

# HELPING PEOPLE CARE FOR, WISELY USE, AND ENJOY WHAT NATURE OFFERS



SPRING 2022



Dear Friends of Conservation,

As I write this, staff are making final preparations for WeConservePA's 2022 EAC Network Conference (Feb. 26), which supports the volunteers serving on Pennsylvania's 150 environmental advisory councils. Staff are likewise gearing up for the Pennsylvania Land Conservation

Conference (Mar. 16-18), bringing conservationists from across the state face-to-face for the first time since 2019. We are holding the former event virtually, the latter—in person. This virtual/in-person split reflects WeConservePA's flexible approach to connecting and providing training and inspiration to people. We are always listening to what you tell us you want and need; we adjust accordingly. Virtual or in person? This topic or that topic? Roundtables or workshops? What worked or didn't work for you? The same goes for all of our other services.

Please don't ever be shy about communicating your needs or the needs of your organization. You can find the relevant WeConservePA staffer at [WeConservePA.org/about](https://weconservepa.org/about). Or contact me at [aloza@weconservepa.org](mailto:aloza@weconservepa.org).

A note regarding this publication: We are multi-purposing most of the front cover, the center spread, and the "What Is a Land Trust?" page for a separate publication that communicates what land trusts are all about to non-land trust people (such as community leaders and elected officials). For land trust volunteers and staff, I hope the content gives you a better sense of the breadth of conservation work happening in Pennsylvania.

Happy spring!

Andy Loza  
Executive Director

## GET INFORMED

Sign up for WeConservePA's e-newsletters providing the latest news and opportunities to make a difference:

- **Conserve Land Update** WeConservePA's main newsletter for you to stay informed on training and funding opportunities, PA conservation news, and more.
- **Project & People News** Land trust people and project news from across PA.
- **Greenways & Trails Newsletter** All things PA greenways and trails, including funding opportunities, trail projects and news, training announcements, and more.
- **Conservation Advocate** Alerts on Pennsylvania conservation issues.
- **EAC Newsletter** News and updates for the environmental advisory council community

*Sign up at [WeConservePA.org/get-informed](https://weconservepa.org/get-informed)*

## WECONSERVEPA JOB BOARD

Looking to advertise your job opening? Seeking a career in conservation? Post your job opening on WeConservePA's job board, or search for open positions.

*Access at [WeConservePA.org/jobs](https://weconservepa.org/jobs)*

## CONSERVATION EASEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOW AWARDING GRANTS OF UP TO \$8,000

WeConservePA's Conservation Easement Assistance Program (CEAP) provides grants to help organizations plan and complete conservation, trail, and other public access easements in Pennsylvania.

With this program, WeConservePA seeks to increase the quantity of easements completed and special places protected and also increase the quality and long-term viability of easements. To date, the program has helped ensure:

- Completion of 333 new conservation and trail easement projects and 17 amendments
- Conservation of 26,870 acres
- Donation of \$61.76 million in real estate value by landowners
- Increased stewardship endowment funding of \$2.54 million

*Learn more about CEAP at [WeConservePA.org/tools](https://weconservepa.org/tools)*

## RECENT WECONSERVEPA PUBLICATIONS

### NEW GUIDE FOR LANDOWNERS

#### **The Durability of Conservation Easements: Favorable Law and Committed Holders Ensure Lasting Conservation**

WeConservePA created this guide at the request of land trust staff to aid them in conveying the seriousness of conservation easements and the commitment of land trusts to uphold them. Land trusts can provide the easy-to-read, two-page piece to landowners contemplating granting an easement or who are considering the purchase of eased land or have already purchased the land. 2 pages.

### NEW MODEL

#### **Model Assignment of Conservation Easement and Declaration of Covenants**

A tool for transferring conservation easements and associated responsibilities, as well as related documents and stewardship funding, to other responsible organizations. 12 pages.

### NEW REPORTS

#### **Local Municipal Open Space Referendums in Pennsylvania: 2021 Status Report**

The report includes numerous maps and charts describing the 151 open space referendums offered to Pennsylvania voters at the local municipal level between 1996 and 2021. 24 pages.

#### **Lands Available for Conservation in Pennsylvania Townships That Have Open Space Taxes**

WeConservePA identified the quantity of remaining unprotected open space in townships that have passed open space tax referendums. We found that all 72 Pennsylvania municipalities that have passed open space tax referendums have substantial undeveloped, unprotected land appropriate to conserve. Only one township has fewer than 1,000 acres of large parcels of unprotected open space. 6 pages.

### Tree Law in Pennsylvania

As it protects more and more urban and suburban lands in Allegheny County, Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) increasingly has found itself the target of complaints regarding trees that neighbors felt were threatening to their homes and businesses or insufficiently maintained.

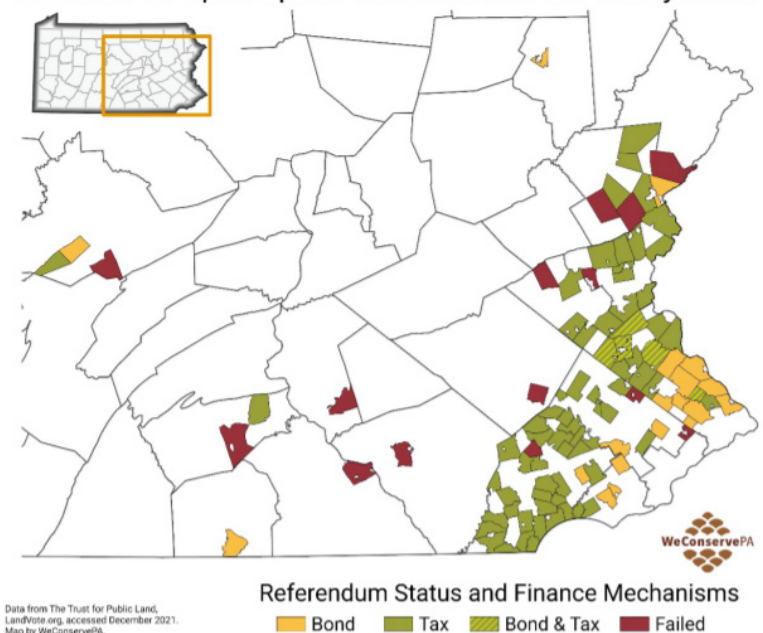
To find guidance on tree ownership and responsibility, ALT's Vice President of Stewardship, Emilie Rzotkiewicz, reached out to WeConservePA, who subsequently organized a statewide discussion on the topic.

"We soon realized that there were a lot of land trusts just like us across the state that were unsure of tree laws within Pennsylvania," said Rzotkiewicz.

WeConservePA then sought to fix this knowledge gap. The eight-page guide, *Tree Law in Pennsylvania*, was the result. Authored by Gilbert P. High Jr., Esq., the guide provides legal insights on typical neighbor disputes and responsibilities concerning trees near property lines. It also addresses the issues of liability for injury as well as the damages a court might award for cutting down or harming someone else's trees.

"Understanding the issues in tree law is imperative to effectively conducting our work," said Rzotkiewicz. "*Tree Law in Pennsylvania* has allowed us to make more informed decisions."

### Overview of Open Space Referendums in Pennsylvania



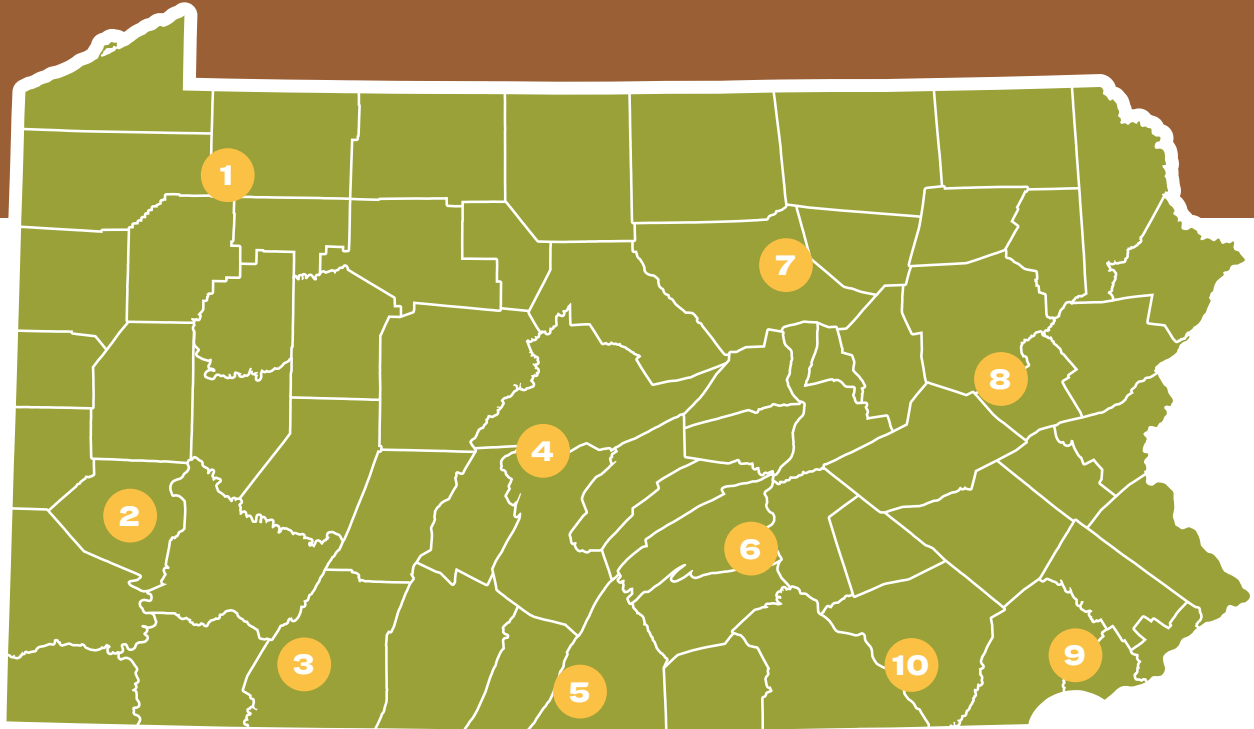
Data from The Trust for Public Land, LandVote.org, accessed December 2021. Map by WeConservePA.

**Figure 3.** Locations of municipal open space referendums in Pennsylvania. Although any local municipality may hold an open space referendum, referendums have occurred predominantly in eastern Pennsylvania. Bucks and Chester Counties have the highest numbers of referendums.

*Find these resources and more at [WeConservePA.org/tools](https://www.weconservepa.org/tools)*



# WeConservePA member organizations complete hundreds of real estate transactions and other projects each year. Highlighted here are 10 projects completed in recent months.



## Supporting the timber economy

Four parcels of land were privately conserved to establish the 528-acre Dotyville Hill Forest. This ensures sustainable timber production and public access for hunting, hiking and more in perpetuity.

*Foundation for Sustainable Forests*



## Enhancing trail experiences

A conservation easement protecting 50 acres of wildlife habitat and scenic views further enhances the Great Allegheny Passage as a world-class destination.

*Western Pennsylvania Conservancy*



## Creating community gardens

The conservation easement placed on Kincaid Community Garden conserves an urban oasis in Pittsburgh's Garfield neighborhood, ensuring that residents have continuing opportunity to grow healthy food and work the soil.

*Allegheny Land Trust & Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative*



## Expanding public access

The land trust purchase and transfer of 1,271 acres to Rothrock State Forest will greatly improve public access. The addition contains the largest remaining patch of pitch pine-scrub oak barrens in Pennsylvania and offers features to be enjoyed by hunters, anglers, hikers, and local historians.

*ClearWater Conservancy*

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### Conserving biodiversity

A site of statewide significance for biological diversity in Franklin County, the recent conservation easement placed on this 233-acre property ensures the persistence of at least five plant species of special concern.

*Central Pennsylvania Conservancy*

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### Protecting water

By permanently protecting the 2,700-acres that make up the Penrose Swamp Barrens, clean water for drinking, fishing, and recreation is better assured for the Lehigh River watershed.

*Wildlands Conservancy*

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### Boosting tourism

The addition of 1,058 acres to Cove Mountain Preserve will further grow the booming economic impact of outdoor recreation in Perry County, conserve views along the Appalachian Trail, and protect the important natural landscape of the Kittatinny Ridge.

*The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania & Delaware*

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### Preserving American history

A conservation easement placed upon 10 acres in Chester County preserves the site of the 1777 Battle of Brandywine, saving a piece of American Revolutionary War history from development.

*Natural Lands*

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### Safeguarding Class A trout streams

Conserving the 112 acres of Bar Bottom Hollow adjacent to Loyalsock State Forest protects a naturally reproducing trout stream and supports local and visiting anglers.

*Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy*

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### Stabilizing farm economies

Placing a conservation easement on the 147 acres that comprise the Bard family's farms contributes to the stewardship of productive farmland in Lancaster County and the continuation of a thriving farm economy.

*Lancaster Farmland Trust*

To learn more about these projects, visit [WeConservePA.org/conserve-land](http://WeConservePA.org/conserve-land)

# What Is a Land Trust?

Land trusts seek to bring lasting conservation benefits to people. Working cooperatively with landowners, these charitable organizations acquire land or conservation easements, or manage land or easements, for conservation purposes.

The purposes may include:

- protecting water quality
- conserving wildlife
- providing fishing, hunting, birdwatching, or other recreation opportunities
- creating new parks, trails, game lands, or other public spaces
- assuring the availability of forestland for timber production
- preserving productive farmland in support of farm economies
- treating abandoned mine drainage or restoring damaged lands
- reducing flooding or sequestering carbon
- preserving scenic views
- establishing neighborhood gardens
- meeting any number of other community needs

Many land trusts also maintain trails and other outdoor recreational facilities, run education programs, restore streams and riparian forest buffers, help municipalities with land-use planning, or engage in any number of other activities. For example, in addition to conserving land, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy manages Fallingwater, promotes science-based public policy, and orchestrates a massive urban greening program. Some land trusts are arms of larger organizations whose missions extend beyond conservation; the Brandywine Conservancy & Museum of Art, for instance, has one division focused on land conservation and another focused on art.

A land trust is defined by what it does, not by what it is named. Organizations such as Berks Nature, the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, Natural Lands, the Foundation for Sustainable Forests, and the French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust are all land trusts, but none use the term land trust in their names. (Confusingly, land development companies and community development groups can and sometimes do include land trust in their names.)

*Search “what is a land trust” at [WeConservePA.org/tools](https://www.weconservepa.org/tools) to read WeConservePA’s 3-page answer to the question.*

*WeConservePA produced this publication with assistance from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, Environmental Stewardship Fund, under the administration of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.*



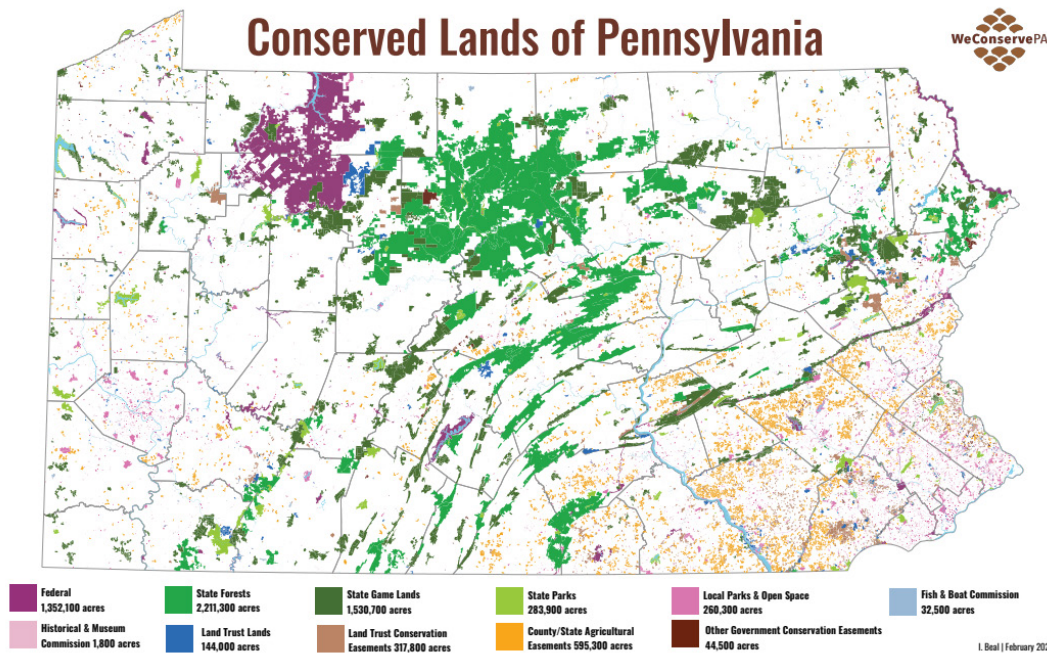
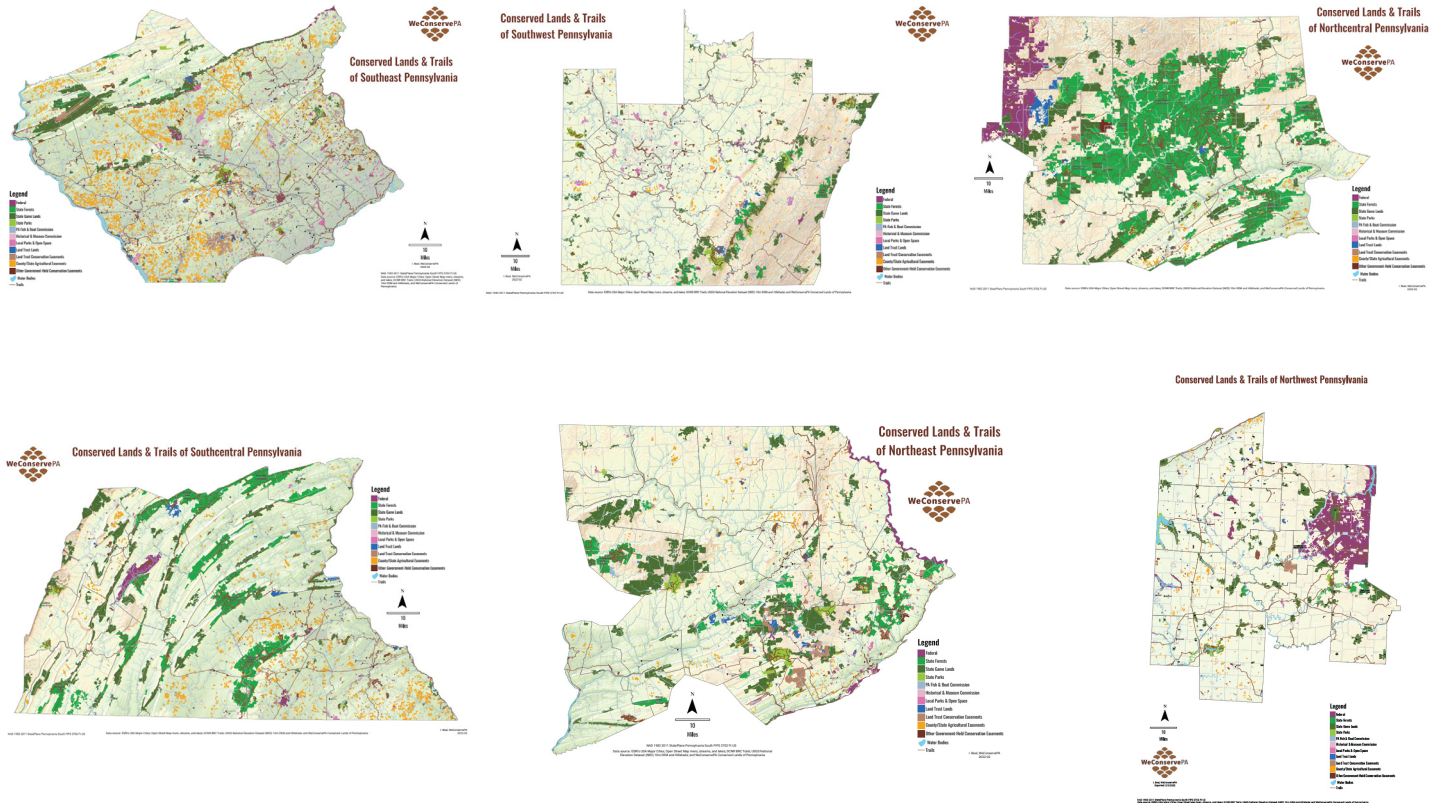
Photo: Lindsay Dill



# NEW MAPS SHOW CONSERVATION'S FOOTPRINT ON PENNSYLVANIA

WeConservePA recently produced a series of high-resolution maps detailing conserved lands in Pennsylvania.

*Download these statewide and regional maps at [WeConservePA.org/gis](http://WeConservePA.org/gis)*



*Need assistance in creating a customized map? Contact WeConservePA's GIS analyst, Irina Beal, at [ibeal@WeConservePA.org](mailto:ibeal@WeConservePA.org).*



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## SPRING WECONSERVEPA EVENTS



### **SOLAR SERIES | VIRTUAL**

WeConservePA, in partnership with Thomas Murphy, Director of the Penn State Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research, and Brook Duer, Staff Attorney with the Center for Agricultural and Shale Law at Penn State, will build upon the success of the last year's solar energy workshop series. This new series will kick-off at the Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference and continue with 3 virtual sessions scheduled in April and May.

**April 5 - Siting Considerations for Community and Grid Scale Solar Development**

**April 19 - Solar Ordinance Development**

**May 3- Panel Discussion for Speakers**



Photo: Lindsay Dill

### **PLANNING FOR TRAILS IN WETLANDS AND WET AREAS | IN-PERSON**

**April 29 - 30**

Join WeConservePA and PennTrails, LLC for a workshop focusing on the specialized demands placed on trail managers and management organizations when planning, designing, and maintaining trails in wet environments. This workshop will be hosted by Allegheny Land Trust at the Millvale Food+Energy Hub and Girty's Woods Conservation Area in Allegheny County.

*Register and view more events at [WeConservePA.org/events](https://www.WeConservePA.org/events)*