

# Forest as Climate Solutions (FACS)

- Expand existing state programs
- Invest in forest conservation
- Enhance a network of forest reserves
- Develop forest management guidelines

## Landowner Incentive and Business Assistance:

- creating new incentives for private and municipal woodland owners
- developing assistance options
- promote and incentivize the use of MA wood

## Management Guidelines Implementation Team:

- incorporate climate-oriented forest management guidelines.
- currently on standby

## Climate and Carbon Data Team:

- assessing carbon/climate change data.
- identifying data gaps/improve data.
- share data with staff and the public.

## Forest Protection and Reserves Team:

- implement EEA's Resilient Lands Initiative (RLI)
- forest land conservation (40% by 2050)
- Expand and protect Forest Reserves.

## REPORT BY THE CLIMATE FORESTRY COMMITTEE (CFC)

- The *Forests as Climate Solutions* initiative resulted in a comprehensive report produced by the *Climate Forestry Committee (CFC)*.
- 12-person committee of forestry and climate experts.
  - inform the development of **climate-oriented management guidelines** that protect forests and increase resilience to climate change

## KEEP FORESTS AS FORESTS

- Supporting efforts to **reduce land conversion** and increasing land conservation.
- **Enlarging forest reserves,**
- Incorporating **carbon considerations** into active management
- Implementing **passive management strategies** to realize older forests

## IMPLEMENTATION

**Work Plan:** Strategies to protect and manage forest lands

- EEA established several goals based on the CFC's findings.
- One of these goals is focused on forest reserves:
  - **Goal:** Expand the Forest Reserve acreage in MA
    - **300,000 acres (10%) of Massachusetts Forests by 2030.**
    - federal, state, municipal, and private lands.

# CURRENT PROGRESS

## Reserve Definition:

- Finalizing an updated definition of the purpose of a Reserve to serve as a broader framework for designation.
- Want to clarify the approach and identify goals for forest reserves

***Forest reserves are formally designated lands where the intent is to allow natural processes to determine changes in the structure and composition of the forest ecosystem to the greatest degree possible.***

- Dispersed, passive recreational activities such as hiking, hunting, and wildlife observation
- Some flexibility:
  - Some management or assisted restoration actions:
    - sustain ecosystem function, vital ecosystem services (water supply), habitat values, invasive species and flexibility to deal with unforeseen circumstances

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF FOREST RESERVES?

1. Provide an opportunity for unique **older forest habitats** to mature and develop over time with no intended intervention in ecological processes as part of a holistic, statewide, biodiversity conservation strategy.
2. Contribute to climate resilience through the maintenance **of connected forest blocks and species movement corridors** that provide a variety of important ecosystem processes, functions, and services.
3. Contribute to **carbon sequestration and storage** as part of the Commonwealth's overall climate mitigation strategy.
4. Provide uniquely remote, less developed opportunities for passive outdoor recreation and other public enjoyment to serve a diverse public with wide-ranging recreational values.
5. Function as passively managed **reference sites** which provide unique opportunities **for ecological research, comparative studies of forest dynamics** within different age classes and types of forest and enable **long-term monitoring** to evaluate how well reserves are achieving their purpose as compared to other land management approaches.



# EEA FOREST RESERVES GRANT PROGRAM

- **\$4M+** allocated to support opportunities to **expand forest reserves on private and municipal lands.**
- Proposals were sought from qualified, eligible non-profit organizations and municipalities to identify opportunities to fund the conservation of forested lands that **align with the goals of the forest reserve program.**
- 17 applications currently under review. Awards anticipated in November.
- Working to **secure funding** for future grant rounds.
- Discussing how this type of funding help you to ensure the **long-term commitment to Forest Reserves.**

# PARTNERING TO ACHIEVE 300,000-ACRES

- **Partnerships** with land trusts and municipalities will be **CRITICAL**.
  - Reserve designation planning process needs **collaboration**.
  - **Existing Reserves?**
    - Existing protected acreage that is managed in a way **compatible with reserve designation criteria**
  - Identify opportunities for reserves that span across different ownerships, **creating larger, more effective reserves**.

Protected and Recreational OpenSpace Polygons

