



Press Release

Partners for Open Space

For Immediate Release

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Marylanders Strongly Support State Plan to Repay \$70 million to Open Space Fund

Marylanders strongly support a proposal currently being considered by the state legislature to repay \$70 million to a fund that helps local communities preserve and acquire open space that otherwise would be lost to development, according to a new statewide poll.

“A solid 57% of Marylanders support the specific plan to pay back the \$70 million the legislature diverted last year,” said Marcia Verploegen Lewis, the coalition’s campaign director. “But perhaps even more important for the long term, 89% of Marylanders support Program Open Space.”

The results of the poll were announced Wednesday by Partners for Open Space, a coalition of 130 organizations including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, 1000 Friends of Maryland, Maryland Public Interest Research Group, The Trust for Public Land, Maryland League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, Maryland Recreation and Parks Association, and the American Farmland Trust.. Partners for Open Space is dedicated to the protection of Maryland’s nationally acclaimed land conservation programs including Program Open Space, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and the Rural Legacy Program.

“Last year, the Maryland legislature diverted more than \$70 million from Program Open Space for purposes other than land conservation,” said Verploegen Lewis. “As a result of legislation passed last year, the governor and the legislature are poised to pay those funds back, and this survey shows that 3 in 5 Marylanders support that move.”

“Our research also shows that support for Program Open Space is closely tied to rising concerns about growth and development,” said Dru Schmidt-Perkins, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Maryland. “Marylanders are increasingly concerned about the rate of

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growth and development in the state. A similar survey we conducted just last year showed that 48% of Marylanders thought the rate of growth and development in their communities was too fast. This year 58% say development is coming too fast," said Schmidt-Perkins.

Program Open Space sets aside money from a one-half of one percent tax on the sale of property in Maryland to build parks, protect land around water sources and to preserve forests, farmland and wildlife habitat. Since 1969 the program has protected thousands of acres of land and created parks and recreation areas throughout Maryland. But during the last four years, the administration and legislature has diverted \$400 million from the fund to be used for general budget expenditures.

The survey was conducted for Partners for Open Space, and the Maryland League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, by the opinion research firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates. It was conducted February 9-14 and included interviews with 803 registered voters from across the state.