

Policy Update for MLTC: November 2016

Federal Policy

The Nature Conservancy provided transition papers on conservation and environmental policy to **President-Elect Donald Trump**. Since Congress will remain in Republican hands, many of the committee leaders will remain the same. As we have always done, we will assess these opportunities and challenges to ensure that the Conservancy is weighing in on issues have the greatest impact to conservation and where our voice adds the most value.

Voters across the United States also overwhelmingly **supported land and water conservation in state and local ballot measures**, dedicating more than \$4.4 billion for conservation and adopting important new policies that benefit natural resources.

The New England Forest Policy Group met in late September to prioritize forest conservation policy/funding issues, needs, opportunities, and strategies. The conversation included identifying overarching goals/messaging and was focused on three to four critical forest conservation programs including funding, and policies for the 2018/2019 Farm Bill as well as engaging the incoming administration.

Staying Connected Initiative: Post-election, we have reached out to the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEGECPP) regarding follow up on appointing state officials to Working Group for work outlined (see September policy summary) under the “Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation.”

State Policy

Eleven cities and towns in Massachusetts, including Boston, voted to adopt the state's Community Preservation Act (CPA) on Election Day (and five communities voted to reject adoption).

Governor Baker signed an **Executive Order 569 Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy**. EO569 lays out a comprehensive approach to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard residents, municipalities and businesses from the impacts of climate change, and build a more resilient Commonwealth. EO 569 ensures that Massachusetts will continue to lead by example and collaborate across state government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resiliency within government operations. The Order also directs the Executive Offices of Energy and Environmental Affairs and Public Safety and Security to lead the development and implementation of a statewide comprehensive climate adaptation plan that will provide a blueprint for protecting the built and natural environment of the Commonwealth, based on the best available data on existing and projected climate change impacts. Recognizing the need to strengthen the resilience of communities throughout Massachusetts, EO569 directs the EEA and PSS to coordinate assistance to cities and towns as they prepare for the impacts of climate change.

State environmental officials are on course to put in place new regulations by August 2017 to bring Massachusetts into compliance with a Supreme Judicial Court ruling on **economy-wide greenhouse gas emission reductions**. Public comments were due by Wednesday on a set of emissions reduction ideas generated by Department of Environmental Protection staff -- preliminary ideas on topics such as gas-insulated switchgear, the state's vehicle fleet, methane leaks from the natural gas distribution, emitting electricity generators and retail electricity sellers. The agency plans to propose draft regulations by Dec. 16. Public hearings will then be completed by Feb. 24, 2017 and the goal is to promulgate final regulations by Aug. 11,

2017. Conservation organizations are urging MassDEP to consider regulation and incentives related to green carbon

The Department of Energy Resources (DoER) has convened the **Next Generation Solar Incentive stakeholder group** to develop eligibility requirements and preferable criteria to address land use impacts under the Commonwealth's energy incentive programs.

Under the newly enacted Energy Diversity law, DoER and the Department of Public Utilities are developing **draft regulations for eligibility requirements and preferable criteria** for the long-term contracts required of utilities for offshore wind and hydropower.

Land conservation NGOs met on strategic planning for **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.

The Baker-Polito Administration on November 2 announced over \$10 million to assist communities and groups across the Commonwealth in **addressing deteriorating dams and refurbishing critical coastal infrastructure**. The projects include five dam removals.