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H.B. 540
(1_136_2257)
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 540's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: In House Ways and Means

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Pizzulli and D. Thomas

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- Beginning in tax year 2026, the partial property tax exemption will generate between \$10,500 and \$12,500 annually for the Adams County taxing jurisdictions.
- Only one nonprofit conservation organization meets the bill's criteria: The Nature Conservancy in Adams County.

Detailed Analysis

The bill establishes a partial property tax exemption for real property owned by nonprofit conservation organizations or their subsidiaries. To qualify, the property or the organization's interest in the property must be used exclusively for charitable purposes and located within a single county, with a total area exceeding 15,000 acres. The bill excludes any portion of the property used primarily for meetings, research, educational activities, or administration.

Beginning with tax year 2026, only 97.5% of the taxable value of qualifying property is exempt from taxation, and the county auditor is required to divide the property's value between the exempt and taxable portions in accordance with existing law.

Fiscal effect

The bill applies to "qualifying property" owned by nonprofit conservation organizations that hold more than 15,000 acres of real property within a single county and the land is used exclusively for charitable purposes. Such organizations commonly acquire land or conservation easements to preserve property for charitable and conservation purposes in perpetuity.

For purposes of the acreage threshold and projected tax impact, only property for which the organization holds a taxable ownership interest is included. Acreage encumbered by a

conservation easement but owned by another individual or entity is excluded because the conservation organization is not liable for property tax purposes for that land.

In the state, there are 51 land conservation organizations that are exempt from property taxes, which together employ 157 people, earn more than \$55 million in revenue each year, and hold assets of \$168 million. Under this bill, only The Nature Conservancy in Adams County meets the required criteria for the partial exemption. This organization owns a preserve system of over 20,000 acres referred to as “The Edge” in the county.

The table below shows the multiple deeded owners which hold interest in this exempt property. Depending on how these different owners are affiliated for tax purposes, the nonprofit conservation organization will pay between \$10,500 and \$12,500 to the Adams County treasurer every year, beginning in calendar year 2026. The county treasurer will distribute the money among taxing units within the territory the property is located in the same manner tax payments are allocated.

Tax Year 2024 Information for Adams County		
Deeded Owner	Exempt Acres	“Unimproved taxable value”
Cincinnati Museum of Natural History	3,022	\$1,516,160
Nature Conservancy	16,041	\$9,307,990
Nature Conservancy Cincinnati Museum of Natural History	36	\$16,030
Nature Conservancy 6375 Riverside Drive	141	\$84,010
Nature Conservancy Ohio Field Office	19	\$10,640
Total	19,259	\$10,934,830

Source: Adams County Auditor