



MASSACHUSETTS  
LAND TRUST  
COALITION

## State Public Policy Update

June 20, 2025

Under the guidance of our Policy Committee, MLTC focusses its administrative and legislative advocacy on increasing state investment in land conservation and the work of land trusts, and maximizing the integrity and natural resource value of protected lands and unprotected lands of significant conservation value.

### 2025-2026 Legislative Priorities

The 2025-2026 legislative session started on January 2, 2025. Unlike in past years, legislators can sign on to co-sponsor bills up until the date a committee acts on that bill.

MLTC encourages you to reach out to your state legislators to ask them to co-sponsor our highest priority bills for the current legislative session:

**The Nature for All Bill** ([H.901/S.597](#), Rep Blais, Rep. Montañó & Sen. Feeney)

This bill would dedicate a portion of the existing state sales tax for conservation, restoration and improvement of lands and waters to benefit nature and people. See this [fact sheet](#) to learn more about the bill and its growing [list of supporters](#). A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has not yet been announced.

**An Act increasing the conservation land tax credit** ([S.2083/H.3147](#), Sen Tarr and Rep. Jones)

This bill would expand the annual cap on the state's conservation land tax credit program, resolving a long-standing waitlist for landowners willing to permanently conserve their environmentally significant properties. For more information, see this [fact sheet](#) and [WBUR coverage](#) from Martha Bebinger on the importance of expanding the tax credit. A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Revenue has not yet been announced.

Find your legislators [here](#), and see this [message template](#) that you are welcome to use or personalize.

### FY2026 State Operating Budget

With the Senate having passed its version of the budget in late May, a House/Senate Conference Committee is now working to resolve differences between House and Senate versions in order to pass a budget to send to the Governor for approval this summer. MLTC is a member of [The Green Budget Coalition](#), which has submitted [a letter](#) urging the Conference Committee to support line items of importance to the conservation community.

### Environmental Bond Bill

Every five years or so, the legislature passes an Environmental Bond Bill that authorizes capital spending over the next five years for a wide range of state programs that are essential to land conservation and other environmental programs. A variety of policy changes may be attached as "outside sections" and become law when the Bill passes. The Healey-Driscoll Administration is expected to file its version of the Bond Bill very soon – reportedly on June 24, 2025. On June 19, MLTC and conservation partners were briefed on key elements of the Governor's bill by EEA Undersecretary Stephanie Cooper and several EEA colleagues. According to that summary, the Administration's "Mass Ready Bill" will emphasize investments

to prepare residents, communities and our natural world for the impacts of climate change, authorizing a record \$2.9 billion in spending on environmental programs. Once the bill has been released and analyzed, MLTC will post a summary of it on our Policy Priorities page. As the bill works its way through the legislature in coming months, MLTC may work with partners to advocate for various amendments to it in order to secure the strongest possible investments in programs of most importance to the land conservation community.

## Other Bills MLTC Supports

**An Act investing in natural and working lands** ([H.1005/S.549](#) Rep. Meschino & Sen. Comerford) to promote acquisition and management of natural and working lands to reduce impacts from climate change. A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has not yet been announced. Read more about the bill [here](#).

**An Act relative to uniform partition of heirs property** ([H.1964/S.1239](#), Sen. Lovely) to increase protection for legal heirs of property owners who die without a will in place. This bill was heard on April 22, 2025 before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. See a letter of testimony submitted by MLTC [here](#).

**An Act accelerating wetlands restoration projects** (HD.1619/[SD.1066](#), Sen. Crighton) to facilitate expanded wetlands restoration. This bill is the centerpiece of a Mass Audubon to Accelerate Wetland Restoration across Massachusetts. Learn more about the bill [here](#). The Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources held a hearing on the bill on June 3, 2025. See a joint letter of testimony that MLTC supported [here](#).

**An Act to reimburse the George L. Darey Inland Fisheries and Game Fund** ([S.579](#)), Sen. Durant) to consistently reimburse MassWildlife for revenue lost from providing free hunting and fishing licenses. A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has not yet been announced.

**An Act relative to Urban Farmland**, ([S.61/H.121](#), Sen. Gómez, Rep. Duffy) to support conversion of vacant lots and underutilized land in environmental justice communities into urban farms, community gardens, and other agricultural enterprises. A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Agriculture has not yet been announced.

**Proposal for a legislative amendment to the constitution relative to agricultural and horticultural lands** ([S.11/H.71](#), Sen. Comerford, Rep. Blais) to authorize lower tax rates for agricultural land regardless of the size of the agricultural parcel. A hearing on this bill was held before the Joint Committee on Revenue on March 25, 2025. See our written testimony in support [here](#). The Senate bill was reported out favorably on May 1 2025, but on the same day, the House bill received an “ought not to pass” decision. Supporters are currently exploring next steps.

**An Act to report payments in lieu of taxes for state-owned land** ([S.1939/H.3032](#), Sen. Comerford, Rep. Blais) to improve equity in the distribution of state payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to municipalities that host state land and facilities. The bill would revise payment formulas to provide additional reimbursement for the value of ecosystem services provided by state-owned land, such as drinking water protection, habitat for endangered or threatened species, outdoor recreation, carbon sequestration, and landscape connectivity. A hearing date before the Joint Committee on Revenue has not yet been announced.

## MLTC's Priorities for Administrative Advocacy

### Conservation Restriction Backlog

We continue to advocate for resolution of the long-standing backlog in Conservation Restrictions under review by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). MLTC met with EEA staff on March 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss on-going challenges and reached seeming agreement on a few matters, including a commitment from EEA to coordinate comments so that applicants would not face multiple rounds of evolving comments on the same CR. Meanwhile, we have proposed a process by which we could assist EEA with the process to update the state's model Conservation Restriction, but are still awaiting word on when EEA will be ready to undertake that process. In the meantime, we agreed with EEA that it would be appropriate for them to update the current Model CR template with smaller edits that they routinely request of applicants. MLTC encourages those who are having persistent challenges with CR review process to reach out to Robb Johnson at [robb@massland.org](mailto:robb@massland.org).

### Open Space Act ("PLPA") Implementation

MLTC continues to monitor implementation of An Act Preserving Open Space in the Commonwealth (the "Open Space Act", formerly known as PLPA), which took effect in February 2023. Late in 2024, EEA opened a comment period on [draft regulations](#) to implement the law. After an initial comment period ending in January, EEA opened a second round of public comment through March 26, 2025. MLTC coordinated a group comment letter in January 2025, which can be viewed [here](#). See our second comment letter [here](#). The state's [Open Space Act webpage](#) provides a variety of important resources on the Open Space Act, including a Tracker with information submitted about proposed Article 97 actions, and list of Article 97 change-of-use petitions that passed in the 2023-2024 legislative session.

### Pending Regulations under the Grid Equity Act

MLTC will work with partners to advocate for robust measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts on ecological and human communities in new energy-facility siting frameworks to be adopted under the 2024 Grid Equity Act signed into law in November 2024. The law will bring major changes to how new energy facilities are permitted in Massachusetts, with the goal of accelerating our much-needed transition to clean energy. In coming months, The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), will be taking comments on draft regulations that must be finalized by spring 2026. The law has a number of provisions intended to mitigate the impacts of energy facilities on communities and the environment, including creation of a financial assistance program for those who face barriers commenting on projects that are under review; new community benefit requirements; a requirement to analyze cumulative impacts, and site suitability criteria. Learn more [here](#).

### Other EEA Initiatives

We will aim to represent land trusts on EEA-convened working groups, including those related to the Resilient Lands Coalition. We will also advocate for effective implementation of the Farmland Action Plan, Healthy Soils Action Plan and strategic actions to set and achieve statewide Biodiversity Goals.

## Uncertainty re: Federal Funding and Executive Orders

In this period of on-going uncertainty, MLTC has posted some [resources on our website](#) for federal grantees and others seeking to protect themselves. As things continue to evolve, we'll do our best to share relevant updates on that page.