

# Land Trust Alliance Federal Policy Updates

June 2025

## **119th CONGRESS**

### *The latest on the reconciliation process*

As previously noted, Republicans are focused on using the reconciliation process to pass the president's top legislative priorities through a tool called reconciliation.

Last month, the House passed its version of a reconciliation bill, also known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" on a partisan 215-214 vote. The legislation addresses the president's top priorities of extending expiring provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act; providing more funding for defense and border security; and expediting the siting of energy infrastructure. Among other things, the House bill secures the remaining Inflation Reduction Act funds slated for Farm Bill conservation programs. The bill also includes language that would allow taxpayers who don't itemize to claim a deduction for charitable donations of up to \$150 per individual or \$300 for married couples, which could lead to an increase in smaller donations to nonprofits. Unfortunately, the House text rescinds more than \$100 million in Forest Legacy Program funding and limits review of the siting of energy infrastructure. The Alliance also advocated hard to ensure that the legislation did not include a harmful provision that would have allowed the executive branch to revoke organization's nonprofit statuses without due process or basic protections and a separate provision that would have allowed the sell off of more than 450,000 acres of public land. Neither of these provisions were included in the final House bill.

The Senate is now working through its own reconciliation bill language. On June 11, the Senate Agriculture Committee released its portion of the legislation which includes legislative text that will secure the remaining Inflation Reduction Act funding. The bill rescinds the funds and reallocates it to the four programs included in the IRA: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program. If this language stays in the final bill, it would increase baseline funding for the conservation title of the next Farm Bill and provide more flexibility to fund conservation programs. In addition, the text does not rescind the remaining IRA funding for the Forest Legacy Program. The Alliance and several partner organizations worked hard to ensure this provision was not included. According to the Senate Agriculture majority, the bill would increase the budget authority for popular conservation programs by over \$16 billion. This represents an approximately 35% increase in these programs' baseline funding. Unfortunately, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee did choose to reinsert language, not included in the House text, that would allow for the sale of public lands.

On June 16 the Senate Finance Committee released text of its part of the reconciliation bill and it's a mixed bag. The good news is a provision that would increase the tax on net investment of certain private foundations was not included in the bill. In addition, the bill increases the non-itemizer donation from \$300 to \$1,000. Unfortunately, the text includes language that imposes limitations on high-income donors charitable donations. It also creates a floor for individual donations and corporate donations. We are still in the process of reviewing the language to fully understand its impact to nonprofit organizations, but we do plan to push back on these bad provisions.

The Land Trust Alliance is watching the reconciliation process in the Senate closely. Since the Senate is making changes to the House version of the bill it will need to go back to the House for final approval. There are still several steps before the bill goes to the Senate floor. Both the House and the Senate bills include big cuts to the Farm Bill nutrition programs with the House cutting nearly \$300 billion and the Senate cutting about \$211 billion.

As debate is ongoing, please note we may reach out to Massachusetts land trusts to support or oppose specific provisions that impact the work of our land trust and nonprofit communities so please stay tuned for additional details as they become available.

#### *The latest on Farm Bill negotiations*

As previously reported, the final reconciliation bill will play a big role in whether Congress will move a new Farm Bill before the current extension expires at the end of September. Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Boozman has stated that he is hopeful they can work with Democrats to pass a “skinny” Farm Bill this year after the reconciliation bill is passed into law. Whether or not that is possible remains to be seen, but the Alliance continues to advocate for passing the next Farm Bill this year.

#### *Forest Conservation Easement Program Act introduced in House*

On May 17, the Forest Conservation Easement Program Act, H.R. 3476, was introduced in the House by Reps. Trent Kelly, R-Miss., and Maggie Goodlander, D-N.H. The legislation largely mirrors the legislative text introduced in the House in the previous 118th Congress.

With this month’s introduction, the Forest Conservation Easement Program Act has been introduced in both the House and Senate. The Senate legislation, S. 1050, was introduced in March by Sens. Kirstin Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and Roger Wicker, R-Miss. The Land Trust Alliance is advocating for the legislation to be included in the Farm Bill’s conservation title with mandatory funding. The legislation would allow willing private and tribal landowners to voluntarily sell their development rights to prevent conversion to non-forest uses. As a result, private forests in an FCEP conservation easement would remain privately owned, working and on tax rolls.

We urge all Massachusetts land trusts to continue to advocate for the inclusion of the Forest Conservation Easement Program Act in the next Farm Bill. To date, no Massachusetts legislators have signed onto either the House or Senate bill. Should you need contact information for your members of Congress please reach out to [policy@lta.org](mailto:policy@lta.org).

#### *Deputy Secretary of the USDA Confirmed*

On June 10, the Senate confirmed Stephen Vaden to serve as deputy secretary of the USDA on a 51-44 partisan vote. Vaden previously served as general counsel to the USDA and in 2020 was appointed by President Trump to serve on the United States Court of International Trade.

#### *Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior Confirmed*

On May 14, the Senate confirmed Katharine MacGregor to serve as deputy secretary of the Department of the Interior on a 54-40 bipartisan vote. MacGregor previously served in this same role during the first Trump administration. Most recently she served as vice president of environmental services for NextEra Energy.

#### *IRS Commissioner Confirmed*

On June 13, the Senate confirmed Billy Long to serve as the IRS Commissioner on a 53-44 vote. Mr. Long previously served as a Congressman from Missouri, he was also an auctioneer and a realtor.

#### *Regional Conservation Partnership Program Awards*

We have received word from some land trust RCPP awardees that their awards have been canceled. We have heard that some of the reasoning relates to streamlining the number of projects per state. The

Alliance team is gathering further information to highlight the impacts of rescinding awards; particularly on landowners, farmers and families.

We encourage Massachusetts land trusts involved in recently awarded RCPPs to reach out to us at [policy@tla.org](mailto:policy@tla.org) if you have received word of any changes to your award.

## **PRESIDENT TRUMP AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

### *Administration Releases Fiscal Year 2026 “Skinny Budget”*

On May 2, President Trump released his “skinny budget” for fiscal year 2026. The budget proposal calls for \$163 billion — or nearly 23% of non-defense spending — in federal cuts and the elimination of programs, including key conservation programs, across the federal government. This is, however, only the first step in the very long process of funding the federal government. Each year, the administration submits a “skinny budget” followed by a full budget request, which Congress may or may not consider as it works on bills to fund the federal government.

The Administration released its full budget request on May 30 which provides more details on the cuts it is seeking across the federal government. The Alliance will monitor the appropriations process carefully and may reach out to members to voice opposition if some of the proposed cuts seem to be gaining traction. In the meantime, it is important for Massachusetts land trusts to continue to reach out to your congressional delegation and underscore the importance of the federal programs that you utilize and voice strong opposition to any cuts to those programs.

### *Executive Orders and Directives*

President Donald Trump continues to issue an unprecedented number of executive orders and actions that, coupled with efforts to reduce the federal workforce, has created uncertainty for our community.

As a reminder we have created a new webpage on our Resource Center, “[The new federal landscape](#)” that provides the latest details about the administrative directives, actions and secretarial orders and how they may affect Massachusetts land trusts.

## **OTHER RELEVANT UPDATES**

### *Advocacy Days*

Last month, the Land Trust Alliance held its annual Advocacy Days fly-in. We’re proud to report that 168 land trust leaders from 40 states, including Massachusetts, joined us in Washington, D.C. and online. A huge thanks to representatives of Greater Worcester Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Barnstable Land Trust, North County Land Trust, Sheffield Land Trust and Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation who joined us from the state. Together, Advocacy Days attendees conducted nearly 220 in-person meetings with congressional offices.

### *Rally*

Registration is now open for Rally 2025: The National Land Conservation Conference, Sept. 3-6 in Cleveland, OH! Rally is the exciting annual gathering of inspired and passionate land conservation practitioners from around the world who are dedicated to conserving cherished places in our communities. Land trust members and staff, landowners, donors and community partners are encouraged to attend. And we're excited to host our annual policy breakfast on Saturday, Sept. 6. Details forthcoming. [Register by July 21](#) for special early bird pricing.