

## **Public Policy Update for MLTC May 2017**

### **State Public Policy**

The House of Representatives amended its FY18 State Operating Budget to *enhance the Conservation Land Tax Credit program*.

- Increase annual cap from \$2M to: \$3M Jan 2018; \$4M Jan 2019; \$5M Jan 2020
- Expand the eligibility of organizations which may receive CLTC donations to land conservation realty trusts. (Please note: more than a third of land trusts in Massachusetts are organized as realty trusts).
- Set an expiration date of 2025

A combination of state revenue shortfalls and anticipated federal funding reductions are providing *challenges to approving state funding increases*. The House of Representatives only approved \$77M in amendments to the \$40B FY18 State Operating Budget. Conservationists are active:

- The Department of Conservation and Recreation Stewardship Council is advocating for an asset management modernization program to support a gap analysis and to determine the amount of funding needed for DCR to meet its mission.
- The Trust for Public Land is launching a feasibility study to research new sources of revenue for land conservation in partnership with The Trustees, Mass Audubon, TNC, MLTC, and AMC.
- The Massachusetts Rivers Alliance is advocating for a water quality program gap analysis, regardless of delegation of the federal water pollution control program to MassDEP.

*The Senate Ways and Means Committee* plans to release its budget proposal is expected out on Tuesday, with amendments due at 5pm next Thursday.

### **FY18 Capital Spending (combined state bond cap, federal and other sources released May 11, 2017):**

- EEA Agency (DAR, DCR, DFG): \$12.6M
- Land Protection Grant Programs (Conservation Partnership and Landscape Partnership): \$3.75M
- Community Investment Grant Programs (Gateway City Parks, LAND, PARC, Small Communities, & Drinking Water Supply Protection): \$21.5M
- Signature Parks: \$750K
- Greening the Gateway Cities (tree planting): \$8M
- Working Forest Preservation Restrictions: \$750K

### **Legislative public hearings on land-related legislation:**

- Community Preservation Act: Revenue Committee approved legislation that would increase the recording fees as a long-term solution (for the last three years the Legislature approved providing surplus revenue). \$10M in potential surplus in the House budget. Not likely to be much surplus. Will likely advocate for the bill in the Senate as a budget amendment.
- No Net Loss (aka Public Lands Preservation Act) -- Environment Committee May 2 -- would codify the Commonwealth's No Net Loss Policy.
- Great Neighborhoods (aka Zoning Reform) -- Municipalities Committee May 2 -- would update zoning laws to allow for walkable communities, protecting open space while enabling development.
- Comprehensive Adaptation Management Plan -- Environment Committee May 16
- PILOT -- Revenue Committee tentatively scheduled for June 13
- Pollinator Habitat commission to help identify funding and planning -- Environment Committee TBD

## **Climate Change Adaptation**

EEA has been busy implementing Executive Order 569 (EO569): an integrated approach to climate change (emissions reductions and resiliency/adaptation). EEA announced the launch of the ***Municipal Vulnerability and Preparedness program*** (MVP)) to help communities conduct vulnerability assessments and prepare adaptation/resiliency plans. The MVP program will provide grants to 50 communities for assessment and planning (applications due May 25) as well as funding for communities to implement their MVP. EO 569 also directs the Executive Offices of Energy and Environmental Affairs and Public Safety and Security to lead the development and implementation of a ***statewide integrated and comprehensive climate adaptation plan***. EEA plans to hold stakeholder sessions to hear public input. The Adaptation Coalition is advocating to codify and strengthen the Baker Administration's approach to climate change by enacting into law the ***Comprehensive Adaptation Management Plan***

## **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Energy**

The Commonwealth is implementing the ***Energy Diversity law*** that requires utilities to execute long-term contracts for renewable energy (1: hydro and RPS Class I mix; and, 2: offshore wind). The conservation community has been working closely with the Department of Energy Resources to ensure environmentally preferable considerations in the generation, siting and operation of our future energy supply.

The Department of Energy Resources Solar Energy Stakeholder process developed recommendations for ***incentives for solar energy development*** on a sliding scale depending on the facility's impact on land resources.

The Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change is hosting ***public hearings across the Commonwealth on climate change and clean energy*** throughout the Commonwealth to solicit input from citizens and advocacy organizations. Hearing dates: Mashpee: May 8; Sudbury: May 9; Malden: May 15; Taunton: May 16; Weymouth: May 22; Springfield: June 12; Pittsfield: June 19; North Shore: June 20; Boston: June 26.

## **Federal Public Policy**

Massachusetts conservation organizations have been ***meeting with statewide and federal elected officials*** to discuss environmental and conservation priorities.

***Federal Budget:*** Congress approved a Continuing Resolution that stabilizes funding for the remainder of the federal fiscal year (through September 2017), with a \$400 million appropriation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. President Trump issued a budget blueprint "skinny budget" but has yet to file his FY18 budget proposal.

***Executive Orders:*** Conservation organizations have been tracking and commenting on numerous executive orders ranging from regulatory reform to climate change to the status of national monuments. The Northeast Canyonlands and Seamounts National Monument is on the list subject to review with a 60-day comment period opening May 12.

***Legislation:*** Both the House and Senate have begun to hold hearings to prepare for the 2018 Farm Bill. House Agriculture Chairman Conaway (R-TX) has publicly stated he wants to finish the 2018 Farm Bill before the 2014 Farm Bill expires in September of 2018. The 2018 Farm Bill will be crafted under extremely challenging budgetary constraints. As with any major piece of legislation, funding (in total, additional above baseline, by program) will be a major issue during the 2018 Farm Bill debate and will drive the politics behind the bill. The ability of the Agriculture Committees to secure additional spending in 2018 is doubtful.