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WeConservePA.org



Voting Member Organizations

Allegheny Land Trust
Armstrong Trails
Allegheny Valley Trails Association
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Armstrong County Conservancy
Berks Nature
Brandywine Conservancy
Brandywine Red Clay Alliance
The Buck Hill Conservation Foundation
Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
Centre County Farmland Trust
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chestnut Hill Conservancy
ClearWater Conservancy
The Conservation Fund, Pennsylvania Office
Countryside Conservancy
Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Earth Conservancy
Edward L. Rose Conservancy
Evergreen Conservancy
Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County
Foundation for Sustainable Forests
Fox Chapel Area Land Trust
French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust
French Creek Valley Conservancy
Glade Run Lake Conservancy
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Heritage Conservancy
Hollow Oak Land Trust
Independence Conservancy
Keystone Trails Association
Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation
Lackawanna Valley Conservancy
Lake Erie Region Conservancy
Lancaster Conservancy
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Land Conservancy of Adams County
Land Trust of Bucks County
Lebanon Valley Conservancy
London Britain Land Trust
Manada Conservancy
Merrill Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy
Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy
Mokoma Conservancy
Montour Trail Council
Mountain Watershed Association
Natural Lands
Neighborhood Gardens Trust
North American Land Trust
North Branch Land Trust
Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy
Open Land Conservancy of Chester County
Pensbury Land Trust
Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society
Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust
Pine Creek Land Conservation Trust
Pine Creek Valley Watershed Association
Pocono Heritage Land Trust
The Radnor Conservancy
Regional Trail Corporation
Schuylkill County Conservancy
Schuylkill River Greenways
Somerset County Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
The Wallace Trust
Tinicum Conservancy
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Westmoreland Conservancy
Westmoreland Land Trust
West Pikeland Land Trust
Wild Waterways Conservancy Inc.
Wildlands Conservancy
Willistown Conservation Trust
Wissahickon Trails

June 1, 2026

Re. **Oppose SB 857**
Harms parks, game lands & fishing access

Chair Dush, Chair Santarsiero, and Members of the Senate State Government Committee:

On behalf of the 75 member organizations of WeConservePA and their 96,000 Pennsylvania members, I ask you to **OPPOSE advancing SB 857 out of the State Government Committee.**

SB 857 requires county governing body approval of any land purchase or gift acceptance by DCNR, Game Commission, and Fish and Boat Commission. While official county approval might seem reasonable on its face, this requirement would be unduly damaging to the responsible care of Pennsylvania's State Parks, Forests, and Game Lands; the recreational, wildlife, and economic values provided by those lands; and select, strategic additions to the lands. It would also hamper expansion of fishing and boating access to Pennsylvania's waterways.

WeConservePA believes that DCNR, the Game Commission, and Fish and Boat Commission should maintain strong communications with and respect for the concerns of local government as the agencies consider acquisitions for the public good. However, SB 857 is a blunt instrument that would hobble the ability of agencies to constructively address inholdings and strategically expand holdings to facilitate land management and better serve Pennsylvanians.

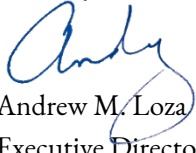
- The bill would disempower a private landowner who chooses to donate *their land* to a state agency for the good of all the public.
- The bill creates a massive hurdle for any landowner anywhere in the Commonwealth to agree to convey land to one of the agencies—a process that is already complex. A seller in a real estate transaction will be exceedingly resistant to a purchase and sale agreement contingency that requires *approval of a third party*, especially if the state agency will not pay a premium for the contingency and the third party is tied into the vagaries of politics.
- To the extent that a seller would be willing to agree to such a contingency, the resulting transaction would be costly to state agencies and taxpayers because either (1) the agency will need to provide sellers with additional inducements to agree or (2) the agency will need to get county approval in advance of reaching agreement with a landowner, which would place the agency in a severely weakened negotiating position, the seller knowing that the purchaser has already gone to extraordinary lengths to advance the transaction.
- WeConservePA respects that some legislators and county officials generally disfavor expansion of State Parks, Forests, and Game Lands in their jurisdictions. State agencies should always be greatly attentive to local concerns; however, it is not appropriate to fully subjugate well-considered state decisions regarding the well-being of 13.1 million Pennsylvanians to the will of a single one of Pennsylvania's 67 county governing bodies (two dozen representing fewer than 50,000 residents).

- The bill could establish problematic patterns—the making of inappropriate or unreasonable demands in exchange for approvals.

Insufficient local tax revenue is raised as the impetus for the bill. However, the General Assembly has already established public policy to address this—the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program—which has been increased twice in the past four years and is now indexed to the Consumer Price Index. If inequities do exist at this time, PILT remains the appropriate pathway to address them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andy", with a large loop at the end.

Andrew M. Loza
Executive Director

cc: member organizations