



Voters Invest in Open Space

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LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

VOTERS INVEST IN OPEN SPACE: 1999 REFERENDA RESULTS

Martin Buckley



The Aiken County Open Land Trust teamed up with federal and local government agencies, the University of Georgia, and an elementary school to preserve this 11-acre addition to the Carolina Bay Nature Preserve in Aiken, South Carolina.

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) is the umbrella organization for local and regional land trusts— nonprofit organizations that work with private landowners to protect open space, primarily by purchasing or accepting donations of land or conservation easements. LTA provides information, training and resources that help land trusts conserve land.

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LAND FOR MAINE'S FUTURE

by Angus S. King, Jr., Governor of Maine

Maine has always been a land of vast forests, beautiful coastlines, and countless rivers and lakes. These have been critical to the character of our communities, the economic health of the region and our quality of life. For years, we assumed that they would always be there, and always be open to the public. But Mainers have seen the landscape changing around them, threatening our traditional uses.

Two years ago, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and The Nature Conservancy urged me to put a land conservation initiative before the state's voters. It was the right thing to do, but we knew it would only succeed with the help of the broadest possible coalition. Never before has there been such cooperation between business, environmental, hunting and fishing, recreational, labor, and social groups. They all came together because of a shared concern about the future of Maine. In November, nearly 70% of the voters showed their commitment to the future by passing the largest environmental bond in our state's history. These funds are now available to purchase public land and protect undeveloped coastal islands, important urban green spaces, farmland, and access to our rivers, lakes and trails.

I can think of no nobler public service than working hard to do things for future generations—people we will never know. And that was the spirit of this campaign.

Someday, a hundred years from now, a family is going to canoe across Moosehead Lake and have a picnic on the shores. We'll be long forgotten and no one will remember that a public land bond passed in 1999. But they are going to be grateful to have the opportunity to enjoy such a special place. And that is what this was all about—saving special places for our children, and theirs.

I am proud to have been involved in this campaign and grateful to those organizations that had the vision and commitment to support this important initiative.

Chris Hamilton



The Land for Maine's Future program purchased the 12,000-acre Bold Coast Reserve with help from the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and The Conservation Fund.

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR OPEN SPACE—A SECOND MEASURE

by *Russell Shay*

Director of Public Policy, Land Trust Alliance

If, as the saying goes, “all politics is local,” then local elections should be the truest measure of the nation’s political pulse. The 1999 local elections continued a theme evident in 1998—that protecting open space is an issue of growing importance to Americans.

The chart that follows shows the results of 102 local elections to devote public funding to protect open space. Of these, 90% (92) won approval, many by substantial margins. The elections committed more than \$1.8 billion to open space protection¹.

A year ago, the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) published a list showing that in 1998, voters approved 124 of 148 (84%) open space funding referenda.² Because 1999 was an “off-year” for elections, with no Congressional or gubernatorial contests to draw voters to the polls, we thought far fewer jurisdictions would hold elections. We were surprised to find more than 100 referenda on the ballot, and even more surprised to find that an even higher percentage of them passed than in 1998.

Our list only includes referenda committing public funding to protect open space. Voters passed property taxes, sales taxes, real estate excise taxes, and general obligation bonds to protect the landscapes around them.

These were not the only signs of the growing importance of open space issues. Controlling the pace or place of development was a major issue in many elections for local political offices, and 1999 also saw many new commitments by state and local governments to open space funding that did not require referenda, such as Illinois Governor George Ryan’s July 21st signing of a bill giving communities \$160 million to buy open space, or Montgomery County, Maryland’s announcement of a \$100 million open space program.

More evidence can be found in public opinion polls conducted in 1999.

The Luntz Research Companies³ found that 88% of voters nationwide agreed that “we must act now or we will lose many special places, and if we wait, what is destroyed or lost cannot be replaced.” Asked what use should be made of any new federal off-budget trust funds, voters chose protecting open spaces over using the money for highways or airports (45% to 37% to 7%).

Julie A. Roszkowiak



Volunteers are helping the Liberty Prairie Conservancy restore streamside forests in Liberty Township’s Oak Openings Nature Preserve in northern Illinois.

A Mellman Group poll⁴ found that 32% of voters identified protecting natural lands as “one of the most important things” state and local government should focus on, putting it at about the same level as “improving education.” Only “fighting crime” generated a significantly higher level of positive responses. Reducing taxes and building roads each generated far less support than “protecting natural lands.”

Princeton Survey Research Associates⁵ found that 26% of suburban voters mentioned sprawl-related issues as the most important problem facing the community they live in. In the Denver area, this poll found that an astonishing 60% of residents named sprawl as the biggest local problem.

As remarkable as those responses are, the most important polling in a democracy is that done in the voting booth. And where voters are asked to protect open space, the record shows that the voters approve.

Marin Agricultural Land Trust



The Marin Agricultural Land Trust purchased a conservation easement on the Richard Respini ranch in Marshall, California, with funding passed by California voters in 1988. This is one piece of more than 6,000 contiguous acres of working farms that have been permanently protected from development.

- 1 Where a measure approved bonding, we scored it at the face value of the bond, even though the public is committing to pay interest on the bonds as well. Where there was no bond amount (as in most tax measures) we counted the entire revenue stream. Where tax increases had no term or sunset, we did not assign a total value to the measure. Because there were so many of these, the total funding devoted to open space protection by these measures actually will far exceed \$1.8 billion.
- 2 At the time of the publication of our 1998 election results, we estimated the total value of the public funds approved in those elections as \$5.28 billion. Subsequently, the Florida legislature used the authority given to it by the state's 1998 referendum to enact a \$3 billion bonding program, bringing the total commitment to more than \$8.28 billion.
- 3 *American Views on Land & Water Conservation*, Summer, 1999, The Luntz Research Companies
- 4 *Poll Results: Support for Land Protection*, July 14, 1999—see http://www.igc.org/tpl/poll/poll_results.html
- 5 *National Survey for the Pew Center for Civic Journalism*—see http://www.pewcenter.org/doingcj/research/r_ST2000nat1.html

1999 OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION BALLOT INITIATIVES

102 Referenda in 22 states; 92 winning referenda (90%); 10 losing referenda (10%); total funds \$1,832,993,000

State	Jurisdiction	Date	For	Against	Description	Tax Rate	Total Funds
AZ	Glendale	11/2	68%	32%	Bond issue for open space preservation and trails		\$53,700,000
AZ	Phoenix	9/7	80%	20%	Increase sales tax for open space acquisition	1/10 cent	\$256,000,000
AZ	Scottsdale	9/11	77%	23%	Bond issue for park acquisition		\$200,000,000
CA	San Carlos	11/2	76%	24%	Property tax surcharge for parks \$6/parcel		\$1,200,000
CO	Adams Co.	11/2	60%	40%	Sales tax increase for open space acquisition	1/5th cent	\$38,500,000
CO	Boulder Co.	11/2	69%	31%	Extend sales tax for open space for 10 years	1/4th cent	\$123,500,000
CO	Clear Creek Co.	11/2	51%	49%	Open space bond for land acquisition		\$1,500,000
CO	Clear Creek Co.	11/2	52%	48%	Property tax increase to establish open space fund	1 mill	
CO	Larimer Co.	11/2	60%	40%	Extend existing sales tax 15 years to support bonds for open space program	1/4th cent	\$54,000,000
CO	Pitkin Co.	11/2	69%	31%	Extend and increase property tax, authorize bonding for open space and trails		\$12,000,000
CO	Summit Co.	11/2	65%	35%	Property tax to fund bonds for open space purchases		\$30,000,000
CO	Brighton	11/2	66%	34%	Reallocate sales tax for open space preservation, parks, and recreation		
CO	Erie	11/2	50%	50%	Increase sales tax and create \$5 million bond authority for open space	1/4th cent	
CO	Louisville	11/2	77%	23%	Allow use of excess tax revenues for open space preservation		
CO	Lafayette	11/2	64%	36%	Increase sales and use tax for open space preservation	1/4th cent	\$750,000
CO	Nederland	11/2	61%	39%	Authorize 309-acre open space acquisition		
CO	Nederland	11/2	71%	29%	Allow use of excess tax revenues for open space preservation		
CT	Cheshire	11/2	65%	35%	Open space acquisition bond		\$500,000
CT	Danbury	11/2	79%	21%	Portion of larger bond devoted to open space and recreation investments		\$2,800,000
CT	Glastonbury	11/2	74%	26%	Bond for acquisition of land and conservation easements		\$3,000,000
CT	Rocky Hill	11/2	65%	35%	Bond for open space acquisition		\$1,000,000
CT	Woodstock	5/3	100%	0%	Creates land acquisition fund (town meeting vote)		
DE	Newark	11/2	74%	26%	Property tax increase for open space acquisition	.05mill	\$4,200,000
FL	Sarasota Co.	3/16	65%	35%	Dedicate property tax increase for land acquisition, protection, and management	0.025 mill	
FL	Sarasota Co.	3/16	68%	32%	Bond for land acquisition		\$53,000,000
FL	Miami Beach	11/2	87%	13%	Bond issue for parks and public beaches		\$24,000,000
GA	Clarke Co.	11/2	53%	47%	Portion of sales tax increase to be used for land acquisition	10% of 1 cent tax	\$10,000,000
ID	Blaine Co.	5/27	50%	50%	Bond for purchase of conservation easements		
IL	Kane Co.	4/13	66%	34%	Bond issue for new Forest Preserve District		\$70,000,000
IL	Lake Co.	4/13	66%	34%	Bond issue for new Forest Preserve District		\$55,000,000
IL	Will Co.	4/13	57%	43%	Bond issue for new Forest Preserve District		\$70,000,000
IL	Glen Ellyn	4/1	56%	44%	Bond issue to purchase a specific property		\$3,500,000
IL	Homer Twp.	4/13	63%	37%	Bond issue for open space preservation		\$8,000,000
IL	Libertyville	2/23	47%	53%	Bond issue for open space preservation		
MA	Northboro	4/26	46%	54%	Portion of additional real estate tax to finance open space purchases	1 per cent	
MA	Quincy	11/2	78%	22%	Acquire 67-acre parcel for open space preservation		
ME	Statewide	11/2	69%	31%	Bond issue to acquire lands and conservation easements		\$50,000,000
MI	Ann Arbor	11/2	64%	36%	Property tax for park acquisition		\$8,000,000
NC	Mecklenburg Co.	11/2	69%	31%	Bond issue for greenway acquisition and park improvement		\$52,000,000
NC	Mecklenburg Co.	11/2	61%	39%	Portion of bond issue to be used for open space protection		\$220,000,000
NC	Asheville	5/12	47%	53%	\$18 million bond issue for parks and greenways		
NH	Northfield	8/31	87%	13%	Bond issue to acquire 85 acres		\$375,000
NJ	Hunterdon Co.	11/2	67%	33%	Property tax increase to establish open space trust fund	0.3 mill	
NJ	Warren Co.	11/2	59%	41%	Property tax increase for open space trust fund	0.2 mill	
NJ	Allamuchy Twp.	11/2	73%	27%	Property tax increase for open space trust fund	0.2 mill	
NJ	Atlantic Highlands Bor.	11/2	72%	28%	Property tax increase for open space, parks and historic preservation	0.1 mill	\$30,000
NJ	Berlin Twp.	11/2	57%	43%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.4 mill	
NJ	Bethlehem Twp.	11/2	61%	39%	Property tax increase for open space, farmland preservation, parks and recreation	0.2 mill	
NJ	Bordentown Twp.	11/2	56%	44%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.3 mill	
NJ	Byram Twp.	11/2	73%	27%	Property tax increase for open space fund	0.2 mill	
NJ	Chatham Twp.	11/2	59%	41%	Property tax increase for open space preservation and parks and recreation	0.1 mill	
NJ	Colts Neck	11/2	36%	64%	\$2.5 million for land acquisition for open space and recreation		
NJ	Cranbury Twp.	11/2	84%	16%	Dedicate portion of property tax for open space and farmland preservation	0.3 mill	
NJ	Franklin Twp.	11/2	64%	36%	Property tax increase for open space/farmland preservation trust	0.1 mill	

State	Jurisdiction	Date	For	Against	Description	Tax Rate	Total Funds
NJ	Frelinghuysen Twp.	11/2	66%	34%	Property tax increase for farmland preservation	0.1 mill	
NJ	Green Brook Twp.	11/2	53%	47%	Property tax increase for open space, parks and historic preservation	0.15 mill	
NJ	Hanover Twp.	11/2	63%	37%	Dedicate portion of property tax for open space preservation and parks and recreation		
NJ	Hopatcong Twp.	11/2	51%	49%	Dedicate portion of property tax to create open space trust fund	0.1 mill	
NJ	Howell Twp.	11/2	80%	20%	Property tax increase to establish Open Space and Farmland Trust Fund	0.1 mill	
NJ	Lawrence Twp.	11/2	68%	32%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.1 mill	
NJ	Lincoln Park Bor.	11/2	48%	52%	Would dedicate property tax increase for an open space trust fund	0.2 mill	
NJ	Logan Twp.	11/2	65%	35%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.1 mill	
NJ	Lopatcong Twp.	11/2	75%	25%	Property tax increase for open space trust fund	0.1 mill	
NJ	Manalapan Twp.	11/2	57%	43%	Property tax increase for open space preservation and related projects	0.1 mill	
NJ	Millstone Twp.	11/2	62%	38%	Property tax increase for open space, farmland preservation, and parks	0.2 mill	
NJ	Montville Twp.	11/2	67%	33%	10-year increase in existing property tax for open space preservation	0.25 mill	\$5,328,000
NJ	No. Brunswick Twp.	11/2	71%	29%	Property tax increase for open space and farmland preservation	0.3 mill	
NJ	No. Hanover Twp.	11/2	75%	25%	Reallocate property tax for purchase of conservation easements	0.2 mill	
NJ	Oceanport Bor.	11/2	67%	33%	Dedicate portion of property tax to establish Open Space Preservation Fund		
NJ	Old Tappan Bor.	11/2	72%	28%	Property tax increase for open space acquisition and conservation projects	0.1 mill	\$300,000
NJ	Pittsgrove Twp.	11/2	59%	41%	\$15,000 for farmland preservation to be raised by 2000		\$15,000
NJ	Plainsboro Twp.	11/2	79%	21%	Dedicate portion of property tax for open space and farmland preservation	0.1 mill	
NJ	Pohatcong Twp.	11/2	65%	35%	Property tax increase for open space and farmland preservation	0.3 mill	
NJ	Randolph Twp.	11/2	78%	22%	Extend property tax for open space trust fund	0.2 mill	
NJ	Roseland Bor.	11/2	62%	38%	Property tax increase for open space, historic preservation, and parks	0.2 mill	
NJ	Scotch Plains Twp.	11/2	51%	49%	Property tax increase for open space preservation and parks and recreation	0.2 mill	
NJ	So. Orange Village Twp.	11/2	76%	24%	Dedicate portion of property tax for open space, historic preservation, and parks	0.1 mill	
NJ	Springfield Twp.	11/2	78%	22%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.2 mill	
NJ	Tewksbury Twp.	11/2	66%	34%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.3 mill	
NJ	W. Amwell Twp.	11/2	63%	37%	Property tax increase for preservation of open space, farmland, and historic preservation	0.2 mill	\$45,000
NJ	Westampton Twp.	11/2	62%	38%	Property tax increase for trust fund to purchase conservation easements	0.2 mill	
NY	Suffolk Co.	11/2	55%	45%	Extend sales tax for protection of drinking water supplies	1/4th cent	\$140,000,000
NY	Brookhaven	11/2	70%	30%	Bond issue for open space and drinking water protection		\$10,000,000
NY	Southold	11/2	58%	42%	Bond issue for purchasing property and development rights		\$2,000,000
OH	Franklin Co.	5/4	59%	41%	Property tax for prairie, forest, and wetland acquisition	0.65 mill	\$125,000,000
OH	Columbus	11/2	68%	32%	Bond issue for parks and recreation		\$59,400,000
OH	Symmes Twp.	11/2	63%	37%	Renew property tax increment for parks and green space	0.185 mill	
OH	Twinsburg	11/2	69%	31%	Bond issue for open space acquisition		\$10,500,000
PA	Buckingham Twp.	11/2	85%	15%	Bond issue for farmland/open space preservation		\$9,500,000
PA	E. Marlborough	11/2	67%	33%	Property tax increase to buy open space	0.2 mill	
PA	E. Rockhill Twp.	5/18	61%	39%	Income tax increase to fund open space acquisition	0.125 per cent	
PA	Half Moon Twp.	11/2	57%	43%	Property tax increase for farmland protection	2 mills	
PA	Logan	11/2	65%	35%	Property tax increase to establish open space trust fund	0.1 mill	
PA	Plumbstead	5/1	48%	52%	Dedicate income tax increment for open space preservation	0.5 per cent	
PA	Solebury Twp.	11/2	90%	10%	Bond issue for open space acquisition		\$10,000,000
PA	W. Vincent Twp.	11/2	40%	60%	Property tax increase for open space preservation	0.56 mill	
PA	Willistown Twp.	11/2	80%	20%	Income tax increase to fund open space acquisition	0.125 per cent	\$5,000,000
RI	Barrington	9/28	81%	19%	Bond issue for open space and recreation		\$1,000,000
VT	Stowe	3/2	66%	34%	Bond issue for open space acquisition		\$350,000
WA	San Juan Co.	11/2	73%	27%	Extend real-estate excise tax for land acquisition and conservation	1 per cent	\$18,000,000
WA	Lakewood	11/2	47%	53%	\$9.9 million bond issue for parks, recreation, and land acquisition		
WI	Dane Co.	4/6	76%	24%	Bond issue to protect park lands		\$30,000,000

Is your community having an open space referendum? Please e-mail policy@lta.org.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources purchased this land from the Hancock Timber Resource Group with state funds and a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It became part of the state's Elk River Natural Area Preserve, which protects habitat for bald eagles, elk, salmon, shorebirds, and migratory waterfowl.



Hancock Timber Resource Group



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