

Voters Have Consistently Approved the Funding of Open Space, Farmland & Historic Preservation in the “Garden” State

There have been **14** public referendums since 1961 to provide funds for conservation. Every one of them has passed.

The **Election Results Report** on Public Questions, which appears on this Web page, provides the details of those approvals. It compiles trends and totals for over 50 years of conservation funding.

The funds for these referenda were used and are still being used for the acquisition of natural and recreational lands, the preservation of private farmland, the development of recreational facilities, and the restoration of important historic properties.

The voter approval margins have ranged from tight in 2009 to landslide proportions between 1989 and 1995.

The first of the 14 occurred in 1961 with the \$50 million public question to begin funding the Green Acres program for parks, refuges and recreational facilities. Some 1.2 million voters cast ballots, and 742,000 of them voted “yes,” an approval rate of 59%.

The 2009 referendum to authorize \$400 million in bonds passed with 53% of the vote, the closest of all 14. Three voter referenda committing a total of \$985 million were approved by landslide proportions from 1989 (71%) to 1992 (72%) to 1995 (68%).

The largest of all conservation funding proposals came in 1998 with a public question to amend the State Constitution to dedicate \$98 million a year from 1999 thru 2029. This referendum brought into being the **Garden State Preservation Trust**. This was no simple bond issue; rather, it was a dedication of funds to be used as cash or to finance the issuance of GSPT bonds. This amendment was approved with 66% of the vote – two “yes” votes for every one vote opposed. Perhaps more significant is that the \$98 million dedication won approval in every one of the 21 counties. It would over the next 10 years provide \$2.1 billion in acquisition funding – more than in the previous four decades combined.

The vote result for every one of the 14 referenda is tabulated in the Election Results Report, broken down by county and by political party. Included also are three public questions in 1987, 2003 & 2006 that did not add funding but which had a direct bearing on the use of conservation funds in the future. All were also approved by wide margins.

Election tables and charts tell a story of which New Jersey residents can be proud – a story of unparalleled, bipartisan, statewide endorsement of the conservation of our landscape with a commitment of more than \$5.3 billion.

Garden State Preservation Trust



Saving New Jersey's Open Spaces, Historic Places and Farmland