Winning Land Conservation Ballot Measures

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Lewisburg, Pennsylvania
TPL’s Conservation Finance Program

• Helps government leaders create the funding to protect those lands that matter to their communities

• Provides technical assistance based on skills developed from work across the country coupled with extensive local research
**Conservation Finance: 84% of Measures Passed!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of TPL Measures</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Conservation Funds Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>$0.6 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$0.2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$4.1 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$0.9 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>$3.8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$0.7 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>$5.3 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$2.4 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$0.8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>$4.8 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$0.54 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>403</strong></td>
<td><strong>339</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25 billion</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LandVote Ballot Measures 1998 – 2006
Who is Creating Funding?

Since 1996, Voters Have Approved 1,399 Open Space Ballot Measures, Authorizing over $38 Billion in Conservation Funding*

Analysis of Land Vote data by Peter Szabo for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

*Note: This does not include legislatively authorized spending programs, such as those in Florida, New York, and Maryland, which were not submitted directly to voters
Why Local Conservation Finance is Essential

- Local funding is the foundation of any long-term land conservation effort
- Competition for external funding is fierce and may not be reliable due to ever-changing state and federal budget circumstances
- Local funding is essential to successfully competing for external funding
Conservation Finance Ballot Measures

Summary of National Trends

- Bipartisan -- Red State/Blue State popularity
- Not subject to economic fluctuations
- Broad support base: environmental and business community
Key Variables In Measure Design

• Funding Source
• Amount (and duration)
• Purposes/Uses of Funds
• Timing (choice of election date)
• Management/Accountability
Critical Steps for a Successful Ballot Measure

Step 1  Feasibility Research
Step 2  Public Opinion Survey
Step 3  Measure Design
Step 4  Ballot Language
Step 5  Campaign
Step 1 – Feasibility Research

Conservation priorities
Finance options
Fiscal capacity
Political profile
Election history
Election requirements
Ballot language requirements
Opposition analysis
Best practices
Step 2 – Public Opinion Survey

Issue Identification
Pollster Selection
Questionnaire Design
Sample Design
Analysis and Presentation
Polling Overview - Methodology

- Random - Not self selected
- Sample - Only a slice of the target population
- Voters - People who are likely to vote
Polling Overview - Why Polling?

• Reality Test
• Perspective
• Message
• Messenger
Polling Overview - Polling Goals

• Affordable Proposal
• Compelling Purposes
• Accountability Provisions
Support for the bond issue is overwhelming when voters are given additional information about how the bond funds will be used, with water related issues the strongest with voters. As shown below in the blue boxes, battleground voters are as supportive of the bond issue as voters overall. This strong favorability extends across the County, across age groups, across partisanship, across length of residence and across income groups. And, little difference exists between definite voters and probable voters.

- **Protect drinking water sources.**
  - Oppose: 10%
  - Favor: 88%

- **Protect the water quality of rivers, lakes and streams.**
  - Oppose: 12%
  - Favor: 86%

- **Protect wildlife habitat.**
  - Oppose: 18%
  - Favor: 80%

- **Protect farmland from development.**
  - Oppose: 19%
  - Favor: 79%

- **Protect existing open space from development.**
  - Oppose: 20%
  - Favor: 76%

- **Provide new outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, walking and biking trails.**
  - Oppose: 23%
  - Favor: 74%

- **Provide new parkland.**
  - Oppose: 34%
  - Favor: 63%
When presented with a series of arguments that proponents might use in a campaign, votes overall express strong agree with each statement, as do battleground voters as shown in the blue boxes below. This strong agree extends across all geographic areas of the district, among both men and women, among all age groups, across partisan lines and across all income groups.

- **We have a responsibility to preserve our land, water, wildlife and natural heritage for our children and grandchildren.**
  - Agree: 89%
  - Disagree: 11%

- **Protecting farmland and open space plays an important role in protecting and improving the quality of life in Adams County.**
  - Agree: 82%
  - Disagree: 17%

- **With land prices increasing and the amount of undeveloped land shrinking, we must act now to protect the little remaining open space for future generations.**
  - Agree: 79%
  - Disagree: 20%

- **$17.32 a year is a small price to pay to protect the last remaining farmland, open space and parkland in Adams County.**
  - Agree: 71%
  - Disagree: 27%
Step 3 – Program Recommendations

Funding Source
Amount (and duration)
Purposes/Uses of Funds
Management/Accountability
Timing (choice of election date)
Step 4 – Ballot Language

Legal Constraints
Best Practices
Integrate Survey Findings
Negotiate with public attorney, bond counsel
Interpretation/ballot pamphlet arguments
Shall Adams county taxes be increased $5,000,000...by a countywide sales tax of one-fifth of one percent...for fifteen years...for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, equipping, operating and maintaining open space and parks and recreational facilities (the “Open Space Tax”): and shall all or a portion of the revenues from such tax be deposited in a special fund to be known as the “Adams County Open Space Sales Tax Capital Improvement Fund” and utilized solely to provide the capital improvements authorized in Adams County Resolution No. 92-2 or for repayment of bonds: and shall all revenues from such tax and any earnings on such revenues...constitute a voter-approved revenue change: and shall such tax be imposed, collected, administered and enforced as provided in Adams County Resolution No. 93-1 as amended by Adams County Resolution No. 97-2?

Lost 61% to 39%
1999 Ballot Language

Shall Adams County **taxes** be increased $5.5 million, and whatever amounts are raised annually thereafter, by a countywide sales **tax** of one-fifth of one percent (20 cents on a $100 purchase), effective January 1, 2000, and automatically expiring after 7 years, with the proceeds to be used solely to preserve **open space** in order to **limit sprawl**, to **preserve farmland**, to **protect wildlife areas**, **wetlands**, **rivers and streams**, and for **creating, improving and maintaining parks** and **recreation facilities**, in accordance with Resolution 99-1, with all expenditures **based on recommendations of a citizen advisory commission** and **subject to an annual independent audit** and shall all revenues from any such **tax** and any earnings thereon, constitute a voter approved revenue change.

**Passed 60% to 40%**
Ballot Language Checklist

Meets Legal Standards
Includes Benefits
Presents Costs in Understandable Ways
Includes Accountability Provisions
Includes a Title
Step 5 – Campaign

Campaign committee
Fundraising
Endorsements
Communications (media)
  • Earned media
  • Literature
  • Direct mail
  • Paid media
Get out the vote
Resources available
Contacts

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