



Conservation  
Law Foundation



June 17, 2025

Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources  
24 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02133

Via Email: [JointCommittee.Environment@malegislature.gov](mailto:JointCommittee.Environment@malegislature.gov)

**Re: H. 1052/S.557 An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration - Support**

Dear Chair Raush, Chair Barber, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Environment & Natural Resources:

We write in strong support of H. 1052/S.557 *An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration*. We request that the Committee report this bill out favorably. This bill supports wetland restoration projects by aligning permitting with the beneficial results these projects produce.

We have a set of strong environmental laws and regulations in Massachusetts, written to ensure that development in and near wetlands is done with little minimal impact to these crucial ecosystems. Ironically, these laws and regulations are now creating barriers to beneficial restoration work. The cost of permitting a restoration project can exceed hundreds of thousands of dollars, and it can take years to navigate as many as a dozen separate permits. Other states have dramatically streamlined permitting for ecological restoration projects, and we should too.

As you know, wetlands provide innumerable benefits by filtering and storing water, protecting our communities from sea level rise and inland flooding, and supporting diverse and abundant populations of fish and wildlife. They also sequester and store carbon, providing a low-cost source of emissions reductions and a crucial piece of our path to net zero by 2050.

But we are rapidly losing our salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, and rivers due to climate change and damage from past land uses. Thousands of acres of wetlands in Massachusetts are impacted by historic ditching, draining, filling, channelization, introduction of non-native plants, and other alterations that impair their natural functions. These impacts have resulted in the loss of more than 40% of our salt marshes and nearly a third of all wetlands statewide, and thousands more acres of wetlands are at risk. While strong laws now protect wetlands from large-scale destruction, action is urgently needed to heal many of these systems and halt ongoing damage and degradation.

We must scale up this work quickly, in order for the state to meet goals for clean water, clean air, biodiversity, and climate resiliency. Many entities across the Commonwealth, including state and federal agencies, are hard at work restoring degraded wetlands to unlock these benefits. The biggest hurdle to scaling up this work is environmental permitting. The complex, winding set of permits, licenses, authorizations, standards, and monitoring requirements that are set up to protect wetlands, act as a barrier to saving them. Restoration that reverses historic damage and has beneficial effects is fundamentally different than development or infrastructure projects impacting wetlands. A different, streamlined regulatory approach is needed for restoration.

The bill eliminates some of these barriers and streamlines the permitting process. Section 1 addresses Chapter 91 licensing, which should not be required for removal of obsolete structures. We will work with the bill sponsors on a technical correction to section 1 to clarify that it should apply to restoration projects in inland waterways, as well as coastal wetlands. Section 2 allows hand pulling of invasive plants in wetlands. Section 3 will provide a process for the agencies and experts to more comprehensively address all of the permitting for restoration, and Section 4 provides a pathway for piloting innovative nature-based solutions projects like oyster reefs and living shorelines.

We strongly encourage the Committee to report this bill out favorably. Thank you for your consideration.

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