folder)</u> |
| | | | Independent Legal Advice |
| | | | DHC Attorney Review |
| | | | Stewardship Thank You |
| | | | Compulsory Pooling |
| | | | IRS/Appraisal |
| | | | Baseline Complete |
| | | | CE Summary |
| | | | Final CE |
| | | | <u>Board/LPC (sub-folder)</u> |
| | | | Board Resolution |
| | | | Offering Form |
| | | | Land Protection Committee Minutes |
| | | | Board Meeting Minutes |
| | | | Project Criteria |
| | | | Site Evaluation |
| | | | <u>Landowner's Will (sub-folder)</u> (if a Legacy Leader or otherwise applicable) |

Project Name:

Electronic Files

Office Working
FilesFire-proof Safe
(Originals)**Grants** (MANILA folder for Office Working Files)

NOTE: 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.

| | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----------------|
| | | N/A | Application |
| | | N/A | Approval Letter |
| | | N/A | Agreement |
| | | N/A | Reports |

Publicity (RED folder for Office Working Files)

| | | | |
|--|--|-----|--------------|
| | | N/A | Articles |
| | | N/A | Press Photos |

Monitoring

NOTE: Complete Monitoring Reports (includes monitoring form, map of track, photos if applicable, and the post monitoring letter) are filed in a binder by year in Office Working and Fire-proof Safe files.

| | | | |
|--|-----|-----|--------------------------------|
| | N/A | N/A | CE Summary |
| | N/A | N/A | Maps (Aerial and Exhibit Map) |
| | N/A | N/A | Driving Directions to Property |
| | N/A | N/A | Past Monitoring (sub-folder) |
| | N/A | N/A | Sub-folder for each year |