



**BACKCOUNTRY
HUNTERS & ANGLERS**
PENNSYLVANIA

June 8, 2026

Re: Senate Bill 857, Providing for Local Approvals for Certain Land Transactions

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, and our members dedicated to the conservation of our public lands and waters, we respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 857.

This bill would mandate county approval for land acquisitions by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Fish and Boat Commission. This creates an unnecessary and political barrier to the very conservation work that sustains our hunting and fishing heritage. These agencies are experts in wildlife, habitat, and public recreation; their land acquisitions should be guided by science and opportunity, not local political veto.

Pennsylvania ranks among the nation's leaders in outdoor recreation precisely because people have places to hunt, hike, camp, bike, and explore. This public access fuels our economic success. Outdoor recreation contributes nearly \$20.4 billion to Pennsylvania's economy, proof that conservation and economic growth go hand in hand. SB 857 directly threatens this engine of prosperity by hampering the expansion of our public land base.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 857 fundamentally undermines the rights of willing landowners. Across Pennsylvania, families who have stewarded their land for generations often seek to permanently conserve it by selling or donating it to the state. This bill disrespects their property rights and their conservation legacy by allowing county government to override their voluntary choice. It inserts a costly, bureaucratic hurdle between a landowner's intent and the permanent protection of vital habitat.



WWW.BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG/PENNSYLVANIA_BHA
PENNSYLVANIA@BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG

The bill cites local tax revenue as a primary concern, but this issue is already addressed by the existing Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which has been strengthened in recent years. PILT is the appropriate mechanism to support local governments, not a law that stifles conservation and limits public access. PILT is the appropriate mechanism to support local governments, and if there are deficiencies in PILT, we believe the Legislature should focus its efforts on further reform, not a law that stifles conservation and limits public access.

For hunters and anglers, the expansion and connection of our public land base is essential. SB 857 directly threatens future opportunities for outdoor recreation by making it harder to secure new public access. We urge you to protect the rights of landowners, the expertise of our resource agencies, and the economic and recreational interests of all Pennsylvanians by opposing this legislation.

Respectfully,

Adam Eckley
Chapter Chair
Pennsylvania Chapter
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

