



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands



State Highlights in Conservation: Pennsylvania

Profile of State Program(s)

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture – Farmland Preservation Program: The Farmland Preservation Program was established in 1988 to curb the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses. The program allows state and local governments to purchase conservation easements (i.e. development rights) from owners of valuable farmland. Easements may be purchased on farms of at least 50 acres in size, or 35 acres if the county program elects. A parcel may be preserved if it is as small as 10 acres and adjacent to existing preserved farmland. At least half of a given tract must be harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land, and contain 50 percent land capability classes I-IV. An agricultural land preservation board must be established in counties that have chosen to have an Easement Purchase Program. There are approximately 57 counties that have established boards.

The program is funded through an annual allotment of cigarette tax revenue of \$20.485 million as well as Growing Greener II bond funds. The Bureau of Farmland Preservation oversees the program. The American Farmland Trust has recognized Pennsylvania's farmland program as the leader in protecting farmland across the country.

Pennsylvania Growing Greener I – Environmental Stewardship Fund: The Growing Green initiative was signed into law in 1999 and dedicated nearly \$650 million in bond funds over five years to preserve farmland and conserve open space. In June 2002, the Governor reauthorized the Growing Greener program, doubling the funding and extending it through 2012. This extension was funded by a permanent dedication of a \$4.25/ton municipal waste disposal fee and increased the dollar commitment from \$645 million to \$1.3 billion.

The program's mission is to conserve farmland and open space; maintain state parks; clean up abandoned mines and restore watersheds; provide funds for recreational trails and local parks; help communities address land use; and provide new and upgraded water and sewer systems.

Funds are split between four state agencies: the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority. There has not been another vote to extend appropriations from the municipal waste disposal fee beyond 2012. As of January 2013, there is remaining funding for an awards cycle scheduled for September 2013.

Pennsylvania Growing Greener II: In May 2005, voters approved the Growing Greener II statewide bond of \$625 million, nearly half of which is dedicated to farmland and open space conservation. The bond funds were spread out over six years to support projects within the Department of Environmental Protection (\$230 million), Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (\$217.5 million), the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (\$80 million), the Department of Community and Economic Development (\$50 million), the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (\$27.5 million) and the Pennsylvania Game Commission (\$20 million). Growing Greener II bond funds expired in 2012.

IMPORTANT – Farmland preservation projects funded through Growing Greener II are not included in the dollar and acreage amounts for Growing Greener below. These projects are included in the farmland program.

Pennsylvania Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund: In 1993 voters passed the Key 93 initiative, which was originally funded by a 5-

year, \$50 million bond in addition to 15 percent of the state's share of the realty transfer tax. The program now relies solely on the realty transfer tax revenue.

The program focuses on land acquisition and preservation of nature preserves, habitats and parks. Grants are made through the Keystone, Recreation, Parks and Conservation Fund. Funds are allocated to The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (65%), Pennsylvania Historic & Museum Commission (13%), Pennsylvania Department of Education (4%), and the State System of Higher Education (18%). Revenue allocated to DCNR is used for rehabilitation and upgrades to state park and forestry infrastructure, rails to trails projects, river protection and conservation projects, grants for local recreation projects and to Land Trusts for natural areas and open space planning and acquisition. Spending figures published here are solely for land acquisition projects through DCNR.

Pennsylvania Forestry and Parks: Funding for land acquisition for Pennsylvania's forests and parks occurs in a variety of ways, including Growing Greener funds (see above), oil and gas lease funds, Key '93 funds, as well as through the state Heritage Areas Program. In 1955, the General Assembly created the Oil and Gas Lease Fund that took money from the sale of nonrenewable oil and gas resources owned by the state. These funds were set aside to reinvest into public land conservation and recreation projects on state park and forestlands.

Substantial State Investment

Pennsylvania uses direct appropriations from the General Fund, a portion of the real estate transfer tax, and a state tipping fee to fund land conservation. Until recently, Pennsylvania also used bonds to support land conservation initiatives.

In 1993 voters passed the Key 93 initiative, which was originally funded by a 5-year, \$50 million bond in addition to 15 percent of the state's share of the realty transfer tax. Key 93 focused on land acquisition and preservation of nature preserves, habitats and parks.

The Growing Greener initiative was signed into law in 1999 and dedicated nearly \$650 million in bond funds over five years to preserve farmland and conserve open space. In June 2002, the Governor reauthorized the Growing Greener program, doubling the funding and extending it through 2012.

This extension is funded by a permanent dedication of a \$4.25/ton municipal waste disposal fee. The program's mission is to conserve farmland and open space; maintain state parks; clean up abandoned mines and restore watersheds; provide funds for recreational trails and local parks; help communities address land use; and provide new and upgraded water and sewer systems.

In May 2005, voters approved the Growing Greener II statewide bond of \$625 million, nearly half of which is dedicated to farmland and open space conservation.

In February 2012, the PA State Legislature approved Act 13 of 2012, which increases revenue from the Oil & Gas Lease Fund for conservation and establishes a new drilling impact fee on natural gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale. Revenue will be allocated to select state agencies and local governments that have passed an ordinance imposing the fee. Sixty percent of funds will be dispersed to local governments and 40 percent to the Marcellus Legacy Fund for statewide programs. Funds will be used for land acquisition as well as for restoration and improvement projects. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission administers the collection and disbursement of the fee.

On an annual basis, \$35 million from the Oil & Gas Lease Fund will be allocated to Growing Greener I (the Environmental Stewardship Fund). The impact fee revenues are expected to generate approximately \$180 million in the first year and increase to more than \$300 million by 2015.

State Incentive for Local Conservation Funding

The Community Conservation Partnership Program offers three grant programs for acquisition of land for parks and open space. The Community Grant Program is offered strictly to municipalities. DCNR provides grant funding at a level not to exceed 50 percent of eligible costs. The Rivers Conservation Grant Program is offered to municipalities and appropriate/authorized organizations. DCNR provides grant funding at a level not to exceed 50 percent of the eligible costs. Projects may include rivers conservation acquisition projects for the purchase of land for rivers conservation purposes.

Public-Private Partnerships

Land Trust Grants provide 50 percent funding for acquisition and planning of open space and natural areas, which face imminent loss. Lands must be open to public use and priority is given to habitat for threatened species. Eligible applicants are nonprofit land trusts and conservancies.

Local Financing Enabled

In Pennsylvania, there is uniform enabling authority for municipalities to adopt a real estate transfer tax or earned income tax, which accounts for the substantial municipal land conservation. Local governments in Pennsylvania also have the authority to issue general obligation bonds for land conservation. There are no statutory debt limits on the amount of voter-approved debt.

Local Programs Included

Local conservation programs include:

- Adams County, PA
- Chester County, PA
- Lehigh County, PA
- Monroe County, PA
- Montgomery County, PA
- Northampton County, PA
- Pike County, PA

- York County, PA

Visit www.landvote.org for detailed information on these programs.

Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Pennsylvania include:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. National Park Service – LWCF Stateside
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2011. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at jessica.welch@tpl.org.

www.tpl.org

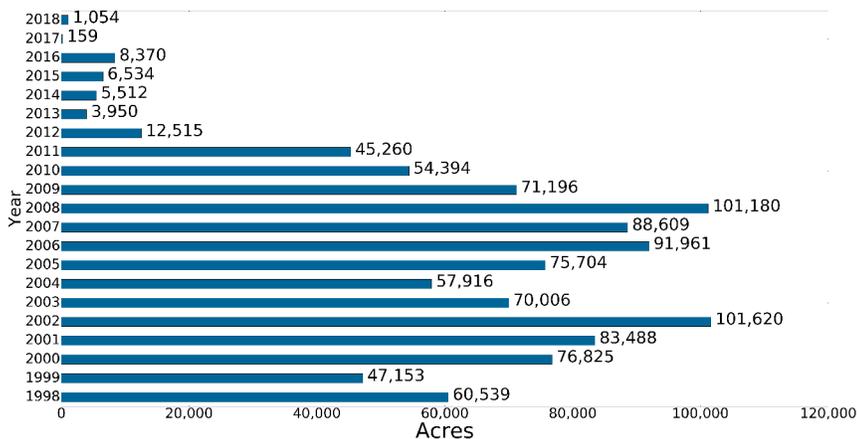
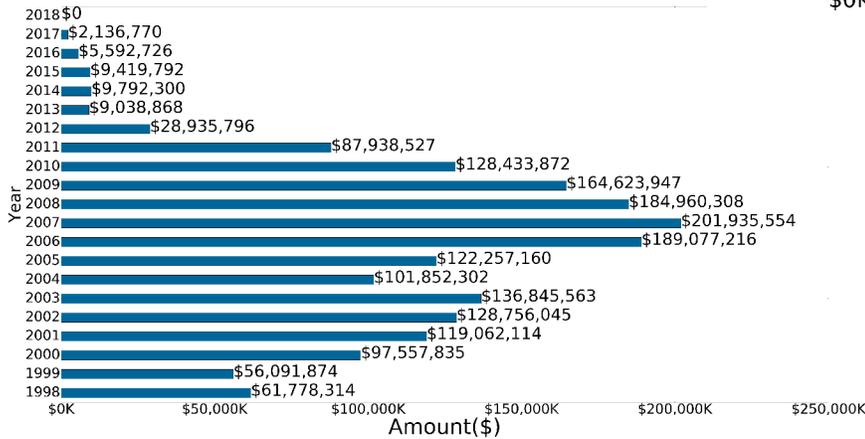
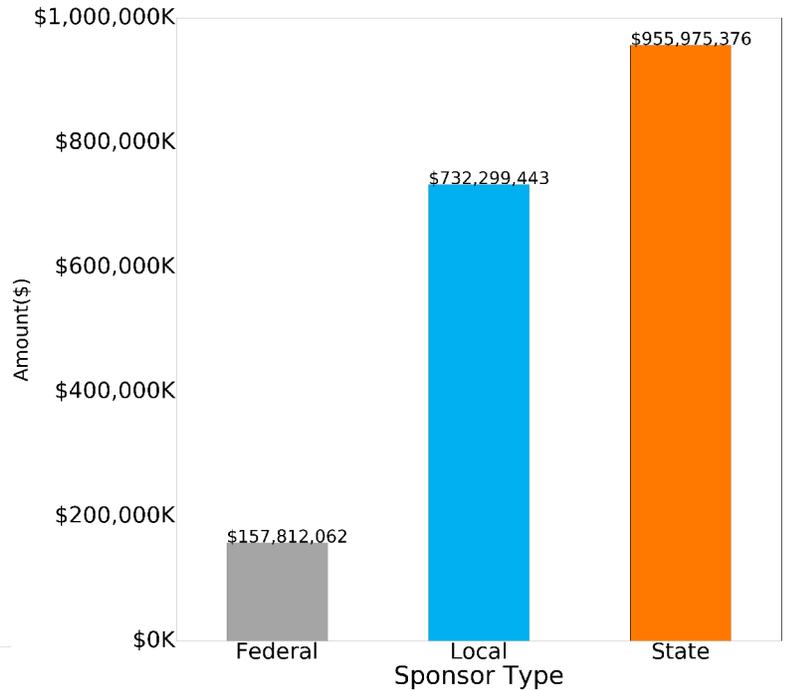
www.conservationalmanac.org

State Conservation Report Pennsylvania



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands

November 20, 2020



The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.