



**MASSACHUSETTS  
LAND TRUST  
COALITION**

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**Conservation Partners (CP) Meeting Agenda**

**Friday, June 14, 2024 10:00 AM – 12:15 PM**

**Doyle Center Main Building, 464 Abbott Ave, Leominster, and Zoom**

**Attendance:** On record at MLTC (43 Zoom / 39 live)

**Hand-outs:** (Emailed <https://massland.org/events/june-2024-conservation-partner-meeting>)

- June 14, 2024 Meeting Agenda
- March 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting minutes
- LTA Federal Policy Update 2024 June 14
- State Policy Update 2024 June 14

Kathy Orlando welcomed all and called the meeting to order at 10:02AM.

- 1. Chair report. Kathy Orlando,** CP Chair reviewed meeting logistics for onsite and Zoom.
  - a. Introductions were done for Zoom and live attendees.
  - b. William “Buzz” Constable moved and Cynthia Henshaw seconded the motion to accept the March 8, 2024 minutes. Hearing no discussion, Kathy called the vote. **VOTE:** Unanimous
  - c. Next meeting: Friday, September 20 (hybrid: MassWildlife HQ in Westborough and via Zoom)
- 2. Update on Biodiversity Goals for the Commonwealth. Tom O’Shea, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (SEE Attachment A, p. 6)** provided this update:
  - a. Future presentations will be updated to improve accessibility and public understanding.
  - b. Most people connect to nature through flora and fauna species, therefore the biodiversity focus will be on species native to MA. Tom noted that New England is a biodiversity “hot spot”.
  - c. Need to make biodiversity relevant to all, whether urban parks and gardens, waterways or rural areas.
  - d. Emphasized that healthy ecosystems are important for all species including humans. Nature-based solutions are a key element of climate resilience.
  - e. A significant challenge will be to explain the loss of natural resources and species that are “invisible” to the public and as such, many are unaware.
  - f. Need to address:
    - i. Environmental injustice to those in both urban and rural underserved areas
    - ii. Invasive species and habitat fragmentation
    - iii. Species at risk of extinction (432 species in MA)
  - g. Gov. Maura Healy has emphasized that biodiversity is an important component in addressing climate change (EO #618).
  - h. This work in Massachusetts is part of a global movement and the pace of land conservation needs to be doubled with a priority goal of 40% of land conserved by 2050.
  - i. Need to ensure coastal and marine habitat health as these are both key to a healthy economy. Work includes dam removals and culvert replacements to restore rivers and streams.
  - j. Land use planning is a key element as each of the following need to be balanced: the housing crisis at the community level and a no net loss of farm land while achieving conservation goals for resiliency.
  - k. Engaging children with nature is a priority.
  - l. Public (virtual) meetings to be held on July 17<sup>th</sup> and July 23<sup>rd</sup> and more information to be posted to DFG’s website: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-fish-and-game>

- m. Q & A included comments on dam removal and reconciling biodiversity goals with the current administration's goal to streamline energy facilities permitting and housing development. The Unlocking Housing committee (See Kurt) is discussing ideas such as incentives to prioritize disturbed/developed land for housing vs. pristine landscape; bringing Biomap to the frontline with residents; indigenous community engagement and Conrad Crawford's work on relationships and work with indigenous tribes; how to elevate work with Cons Coms (Michelle Girard) and importance of wetlands restoration (Heidi Ricci); questions about financial resources for conservation and need for government support. Kurt noted 40% by 2050 goal is strong and the need for resources has been publicly stated and there will be an increase in state budget for this and Resilient Lands Initiative is addressing it as well; Question on PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) from Chris LaPointe in chat and how to address this, especially for smaller communities who need the tax income.
3. **Presentation of Slate and Election, FY25 MLTC Board of Trustees- Kathy Orlando (See Attachment B, p. 9)**
- The board members who are coming off the board as of June 30th (Paul Catanzaro, Karen Grey, Cynthia Henshaw, and Rich Hubbard) were graciously thanked for their service.
  - Kathy then presented both the board candidates for re-election and the new candidates and reviewed the voting process for candidates up for re-election. Robb reviewed voting procedure allowing only one voter from each eligible member organizations as posted. Candidates for re-election include: Jack Clarke, Christa Collins, and Vidya Tikku. New candidates include Rachel Bruce, Mary Griffin, and Emily Myron (See Attachment B for bios).
  - Kathy reviewed the process for voting and noted the voting options of: in favor; opposed; or abstain. In-person attendees voted via show of hands; virtual attendees a via Zoom poll. Buzz Constable moved and Cynthia Henshaw seconded the motion to approve the slate. Hearing no discussion, Kathy called the vote. **LIVE VOTE:** Unanimous in favor. **Zoom vote:** Majority in favor. (73% in favor [8 of 11 voters], 0 opposed, 27% of those on Zoom abstained [3 of 11 voters])
4. **LTA Report – Jen Plowden, New England Program Manager (See Attachment C, p. 13 / LTA Policy update as emailed)** gave the following summary:
- Mariah Fogg, formerly at BNRC, is the new New England Program Coordinator.
  - Reviewed Advancing Excellence Program to assist land trusts (LTs) increase capacity and impact.
  - Recent short-course on Building a strategic fundraising program for LTs was a success, with follow-up networking sessions upcoming
  - LTA Rally is in Providence this year Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> and early registration ends August 12<sup>th</sup> and will include a board member summit.
  - NRCS Conservation Acquisition Team building programs to assure LTs understand federal funding sources. On June 24<sup>th</sup> there's a webinar on this topic. Link is on website and was put in the chat to meet the NRCS team: <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/learn/explore/meet-the-alliances-nrcs-easement-acquisition-team>
  - LTA has new jobs posted for New England and all directed to see Job Board on LTA's website.
  - All directed to Resource Center on LTA website.
  - Jen encouraged all with questions or future needs to contact her.
  - Q&A: a LT does not have to be accredited to participate in any of the sessions or programs noted; In addition, programs are open to land trusts that are members of *either* LTA or MLTC.
5. **MLTC Staff Report -- Robb Johnson, MLTC Executive Director (See Attachment D, p. 16)** provided this update.
- Reviewed upcoming meetings including the next one on September 20<sup>th</sup>
  - Program updates were reviewed and Robb thanked all involved in recent programs.
  - Noted that MLCC in March was successful.
  - Next MLCC will be in March at UMass Amherst and a call for proposals will be coming this summer. He summarized the results of the vote on whether the conference should be on Friday vs. Saturday and attendees were polled: **Question:** If the MLCC were on a Friday vs. Saturday would you be more likely

to attend? In person count: more likely: 8; less likely: 1; no difference 21. Virtual participants' online poll: more likely = 59% [17 of 29 voters], less likely = 0, no difference = 41% [12 of 29 voters]

- i. Frequent comments that those who work during the week and could not attend on a weekday. This comment was also common in poll done online earlier this week.
  - ii. Heidi Ricci noted other conferences held on Saturdays in March make it difficult to give up too many Saturdays.
  - iii. Question was asked about whether MLCC being held in western MA is being considered.
- e. Robb noted that some MLCC attendees were receiving **emails** offering to sell the attendee list of past MLCCs. MLTC is investigating whether this is fraudulent and will have an update in next week's eNews.
  - f. Robb encouraged everyone to review the Service Provider Directory and encourage service providers they work with to add themselves.
  - g. Resources for LTs reviewed including large video library of past trainings.

6. **Policy Update. Robb Johnson** provided the following update for **Jack Clarke**, MLTC Policy Chair who could not attend today's meeting. (*See Attachment E, p. 19*).

- a. Updates were given on priority legislation, funding and administrative actions as noted in Attach. E.
- b. Robb thanked Martha Bebinger for her radio story on the Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) on WBUR (<https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/05/24/conservation-land-tax-credit-funding-preservation-rehoboth>) and noted that this story might go national for a Marketplace segment.
- c. Overall, the state budget is headed in positive direction.
- d. Climate Bill emerging but timing uncertain as issues are being addressed. Goal will be to streamline the energy facilities siting. Recognizing the need for this, advocates are also working to ensure that water and land resources are protected.  
Robb thanked everyone who sat on the State's Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting (CEISP), which provided recommendations that will shape this bill. .
- e. Environmental Bond anticipated in early 2025, but groundwork is being laid now for this as it will be setting the spending framework for several years to come. Allows policy riders to be attached and MLTC is now participating in a broad coalition of colleagues organized by Sam Anderson, Director of Legislative and Government Affairs at Mass Audubon, to advocate for our priorities.
- f. The State Capital Plan for the coming year was released yesterday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. (See figures on p. 19). Robb asked Kurt to comment on how numbers compared to last year and he noted that EEA Land Protection has gone up by \$1.2 M from last year, while most other lines were level funded. This is all state money but additional federal monies, including ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds, are also covering conservation and stewardship costs. Deadlines for applying for these federal matching funds are imminent and applications will be needed ASAP.
- g. MLTC is very interested in assisting local LTs in hosting legislator events based on recent, successful events.

7. **State Agency Updates –Bob Wilber, Director of Conservation Services and Agency Staff** provided this update:

- a. Current CR status: DCR is working very hard on the CR review process to improve it and reduce the remaining backlog. Grant related applications (38) were prioritized and progress has been made on deadline sensitive applications for June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. CLTC CRs (21) will be addressed soon as they are calendar year based. Overall, 247 CRs are "in the system" with status as follows:
  - 50 are out for signatures or applicants' action
  - 38 are for grants, to be finished by 6-30-2024
  - 21 are CLTC projects, due by the end of the year
  - 113 are in active review
  - 84 have not yet started.
- b. Staffing: The goal is to have the backlog addressed by this fall. Many CRs are going to an outside law firm for initial review to accelerate the process. Four additional reviewers are starting next week and will join the other outside reviewers already on board. Robb asked for additional clarity on how the

current updates will assure that the backlog will be addressed by fall, given that these promises of additional help coming soon have been repeated at the past several of our quarterly meetings. Bob responded that some of the delay issues are outside of DCS control and progress is being made on this.

- c. Lengthy discussion on the frustration with delay despite efforts of Bob and Kurt. Christa suggested both the CR template and the CR drafting process be improved and Bob noted that both of these, in addition to other things, are being considered. The CR template/process group will be reconvened.
- d. More comments were made on the need for resolution of deadlines especially when working with landowners. Buzz Constable emphasized that the backlog should be resolved before reconvening the CR group. Bob is planning to move on both. Colin Novik mentioned that non-deadline driven CRs may not get done while the landowners are still alive.
- e. Heidi Ricci asked about the selection process for the new outside law firm. Bob confirmed that general counsel is moving forward on this. Kathy Sferra asked questions on the process for experienced CR writers, and whether they could benefit from expedited review. Bob clarified that the same reviewer will work with the applicant.
- f. Mark Robinson on Zoom suggested a working group of land trust practitioners and state agency staffs brainstorm ways to streamline working in partnerships, including multiple grant rounds each year, lengthening the pre-acquisition window for partners on state grants, removing the CR requirement on state grants when possible. Robb Johnson suggested this discussion could be held at the fall retreat, as the planning committee had already proposed focus on related topics.
- g. Bob summarized that the Resilient Land Coalition, a public/private effort, will be holding an urban-focused meeting in August.
- h. Two new grants for private forest reserves which could be helpful for NGOs and municipalities (munis) are being issued; also coming soon is Land Conservation Assistance grant to help munis and LTs engage needed capacity to complete land conservation projects.
- i. EEA is gearing up for an NRCS grant application which if funded would be distributed through the Resilient Land Coalition. Funds could be used for a variety of conservation related projects. In response to a question, an indigenous tribe could be eligible to apply and receive funding if done with 501(c)(3).

8. **Kurt Gaertner, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Policy**, provided the following summary:

- a. The SMART (Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target) Program is working on revised solar guidelines and incentives, which will be provided for comment soon.
- b. The Administration is going to work on a comprehensive land use plan with the intent of looking for solutions to reconcile potential conflicts, such as that between the need to significantly increase housing and conservation.
- c. Regulations to implement the PLPA (Public Lands Conservation Act) have been drafted and will be provided for comment following the required process.
  - i. The PLPA requires an assessment to determine if a replacement parcel provides equivalent or greater natural resource value. The first EEA findings on such a question (related to an Article 97 withdrawal petition from the Town of Milton) will be issued soon.
  - ii. No submissions have been made via the PLPA Portal, so they are reconsidering what mechanisms should be used to receive petitions and supporting documentation from those proposing Article 97 withdrawals. We are approaching the end of legislative session. It seems Art. 97 bills have decreased in number this session compared to past session. It is unclear if the PLPA was a factor in this, but it is positive.
- d. Melissa Cryan reviewed noted the approaching July 11th PARC and LAND grant deadline and July 15th Conservation Partnership grant deadline. She invited everyone to reach out to her with questions or needs. Also, she wanted to make it known that the Conservation Assistance funding can be used to fund designs to make local parks more resilient. Vanessa Farny said that decisions from the recent Landscape Partnership grant round are pending final approval and should be known in July. The new Land Conservation Assistance capacity grant program should be out soon.

- e. APR and Farmland Action Plan updates were given by Katherine Otto from MDAR. New grants are coming out for APRs and private APRs, coordinating on a regional scale. MDAR has about \$10M to commit by the end of October. Farmland action plan was released in December and now working on how to implement priority elements of that. Please reach out to Katherine Otto with questions and she welcomed LT involvement.

## 9. Committee and Working Group Updates

- a. **Early Career Conservation Network (ECCN).** Mariah Fogg (Land Trust Alliance) gave the following update:
  - i. Organizing Committee has been meeting monthly to increase their strategic approach with one event per season per area of state. Technical training combined with casual gatherings.
  - ii. Three events are being hosted this summer and link in chat on July 24<sup>th</sup> event with a Coldbrook Preserve tour: <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/earconcernetcolbropretou>.
  - iii. Networking events are being planned for both Cambridge, MA and W. MA with Kestrel LT.
  - iv. New participants on the committee were noted.
- b. **Agriculture.** Kathy Orlando (Sheffield Land Trust) introduced Kathleen Doherty from AFT who is new in her role which is to support LTs and AG Coms to protect farmland. Funding is available. Referenced upcoming webinar on this topic on June 20. She asked for anyone with questions to contact her. Kathy noted that goal is to leverage LT involvement in ag protection. Also noted that MDAR is very good with this. Towns across MA are adopting [Farmland of Local Importance](#) which makes funding available for preserving some farms that may not have qualified before.

## 10. Other announcements

- a. Colin Novik noted a new power line corridor (National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor) is being proposed that
  - i. Would be 1 mile wide and 60 miles long. This corridor will then be exempt from rules and regulations concerning the conserved lands it will be going through. Map link posted in chat and here, noting it intersects with various state and land trust-protected properties: [https://massland.org/sites/default/files/images/nietc\\_ny-ne.png](https://massland.org/sites/default/files/images/nietc_ny-ne.png)
  - ii. More information on the power line corridor: <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/national-interest-electric-transmission-corridor-designation-process>

**12:15: Adjournment** Cynthia Henshaw moved and Janet Milkman seconded the motion to adjourn. Hearing no discussion, Kathy called the vote. **VOTE:** Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rita Gibes Grossman, clerk

# Attachment A Update on Biodiversity Goals for the Commonwealth



**VISION 2050**  
BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH



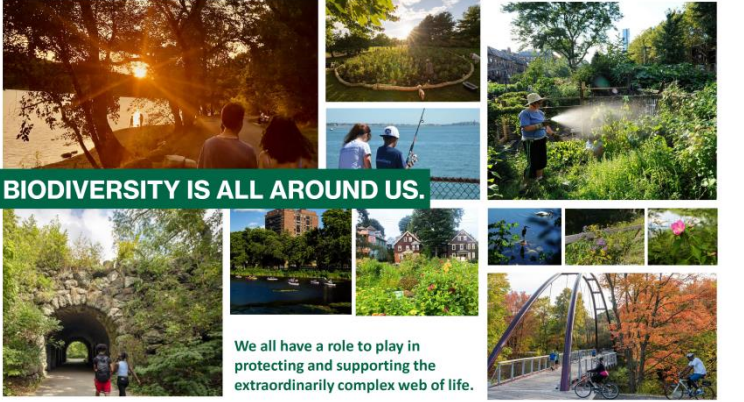
**CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY: OUR SHARED COMMITMENT**  
The Department of Fish & Game's mission is to preserve the state's natural resources, including marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife species, plants, and natural communities, as well as the habitats that support them.



516 species of birds  
11,000 global  
7 species of frogs  
7,500 global  
82 species of trees  
73,000 global  
83 species of mammals  
6,400 global

**BIODIVERSITY** one of Earth's most important resources

Biodiversity – or biological diversity - is the extraordinary variety and abundance of living things: species of plants, insects, birds, and other animals and their genetic diversity. Species evolved over millennia and have inherent, intrinsic value. Biodiversity anchors our history and culture, sustains our health and economy, and enriches our quality of life.



**BIODIVERSITY IS ALL AROUND US.**

We all have a role to play in protecting and supporting the extraordinarily complex web of life.

## BIODIVERSITY SUSTAINS US

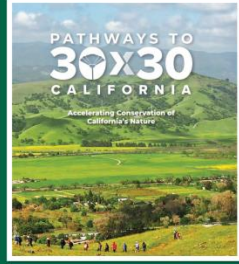
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <br><b>HUMAN HEALTH</b><br>Healthy ecosystems create healthy communities—nature provides us with essential clean water, clean air, food, medicine, materials, and physical + mental well-being. | <br><b>OUTDOOR RECREATION &amp; TOURISM</b><br>Biodiversity plays a vital role in Massachusetts' economy + quality of life—special places make our state an attractive place to visit and live. |
| <br><b>CLIMATE RESILIENCE</b><br>Nature is a climate solution—restoring forests, rivers, estuaries + wetlands is a cost-effective, impactful way to prepare cities + towns for climate hazards. | <br><b>SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES</b><br>Protecting biodiversity will sustain Massachusetts' nation-leading seafood industry + commercial fisheries for future generations.                          |
| <br><b>CARBON SEQUESTRATION</b><br>Restoring biodiversity hotspots—wetlands, salt marshes, eelgrass—will help MA restore the ability of nature to help us reach net-zero.                       | <br><b>FOOD SECURITY</b><br>Biodiversity sustains our local food systems + economy—ensuring viability of agriculture, hunting + fishing, wild harvest in a time of climate uncertainty.         |

## BIODIVERSITY IN CRISIS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <br><b>POLLUTION OF LANDS &amp; WATERS</b><br>Ecosystems are significantly degraded—legacy + present-day pollution threatens ecosystems and human health.    | <b>INVASIVE SPECIES</b><br>Fast-growing, non-native terrestrial and aquatic plants, invasive species outcompete native species and overtake the ecosystem.  |
| <br><b>HABITAT LOSS</b><br>We are losing critical natural spaces at an alarming rate—conversion of unprotected lands threatens essential remaining habitats. | <b>HABITAT FRAGMENTATION</b><br>Poorly placed infrastructure—defunct dams, underused culverts, excessive pavement—fragments habitats, blocking wildlife migration + harming our state's ability to withstand climate impacts. |
| <br><b>ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</b><br>Stark disparities exist in access to nature and its many benefits—especially for underserved + EJ communities.           | <b>CLIMATE CRISIS</b><br>Climate change is amplifying threats—Without action, we will see loss of essential species + habitats that sustain us, threatening our public health, safety, food security, and economy.            |



**Executive Order No. 618**  
BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS FOR 2030, 2040, 2050  
Signed by Governor Maura Healey



**THIS IS PART OF A GLOBAL MOVEMENT**



- Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 + Action Plan
- California Biodiversity Initiative Roadmap & Pathways to 30x30 Strategy
- Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act of 2023

**BIODIVERSITY IS A KEY CLIMATE SOLUTION**

Preserving biodiversity is a critical climate resilience strategy—protecting + restoring key habitats will allow Massachusetts to **boost the power of nature** to withstand future climate impacts, adapt to rising seas, extreme weather, and drought, and **store and sequester carbon** to meet our net-zero goals.

**NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS**  
Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer's Recommendations for a whole-of-government approach to climate crisis call out **bold biodiversity conservation goals** as a key strategy for adaptation.

**PHASE #1 IDENTIFYING DRAFT GOALS & STRATEGIES**  
FALL 2023 – WINTER 2024

**PHASE #2 ENGAGEMENT & REVIEW**  
SPRING - SUMMER 2024

**PHASE #3 FINAL GOALS & STRATEGIES**  
FALL 2024

- Assessment & Research by DFG Working Group
- Develop Framework:
  - PROTECT
  - RESTORE
  - SUSTAIN
  - CONNECT
- Draft: Goals, Strategies, and Metrics

- Public Engagement Process
- 1:1 Engagement with Divisions, EEA Sister Agencies (CZM, DEP, DCR, MDAR, DOER) other Secretariats (DOT, DESE, DCAMM, EOHEd, EOHLc)
- Biodiversity Workshops and Presentations to engage agencies, conservation partners, commercial interests, government, academics, EJ + Indigenous communities
- Public listening sessions in July

- Continue engagement
- Biodiversity Goals finalized + announced
- Release kicks off statewide "Movement for Biodiversity"

**VISION 2050 FOR BIODIVERSITY**

**PROTECT**  
KEY HABITATS, LANDSCAPES, SEASCAPES

**RESTORE**  
HABITATS, SPECIES, CONNECTIVITY

**SUSTAIN**  
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, FOOD SECURITY, ECONOMY

**CONNECT**  
ALL PEOPLE WITH NATURE

**CRITICAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES**

**CORE HABITATS**

**GLOBALLY RARE "HOT SPOTS"**

**PRIORITY 40%**  
CONSERVE KEY HABITATS FOR SPECIES

- Prioritize key lands to protect under Clean Energy + Climate Plan 40% by 2050
- Protect 500,000+ acres identified by BioMap
- Best management practices used to maximize species diversity
- Active management goals established for forest biodiversity

**EXAMPLE: CONSERVE MARINE ESSENTIAL HABITATS**  
Mapping to identify + guide protection and restoration of critical seascapes—eelgrass, complex hard bottom.

**SEAFOOD**

**BLUE ECONOMY**  
SUSTAINING A THRIVING SEAFOOD INDUSTRY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Protect and restore **core coastal + marine habitats** to boost marine biodiversity, commercial fishing, and climate resilience.

- Restore eelgrass habitats; identify sensitive, special, unique habitats (SSUs) identified by MA Ocean Plan
- Protect and restore salt marshes to maximize carbon sequestration
- Upgrade stormwater + wastewater treatment for No Net Loss of Shellfish Growing Areas

**EXAMPLE: RESTORE RIVERS & STREAMS**  
300+ dam removals + 300+ culvert replacements by 2050 for fish passage, aquatic connectivity, + climate resilience.

**MAKE ROOM TO MOVE**  
CLIMATE CORRIDORS FOR MIGRATION & RESILIENCE

Targets prioritize **landscape-scale + watershed-scale restoration** to

- Knit together disconnected core habitats
- Restore fish passage for all diadromous/cold water fisheries
- Support species in climate migration by providing refuges + mobility
- Facilitate salt marsh, beach, + flood plain migration as sea levels rise

**EXAMPLE: BIODIVERSITY SUITABILITY TOOLS & SITING POLICY**  
Guide sustainable development around sensitive habitats + climate-vulnerable areas.

**LAND USE PLANNING**  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR PEOPLE & NATURE

Elevate biodiversity as a priority—meet our climate, clean energy, transportation, and housing goals and:

- Avoid impacts to **core habitats + critical natural landscapes**
- Inform housing + transportation goals and projects
- Inform **clean energy generation + carbon sequestration policy + actions**

**EXAMPLE: FARMS + BIODIVERSITY**  
Encourage farmers to incorporate biodiversity-friendly farming practices to boost productivity + sustain ecosystem health.

**FOOD SECURITY**  
SUSTAINABLE HARVEST & FARMLAND BIODIVERSITY

- Support farms in applying biodiversity-friendly practices for healthy soils, pollinator edges, agroforestry, intercropping
- No Net Loss of Farmland
- Bolster food security by growing "Hunters Share the Harvest" + "Share the Catch"
- Ensure sustainable, equitable access to wild harvest



**EXAMPLE: INNOVATION PATHWAY & CHAPTER 74**  
 Develop pathways for future workforce for climate + biodiversity.

**NATURE IN THE CLASSROOM**

Support inherent appreciation for + belonging in nature from a young age:

- Launch the **Nature in our Schools Initiative** to educate all students on the nature of Massachusetts and biodiversity principles in the classroom, after-school, or summer programming.
- Reach **all students** in Environmental Justice + underserved areas.



**EXAMPLE: BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP**  
 Launch a "Movement for Biodiversity" campaign to foster individual adoption of biodiversity-friendly practices.

**NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS**

- Ensure every person has access to a **biodiverse greenspace** (pocket forest, urban garden, food forest, pollinator pathway) in walking distance of their home
- **Supporting municipal-led initiatives** – partner with municipalities
- **Supporting community-led initiatives**—partner with local organizations



**STAY IN TOUCH!**

As we develop our recommendations, we are looking for **you** to bring us your vision for nature in 2050!

Over the next months, we will have **opportunities to engage**— including public listening sessions and surveys.

**VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE:**

Sign up for the latest news, events, and ways to take action!

[mass.gov/biodiversity](https://mass.gov/biodiversity)







## Attachment B Board Elections

**Thank you to Board Members  
with term ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Paul Catanzaro (2019 – 2024)**

**Karen Grey (2011 – 2024)**

**Cynthia Henshaw (2011 – 2024)**

**Rich Hubbard (2011 – 2024)**

**We're grateful for your many years of service to MLTC  
and the conservation community!**

## Board of Trustees Elections

Zoom participants will use a Zoom Poll to vote on the proposed slate, with the options "In favor" "Opposed" and "Abstain". We'll do a show of hands for those in person.

Per our bylaws, only **land trust members** of MLTC are eligible to vote.

If multiple representatives of your organization are present, please message each other to agree which of you will vote.

If not voting, please ignore the poll.

## **FY23 MLTC Members Eligible to Vote (A – L)**

Acton Conservation Trust  
Alford Land Trust  
American Farmland Trust  
Andover Village Improvement Society  
Arlington Land Trust  
Ashby Land Trust  
Attleboro Land Trust

Barnstable Land Trust  
Belmont Land Trust  
Berkshire Natural Resources Council  
Bolton Conservation Trust  
Boxborough Conservation Trust  
BTA/BOLT  
Brewster Conservation Trust  
Broad Brook Coalition  
Buzzards Bay Coalition

Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust  
Carlisle Conservation Foundation  
Chatham Conservation Foundation  
Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust  
Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust  
Cohasset Conservation Trust  
Common Ground Land Trust  
Concord Land Conservation Trust

Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust  
Dennis Conservation Trust  
Dover Land Conservation Trust  
Dracut Land Trust  
Dudley Conservation Land Trust  
Dunstable Rural Land Trust

East Quabbin Land Trust  
Eastham Conservation Foundation  
Essex County Greenbelt

Fairhaven-Acushnet Land Preservation Trust  
Franklin Land Trust

Grafton Land Trust  
Grafton Land Trust  
Great Barrington Land Conservancy  
Greater Worcester Land Trust  
Groton Conservation Trust  
Groundwork Lawrence

Harvard Conservation Trust  
Harwich Conservation Trust  
Hilltown Land Trust  
Hingham Land Conservation Trust  
Hudson Land Trust

Kestrel Land Trust

Lancaster Land Trust  
Land Preservation Society of Norton Inc  
Lenox Land Trust  
Lincoln Land Conservation Trust  
Littleton Conservation Trust  
Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust

## **FY23 MLTC Members Eligible to Vote (M-W)**

Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust  
Marblehead Conservancy  
Mass Audubon  
Massachusetts Forest Trust  
Mattapoisett Land Trust  
Medford-Brooks Estate Land Trust  
Metacomet Land Trust  
Minnechaug Land Trust  
Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Nantucket Conservation Foundation  
Nantucket Land Bank  
Nantucket Land Council  
Nashoba Conservation Trust  
Native Land Conservancy  
Needham Land Trust  
New England Forestry Foundation  
Newton Conservators  
North County Land Trust  
Northeast Wilderness Trust

Opacum Land Trust  
Orenda Wildlife Land Trust  
Orleans Conservation Trust

Pascommuck Conservation Trust  
Paxton Land Trust  
Princeton Land Trust  
Provincetown Conservation Trust

Rattlesnake Gutter Trust  
Reading Open Land Trust  
Rehoboth Land Trust  
Richmond Land Trust  
Rochester Land Trust  
Rural Land Foundation of Lincoln

Sandwich Conservation Trust  
Seekonk Land Conservation Trust  
Sheffield Land Trust  
Sherborn Rural Land Foundation  
Sippican Lands Trust  
Sheriffs Meadow Foundation  
Southborough Open Land Foundation  
Stockbridge Land Trust  
Stow Conservation Trust  
Sudbury Valley Trustees

The 300 Committee  
The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts  
The Trust for Public Land  
The Trustees of Reservations  
Tyngsboro Land Trust

Upper Charles Conservation Land Trust

Walden Woods Project  
Waltham Land Trust  
Wareham Land Trust  
Wellesley Conservation Land Trust  
Wellfleet Conservation Trust  
Westborough Community Land Trust  
Westford Conservation Trust  
Weston Forest & Trial Association  
Westport Land Conservation Trust  
Westwood Land Trust  
Wildlands Trust  
Williamstown Rural Lands

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## Candidates for Re-Election for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2024

**Jack Clarke** has served on the MLTC Board since 2021. He retired after twenty-six years as Mass Audubon's Director of Public Policy. Previously he worked for the National Park Service at the Cape Cod National Seashore, and was Assistant Director of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Office. Jack is a gubernatorial appointee to the Mass. Ocean Advisory Committee, and is on the CPA Coalition Steering Committee. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Boston College. He lives in Gloucester.

**Christa Collins** has served on the MLTC Board since 2021 and is currently Treasurer. She started her conservation career at the Nashua River Watershed Association, and in 2002 joined Sudbury Valley Trustees, where she ended her tenure in 2022 as Director of Land Protection. She holds a bachelor's degree from Middlebury College and a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Michigan. She lives in Concord.

**Vidya Tikku** has served on the MLTC Board since 2021. She is the Vice President, Urban Outdoors at The Trustees. She has been with the Trustees since 2005, and held previous positions at Boston Natural Areas Network, the Neighborhood Parks Council in San Francisco and as a practicing architect in India. She holds a Master's degree in Architecture & Urban Design from Washington University and a Certificate in Environmental Policy and International Development from Harvard Extension School. She lives in Lexington.

## Candidate for the MLTC Board of Trustees for a 3-year term beginning July 1, 2024



**Rachel Bruce** is Chief of Staff at Wildlands Trust, the regional land trust for Southeastern Massachusetts. Rachel has built her conservation career interacting with and educating people in a variety of outdoor settings in Massachusetts, Oregon and Minnesota. She started at Wildlands Trust as a TerraCorps member in 2014 before moving into positions as programming coordinator & educator, outreach & education manager, director of special projects, and now chief of staff. She oversees the D.W. Field Park Initiative in Brockton and the outreach team at Wildlands, working to improve access to nature in environmental justice communities and increase the organizational capacity and regional impact of Wildlands Trust. She holds a degree in environmental science from UMass Amherst.

Rachel is honored by the nomination to serve on the Board of Directors at MLTC and would look forward to bringing her affinity for planning and logistics and passion for fairness and inclusion to this role.

## **Candidate for the MLTC Board of Trustees for a 2-year term beginning July 1, 2024**



**Mary Griffin** has had a distinguished and varied career in conservation, including past service as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Southeast Regional Director of Mass Audubon, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, General Counsel of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and Chief of Legal Services and Land Protection at the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

She is currently a part-time hearing officer for the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and a part-time Ranger for the Trustees of Reservations. She is a graduate of Davidson College and Cornell Law School. She lives in Orleans and is a Board Member and Vice President of Orleans Conservation Trust.

## **Candidate for the MLTC Board of Trustees for a 1-year term beginning July 1, 2024**



**Emily Myron** is the Senior Policy Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts. Since joining the team in 2018, she has worked with state and federal legislators, agencies, and partners to advance land and water conservation and climate funding and policy. Prior to TNC, Emily led international and local-level conservation work in roles at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Chesapeake Conservancy.

She holds a Master of Environmental Management degree in Ecosystem Science and Conservation from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, a degree in Biology from St. Mary's College of Maryland, and executive education in conservation finance.

# Attachment C LTA Update

## New staff in New England

More capacity to support you

**Mariah Fogg**  
New England Program Coordinator  
[mfogg@lta.org](mailto:mfogg@lta.org)  
(202) 349-0587



## Advancing Excellence Program

An Alliance and MLTC program to increase capacity and impact

- Advancing conservation by helping land trusts identify and take the next steps towards excellence
- Program discovery and needs assessment nearing completion
- Key elements:
  - Leadership development
  - Organizational assessment and implementation support
  - Grants
  - Training on key topics

## Build a Strategic Fundraising Program

- 42 people from 20 MA land trusts participated in the short course in May.
- Three optional peer sessions this summer.
- Participants can apply for development assessment. Applications due June 28.



## Rally 2024



- September 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>
- Scholarships are available for New England land trusts. PLEASE APPLY BY JUNE 28!
- <https://alliancerally.org/scholarships-and-stipends/>
- Early bird ends August 12<sup>th</sup>
- Rally 2025 will be in Cleveland, OH (Sept 3-6, 2025)

## Board Member Summit



- Focus on small and mid-sized land trusts
- Registration is open
- \$50 per person, includes lunch and light breakfast
- Peer learning, networking, board leadership topics
- Click here to learn more: <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/learn/explore/land-trust-board-summit-at-rally-2024>

## NRCS Conservation Acquisition Team

Helping Land Trusts Access Federal Easement Funding through ACEP-ALE and RCPP

- **Justin Merrifield**, Senior Project Manager NRCS Easement Acquisitions
- Interested in these programs but have concerns about staff capacity, knowledge and understanding or the bureaucratic lift that can come with the programs?
- This team offers one-on-one support, knowledge sharing, and document assistance to get these critical federal dollars on the ground to protect our nation's food and fiber system.
- "Meet the team" webinar on June 24. Register [here](#).



## Government Relations Update

Federal policy updates can be found on MLTC's website

- Learn more about federal funding opportunities on the Alliance's [new site](#) listing current federal funding opportunities
- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced 2024 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). \$1.5 billion available during current sign-up period which ends July 2nd
- **Jeremy Lougee**, Regional Conservation Partnership Program Manager
- Free webinar recording: [Writing a successful RCPP-proposal](#)

### Federal Funding Opportunities

Posted September 29, 2023 / Updated May 3

SOURCE  
Land Trust Alliance



**ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT**  
The federal government is a vital source of funding for land and natural resource conservation in the United States. Parks and public lands, prairie farms and ranches, vital wildlife habitat, healthy watersheds and more all receive federal dollars. Listed below are current federal conservation program funding opportunities that might be the right match for your most conservation project. Opportunities are organized by deadline date and include opportunities from the Inflation Reduction Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and other sources. For a complete listing of current federal funding opportunities available to land trusts, please visit [grants.gov](#).

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# Land Trust Alliance Job Board

<https://landtrustalliance.org/job-board>

Submit a job [here](#).



# Upcoming National Webinars

• <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/learn/explore/all-access-pass-for-2024-webinars>

An **all-access pass** gives you and your entire team the keys to 30 webinars on critical topics in land conservation, so you can learn from the best right at your desk

# Resource Center – Learning Paths

# Please reach out any time!



**Jen Plowden**  
 New England Senior Program Manager  
 Land Trust Alliance  
[jplowden@lta.org](mailto:jplowden@lta.org)  
 (978) 595 - 3871



**Land Trust Alliance  
Federal Policy Updates**  
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition Conservation Partners Meeting  
Friday, June 14

**Congress**

Last month, House Speaker Mike Johnson announced an ambitious timeline to pass all 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2025. Determined to complete the task before members of Congress head home for August recess, the appropriations process is now well underway. The first bill expected to be voted on is the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Legislation – one of the less controversial. Additional bills that are expected to be released in coming weeks include Defense, Homeland Security, Financial Services-General Government and State-Foreign Operations. Across the board cuts to nondefense funding is expected including a reduction of funding for Interior, EPA and related agencies from \$41 billion to \$36.94 billion. Funding for Agriculture is expected to be cut by \$355 million than currently enacted. In addition, we expect to see deep cuts across the board for funding related to climate change as well as a lot of bad policy riders. The Alliance plans to continue to monitor the appropriations process and keep members updated about funding for key agencies and programs for our community.

**Farm Bill**

On May 23, House Agriculture Committee Chair GT Thompson (R-Pa.) marked up H.R. 8464, the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2024 in committee. The bill, which includes the vast majority of the Land Trust Alliance's recommendations, passed out of committee on a 33-21 bipartisan vote.

The House bill text makes important changes to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. It would:

- Increase annual funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program from the current funding level of \$450 million to \$600 million in FY25 and growing to \$700 million in FY29.
- Increase the federal share to 65% for most transactions.
- Increase the federal share to 90% for socially disadvantaged landowners.
- Provide flexibility for minor easement modifications.
- Exempt ACEP from the Adjusted Gross Income limitation.
- Unfortunately, it strikes all references to Buy-Protect-Sell transactions under ACEP.

In addition, the bill would:

- Establish the Forest Conservation Easement Program with mandatory annual funding starting at \$25 million in FY25 that would grow to \$65 million in FY29.
- Allow up to 10% of RCPP project agreements to cover eligible partner administrative costs.
- Recognize certified entities for RCPP easements.

One additional note: The bill would reinvest the remaining Inflation Reduction Act funds, about \$14 billion, into the conservation title without the climate sideboards. Following the House vote, Chair Thompson said he does not anticipate bringing the bill to the House floor until September to provide time for negotiations.

Over in the Senate, the Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), released a detailed summary of a Senate bill, the Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act, earlier this month. The summary also reflected most of the Alliance Farm Bill recommendations including clarifications to make

Buy-Protect-Sell work as intended; however, it did not include FCEP. Agriculture Committee Ranking Member, John Boozman (R-AR) is expected to release his "framework" sometime in the next week or so.

It is possible for Congress to pass a Farm Bill this year and there are many reasons why doing so makes sense, including the fact that a delay beyond this year will mean less IRA funding to reallocate into baseline funding. As such, we need to be sure members of Congress hear from our community.

**Call to Action:** - If you have not done so already, please help the Alliance in delivering a cohesive message to Congress about the importance of passing the Farm Bill this year. Upon determining [who represents you in Congress](#), email their staff and urge their office to support the Alliance's Farm Bill recommendations and to pass the Farm Bill this year. At same time, please consider 1) urging your elected officials to include supporting the Forest Conservation Easement Program Act with mandatory funding; 2) share stories with them about the benefits of perpetual easements for their district/state and 3) invite the member of Congress to visit a conserve land trust property this summer. Once you have completed this request, please email [policy@lta.org](mailto:policy@lta.org).

**Current Federal Funding Opportunities**

As a reminder, the Alliance has launched a site dedicated to providing a listing of all current federal funding opportunities. One of the newest funding opportunities added was the announcement by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding proposals for the 2024 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS announced its highest ever funding for RCPP with \$1.5 billion available during the current sign-up period which ends July 2nd.

To access the website and obtain additional information about the RCPP opportunity and other funding opportunities, [click here](#).

**Expanded Partnership with Natural Resources Conservation Service**

The Alliance continues to build out services as part of its expanded partnership agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. As previously noted, we welcomed Justin Merrifield to our team as senior project manager for the NRCS Conservation Acquisitions team in January, and in March, Jeremy Lougee, our new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Program Manager came onboard.

Justin's NRCS Conservation Acquisitions Team will be responsible for rolling out assistance for land trusts on NRCS easements. In the next month, three additional staff members will join the team and assist the Alliance in beginning to support land trusts interested in protecting farms and ranches using ACEP-ALE and RCPP. For land trust staff that are interested in these programs but have had concerns about staff capacity, knowledge and understanding or the bureaucratic lift that can come with the programs, the Conservation Acquisition Team will be able to offer one-on-one support, knowledge sharing, and document assistance to get these critical federal dollars on the ground to protect our nation's food and fiber system. The team will roll out the services they can offer by hosting a webinar on June 24. Registration is currently open and free of charge thanks to our NRCS partnership. Reach out to Justin at [jmerrifield@lta.org](mailto:jmerrifield@lta.org) for more information.

In the RCPP Program Manager role, Jeremy serves as a joint resource for land trusts and NRCS personnel to strengthen participation in RCPP, deliver training opportunities, and coordinate the development of online resources to better align land trust expectations and NRCS delivery of the program. Since launching, we have already seen significant growth in land trust interest and utilization of these

resources, and we expect further engagement as the [newly announced \\$1.5 billion in USDA funding](#) finds its way to partners. Jeremy also recently hosted a webinar with NRCS on June 22 focused on writing a successful RCPP-proposal. The webinar is free and recording will be available on the Alliance Resource Center online. Jeremy is also working closely with the Alliance's Community-Centered Conservation Department to engage historically underrepresented landowners and land trusts in RCPP, ensuring it benefits all people, particularly those who have been harmed or excluded by racism and other forms of oppression. For inquiries about the Alliance RCPP services, reach out to Jeremy at [jlougee@lta.org](mailto:jlougee@lta.org).

This summer the Alliance and NRCS are hosting the third joint in-person summit to strengthen participation in ACEP-ALE and RCPP. This facilitated invite-only event brings together NRCS national team members and land trusts to have solution-focused discussion on ways to streamline the programs and get more conservation dollars out on the ground. The summit is curated for land trusts active in both programs. Registration is open now. Reach out to Nikki Nesbary at [nesbary@lta.org](mailto:nesbary@lta.org) for more information.



## Attachment D Staff Report

### Upcoming Meetings

#### Conservation Partners Meeting

Friday September 20, 10:00 am – 12:15 pm

(hybrid: MassWildlife Headquarters in Westborough and Zoom)

#### Massachusetts State Dinner at LTA Rally

Friday September 27, 7:00 – 9:00 pm (Trinity Brewhouse, Providence)

#### Land Trust / State Agency Retreat

Wednesday October 16 (full day in person at Harvard Forest) to

Thursday, October 17 (half day, hybrid at HF and Zoom)

#### Conservation Partners Meeting

Friday December 13, 10:00 am – 12:15 pm (via Zoom)



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### Program Updates

**JUN**  
**20**

Thu, Jun 20 2024, 12 - 1pm

**Farmland Protection Tools in Massachusetts**

Zoom DATE CHANGE - was June 19, now June 20.

Massachusetts is losing farmland faster than we can save it. Land trusts can play a part in ensuring land remains available for future generations of farmers! There are many programs (and lots of funding) available to help protect farmland. This session will show you how.

[Register >>](#)

**JUL**  
**9**

Tue, Jul 9 2024, 1 - 2pm

**Small Staffed Land Trusts: Capacity Building and Staffing Challenges**

Zoom

Discussion of this topic may include: what does Capacity Building actually mean? Only in Operations, or also Stewardship, Land Acquisition, other? How are you solving the problem? Insights and suggestions from attending Zoomers. Conversation in these calls has been fluid, so other topics of mutual interest may also be discussed. Part of MLTC's Stronger Together networking series for staff and Board members. This call will not be recorded. [Register.](#)

**JUL**  
**24**

Wed, Jul 24 2024, 3 - 4:30pm

**Early Conservation Career Network Cold Brook Preserve Tour**

Robert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve Harwich Port

Join the Early Conservation Career Network to tour a complex cranberry bog wetland system eco-restoration underway at the 66-acre Robert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve in Harwich Port. The project will also provide enhanced visitor access, including a half-mile wheelchair accessible trail loop.

[Learn more and register >>](#)

Watch eNews and [massland.org/events](https://massland.org/events) for more

More [multi-session trainings](#) in the coming year



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## 2024 Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference



## 2025 Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

- Returning to UMass Amherst next March
- Planning Committee hard at work
- Call for proposals coming this summer
- If you got an email offer to sell you an attendee list.....
- What if it was Friday rather than Saturday?



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Picone Farm. Photograph by Jerry Monkman of EcoPhotography, courtesy of Wildlands Trust.

# Service Provider Directory

Add your own listing to this page

SERVICE PROVIDER TYPE: Attorneys, legal services  
COUNTIES SERVED: Worcester  
APPLY

✂ = Annual MLTC Supporter or Conference Sponsor.

- Bernardin Law Firm, P.C.** • Attorneys, legal services
- Beveridge & Diamond, P.C.** • Attorneys, legal services
- Bowditch Attorneys** • Attorneys, legal services
- Bulkley Richardson** • Attorneys, legal services
- Corliss Law** ✂ Attorneys, legal services

## Resources For Land Trusts

TOPICS: Any  
SEARCH:   
APPLY

### 10+ Examples of Awesome Inclusion Statements

Article linked here.

### 2020 MLTC Land Trust Survey

In the fall of 2019, the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC) sent surveys to land trusts and other private nonprofit organizations engaged in the protection or management of conservation land in...

### 6 Ways to Reimagine Fiscal Sponsorship in Service of Equity

Challenges: BIPOC-led coalitions, movements, organizations, and other under-resourced groups often struggle to build human and financial capital due to systemic racism. Under-resourced nonprofit group...

### A Board Member's Guide to Mergers

This booklet is designed as a practical guide to help nonprofit board members, executives and funders think through a merger. Over the next pages, you'll take a quick trip through a merger's terrain a...



## Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition



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massland.org and 2 more links

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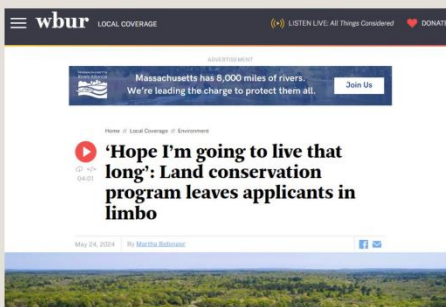
Sort by

|   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Endowments and Board-Designated Funds: Does Your Land Trust Need One?<br/>Web Page Content<br/>March 20, 2021</p> <p>1 video</p> | <p>Forest Management and Ash Fertilization in Response to Emerald Ash Borer<br/>Web Page Content &amp; Video Content<br/>March 10, 2021</p> <p>3 videos</p> | <p>Intro to Land Trust Board Service<br/>Web Page Content<br/>October 19, 2020</p> <p>6 videos</p> | <p>Preserving Perpetuity and Reducing Headaches: CR Slitting Basics<br/>Web Page Content and Web Page Content<br/>March 26, 2021</p> <p>6 videos</p> | <p>Open Space Network: Critical Role of Open Space Committees &amp; Volunteers<br/>Web Page Content &amp; Open Page Content<br/>March 26, 2021</p> <p>5 videos</p> |
| <b>Financial Management</b><br>View full playlist   | <b>Invasive Species Management</b><br>View full playlist  | <b>Governance and Management Issues</b><br>View full playlist                                      | <b>Acquiring Conservation Restrictions</b><br>View full playlist   | <b>Working with Municipalities</b><br>View full playlist   |

# Attachment E MLTC Policy Update

## Policy

- State budget
- Conservation Land Tax Credit
- Climate Bill – Energy Facilities Siting
- Environmental Bond
- State Capital Plan



## FY25 State Capital Plan, released June 13

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Municipal Grants (PARC, LAND, DWSP, GWC Parks) | \$21.00 M  |
| EEA Agency Land Protection                     | \$12.20 M  |
| Conservation Partnership/Landscape Partnership | \$2.75 M   |
| MassTrails Grants to municipalities            | \$10.00 M  |
| ResilientMass Implementation                   | \$25.00 M  |
| MVP Grants                                     | \$25.20 M  |
| DCR facilities                                 | \$150.00 M |



Let us help you host a field visit for local legislators!





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## Public Policy Update

June 14, 2024

### Healey-Driscoll Administration Updates

#### Forests as Climate Solutions Work Plan

On June 10, the Healey-Driscoll administration released a [comprehensive work plan](#) outlining strategies to protect and manage forest lands while prioritizing efforts to address climate change impacts. The plan presents a detailed timeline for acting on [recommendations of EEA's Climate Forestry Committee](#) that were released earlier this year.

#### PLPA Implementation

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) maintains [a website](#) with information of importance to any community facing proposed diversion of public parks and conservation land to another use. It includes guidance for how to comply with *An Act conserving open space in the Commonwealth* (commonly referred to as the Public Lands Preservation Act, or 'PLPA'), which took effect on February 17, 2023. While the website's PLPA Guidance, Frequently Asked Questions, and ["PLPA Portal"](#) are very helpful, EEA has yet to launch the long-awaited "PLPA Tracker", which will provide much-needed transparency regarding the status of pending Article 97 actions **EEA has also yet to promulgate regulations to implement the law, even though the May 2024 legislated deadline to do so has passed.**

#### Energy Infrastructure Siting Commission

On March 29, the Healey-Driscoll administration released the [Recommendations of the Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting](#) (CEISP). Governor Healey charged the Commission with expediting land-based renewable energy generation, storage, and transmission permitting, while avoiding impacts on people and nature. The CEISP called for legislation and made recommendations that can be adopted by the Administration. Importantly, the Commission included recommendations related to earlier engagement of both scientific and community review, to help ensure that decisions are made more equitably and efficiently, with better outcomes for the Commonwealth. Much work remains to be done by the administration, the legislature and the advocacy community to ensure that environmental, conservation and environmental justice is sufficiently incorporated into any new mechanisms to speed permitting for the critically needed infrastructure. Advocates are now actively engaged in translating these recommendations into legislative language and advocating for them to be included in an omnibus climate bill that is expected before the end of the current session. Mass Audubon, the Nature Conservancy and MACC were among organizations represented on this Commission. Along with AMC, they communicated priorities for legislation in an April 12<sup>th</sup> [sign-on letter](#) to the Legislature. (NOTE: AMC, TNC and MACC subsequently sent a corrective note to the Committee clarifying that they have not in fact taken a position on the issue related to biomass in the final bullet of the letter (page 9), after getting more clarity on an unintended consequence of the scope of that provision.)

#### State to Expand Tree Planting in Environmental Justice Communities

On April 26, Governor Healey announced a new **Cooling Corridors** program that will support municipalities, non-profits, and other organizations in their tree-planting initiatives. The program will specifically target

walking routes in areas that suffer from extreme heat, such as urban heat islands and hotspots, within environmental justice neighborhoods, and will be available beyond the 26 communities currently eligible for the existing [Greening the Gateway Cities](#) tree-planting program. Information on how to access the program is pending.

#### **Chief Coastal Resilience Officer Named**

On June 3, Deanna Moran began serving in the new role of Chief Coastal Resilience Officer within the Office of Coastal Zone Management. She will lead the state's new [ResilientCoasts](#) initiative, a proactive strategy to guide coastal resiliency policy and action. Moran most recently served as Vice President for Healthy and Resilient Communities at the Conservation Law Foundation.

#### **New Regulations for Air Quality Permits Near Environmental Justice Populations**

On March 28, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced changes to state air pollution regulations. Facilities seeking emissions permits will now be required to conduct a site-specific cumulative impact analysis (CIA) which evaluates existing local environmental and health conditions in a community. The regulations also require enhanced public outreach to, and meaningful involvement of, environmental justice populations in the permitting process. "This approach takes a holistic look at what existing conditions might be worsened by a new or increasing source of air pollution," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rebecca Tepper. The new regulations apply to comprehensive plan applications submitted on or after July 1, 2024. [Learn more.](#)

#### **Administration Launches Climate Action Campaign**

On March 11, the Healey-Driscoll Administration launched a statewide media campaign to raise awareness about climate change and promote ways for individuals to take climate action. The campaign was shaped by research conducted by The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to assess Massachusetts residents' perceptions, motivators, and barriers to taking climate action. The media campaign directs people to resources hosted on [mass.gov/ClimateAction](https://mass.gov/ClimateAction), including information on how to participate in energy efficiency, weatherization, electric vehicle adoption, and residential solar programs.

#### **2023-2024 State Legislative Priorities (updates since March 8, 2023 are in bold)**

MLTC supports a limited number of legislative priorities that advance our primary strategic objectives: increasing state investment in land conservation; advancing the work of land trusts; and maximizing the integrity of conservation land and unprotected lands of significant conservation value.

#### **Top MLTC Priorities**

##### **An Act relative to the conservation land tax credit ([H.2839/S.1940](#), Rep. Jones and Sen. Tarr)**

MLTC's top legislative priority this session. A hearing on the bill was held June 6, 2023, before the Joint Committee on Revenue. Linda Orel (The Trustees) coordinated submission of [joint testimony on behalf of 21 organizations](#) and a panel including Robb Johnson, Tara Christian (TNC), Alain Peteroy (Franklin Land Trust) and Jessica Whritenour (The 300 Committee Land Trust) delivered live testimony. This bill would raise the annual cap under the Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC), the state income tax credit for donations of conservation land, from \$2 million to \$5 million - phased over three years. The program cap would revert to \$2 million after 10 years. The bill also amends the definition of an eligible "public or private conservation agency" to include all land conservation trusts regardless of their corporate structure. (The current statute inadvertently excludes land trusts that are chartered as charitable trusts rather than non-profit corporations.) Passage is a recommendation of the Resilient Lands Initiative and Forests as Climate Solutions Initiative. The Joint Committee on Revenue reported this bill favorably. **Language based on this**

bill was added to the House version of the FY25 State Operating Budget in April, but not to the Senate version passed in May. MLTC joined many partners in [a June 10<sup>th</sup> letter](#) to the Conference Committee urging inclusion in the final version of the Budget the legislature will send to the Governor in coming weeks. On May 24, WBUR ran an excellent [radio story](#) on the need for this legislation, which we encourage you to forward to your legislators with a request that they support passage of this bill before the end of this session.

### State Operating Budget

MLTC was pleased to see that funding for environmental agencies generally fared well in the versions of the FY25 State Operating Budget passed by the House in April and the Senate in May. Differences between the budget versions are currently being worked out in a Conference Committee. As noted above, MLTC is urging the Conference Committee to include language from the House version to expand the Conservation Land Tax Credit.

### Environmental Bond

The Commonwealth issues bonds to fund capital spending on the land acquisition and restoration programs that are critical to our work as well as other environmental projects. In anticipation of the next bill, **expected early in 2025**, MLTC is working closely with our conservation partners to advocate for the bill to authorize investments that expand and create new programs in alignment with our priorities.

### Other Bills MLTC Supports

#### **An Act relative to uniform partition of heirs property** ([H.1744](#), Rep. Roy., SD 2816, Sen. Payano)

The bill was heard before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary on October 31, 2023, with multiple speakers in favor. Click [here to see testimony](#) submitted by American Farmland Trust. Heirs property is real estate owned by the legal heirs of a previous owner when there is no will. Under state law, multiple heirs take ownership as tenants-in-common, an unstable form of ownership that too often results in the heirs losing the land through a forced partition sale. The bill would institute new process protections for heirs in such situations by requiring that co-tenants receive fair market value in any partition sale, and generally providing that co-tenants have an option to buy. With endorsement by the Uniform Law Commission, provisions of this bill have already been adopted in 22 states and districts. Millions of dollars of inherited wealth have been lost nationally by families who were vulnerable to real-estate speculators, disproportionately impacting low-income property owners without resources for estate planning. Nationally, forced partition sales have been cited as a significant factor in conversion of agricultural property. MLTC joins a coalition including American Farmland Trust, The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, Mount Grace Conservation Land Trust, The New England Land Title Association and the Greater Boston Real Estate Board in favor of this legislation. The Judiciary Committee failed to report the bill favorably, sending it to study. The coalition continues to meet to discuss strategies for moving forward.

#### **An Act investing in natural and working lands** ([S.448](#), Sen. Comerford)

A hearing on this bill was held October 11, 2023, before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Meeting the natural and working lands goals in the Clean Energy Climate Plan (CECP) will require new tools. This bill would create a local opt-in program under EEA called “Farm and Forest Friendly Communities,” to incentivize municipalities to make land use and planning decisions that reduce loss of farmland and forests. Communities would receive technical and financial assistance and increased payments in lieu of taxes on state-owned land. Consistent with CECP recommendations, this bill would also direct DEP to set a MEPA review threshold for projects that involve certain levels of forest clearing or farmland conversion, and recommend a successor to the SMART solar siting incentive program that would minimize impacts to priority forest and farmland. Read a [summary and bill text here](#). The Environment and

Natural Resources Committee failed to report the bill favorably, sending it to study.

**An Act to encourage solar development on buildings and disturbed land** ([H.3225](#), [S.2150](#), Reps. Lindsay Sabadosa & Sean Garballey/Sen. Mark)

A hearing on this bill was held June 20, 2023, before the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. Massachusetts has committed to deploying solar energy that maximizes clean energy generation, avoids impacts on humans and natural communities, and connects efficiently to the grid. This bill would help achieve these goals by encouraging installation of solar panels on buildings and disturbed sites, such as parking lot canopies, brownfields, and roadway cuts. It would require the Department of Energy Resources to make change to existing policies and programs, such as net-metering and SMART, to increase incentives for generation and siting of solar projects in the built environment. Sierra Club is leading the effort on this bill. MLTC signed on to [joint testimony](#) submitted June 23, 2023. The Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy Committee extended the deadline for reporting on this bill to April 7, 2024. **It is possible that aspects of this bill may addressed in energy facilities siting provisions of an omnibus climate bill expected before the end of the legislative session this summer.**

**An Act to create a commission to determine the feasibility of voluntary acquisition of flood risk properties** ([H.876](#), [S.557](#), Rep. Sarah Peake, Sen. Marc Pacheco)

A hearing on this bill was held May 17, 2023, before the Joint Committee on Natural Resources. The Trustees is leading the effort on this bill, and [submitted testimony on behalf of a coalition of 12 organizations](#), including MLTC. This bill would create a new commission to bring together agency officials, legislative leaders, and expert stakeholders to study the feasibility of a voluntary acquisition program for properties that are subject to risk of catastrophic flood damage --- helping owners and renters move out of harm's way while conserving land and restoring wetlands to increase climate resiliency. The commission would be tasked with making concrete recommendations to lawmakers for how to address this difficult and pressing issue, especially for Massachusetts' most vulnerable residents. Learn more about the bill [here](#). The Healey-Driscoll Administration launched a ResilientCoasts Initiative on November 28, 2023, under which MEMA has hired a consultant to conduct a statewide study (including coastal and inland lands at risk of flooding) that will hopefully meet many of the objectives of this bill. If done well, this study could meet many or all of the objectives of this bill. Advocates for this bill will encourage administrative officials to ensure the study emphasizes the importance of recommending a pre-disaster statewide property buyout program in their report, and to ensure the study process includes the following: Meeting with stakeholders and experts; prioritizing the needs of EJ communities, low income homeowners, and tenants; ensuring recommendations encourage wetland and flood plain restoration to provide climate resilience benefits and ecosystem services, and providing a deadline for the report to be issued. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee reported this bill favorably **and discharged it to the Joint Committee on Rules in April.**

**Outdoor Recreation Act** ([H.757](#), [S.488](#) Rep. Natalie Blais & Sen. Paul Feeney)

A hearing on this bill was held October 11, 2023, before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. This bill would create a statewide dedicated fund to ensure the success of the newly created Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation and provide grants for outdoor recreational purposes, with priority given to projects that benefit underserved and Environmental Justice populations. There would be no increase in sales tax, but existing sales tax revenues received by the Commonwealth from the sale of sporting goods would be placed in the Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund for the purposes of conservation, creation, preservation, and restoration of natural resources for recreational use. The Trustees and Charles River Watershed Association are leading the effort on this bill. MLTC signed onto [joint testimony submitted](#) on October 6, 2023. A fact sheet on the bill can be found [here](#). The Environment and Natural Resources

Committee failed to report the bill favorably, sending it to study.

**An Act to reimburse the George L. Darey Inland Fisheries and Game Fund (S. 499, Sen. Gobi)**

A hearing on this bill was held on November 29 before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. The effort is coordinated by The Nature Conservancy and The Trustees, and MLTC signed on to joint testimony from 12 organizations in support. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), which works to conserve and restore critical fish and wildlife habitat and plant species and to deliver education programs, is primarily funded through hunting and fishing license fees deposited in the Inland Fisheries and Game Fund. This legislation would create consistency and reimburse MassWildlife for the loss of revenue associated with providing both discounted (currently reimbursed) and free hunting and fishing licenses. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee reported this bill favorably **and referred it to the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Language based on this bill was added to the Senate version of the FY25 State Operating Budget passed in May. MLTC joined many partners in a [June 10<sup>th</sup> letter](#) to the Conference Committee urging inclusion in the final version of the Budget the legislature will send to the Governor in coming weeks.**