



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg

RE: Summary of Key Findings from Pennsylvania Statewide Public Opinion Survey

DATE: June 2, 2014

The Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg recently completed a statewide survey of 606 Pennsylvanians to assess public support for state funding to conserve and protect open space, clean water, natural areas, wildlife habitats, parks, historic sites, forests, and farms. The survey results showed **overwhelming public support throughout the state and among all demographic groups for both continuing existing dedicated state funding for conservation, as well as increasing state funding for land and water conservation, even if that meant a small increase in taxes.**¹

The survey questions were commissioned by The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land.

Survey respondents were asked the following question:

“Do you think that state funds dedicated to preserving farmland and open space, providing parks and trails, and protecting rivers and streams should continue to be used for these purposes?”

Overall, the vast majority of Pennsylvanians surveyed (97.4%) think that state funds dedicated to preserving farmland and open space, providing parks and trails, and protecting rivers and streams should continue to be used for these purposes. This represents an increase over the 92.1% who agreed when the same question was polled in 2012.

- Because almost all of the respondents noted agreement with this statement, there were few differences among demographic variables or regions of the state.
- Support cut across political affiliations identified by respondents, with 97.2% of Republicans, 96.8% of Democrats and 97.7% of Independents in agreement.

In addition, survey respondents were asked the following question:

“Would you support increasing state funds to conserve and protect open space, clean water, natural areas, wildlife habitats, parks, historic sites, forests, and farms, even if it would cost the average household \$10 more annually?”

¹ **METHODOLOGY:** A total of 606 telephone interviews with adult Pennsylvanians were conducted between March 17 and April 16, 2014. The Penn State Poll used a dual frame design consisting of a representative landline sample with a cell phone sample supplement. Project activity was directed by Stephanie L. Wehnau, Director of the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

Over three-quarters (82.6%) of respondents would support increasing state funds to conserve and protect open space, clean water, natural areas, wildlife habitats, parks, historic sites, forests, and farms, even if it would cost the average household \$10 more annually. This represents an increase over the 77.7% support found when the same question was polled in 2012.

- Women were more likely than men to support increasing funds for these efforts (86.3% versus 78.8%).
- At least three-quarters of respondents in every region of the state were supportive of this statement.
- Respondents identifying themselves as Democrats were more likely than those identifying as Republicans to support increasing funds (89.9% versus 73.8%).

When presented with a choice, nearly two-thirds of the Pennsylvanians surveyed (62.9%) thought that money from existing leases for gas drilling in publicly-owned state forests should continue to be dedicated to land, water, and wildlife conservation, while over one-quarter of respondents (26.8%) thought this money should be used for general needs in the state budget.

- Majorities of all respondents who identified themselves as Republicans (59.5%), Democrats (64.9%) and Independents (70.7 %) chose to dedicate funds to conservation rather than the general budget, as did not less than 59% of respondents from every region of the state.
- White respondents were more likely than black or African American respondents to choose that money from existing leases for gas drilling in publicly-owned state forests should continue to be dedicated to land, water, and wildlife conservation (63.4% versus 43.5%).

Overall, the results of the survey show that Pennsylvania residents clearly value the state's natural resources. Results showed overwhelming public support for both continuing existing dedicated state funding for conservation, as well as increasing state funding for land and water conservation, even if that meant a small increase in taxes. By a more than two-to-one margin, respondents chose to dedicate funds from existing leases on state forests to conservation rather than use them for general needs in the state budget.