



Pennsylvanians agree on this: Our state parks need funding now | Opinion

Published: Jun. 22, 2026, 6:39 p.m.



Black Moshannon State Park is seen from the air as state officials visit March 30, 2026, to announce the Conservation Volunteer online platform for connecting residents with volunteer opportunities across the state's 124 state parks and 2.2 million acres of forestland.
Commonwealth Media Services

By Bradley L. Mallory

Ninety-four percent of Pennsylvanians agree on something – open public lands are very or somewhat important. A recent poll by Susquehanna Polling and Research found broad-based support across the political spectrum for Pennsylvania's 300,000 acres of state parks and 2.3 million acres of state forests.

This level of support for anything is unusual and probably surprises some people. However, it is quite understandable.

We live in a state named for its forests. A state park is within easy driving distance of every Pennsylvanian. With rising fuel costs, this is becoming more important every day. Our state parks and forests are convenient and affordable destinations for recreation and vacations.

We think of these incredible resources as free, but their care and maintenance are expensive. Our forebearers had the wisdom and courage to invest their scarce funds in the purchase and development of these wonderful assets. It is our obligation now to maintain and enhance them for our families and generations to come.

The recent poll also shows that Pennsylvanians favor making these investments, even when it is specifically noted that resources are limited and could affect levels of support for other programs. Asking people whether they like something tells us one thing, but asking them whether they are willing to pay for it is quite another.

We are our own worst critics. We dwell upon our divisions and disagreements, but we are a rational people at heart. We do what we think is best for our families and friends. We understand that just as we invest in our homes, our children and other things we hold dear, we must invest in our state parks and forests.

It is budget season in Harrisburg. Now is the time to let your representatives and senators know how important your state parks and forests are to you and your families. If you think this won't make a difference, put yourself in the shoes of your legislator. You have a finite pool of resources.

The budget (unlike the federal budget) must be balanced. You want to do the right thing. Wouldn't you want to know what is really important to your constituents?

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is a charitable organization of dedicated volunteers that encourages the donation of time and money to our state parks and forests. Join us in this important work. Volunteer or donate if you can. Write to your elected representatives today and encourage their support for funding your state parks and forests.

Picture a child happily throwing rocks into a clear stream flowing through the pines or toasting marshmallows over a campfire in a state park. That will be worth it.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, visit us at PAParksandForests.org.

Bradley L. Mallory is a member of the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation.