



# Retention and Improvement of Overlooked Lands in Foothills County

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## Program Summary

Foothills Land Trust's (FLT's) Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Program supports private landowners who are interested in conserving and improving ecologically significant lands within Foothills County.

FLT will provide direct payments to landowners who retain and steward environmentally valuable lands that provide important ecosystem services. The program will focus on protecting natural features that contribute to healthy watersheds, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

FLT will also support eligible habitat restoration and enhancement projects by funding approved materials and providing select project-related labour.

## Program Objectives

The program supports the retention and improvement of natural features that contribute to:

- Water regulation and water quality
- Flood mitigation and erosion control
- Carbon storage and sequestration
- Fish and wildlife habitat
- Biodiversity and pollinator support
- Healthy riparian and aquatic ecosystems

## Eligible Properties

The program is designed to support privately owned properties located within Foothills County that:

- Are between 10 and 160 acres in size (larger properties may also be considered)

- Contain ecologically valuable features
- Are at risk of development or land-use conversion

**Priority will be given to lands containing:**

- Wetlands
- Riparian areas
- Native grasslands
- Native forests
- Wildlife corridors
- Fish and aquatic habitat

## **Property Assessment and Enrollment**

Applications will be reviewed using a combination of mapping tools, desktop review, and field assessment.

Selection criteria will consider:

- Ecological value and habitat quality
- Landscape connectivity
- Development or conversion risk
- Potential for long-term stewardship outcomes
- Wildlife use

## **Program Streams**

### **1. Retention Agreements**

Retention agreements support the conservation of existing high-value ecosystems. These are legal agreements that are not registered on land title.

Land use restrictions may include limitations or prohibitions on:

- Subdivision
- Construction of new structures
- Tree and vegetation removal
- Soil disturbance
- Watercourse disturbance
- Waste disposal
- Obstructions to wildlife movement, including certain fencing

## 2. Improvement Projects

Improvement funding is available for projects that enhance ecosystem health and function, including:

- Riparian restoration
- Native tree or shrub planting
- Invasive species management
- Wetland restoration
- Fencing or grazing management projects

## Payment Structure

### Retention Payments

Retention payments are based on a 4-year agreement term beginning in July 2027.

- \$50/acre per year for eligible retained lands
- Payments distributed in two equal installments:
- 50% upon signing the agreement
- 50% at the conclusion of the 4-year agreement term

FLT is also offering a base signing payment of up to \$500 per landowner to encourage participation by smaller properties with important ecological features.

### Improvement Payments

Approved improvement projects will receive reimbursement for eligible material and equipment costs required to achieve the agreed conservation objectives once work has been completed.

## Application Intake Period

**June 15 - September 30, 2026**

**Funding is limited** and applications will be reviewed on a **first-come, first-served basis**. Early applications are encouraged. Please include relevant photos of the property with your submission. Maps are also helpful, if available. Applications containing supporting materials may receive higher consideration.

Click [here](#) to download an application form

For questions, email: [executivedirector@foothillslandtrust.org](mailto:executivedirector@foothillslandtrust.org)

Or call: 403.931.3252

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