



June 8, 2026

Dear Senator:

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) urges you to oppose Senate Bill 857 should the bill receive further consideration in the Senate.

PPFF is a statewide non-profit organization that provides a voice for the Commonwealth's 125 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forest.

Senate Bill 857 would require county approval for any land acquisition, be it by sale or donation of the property owner, made by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

This bill is a startling interference in the rights of private property owners who steward their lands and wish to improve communities and leave a legacy of conservation or public recreation through a sale or donation. It also undermines a voluntary process that has made Pennsylvania's state park and state forest system one of the best in the United States, contributing to our quality of life and our burgeoning outdoor recreation economy.

PPFF recently shared polling data with you that demonstrates how much your constituents value state parks and forests. Susquehanna Polling and Research found that 94 percent of likely Pennsylvania voters believe that our state parks and forests are "very" or "somewhat" important to quality of life in Pennsylvania, including 85 percent in the "very" important category. A combined 86 percent of likely Pennsylvania voters believe that funding for state parks and forests should be a priority of state government. Support for these responses was consistent across party identification, region, gender, and ethnicity.

Senate Bill 857 creates a disincentive and potentially massive hurdles and headaches for private property owners who wish to donate or sell their land for the public good by creating a third-party approval of any such donation or sale.

It is important to bear in mind that donations and sales by private property owners have helped make the Pennsylvania state park and forest system the conservation gem, quality of life asset, and economic engine that it is.

For example, decades of sales and donations coordinated by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy have been instrumental in the creation of Ohiopyle, McConnell's Mill, Moraine, Raccoon Creek, Laurel Ridge, Oil Creek, and other beloved state parks in western Pennsylvania. Vosberg Neck State Park, Wyoming County's first state park, was recently created thanks to purchases and donations. Purchases of former rail corridors that are now owned by DCNR, including segments of the Great Allegheny Passage, Pine Creek Trail, and the Lehigh Gorge Trail, have helped make Pennsylvania a top national rail trail destination.

We also note that Pennsylvania's newest state park, Laurel Caverns State Park, is the result of a generous bequest to the Commonwealth that conserves the largest sandstone cave in the world and the largest bat hibernaculum in the northeast. Dave and Lillian Cale conserved this incredible resource, built a business that enabled them to share their love of the property with the public, and wanted nothing better than to see Laurel Caverns conserved forever as a state park. Providing a third-party political entity with a potential veto of their wishes and public-spiritedness illustrates why Senate Bill 857 is a bad idea.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

Sincerely,



Marci Mowery

President