



June 10, 2023

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz
 Chair, House Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 243
 Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues
 Chair, Senate Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 212
 Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante
 Vice Chair, House Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 238
 Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy Friedman
 Vice Chair, Senate Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 313
 Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Todd Smola
 Ranking Member, House Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 124
 Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patrick O'Connor
 Ranking Member, Senate Ways and Means
 24 Beacon Street, Room 419
 Boston, MA 02133

Re: Reimbursements for MassWildlife for free and discounted licenses in FY25 state budget

Dear Honorable Members of the FY25 Budget Conference Committee,

Our organizations are grateful for your leadership in supporting the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife). We work closely with experts at MassWildlife to protect and restore rare, threatened, and endangered species throughout the Commonwealth, including urban wildlife habitat. Critical habitat has always faced threats from development, fragmentation, pollution, and invasive species, and now climate change is heavily impacting ecosystems and natural areas, making MassWildlife's work more important than ever.

MassWildlife is primarily funded through the sale of hunting, freshwater fishing, and trapping licenses, permits, and stamps, as well as dedicated federal funds from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program.¹ Despite this dedicated funding, MassWildlife is chronically underfunded and receives minimal support from the General Fund.

We have been grateful for the Legislature's support for budget language (line item 2300-0100) in the last three consecutive budgets to reimburse the Inland Fish and Game Fund for the loss of revenue associated with *free* hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses statutorily offered to residents over age 70, minors, and disabled residents, worth more than \$1 million per year² (see attached fact sheet for more information). This budget language created

¹ MassWildlife Funding, 2023. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/masswildlife-funding>

² Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. Annual Report 2022, page 138. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/masswildlife-fy-2022-annual-report-1/download>

consistency with an existing law that requires the state to reimburse MassWildlife for *discounted* licenses for those ages 65-69.³ However, the same provision was not included in the Governor's FY25 budget.

We respectfully request that the Conference Committee include the language adopted by the Senate (through Amendment #2, filed by Senator Moore) to again reimburse the Inland Fisheries and Game Fund in the FY25 Operating Budget for both free and discounted licenses.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Emily Myron
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The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts
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Heather Clish
Vice President, Conservation
and Recreation Advocacy
Appalachian Mountain Club

Christopher Borgatti
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David Melly
Legislative Director
Environmental League of Massachusetts

Dorothy McGlinicy
Executive Director
Mass Association of
Conservation Commissions

Sam Anderson
Director, Legislative & Government Affairs
Mass Audubon

Robb Johnson
Executive Director
Mass Land Trust Coalition

Katharine Lange
Policy Director
Mass Rivers Alliance

Henry Sweren
Council Chairman
Massachusetts Council of Trout Unlimited

Cynthia Dittbrenner
Interim VP of Conservation and Resilience
The Trustees

Enclosed: Fact Sheet
Letter of support from the MassWildlife Fish and Wildlife Board

cc: The Honorable Michael Moore
The Honorable Smitty Pignatelli

³ Per Chapter 983 of the Acts of 1977.
<https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/29286/1977acts0983.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>