Not Red or Blue, But Green: How to Get Billions for Land Conservation

Land Trust Alliance Rally 2019

Will Abberger, Pegeen Hanrahan, Christine Johnson, and Bill Kastning
Not Red or Blue, But Green

• National Trends
• Ballot Measure Basics
• Measure Components
• Case Studies:
  ➢ Sarasota County, FL
  ➢ Monmouth County, NJ
Where Does Public Funding for Land Conservation Come From?
Public Funding for Land Conservation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local: Spending authorizations via local ballot measures. Source: TPL’s LandVote Database

State and Federal: Actual spending. Data not complete for all 50 states. Source: TPL’s Conservation Almanac Database
What is the “Big Idea”? Engaging Voters to Approve Funding for Conservation

Is it really possible to get voters to raise their TAXES to invest in parks and conservation?
Proof of Concept:
76% long-term approval rate, good times and bad
104 measures -- 84 passed -- generated over $11B in funds for land conservation, parks and restoration
Not Red or Blue, But Green - November 8, 2016

• 21 county measures – 16 passed (76%)
• Clinton counties: 12 of 16 (75%)
• Trump counties: 4 of 5 (80%)
Track Record of the Concept:
Tens of Billions of $ for Land Conservation
November 6, 2018 Election – All Park and Conservation Ballot Measures

• 54 measures in 21 states
• 46 were approved by the voters
• 85 percent passage rate
• $2.86 billion in funds for parks and conservation
What is the Trust for Public Land’s Conservation Finance Program?

We create and protect new public funding for land conservation, parks, and restoration through the research, design, and passage of ballot measures and legislation and serve as thought leaders in the field.
November 6, 2018 Election – Trust for Public Land Park and Conservation Ballot Measures

- 19 measures in 10 states
- 18 were approved by the voters
- 95 percent passage rate
- Over $1.8 billion in funds for parks and conservation
Our Track Record: 564 wins, 82% Yes, $75 billion created, over 100 million Yes Votes
• $443 million, 20 years
• More equitable distribution
• City Park gets funding for the first time ever
• Broadened permitted uses to allow more flexibility
### November 5, 2015 Election – Trust for Public Land
Park and Conservation Ballot Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction Name</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Conservation Funds At Stake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Springs, CO</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$7,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarborough, ME</td>
<td>Bond</td>
<td>$2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowell, MA</td>
<td>Property tax</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick, NJ</td>
<td>Property tax</td>
<td>$7,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Metro, OR</td>
<td>Bond</td>
<td>$475,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>Property tax</td>
<td>$200,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester County, SC</td>
<td>Bond</td>
<td>$38,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas statewide</td>
<td>Sales tax</td>
<td>$3,400,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total of **26** Measures on Election Day 2019

$4.7 billion conservation funds at stake
Not Red or Blue, But Green

• National and Florida Trends
• Ballot Measure Basics
• Measure Components
• Case Studies:
  ➢ Sarasota County, FL
  ➢ Monmouth County, NJ
Key Variables in Measure Design

• Funding Mechanism
• Amount (and duration)
• Purposes/Uses of Funds
• Timing (choice of election date)
• Management/Accountability
Not Red or Blue, But Green

• National Trends
• Ballot Measure Basics
• Measure Components
• Case Studies:
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  ➢ Monmouth County, NJ
Key Steps for Successful Ballot Measures

1. Feasibility Research
2. Public Opinion Survey
3. Program Recommendations
4. Ballot Language
5. Campaign
Step 1 - Feasibility Research

- Finance options
- Conservation priorities
- Fiscal capacity
- Election requirements
- Ballot language requirements
- Pathways to ballot
- Best practices
- Election history
Step 2 – Public Opinion Survey

Methodology: random, sample, voters, telephone

Why poll?
  • reality test
  • perspective
  • messages and messengers

Polling goals
  • affordable proposal
  • compelling purposes
  • accountability provisions
Step 3 – Program Recommendations

Funding source
Amount (and duration)
Purposes/Uses of funds
Timing (choice of election date)
Management/Accountability
Step 4 – Ballot Language

Legal constraints
Best practices
Integrate survey findings
Negotiate with public attorney, bond counsel
Interpretation/ballot pamphlet arguments
Step 5 – Campaign

Coalition building
Strategy/campaign plan
Campaign committee
Campaign finance registration and reporting
Fundraising
Endorsements
Communications (media)
  • Earned media
  • Paid media: TV, radio, direct mail, digital
  • Phones
Grassroots/Field (GOTV)
Not Red or Blue, But Green

• National and NJ Trends
• Ballot Measure Basics
• Measure Components
• Case Studies:
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  ➢ Monmouth County, NJ
Successful Ballots & A Land Trust’s Role

Christine P Johnson, President
Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast

- Five Gulf Coastal Counties
- Our strategic focus:
  - Waterfront
  - Imperiled wildlife
  - Connectivity
  - Unique public access

Land Protected (to date):
- 43 properties
- 12,056 acres

We strive to protect the character, natural integrity, and biodiversity of the Gulf Coast's bays, beaches, barrier islands and their watersheds ...for future generations.
Successful Partnerships with TPL

• Lee County Advisory Ballot
  – 2016
  – $0 - Not for funding
  – Non-binding opinion poll
  – 84% approval

• Sarasota County Legacy Trail Extension
  – 2018
  – $65 million
  – General Bonds
  – 70.58% approval

• And…
  – Hopeful for Manatee County in 2020
Statewide Support for Saving Land
Statewide Support for Trails
Historical Local Support
Favorable Conditions

- Recession Behind Us
- Historical Support
- Civic Support
- Political Support
- Some Funding
- Willing Seller (albeit, we were 2nd choice)
- Strategic Relationships
# The Legacy Trail Extension - Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Began Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>Initial Ballot Language and Fiscal Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>Initial Polling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>County Adopts Ballot Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May to Nov 2018</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial Polling of Ballot Language

**Key Demographics**

- **Gender**
  - Male: 46%
  - Female: 54%

- **Region**
  - Sarasota: 56%
  - Venice: 23%
  - North Port: 21%

- **Age**
  - 18-44: 17%
  - 45-54: 9%
  - 55-64: 23%
  - 65+: 52%

- **Party**
  - Republican: 49%
  - Independent: 19%
  - Democrat: 31%
Initial Polling of Ballot Language

- Definitely Yes: 56%
- Definitely No: 28%
- Undecided/Lean No: 16%
- Total Yes: 28%
- Total No: 16%
- Total Lean/Undecided: 16%

Net Change: +28%
The Legacy Trail Extension Campaign

- June, 2018 – Go time!
- Campaign Plan & PAC
- Endorsements
- Printing & Mailings
- Volunteers activated
- Messaging crystalized
Extend the Legacy Trail - Messaging

Vote YES FOR BONDS for the Sarasota Legacy Trail Extension on Tuesday, November 6, 2018

Improves safety for cyclists, walkers and drivers

Funds can ONLY be used to Extend the Legacy Trail

Enhances quality of life and property values
Messing - Fiscal Responsibility

• Funds can only be used to build the trail and for no other purpose
• State and federal matching funds are available
In this digital age, The Legacy Trail is:

• an opportunity for people of all ages to exercise and experience nature together.
• it improves quality of life,
• enhances property values,
• and makes Sarasota an even better place to live, visit and invest.
Messaging - Safety

- Safe crossings and overpasses at large intersections
- Safety is improved by providing walkers, runners and cyclists with a separate trail on the old railroad corridor
Coalition Support

- Friends of the Legacy Trail
- Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast
- The Trust for Public Land
- Sarasota County

- Neutralize Potential Opposition
## Budget and Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C4 Organization</th>
<th>C3 Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$88,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design and Mail</strong></td>
<td>$47,262 (120,240 pieces)</td>
<td>$43,393 (159,922)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paid Social Media</strong></td>
<td>$5,000 (200k views)</td>
<td>$5,000 (200k views)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palm Cards</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,900 (45k cards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Messaging</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,400 (10,500 voters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone Town Hall</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$6,537 (27,540 calls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Donation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,526 (kickoff), $1,442 (victory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
<td>$52,262</td>
<td>$73,698</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can I have a total for the columns?
Christine Johnson, 10/10/2019
Mailings for C3

IF APPROVED BY VOTERS, The Legacy Trail Extension will IMPROVE SAFETY³ by:
• Creating safe crossings
• Building overpasses for walking and cycling
• Providing a safe trail for walkers, runners, and cyclists

IF APPROVED BY VOTERS, The Legacy Trail Extension will INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY³ by:
• Adding amenities to the Legacy Trail
• Connecting downtown Sarasota to downtown Venice, and creating a connector into North Port
• Acquiring 6 more miles of the railroad corridor and converting 7.7 miles into a trail

ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES AND RESTRICTED USE OF FUNDS³
The proposal specifies funds can ONLY be used for the trail, and for no other purposes. Voluntary agreements with the railroad have already been signed and the land will be purchased for LESS than current fair market value. Sarasota county funds WILL be supported by funds from state and private sources.

THE LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION IS ON YOUR BALLOT Nov. 6

70.58% Win

### Bond Referendum Legacy Trail (Vote For 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON</strong> Yes, for Bonds</td>
<td>70.58%</td>
<td>139,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON</strong> No, against Bonds</td>
<td>29.42%</td>
<td>58,199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Votes:** 197,812

### United States Senator (Vote For 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REP</strong> Rick Scott</td>
<td>53.76%</td>
<td>113,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEM</strong> Bill Nelson</td>
<td>45.88%</td>
<td>96,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON</strong> WRITE-IN</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Votes:** 211,331

**Also note:**
- Donald J. Trump carried Sarasota County in the 2016 presidential election 54-42.
- Ron DeSantis beat Andrew Gillum 54-45 in the Governor’s race in 2018.

6.4% ballot drop-off from top of ticket (US Senate) Race
### Lessons Learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Beloved long term project</td>
<td>• Printer problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Long term relationship with landowners</td>
<td>• Difficulty acquiring good photography and logos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sophisticated local government and non-profits</td>
<td>• Too many “cooks in the kitchen.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Great community vision</td>
<td>• Local government staff do not always listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wealthy donors (and philanthropic support)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Endorsements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incredible volunteer leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For More Information

- ExtendTheLegacyTrail.com
- SCGov.net
- FriendsofTheLegacyTrail.org
The Role of Land Trust
Land Trust Role

• Feasibility Research
  – Conservation Priorities
  – Pathways and Road Blocks to Ballot
  – Best Practices
  – Funding

• Public Opinion Survey
  – Polling Goals
  – Funding Must Be Private
  – Phrasing of Questions

• Program Recommendations
  – Purposes / Uses of Funds
    ▪ What People Want
  – Management / Accountability
    ▪ Local knowledge and listening
Land Trust Role

• **Ballot Language**
  – Give input for local tone
  – Interpretation / Ballot Pamphlet Arguments

• **Campaign**
  – Coalition building
  – Strategy/campaign plan
  – Campaign committee
  – Fundraising
  – Endorsements
  – Communications (media)
    ▪ Earned media
    ▪ Paid media: TV, radio, direct mail, digital
    ▪ Phones
  – Grassroots/Field (GOTV)
Case Study
~
Monmouth County, NJ
New Jersey is one-third preserved, one-third developed and one-third there for the taking. Will be the first state to be “built out.”
Monmouth County
53 Municipalities
Fun Facts about Monmouth County

- Bruce Springsteen
- Jon Bon Jovi
- Max Weinberg
- Debbie Harry
- Joe Klecko
- Jon Stewart
- Geraldo Rivera
- Jim Kramer
- Queen Latifah
- Joe Pesci
- Governor Murphy
2017 County Ballot Measures

• Monmouth County
  – Passed 58:42 in 2017 (47 of 53 municipalities)
  – Yet voted 53-47 for Donald Trump
• Colts Neck Township (locally promoted only)
  – Failed in 2016 & 2017
  – Poorly planned and promoted
• Ocean Township (locally promoted only)
  – Passed (62:38) in 2018, Non-binding referendum
  – 0.5 cent open space tax would raise $45,000/yr
  – Township council enacted enabling legislation
Monmouth County Open Space Trust History

- After a non-binding referendum question, the Freeholders established a Trust Fund 1987 (first county in NJ)
- Voters approvals:
  - 1987 - $4 M annually, 71% in favor
  - 1996 - $10 M annually, 73% in favor
  - 2002 - $16 M annually, 73% in favor
  - 2006 - 1.5 cents/$100 of Equalized Valuation
    - $17 M annually, 65% in favor
Monmouth County 2017 Proposition Question

• “Should the County of Monmouth increase its dedication to the Monmouth County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund from the previously approved and implemented annual levy of 1.50 cents per $100 of equalized valuation to 2.75 cents per $100 of equalized valuation,...”
Monmouth County 2017 Proposition Question

- County government cannot promote its referendum
- Nonprofits can and should lobby for a referendum
  - There are limits on lobbying expenditure
- Referendum was promoted and funded by TPL and Monmouth Conservation Foundation (MCF)
• Accredited 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Land Trust
• Established in 1977
• One of 20 land trusts in New Jersey
• Serves only Monmouth County
Monmouth County Referendum Campaign

Two Mutually Exclusive MCF Campaigns

- **Voter Education**
  - Funded and Supported by TPL ($10,000)
  - Also funded locally

- **Vote Yes (lobbying)**
  - Funded locally

- The Campaigns ran independently (A Must!)
- Campaign funds were not be co-mingled!
- Campaigns were staffed separately!
Absolute Requirements for Campaigns

- **Education Campaign** must not infer how to vote
  - TPL legal reviewed print mailings
  - Words and pictures were carefully scrutinized

- **Vote Yes Campaign** is Lobbying
  - Must follow NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) rules
    - Separate bank account
    - Timely filing of donations and expenditure reports
    - Account for all $
    - Close out at end of campaign
VOTE YES
VOTE YES for OPEN SPACE
November 7th
WE MUST ACT NOW TO SAVE WHAT REMAINS!

1972  2012
Agriculture  Source Land  Forest  Urban  Water  Wetlands

PROVEN ACCOUNTABILITY
The Monmouth County Open Space Trust Fund has an excellent record of spending accountability and has always ensured funds are spent wisely. Funds are spent with full public disclosure and oversight by a board with citizen participation.

PROTECT CLEAN WATER
Pollution from overdevelopment drains into our streams, rivers, and ocean. Drinking water in urban areas is directly impacted by pollution in rural areas. Open space filters pollution before it goes into our water.

NOW IS THE TIME
Our children and grandchildren deserve to enjoy natural areas, parks, clean water, and wildlife. We must act now to preserve our last remaining open space for future generations before it is lost.

PROTECT PROPERTY VALUES
Homes adjacent to parks have 15-20% higher real estate values. The value of our homes is often our biggest investment in Monmouth County. Protect our quality of life and protect our home values.

SAVE OPEN SPACE
in Monmouth - Preserving Life, Land and Water for a Bright Future

MAPS PREPARED BY MAXINE FRENO. AUGUST 2017 FOR SAVE OPEN SPACE IN MONMOUTH COUNTY. DATA FROM RUTGERS UNIVERSITY AND N.J. DEP LAND USE COVER. PAID FOR BY SAVE OPEN SPACE

MCF
MONMOUTH CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
WHY VOTE YES TO OPEN SPACE THIS NOVEMBER

Voters will be asked to support an increase of the Monmouth County Open Space Trust Fund on the ballot this November.

CLEAN WATER

Over development threatens our water quality.

Whether you live in Belmar or Millstone, we all depend on clean water to survive. Pollution from roads, sewers, and urban runoff drains into our streams, rivers, and aquifers. Natural lands act as a filter for pollution, slowing down run-off and allowing mother nature’s systems to do their job before it reaches our rivers and streams.

PROPERTY TAXES

OPEN SPACE IS A GOOD INVESTMENT

Residential development comes at a huge cost to tax payers. Roads, schools, police, and other infrastructure costs need to be increased with the increased population demands that development brings. Preventing open space has the long-term benefits of avoiding future strain on our already burdened public schools, roadways, and infrastructure.

HEALTH

MOTHER NATURE IS OUR MEDICINE

Countless medical research studies from around the world now prove that nature may be the best preventative medicine. Studies show increased production of Natural Killer cells after spending time in the forest, trail walks reduce stress and relax an overstimulated nervous system, and group recreation opportunities increase supportive social relationships.

LEARN MORE

Mikh
MONMOUTH CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

www.monmouthconservation.org

Handout

Leave Behind
November 7th

Vote YES

Open Space

Support the County Ballot Question!

www.monmouthconservation.org/sos

Lawn Sign
Targeted Outreach (NJLCV & Penna Consulting)

**List 1**
- 26,353 HH, leans female and dem/independent
- 30-90 vote propensity
- 30-59 years old
- $50-$100K
- Top 3 (of 4) green screen scores + unidentified

**List 2**
- 22,145 HH, leans female and dem/independent
- 50-90 vote propensity
- 30-59 years old
- $50-$100K

**List 3**
- "Green Screen Model" - 25,795 HH, Dem heavy (only 1.6% R) and lean female
- 35-90 vote propensity
- Top 2 Green Screen Categories

**List 4**
- "Green Screen 2" - 20,346 HH, Dem heavy (only 2% R) and lean female
- 40-90 vote propensity
- Top 3 Green Screen
- 30-59 years old

**List 5**
- 31,629 HH, leans female and independent
- 50-90 vote propensity
- $50-$100K
- Top 3 green screen + unidentified
EDUCATE
Election Day, November 7
County of Monmouth:
Open Space Proposal
Will Be on Your Ballot

Official Ballot Language
Should the County of Monmouth increase its dedication to the Monmouth County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund from the previously approved and implemented annual levy of 1.5 cents per $100 of equalized valuation to 2.75 cents per $100 of equalized valuation, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2(e), with the annual levy to be used for any or all of the purposes set forth in N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2(e) (1)?

Monmouth County's Open Space Trust Fund has been successful in preserving more than 17,000 acres across 43 park areas, open space, and wildlife habitat in Monmouth County.¹

¹ Monmouth County Open Space Trust Fund Fact Sheet®, Monmouth County Park Systems, September 6, 2017.
County of Monmouth
Open Space Proposal

If approved by the voters, the Open Space Proposal will fund the protection of Monmouth County’s drinking water supplies, rivers, lakes, and beaches.

Accountability measures to ensure funds are properly spent:
• an annual public audit of how the funds are spent.
• requires that funds be placed in a separate Trust Fund, legally dedicated only to the land and water conservation purposes approved by voters.
• full public disclosure of all expenditures and oversight by a board with citizen participation.

Don’t forget to vote on November 7

For more information visit https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/openspaceplan
Keys to Success / Lessons Learned

- Use TPL resources - advice and knowledge
- Spend limited funds wisely
- Engage consulting firm to target communications
- Do not co-mingle lobbying and education messaging
- Run ads, write letters to editors
- Use all forms of social media
- Create and strategically place signage
- Seek local environmental nonprofit endorsements
- Hope for the best
Questions for MCF?

Bill Kastning
Executive Director
Monmouth Conservation Foundation
732-671-7000
wkastning@monmouthconservation.org

www.monmouthconservation.org

Monmouth Conservation Foundation
P. O. Box 4150
Middletown, NJ 07748
Where can I go to learn more?
TPL’s Conservation Finance Program  (www.tpl.org)

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Director, Conservation Finance
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will.abberger@tpl.org

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SE Conservation Finance
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Pegeen.Hanrahan@tpl.org

The Trust for Public Land
306 N. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL  32301