



*Protecting the Forests of the*  
**CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED**  
*by Enhancing Local Land Conservation Funding*

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

## FORESTED LANDS ARE THE MOST BENEFICIAL FOR WATER QUALITY

People need forests. They clean our air and are the most efficient of all land types in preserving water quality. From their headwaters all the way to the Chesapeake Bay, the streams and rivers of the Chesapeake Bay watershed stay cleaner when they run through forests. Unfortunately, during the past 25 years the watershed has been losing more than 100 acres of forest every day.

To confront this challenge, the Chesapeake Executive Council—which includes the governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; the mayor of the District of Columbia; and the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—signed the 2007 Forest Conservation Directive.

## FOREST CONSERVATION GOALS REQUIRE ACTION BY ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

The directive sets a goal of protecting 695,000 forested acres with the highest value in preserving water quality by 2020. This high-priority land is also the land most threatened by development. In identifying specific actions to meet the directive’s goals, the Chesapeake council noted that local governments must significantly boost funding for land conservation, and established a goal of encouraging them to create dedicated sources for land conservation funding.

In May 2010, President Obama issued an executive order (Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed) that called for action at all levels of government to protect an additional two million acres of Chesapeake watershed lands currently identified as high conservation priorities at the federal, state, or local level by 2025, including 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality.

*“Retaining and expanding forests in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is critical to our success in restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Forests are the most beneficial land use for protecting water quality, due to their ability to capture, filter and retain water, as well as absorb pollution from the air.”*

—DIRECTIVE 06-I

*“By 2010, work with local governments, legislative delegations, land trusts, or other stakeholders to create or augment dedicated sources of local funding, such as through ballot initiatives, for the conservation of forests important to water quality. Where possible, we will support these through incentive programs (e.g., matching grants).”*

—RESPONSE TO DIRECTIVE 06-I



CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED FOREST CONSERVATION GOALS

State	Total Forest in Watershed (acres)	Forest Already Protected (acres)		2012 Protection Goal (acres)	2020 Protection Goal (acres)
DELAWARE	175,900	48,400	28%	5,000	15,000
MARYLAND	2,358,000	724,000	31%	96,000	250,000
NEW YORK	2,433,000	295,000	12%	5,800	15,000
PENNSYLVANIA	8,716,000	2,896,000	33%	38,500	100,00
VIRGINIA	8,367,000	2,093,000	25%	135,000	315,000

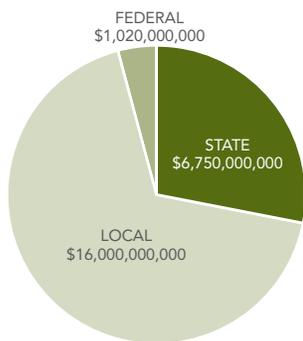
## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CRITICAL TO U.S. LAND CONSERVATION

Local governments are at the forefront of creating public funding for land conservation. According to data collected by The Trust for Public Land (TPL), between 1998 and 2005, local voters approved ballot measures that generated \$16 billion in new public land conservation funding—an average of \$2 billion annually. Nationwide, local ballot measures accounted for 67% of new land conservation funding during that period. (No comprehensive figures exist for legislative funding.)

Within the states of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, local conservation ballot activity has varied widely in recent years. Pennsylvania has seen the third-highest number of measures in the nation, although the vast majority of these were passed in southeastern Pennsylvania, outside the watershed. (Many of these were municipal, rather than county, measures.) In Virginia, communities within the watershed have passed only a modest number of measures, and in Maryland, only Baltimore County has passed a measure.

Local governments in these states also generate conservation funding through legislation. In Maryland, a majority of counties have passed legislation creating conservation funding. In Pennsylvania, 50 of 67 counties

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC LAND CONSERVATION FUNDING 1998–2005**



support farmland preservation with legislatively approved funding. Farmland preservation is supported by 13 of Virginia's 95 counties and two of its 39 cities.

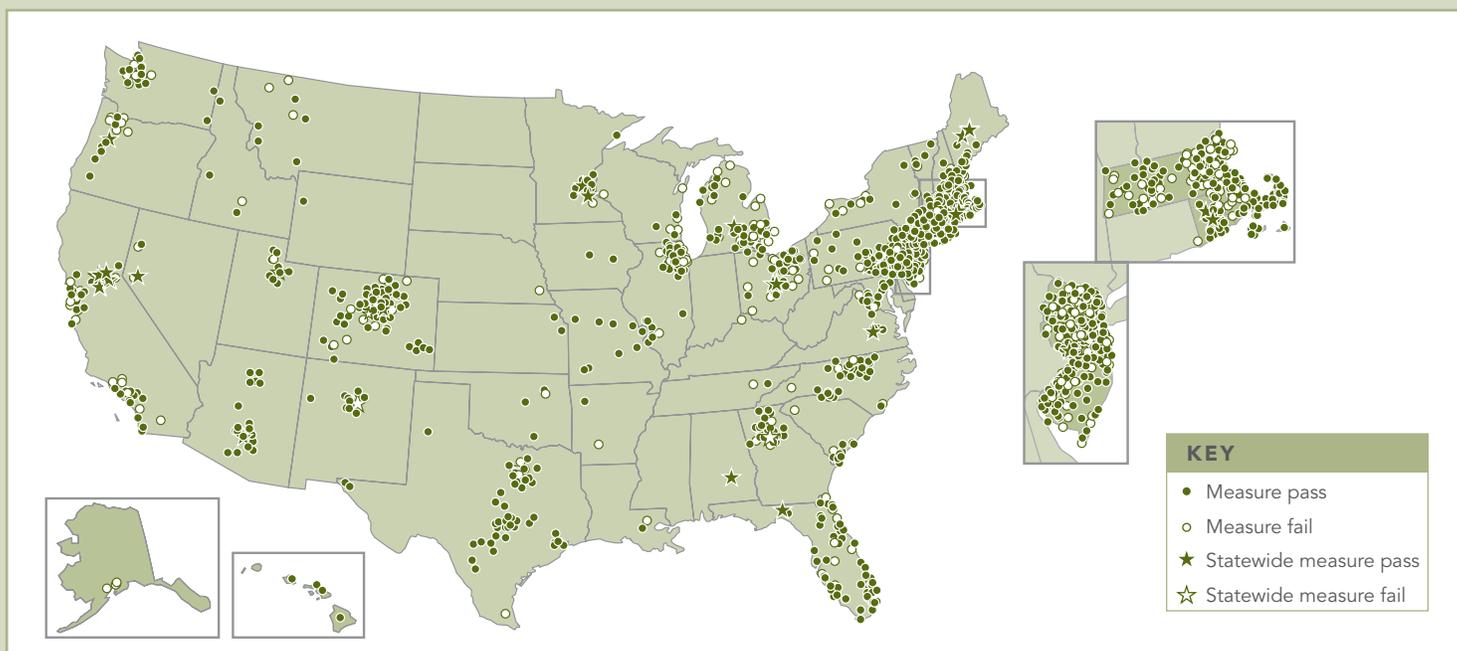
**SUMMARY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSERVATION FINANCE BALLOT MEASURES 1998–2009**

State	# of Measures	Wins	Conservation Funds Approved
VIRGINIA	19	17	\$284 million
MARYLAND	7	7	\$26 million
PENNSYLVANIA	123	101	\$926 million
NEW JERSEY	435	339	\$3.75 billion

## STATE POLICIES PROMPT LOCAL CONSERVATION FUNDING

Nationwide, the most active states for local conservation ballot measures are those that have developed a policy framework that encourages local governments to create a dedicated source of conservation funding. Such a framework has two primary elements: 1) uniform enabling authority that authorizes local governments to establish dedicated conservation funding via ballot measures as a portion of the property tax; 2) state incentives for local conservation finance, under which governments that pass a conservation finance measure are eligible for generous and reliable matching grants for conservation projects. New Jersey, Massachusetts, Florida, and Colorado all enjoy supportive state policy frameworks, and the resulting high number of ballot measures is reflected on the LandVote map below.

**CONSERVATION FINANCE BALLOT MEASURES**



## THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSERVATION FUNDING IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED

If Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia adopted a policy framework similar to those in Florida, New Jersey, or Colorado, they could significantly increase conservation funding by local governments. Such frameworks create a strong partnership between the state and local governments and are characterized by reliable, substantial state matching funds for governments that establish dedicated conservation funding through a local ballot measure.

In New Jersey, local property taxes generated \$355 million for land conservation in 2009, the result of ballot measures approved by voters in prior years. How much local funding might be raised in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia if these states were to adopt a set of policies comparable to New Jersey's? The accompanying chart projects that potential funding.

### STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LAND CONSERVATION

In 2007, TPL commissioned statewide public opinion surveys in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia to determine if voters would support a local dedicated property tax for land conservation if the state provided matching funds. In each state, a solid majority of respondents indicated support. For details, go to [www.tpl.org/chesapeakepolls](http://www.tpl.org/chesapeakepolls).

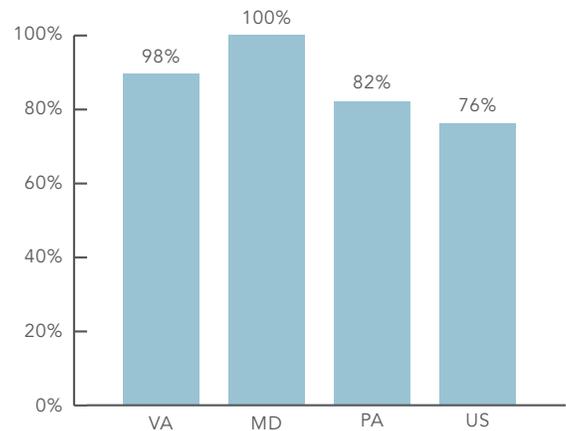
This survey data is consistent with findings at the ballot box. When voters have a chance to vote on

measures, they are very likely to approve them. Between 1998 and 2009, voters nationwide approved 76% of local ballot measures for land conservation. Over the same period, the approval rates for land conservation ballot measures in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia all exceeded the national average.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSERVATION FUNDING POTENTIAL WITH STATE POLICY ENHANCEMENTS

	Annual Funding Estimates	
	Current	Potential
MARYLAND	\$68 million	\$196 million
PENNSYLVANIA	\$107 million	\$287 million
VIRGINIA	\$54 million	\$200 million

#### APPROVAL RATE FOR LAND CONSERVATION BALLOT MEASURES 1998-2009



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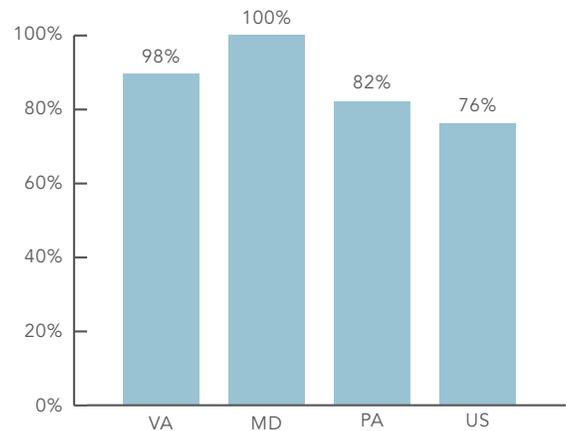
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