



CHESTER COUNTY

2025

Annual Report for Open Space
Protected During 2024



31.9%

**of the county, or 154,970
acres of protected open
space, has been preserved
as of December 31, 2024.**



The Annual Report for Open Space Protected during 2024

The Planning Commission has collected information summarizing the amount of open space protected in Chester County each year since 2000. Starting in 2011, the Planning Commission has used the Protected Open Space Tracking (POST) system to map and assess open space. POST is a web-based database and mapping program designed to record protected open space and link that data to the County’s existing tax assessment records.

Most of the open space protected in Chester County has been preserved by the efforts of non-profit land trusts or the county’s Agricultural Land Preservation Board. The cooperation of these organizations and private lands owners has been the foundation of success in protecting Chester County’s open spaces for over 25 years.

155k
acres
protected

According to POST, 154,970 acres of protected open space, or 31.9% of the County, was preserved as of December 31, 2024. This is an increase from 2023 when it was 31.4%. This calculation is based on a total Chester County area of 485,845 acres, as measured by the POST system. An estimated 2,590 acres of open spaces were protected in 2024, making it a typical annual increase relative to recent years.

**Increased
by 2,059
acres since
2023**

As set forth in Landscapes3, the “How We Preserve” Objective A. states: “Protect a significant portion of Chester County as preserved farms, open space, forests, public parks or nature preserves.”

The following table presents a compilation of protected open space over the past ten years through a combination of County funded and non-County funded efforts.

<https://chescoplanning.org/OpenSpace/POST.cfm>

Estimated POST Protected Open Space 2015 through 2024

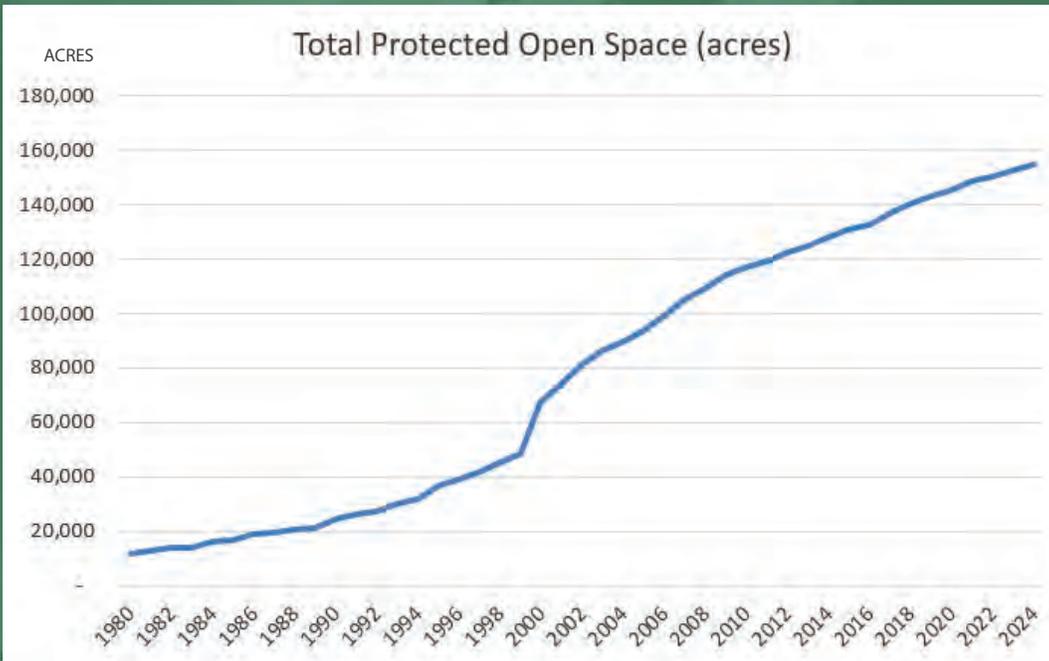
Year	Estimated Acres Protected Annually	Estimated Aggregate Total Acres Protected	Estimated % of the County Protected Annually
2015	2,490	131,830	26.9
2016	1,920	133,750	27.3
2017	4,010	136,840	28.2
2018	3,730	140,570	28.9
2019	2,560	143,130	29.5
2020	2,180	145,320	29.9
2021	3,140	148,450	30.6
2022	2,050	150,500	31.0
2023	1,880	152,380	31.4
2024	2,590	154,970	31.9

POST Results for Calander Year 2024

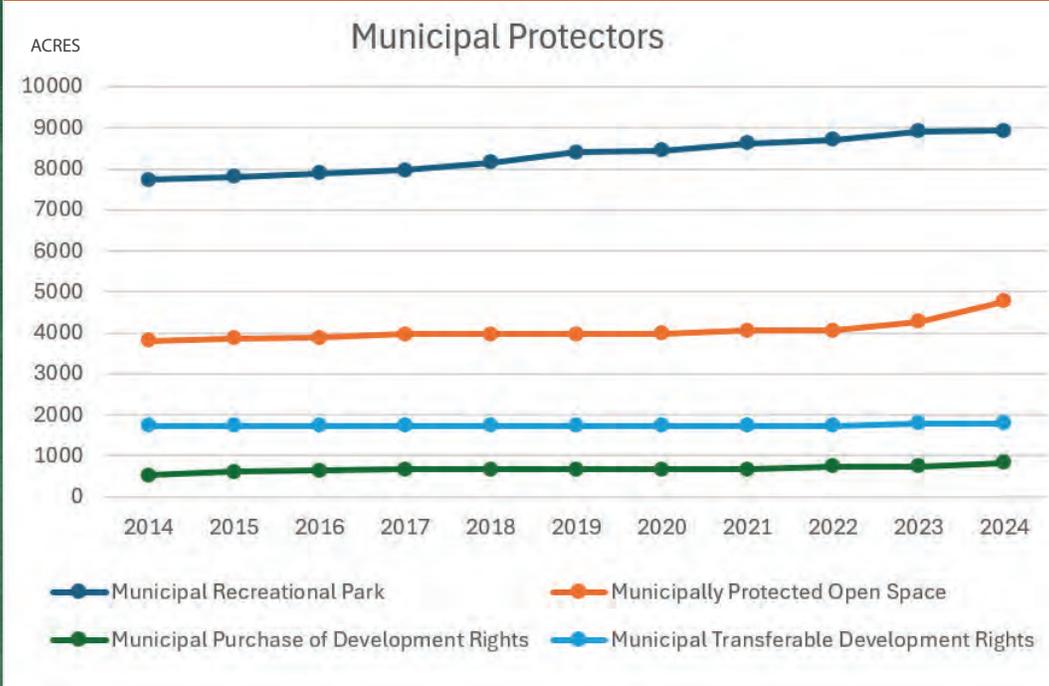
- The annual 2024 increase in protected open space was similar to those of most of the past 10 years. During that time, the increase has typically been between 2,000 and 3,000 acres.
- In 2024, county-funded Agricultural Conservation Easements accounted for 502 acres of protected open space. This acreage is lower than the typical annual accumulation during the last 10 years, which ranged from 1,000 to 1,500, but it was similar to the increases of the past three years.
- Land trusts preserved 89 acres in-fee during 2024. Land trusts preserved 695 acres through conservation easements which was similar to the number of annual acres preserved during most of the past 10 years.
- Homeowner association (HOA) open space protected over 720 acres, which was somewhat larger than the annual acres protected during the last 10 years. HOA lands commonly are protected when larger scale developments are built. This increase may be the result of the completion of developments which were paused during the COVID slowdown.
- While municipal recreational parks grew by only 14 acres, municipal non-recreational open space grew by 496 acres, most of which came from two new acquisitions: the Creybilly Site in Westtown Township and parts of the Lieds Park Site in West Bradford Township.

Post Mapping Methodology

- During the summer of 2024, staff reviewed and updated all the HOA open space parcels included in the POST database. Using a new GIS mapping application, we were able to more accurately measure areas which are undeveloped HOA open space, as opposed to areas that are covered by parking lots or other paved features. As a result, the total HOA open space acreage for prior years was in some cases reduced.
- Staff also coordinated with WeConservePA, an organization which coordinates with land trusts to map protected open space statewide. They provided an updated mapping of parcels protected in past years by organizations who infrequently ease lands in Chester County, like the USDA. As a result, the total protected open space acreage for several prior years was modestly increased.



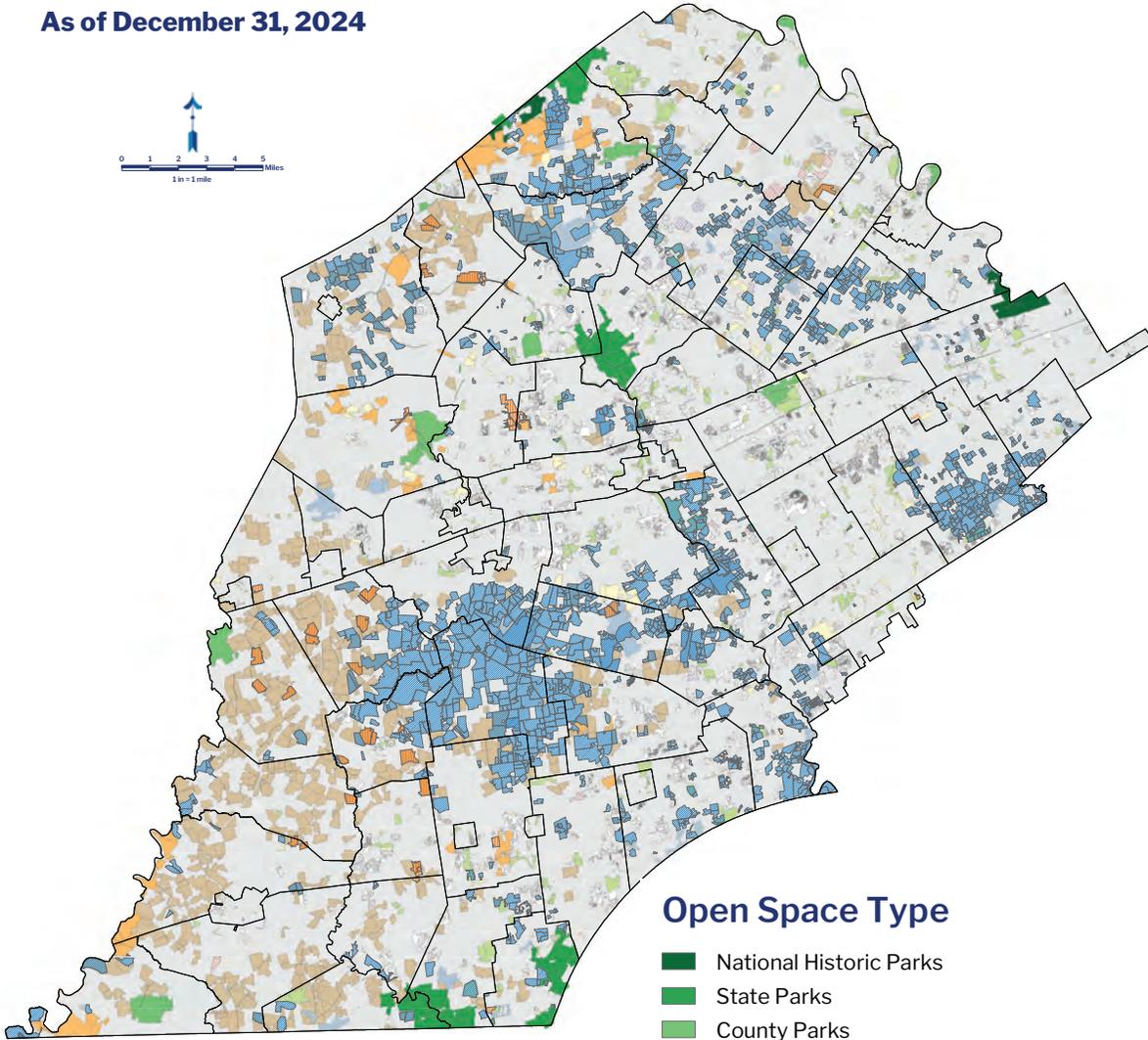
HOAs = 720 acres Homeowner associations protected over 720 acres of open space.



<https://chescoplanning.org/OpenSpace/POST.cfm>

Chester County Protected Open Space

As of December 31, 2024



Open Space Type

- National Historic Parks
- State Parks
- County Parks
Includes trail corridors with easements owned by Chester County.
- Municipal Recreation (Active and Passive)
Includes only municipally owned parcels that have been developed and are used for active or passive recreation. Schools and municipal buildings or offices are not included.
- Municipal Open Space (Non-recreational and Undeveloped)
Includes municipally owned parcels that have not yet been developed for recreational use, or parcels which have been designated as non-recreational open space, including wildlife, floodplain and natural resource preserves.
- Agricultural Conservation Easements
- Homeowner Association Open Space
- Managed Lands Owned In-fee
Includes State Game Lands, State Forests and land owned in-fee by the PA Fish and Boat Commission, the Chester Water Authority or the Chester County Water Resources Authority.
- Managed Lands with Public Sector Easements
Includes land eased by the Chester County Water Resources Authority and easements that have been funded with County Grants that restrict future development.
- Parcels with Land Trust Easements
- Parcels Owned In-fee by Land Trusts
- Municipal Purchase of Development Rights
- Municipal Transfer of Development Rights

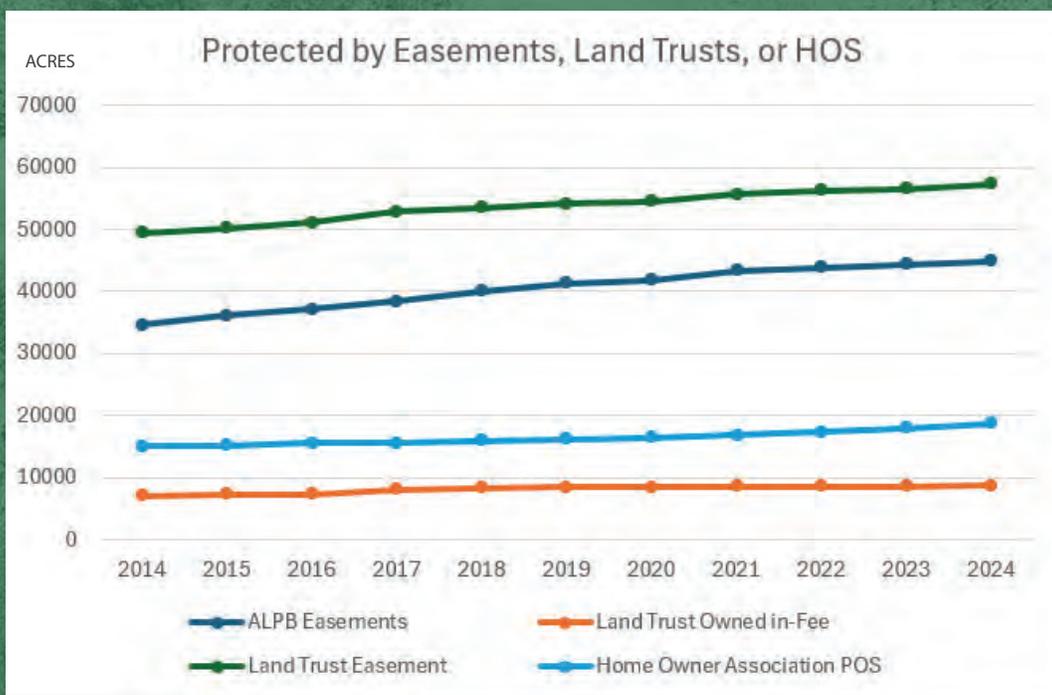
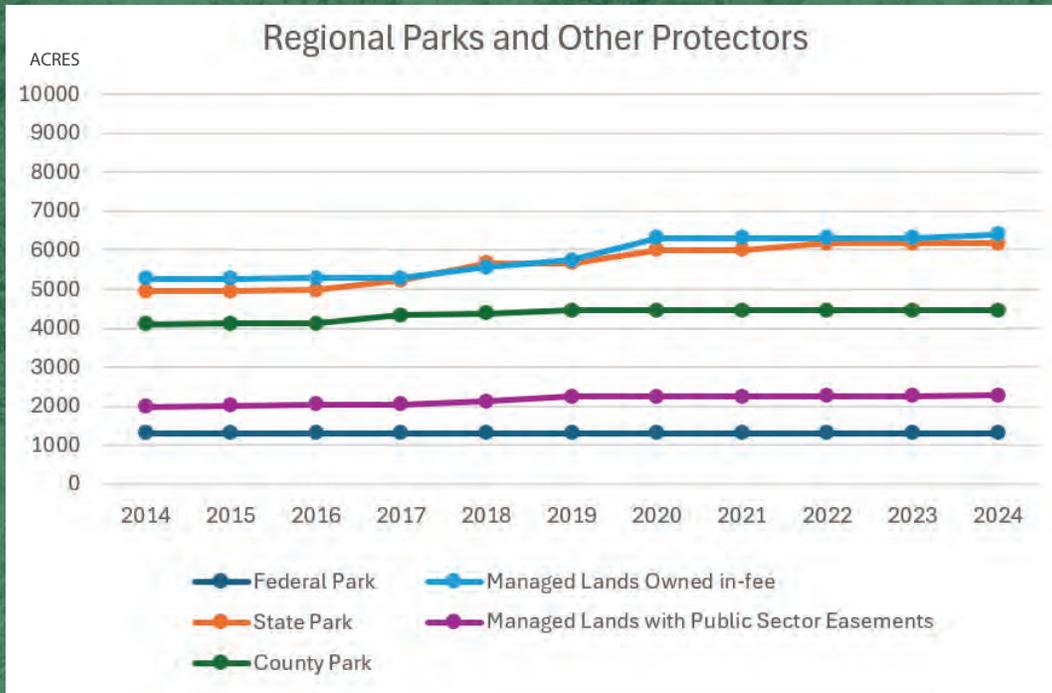
Sources

- Lakes, ponds, streams and rivers were provided by Aerial Data Reduction Associated through sublicense to the County of Chester, 1994.
- Parcels owned by homeowner associations, land trusts, water authorities, utilities, and by the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Chester County were provided by the Chester County Tax Assessors Office and the Bureau of Land Records E-PIN system, 2024.
- Parcels with agricultural conservation easements were provided by the Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, 2024.
- Parcels with Water Resources Authority easements were provided by the Chester County Water Resources Authority, 2024.
- Parcels with land trust easements were provided by the Brandywine Conservancy, the Brandywine Valley Association, the Franchese and Pinkney Conservation Trust, the Land Conservancy of Southern Chester County, the Nature Conservancy, Natural Lands, the Open Land Conservancy of Chester County, the Pennsylvania Land Trust and the Willstown Conservation Trust, through a license agreement with Chester County, 2024.

Notes

1. The Chester County Planning Commission defines Protected Open Space as: "Land and water areas that have little or no development, are used for recreation or preserving cultural or natural resources, including productive agricultural soils, and are protected either permanently or on a long term basis."
2. The information presented is based on data received from various contributing sources. Polygons that contain easements may only contain partial easements. Therefore, the area of a polygon presented may be larger than the actual area of the land that is eased.
3. Chester County is not permitted to distribute to any private or public entity, electronic data or mapping depicting parcels presented on this map that contain land trust easements, except as set forth in the licensing agreements between the land holding land trusts and the County of Chester.
4. Disclaimer: This map was digitally compiled for internal maintenance and development use by the County of Chester, Pennsylvania to provide an index to parcels and for other reference purposes. Parcel lines do not represent actual field surveys of premises. County of Chester, Pennsylvania makes no claims as to the completeness, accuracy or content of any data contained hereon, and makes no representation of any kind, including, but not limited to, the warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular use, nor are any such warranties to be implied or inferred, with respect to the information or data furnished herein.





<https://chescoplanning.org/OpenSpace/POST.cfm>



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