

THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

LAND FOR PEOPLE



CONSERVATION FINANCE SUCCESS *Gallatin County, Montana*

Gallatin County, Montana, is characterized by sweeping vistas over rolling rangeland to looming mountains—an openness much prized by residents and visitors alike. But in recent decades, rising land values, development pressure, and looming estate taxes for farmers and ranchers have threatened to break up long-held family lands.

In the late 1990s, the county began working with The Trust for Public Land to explore ways to preserve agriculture, protect water quality, and create additional opportunities for recreation. In early 2000, our Conservation Finance service oversaw a public survey to determine if voters would pay for open-space preservation. Encouraged by the results, the county placed a \$10 million open space bond measure on the fall ballot. A succeeding measure, in 2004, authorized an additional \$10 million in funding. For each measure,

The Trust for Public Land helped with feasibility research, polling, and campaign guidance and support. One key to success was ballot language that highlighted the protection of agricultural lands and the preservation of water quality by preventing the development of farms and ranches along rivers and streams.

The county's Open Lands Program is overseen by a 15-member citizen's group appointed by county commissioners. To date, the program has acquired 33 farmland and ranchland conservation easements, protecting nearly 40,000 acres, and created one 100-acre park. By leveraging county funds with state and federal dollars and private donations, the program has acquired about \$14 million in easements with a fair market value of just over \$74 million.

About the Conservation Finance service

The Trust for Public Land is the nation's leader in helping state and local governments design, pass, and implement legislation and ballot measures that create new public funds for parks and land conservation. Our technical services include feasibility research, public opinion polling, measure design, and the design and evaluation of conservation programs.

To pass ballot measures, we work with our lobbying and campaign affiliate, The Conservation Campaign (TCC), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit corporation that mobilizes public support for measures that create public funds for land conservation.

Since 1996, we've helped pass more than 450 measures—an 81 percent success—creating \$34 billion in voter approved funding for parks and open space.



Measure snapshot

Year: 2000, 2004

Name: Gallatin County Open Space Bond

Measure type: General obligation bonds

Goal: Preserve farmland and ranchland, protect water quality, and create opportunities for recreation

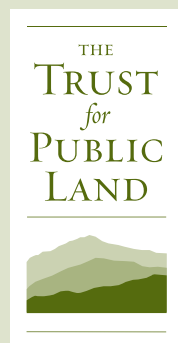
Services provided: Public opinion polling, feasibility research, measure development, campaign strategy and support

Winning margin: 59 percent, 63 percent

Funds generated: \$20 million total

Lesson learned: A citizen advisory group promotes confidence among voters that funds will be spent as intended

Conservation results: 33 ranches and farms protected with conservation easements, totaling 40,000 acres; one 100-acre park created



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

tpl.org

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