



Pennsylvania Land Trust Association



presents

Springfield Township

with the

2018 Government Conservation Leadership Award

Many municipalities in southeastern Pennsylvania are blessed with significant natural resources and prime agricultural soil. But Springfield Township, nestled among the beautiful rolling hills and farmland of Bucks County, stands out. Recognizing the value of open space for recreation, wildlife, and water quality, the township has permanently protected



thousands of acres of its meadows, streams, fields, and forests. In the process, it has become a model of effective conservation at the community level.

The genesis of Springfield Township's conservation efforts was a 2000 referendum to establish a tax to fund open space preservation. Voters approved the ballot measure, which generated \$4.6 million to acquire land and conservation easements. In 2006, Springfield residents again demonstrated their support for conservation, when an overwhelming majority (74%) voted for a \$5 million bond to accelerate the township's conservation work.

Following the referendum, the township created a volunteer open space committee to spearhead land protection. The committee developed an evaluation process, policies, and practices to evaluate and rank properties. Since then, committee members have worked tirelessly to create an outstanding open space program. The committee has successfully

applied for matching grant funds and partnered with neighboring townships to preserve properties that cross township boundaries. To ensure the program's long-term success, the committee chose Heritage Conservancy to co-hold the township's easements.

Springfield Township has protected over 2,600 acres in the past decade, on top of the 1,500 that were already protected. Almost a quarter of the township (21%) is now permanently preserved. The committee has focused on conserving large contiguous areas of open space, which provide important greenways and wildlife habitat. It has also used open space funding to provide recreational amenities such as Peppermint Park, which opened in 2013.

The township prides itself on administering the open space program in a fiscally responsible way. Eighty-five percent of open space funds have been used to purchase conservation easements, with the remaining 15% used for costs like appraisals and legal fees. In 2012, the township refinanced the original bond, saving \$800,000, which was used to protect additional acres. The township has also preserved 16 properties for free or at minimal cost through a county program.

The committee is currently working on preserving three properties, which could add 150 acres of open space to the already impressive total.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's 75 leading conservation organizations, the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association honors Springfield Township for its demonstrated leadership and vision in the conservation of our special places and landscapes.

