

July 15, 2026

The Honorable Julian Cyr, Chair
State House, Room 111
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael J. Finn, Chair
State House, Room 39
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Rebecca Rausch, Vice Chair
State House, Room 215
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Christine P. Barber, Vice Chair
State House, Room 167
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Peter Durant
State House, Room 520
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Kenneth P. Sweezey
State House, Room 237
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Support for An Act to build resilience for Massachusetts communities

Dear Chair Cyr, Chair Finn, and Honorable Members of the Mass Ready Act Conference Committee,

On behalf of the Environmental Bond Bill Coalition, thank you for all the time and effort that you and your colleagues have put into developing a comprehensive bill to address our environmental protection, climate, and resiliency needs. We are a coalition of organizations supporting land and water conservation, climate action, and environmental justice writing to respectfully share our recommendations on *An Act to build resilience for Massachusetts communities*, or “Mass Ready Act.” Our members and supporters include hundreds of thousands of residents committed to addressing three critical challenges: impacts from climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequities in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, especially related to equitable access to nature, working farmland, and open space for urban residents.

We have divided our priority recommendations into two sections in this letter: line item authorizations and outside sections.

Priority Line Item Authorization Recommendations

While the coalition supports the full range of funding recommendations outlined in the attached appendix, we respectfully ask that the Conference Committee adopt the higher authorization level included by either chamber for each program whenever possible. Higher authorizations will enable the Commonwealth to protect and restore more forests, farms, wetlands, rivers, and coastal habitats; expand parks, trails, and support other outdoor recreation opportunities; repair

or remove aging dams, and right-size culverts, bridges, and other critical infrastructure; strengthen climate resilience for communities across Massachusetts; and conserve the ecosystems that sustain the Commonwealth's wildlife, clean water, and quality of life.

Within the broader set of recommendations in the appendix, we respectfully ask the Conference Committee to prioritize the following investments, which we believe are among the most critical to ensuring the Mass Ready Act fulfills its promise to meet the Commonwealth's climate resilience, public health and safety, environmental justice, land and water conservation, and infrastructure needs.

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Capital Investments (2840-7028)

Senate: \$623.8 million

DCR manages more than 450,000 acres of public lands across Massachusetts, providing essential access to parks, forests, trails, beaches, and waterways while protecting critical natural resources for habitat, carbon sequestration, flood control, and forest products. State parks play a critical role in supporting Massachusetts' \$14.6 billion outdoor recreation economy, which generates approximately 108,000 jobs annually and is growing faster than any other state.¹ Years of chronic underinvestment, however, have left DCR with an estimated \$1 billion deferred maintenance backlog that threatens public safety, limits access to recreation, and reduces the resilience of the Commonwealth's natural infrastructure.

We respectfully urge the Conference Committee to adopt the Senate's higher authorization of \$623.8 million for DCR capital improvements. Investing in state parks, forests, dams, bridges, recreational facilities, and climate-resilient infrastructure will help address decades of deferred maintenance while ensuring these public assets can continue serving communities, expanding access to nature, and increasing the Commonwealth's resilience.

MassTrails (2000-7078)

House: \$75 million

Trails are a vital part of Massachusetts' infrastructure, supporting conservation, active transportation, recreation, tourism, and community health. MassTrails provides essential funding for locally driven projects that strengthen and expand the Commonwealth's trail network by connecting localities, natural spaces, and communities. Demand for the program continues to far exceed available funding, reflecting both the popularity and statewide importance of these investments.

We strongly support preserving MassTrails as its own dedicated line item, consistent with both House and Senate bills, and urge the Conference Committee to adopt the House's slightly higher authorization of \$75 million. We also strongly support preserving the \$10 million earmark for

¹ [OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC STATISTICS](#) U.S. BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS, 2024

universally accessible trails within this account, consistent with both House and Senate bills, that reflect the Commonwealth's commitment to increasing connection to the outdoors for all.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) (2000-7088)

Senate: \$510 million

The MVP program provides grants for local and regional climate resilience projects that prioritize community engagement, nature-based solutions, and resources focused on our most vulnerable residents and workers. MVP has proven wildly popular, with 349 of 351 Massachusetts communities having used MVP funding to complete initial vulnerability assessments, and over \$210 million distributed in FY2026 for locally-driven priorities that meet climate resilience, public safety, and equity goals. Demand continues to far outpace available resources. In FY2026 alone, municipalities requested nearly four times the funding available, leaving approximately 75% of requested projects unfunded.

We respectfully ask the Conference Committee to adopt the Senate's \$510 million in bonding authorization for the state's essential MVP program. Increased investment in this deeply impactful grant program makes it possible for communities throughout the state to assess our local and regional climate risks and advance effective solutions to mitigate them.

Coastal Resilience and Infrastructure (2000-7083)

House: \$250 million

As coastal communities face growing threats from sea level rise, erosion, storm surge, and extreme weather, dedicated investment in resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions has never been more important. The authorization will support the implementation of the [Commonwealth's Resilient Coasts Plan](#) which provides greater efficiencies by encouraging regionalization to enhance safety, avoid costs, and restore natural systems among coastal communities that face common challenges.

Support for the Office of Coastal Zone Management's Coastal Resilience line item is critically important to ensure Massachusetts can safeguard its natural and built infrastructure along the coast. We respectfully ask that the Conference Committee adopt the House's higher authorization of \$250 million for this account.

Food Security Infrastructure Grants and Massachusetts Food Trust (2511-0124)

House: \$157.5 million

We appreciate both chambers' commitment to reducing food insecurity and strengthening local food systems by supporting farmers, fishermen, schools, food businesses, and community organizations across the Commonwealth. We respectfully ask that the Conference Committee adopt the House's higher authorization of \$150 million for the Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program, which is more closely aligned with demand after the program has been able to fund only about one-third of applications over the past six years.

We also urge the Committee to include the Senate's proposed \$7.5 million earmark for the Massachusetts Food Trust Program within 2511-0124 to provide critical grants and loans to food businesses and nonprofits located in food deserts, where demand for assistance continues to exceed available funding.

Priority Policy Provision Recommendations

In addition to the bond authorizations outlined above, our coalition respectfully urges the Conference Committee to consider the following policy provisions, which will help ensure these investments are implemented effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

Support a Drought Management Framework (Senate Section 13)

With droughts becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change—and Massachusetts currently experiencing the driest six-months on record—the Commonwealth needs to reinforce a cohesive approach to managing water use during drought. We strongly support the Senate's inclusion of language codifying the existing Drought Management Task Force, clarifying the state's role in helping to coordinate consistent and scalable water conservation measures for each designated drought-level, and preserving municipalities' oversight over local drought ordinances.

These provisions will not impose a “one-size-fits-all” response to drought, and only affect non-essential outdoor water use (*e.g.*, private lawn watering). The Senate, state agencies, and nearly 50 Representatives have already recognized that drought management in Mass Ready is the best pathway for guaranteeing safe and clean water supplies for all current and future residents.

Strengthening Air Quality Monitoring and Community Protection (House Section 11)

Communities located near highways, industrial areas, and other high-emission corridors, particularly environmental justice communities, continue to experience disproportionate exposure to harmful air pollution. We respectfully ask that the Conference Committee include the House's language in Section 11, establishing a technical air quality advisory committee to guide implementation of the Commonwealth's air quality monitoring strategy and ensure investments are deployed effectively and equitably. The advisory committee would help identify priority monitoring locations, support community-informed implementation, and require the installation of stationary air quality monitors in pollution hotspots, helping to fill longstanding data gaps and better protect residents from chronic exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution.

Permitting Provisions for Nature-Based Solutions & Ecological Restoration (Senate Sections 25, 51, 105, and 107; House Sections 15, 33, 54, 55, and 82)

Ecological restoration projects— including salt marsh restoration, dam removals, culvert replacements, floodplain reconnections, and living shorelines— restore natural ecosystem

functions while improving climate resilience, reducing flood risk, enhancing biodiversity, increasing carbon sequestration, and improving water quality. Despite delivering these significant public and environmental benefits, restoration and nature-based solution projects are generally subject to the same complex permitting processes as development projects that permanently alter or degrade natural resources.

The thoughtful reforms included in both the Senate and the House versions of the Mass Ready Act can reduce unnecessary delays and administrative burdens for projects that heal ecosystems while maintaining the environmental safeguards that protect wetlands, waterways, and public trust resources. We urge the Conference Committee to retain the permitting streamlining provisions for nature-based solutions and ecological restoration in Senate Sections 25, 51, 105, and 107. We also ask that the Committee include the provision in the Senate bill in Section 51, in proposed section 18D(i) of Chapter 91 (lines 2157-2161 of S.3064), that exempts ecological restoration projects that already have a wetlands permit.

Conclusion

Thank you for your continued leadership and thoughtful consideration of these recommendations. While this letter highlights the coalition's highest priorities for conference, we continue to support the broader recommendations we have submitted throughout the legislative process. For a complete summary of the Environmental Bond Coalition's positions on bond authorizations and policy provisions, please see the attached Appendix.

If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Rae Ettenger, Mass Audubon Conservation Policy and Advocacy Fellow (rettenger@massaudubon.org). Thank you for your attention to these critical investments and policy recommendations.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Mountain Club

Boston Harbor Now

Charles River Watershed Association

Conservation Law Foundation

Environmental League of Massachusetts

Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Mass Audubon

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

Mystic River Watershed Association

Native Plant Trust

Sierra Club Massachusetts

The Nature Conservancy- Massachusetts

Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions

The Trustees of Reservations

Massachusetts Food System Collaborative

Trust for Public Land

Massachusetts Forest Alliance

Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Mass Parks for All

Appendix A: Environmental Bond Coalition- Conference Committee Recommendations

To: Mass Ready Act Conference Committee

From: The Environmental Bond Coalition

On: July 15, 2026

Re: Priorities for the 2026 Environmental Bond Bill

The Environmental Bond Coalition has engaged throughout the development of the Mass Ready Act and appreciates the many coalition priorities reflected in both the House and Senate bills. This appendix summarizes the coalition's recommendations for the Committee's consideration. The appendix is separated into two tables: line item authorizations and outside section policy recommendations.

We respectfully recommend that the Conference Committee adopt the higher authorization included in either the House or Senate version of the bill for each account to maximize the Commonwealth's investments in climate resilience, conservation, and natural infrastructure.

Line Item Authorizations

Program	Line Item	Coalition Recommendation
Land, Water, Soil, and Stewardship grants	2000-7082	Adopt Senate (\$125.5M)
Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) Program	2511-0124	Adopt House (\$150M)
Massachusetts Food Trust Program	2511-0124 (earmark)	Adopt Senate (\$7.5M earmark)
MassTrails	2000-7078	Adopt House (\$75M)

		dedicated line item)
Healthy Soils Program	2000-7082 (earmark)	Preserve \$5.5M earmark (Senate)
Coastal Resilience and Infrastructure Authorization	2000-7083	Adopt House (\$250M)
DCR Capital Authorization	2840-7028	Adopt Senate (\$623.875M)
Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)	2000-7088	Adopt Senate (\$510M)
DFG Marine Fisheries	2300-7033	Adopt Senate (\$10M)

Outside Section Policy Recommendations

Policy Description	Section Number	Coalition Recommendation
Flood Risk Disclosure	House Section 66; Senate Section 81	Retain comprehensive disclosure language in House bill
Wetlands and Ecological Restoration Permit Streamlining	Senate Sections 25, 51, 105, and 107; House Sections 15, 33, 54, 55, and 82	Retain the permit streamlining provisions for nature-based solutions and ecological restoration. Include Senate provision in Section 51, in proposed section 18D(i) of chapter 91 (lines 2157-2161 of S.3064).
Wetlands Protection Act Local Bylaws Reform	Senate Sections 60, 68, 69, and 108	Remove Senate Sections 60 and 108 entirely. Remove provisions of Senate Sections 68 and 69 that exempt “priority housing” projects from local Wetlands Protection Act bylaws/ordinances.
Drought Management Framework	Senate Section 13	Retain Senate language

Air Quality Advisory Committee	House Section 11	Retain House language
Codify the Division of Ecological Restoration	House Section 10D	Retain House language
Single-Use Plastic Reduction Policy	Senate Section 19	Retain comprehensive Senate language
Dark Skies Policy	House Section 11F	Retain House language
Rodenticides Reform Policy	Senate Section 74 and 75	Retain Senate language