



Sen. Rebecca L. Rausch, Senate Chair
 Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
 State House, Room 215
 Boston, MA 02133

Rep. Christine Barber, House Chair
 Joint Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
 State House, Room 167
 Boston, MA 02133

RE: In support of H.901 and S.597, An Act providing nature for all

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

Massachusetts is facing the triple-threat from climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the fact that the benefits of nature are not accessible to all of our residents. Massachusetts lacks a significant dedicated funding mechanism for nature conservation, and existing bond-supported programs are underfunded and oversubscribed. As a result, Massachusetts lacks sustainable and reliable resources to meet the Commonwealth's goals of 1) protecting, managing, and restoring nature in order to reach net zero by 2050, and 2) conserving 30% of the state's natural and working lands by 2030, and 40% by 2050.

H.901 and S.597, *An Act Providing Nature for All*, would create a permanent Nature for All Fund for the purposes of acquisition, restoration or improvement of land to create parks and trails; protect forests, farms, wildlife habitat, and water resources; and advance climate resiliency and environmental justice goals. By setting aside just a portion of the revenue generated from the tax on sporting goods, we would be able to dedicate as much as \$100 million every year for the Nature for All Fund ***without any increase in taxes***.

Currently, the state appropriates only about \$25 million¹ in bond funding for land conservation annually, but this number fluctuates year-to-year. And even when combined with local and federal matching funds, total annual funding for nature has never totaled more than \$60 million. The state's own climate plan tells us we need to dramatically increase the pace of conservation in order to meet Net Zero emissions by 2050.

We urgently need a statewide, permanent funding source to conserve and restore land, protect clean drinking water, ensure climate resilience, absorb climate emissions, provide outdoor recreational opportunities, improve human health, and invest in access to greenspace and nature for everyone across Massachusetts.

Not only is this good for our climate, this is a smart investment. The Trust for Public Land conducted an [economic analysis \(2013\)](#) of the return on the Commonwealth's investments in land conservation and found that every \$1 invested in land conservation returned \$4 in natural goods and services to the Massachusetts economy.

Additionally, this fund would help Massachusetts unlock millions more in matching dollars from federal programs, private partners, land trusts, watershed organizations, and local governments. Every \$1 in state funding for land conservation can leverage an additional \$1.23 from other sources—meaning every investment goes even further. [Another report from Highstead](#) shows a return on investment of \$4 to \$11 for every \$1 invested in land conservation in New England.

There are 11 states with constitutionally-dedicated funding for conservation: Oregon, Minnesota, Michigan, Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and New Jersey. There are three states that do exactly what H.901/S597 proposes – Texas, Georgia, and Virginia each allocate the revenue from the tax on sporting goods towards nature, land and water conservation, and the environment. It's time that Massachusetts joins them. In Texas and Georgia alone, the legislation was overwhelmingly approved by voters, at [88% \(Texas\)](#) and [83% \(Georgia\)](#).

Mass Audubon, the largest nature-based organization in New England, has released a new report called [“Funding Nature’s Future: A Pathway to 30x30”](#) that makes clear how far the state needs to go to reach its goals of protecting 30% of Massachusetts' lands and waters by 2030, and 40% by 2050. While there is ample conservation interest from private landowners and a skilled conservation workforce to achieve these ambitious goals, we know that much more investment needs to be made.

There is no better time to invest in nature than now. Every year, the impacts of climate change worsen, and it will only get more and more expensive to counteract those impacts the longer we wait.

¹ [The Mass Audubon Pathways 30x30 technical supplement](#) shows a list of all public funding sources over the last fifteen years. Roughly \$24 million in FY25 was from EEA-managed bond-funded programs, and roughly \$1 million was acquisition funded through MVP.

Thank you for your consideration of our coalition's testimony. We urge you to report H.901/S.597 *An Act providing nature for all* favorably out of committee.

Sincerely,
Nature for Massachusetts

The Nature for Massachusetts Coalition is a diverse coalition of more than 50 environmental, conservation, and community organizations that seek to create a dedicated, annual revenue stream to conserve land, water, urban greenspace, and outdoor recreation access in Massachusetts.