Delaware County Ballot Initiative

VOTE YES: The ballot question emphasizes the incredibly important and diverse aspects of the funding, which would protect our drinking water sources, the health of our rivers and streams, our wetlands that prevent flooding, our trees and wildlife habitat, and our parks and trails that improve public health — and preserve our natural areas before they're lost to development. These protections would extend throughout every municipality in Delaware County. It also gives communities the flexibility to pursue solutions that fit their local needs.

Background and Local Record

The proposal would authorize Delaware County to borrow up to $120 million for land conservation, water quality improvements, wetland protection, wildlife habitat, tree cover, and parks and greenways. "Up to" is important: approval sets a ceiling; it does not require the entire amount to be borrowed immediately or at all.

This bond invests in our future. This is a way for taxpayers to have a say in how their tax dollars are spent and their money goes to the imperative needs we have to protect our environment, our drinking water, our natural resources and our waterways. Our goal is to help our community understand the facts, and we trust voters to make informed decisions.

Why We Recommended “Yes”

After reviewing the initiative's purpose, potential benefits, estimated costs and accountability requirements, we concluded that it proposes a balanced approach to Delaware County's environmental and recreational needs.

- Protect drinking-water sources and improve water quality in rivers and creeks.
- Conserve wetlands that can absorb stormwater and help reduce flooding.
- Protect trees, wildlife habitat and natural areas before they are lost to development.
- Improve parks and create trails and greenways that connect communities.
- Give municipalities flexibility to pursue smart and responsible projects that fit local needs.

Preserving green space increases property values, protects water quality, provides recreation, and costs less to preserve now than to remediate later — it's smart economics.

Long-term borrowing, namely bonds, is ideally suited for this exact purpose. Utilizing bonds for capital investments like this is sound financial management.

Delaware County voters should know that Delaware County is the only one of the nine counties in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) that has not passed a bond referendum for these protections.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does approval require the County to borrow all $120 million?

No. The referendum establishes the maximum authorization. The County Council would still need to approve individual borrowings and establish their repayment terms.

How will residents know where the money goes?

The ballot language requires full public disclosure and annual independent audits of all project spending.

How will grants be kept from going repeatedly to the same municipalities?

The ballot language itself does not establish a municipal funding formula or prohibit repeat recipients. The County's existing Green Ways grant program provides a useful foundation: past grant evaluations have considered community need, project quality, municipal cooperation, outside matching funds and indicators of historical disadvantaged communities. Recent funding from the Green Ways grant has supported municipalities from throughout the county.

Will taxpayers immediately pay the maximum estimated amount?

Any borrowing under this authorization would be repaid over time, primarily through property taxes, similar to how the County finances other capital projects. The county's cost study estimates an annual impact of about $23.95 on the median homeowner if the full $120 million were issued at once — roughly $2 a month. That's a small price to pay to preserve and protect our water quality and natural areas in Delaware County.

Could the County use the money for another purpose?

The authorization is limited to the purposes stated in the ballot question. Public disclosure and independent audits are intended to allow residents to verify that spending remains within those purposes.

Why borrow instead of paying for projects annually?

Borrowing makes substantial funding available while land is still available and spreads costs among current and future residents who benefit.