

CONSERVATION USE VALUATION ASSESSMENT (CUVA)

Description

Certain properties, including agricultural lands, forestlands, and environmentally sensitive areas, may be eligible for reduced property tax rates through conservation use valuation assessment (CUVA). These properties are assessed according to a combination of soil type, productivity and a reduced fair market value factor. This typically results in a significant reduction of property taxes.

Benefits to Landowner

Landowners receive a reduced ad valorem tax rate for their property.

Costs to Landowner

There are no direct costs to the landowner for entering into a CUVA covenant for forested lands or agricultural lands. There may be costs, however, for landowners entering into a CUVA covenant for environmentally sensitive land, due to the specific regulations for certification. There are significant penalties for landowners who break the covenant before the end of the 10-year period. Owners who break their conservation use covenant must pay back to the taxing authorities twice the savings they received over the life of the covenant up to the point it was breached, plus any applicable interest. If the property is sold during the covenant period, the new landowner must agree to continue the covenant or be responsible for penalties and taxes due if the covenant is breached under their ownership.

Term

Landowners must promise to maintain their lands in the designated use (agriculture, forestry, or environmentally sensitive) for 10 years. Landowners can re-enroll after 10 years if they wish to remain in CUVA.

Eligibility

Each county tax assessor's office administers the program independently, so application requirements may vary among counties. Generally, a minimum of 10 acres is required for enrollment, but some counties have recently increased the minimum acreage to 25 acres. No more than 2,000 acres can be enrolled in CUVA by any one non-industrial, private landowner. Foreign citizens and foreign corporations are not eligible to enroll. The land must be kept in its qualifying use and cannot be used for any non-agricultural commercial business.

Landowner Initiation

Contact your local county tax assessor's office for applications and enrollment information. Applications for conservation use assessment must be filed with the county board of tax assessors on or before the last day for filing ad valorem tax returns in the county (usually April 1st). For more specifics on CUVA, refer to the Georgia Department of Revenue's web page at www.etax.dor.ga.gov/PTD/cas/cuse/assmt.aspx.