

Policy Update for MLTC: September 2016

Federal

The New England Forest Policy Group is meeting in late September to revisit forest conservation policy/funding issues, needs, opportunities, and strategies. The original goal of the Agenda in 2010 was to enhance federal policymakers understanding of New England's unique forests and needs and to ensure equity and equal opportunity among federal conservation programs. Highstead recently reconvened the Agenda leaders, held listening sessions and released a compilation "Public Conservation Funding in New England" at www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/sites/default/files/Public%20Funding%20LR.pdf. The reinvigorated efforts include: identifying goals/messaging; focusing on three to four critical forest conservation programs, funding, and policies for the 2018/2019 Farm Bill; engaging the incoming administration.

Staying Connected Initiative: The New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEGECP) held their annual meeting in August and approved a "Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation" which instructs state and provincial natural resource and transportation agencies to:

- Elevate ecological connectivity, conservation and restoration and carbon sequestration. Encourage regional collaboration: identify priority connectivity zones and expand existing protected areas and apply resources most effectively. Support land protection and planning, promote sustainable management of public and private lands and aquatic systems
- Improve connectivity in transportation projects; identify appropriate design and size of transportation infrastructure for connectivity
- Develop regional work plans and report back the NEGECP

Resolution is available at: www.coneg.org/Data/Sites/1/media/40-3-ecological-connectivity-en.pdf

Year-end items:

Congress has yet to pass any FY17 appropriations bills. NGOs are preparing for all options including a lame duck session and year-long Continuing Resolution.

State Policy

Governor Baker plans to sign an **Executive Order on Climate Change**. The EO is expected to include provisions on adaptation/resiliency and emissions reductions. The scope of the Executive Order is likely broad, and implementation and funding support for this effort will be key.

TNC, TTOR, and TPL are convening a two-part meeting of land conservation NGOs on **land conservation financing and legislation**.

- Finance: investigation of big-thinking environmental and parks funding initiatives, including ballot measures; Review status and prognosis of recommendations from Forest Conservation Financing Commission (2010 report); Private sources of funding
- Legislative priorities among groups: Conservation Land Tax Credit; CPA; defense on PILOT; Farmland Protection; environmentally preferable siting/operation of energy facilities and transmission.
 - Note – 16 communities, including Holyoke, Pittsfield, and Boston, will vote on CPA this November.
 - DAR Commissioner LeBeaux has begun outreach and conversations regarding a Farmland Protection and Viability Plan, the goal of which will be to set farmland protection goals for the

Commonwealth and to assess and make recommendations for funding and regulatory changes that will both further farmland protection and viability.

The Massachusetts Rivers Alliance have convened watershed NGOs on **water policy and legislation**, including: drought management, water quality and quantity; green infrastructure; sustainable funding.

The Global Warming Solution Act Implementation Advisory Committee is providing recommendations to EEA on policies and regulations that will help achieve the emissions reductions goals of the GWSA. EEA and the Division of Ecological Restoration presented at the September meeting:

- **Blue Carbon:** release of an on-line Calculator (assesses GHGs budgets of restoration projects); pilot with voluntary carbon markets; exploring links to wetlands programs and regulations
- **Green Carbon:** Tree retention policies: model by-law; municipal incentives, funding and technical assistance (fact sheets)