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Insights and Applications

Factors Impacting Agricultural Landowners' Willingness to Enter into Conservation Easements: A Case Study

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Abstract

Agricultural lands offer an abundance of environmental goods and services, yet face residential development pressures. Conservation easements are frequently used to protect both productive land and environmental amenities. The landowner retains ownership, and may donate development rights or receive compensation for permanently limiting development on the property. Focus groups were conducted with agricultural landowners in Wyoming and Colorado to explore factors affecting their preferences for conservation easements. Results from the focus groups reveal that landowners have concerns about providing easements in perpetuity. They also considered public access to and loss of managerial control of their property as obstacles. Focus-group results indicated that landowners valued the provision of public

goods, such as wildlife habitat and open space, to neighboring communities, and generally felt something important would be lost to their communities if their lands were developed. Addressing landowner concerns could potentially increase the volume of easement transactions.

Keywords:

agricultural lands | conservation easements | landowners | open space

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