

THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE IN MASSACHUSETTS



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In recent decades, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has approved three comprehensive Environmental Bond bills (1996, 2002, and 2008) that have been the cornerstone of the state's investments in parks and land and water conservation. As a result of these bond measures, Massachusetts conserved an average of 9,350 acres per year from 1998 to 2011. The Trust for Public Land recently conducted research that quantifies and summarizes the significant economic benefits to local Massachusetts communities resulting from investments in open space, natural areas, working lands, parks, and public pools.

Projects made possible by the Commonwealth's investments in parks and open space support hundreds of thousands of jobs across the state. For every \$1 invested in land conservation, \$4 in natural goods and services is returned to the Massachusetts economy according to The Trust for Public Land.

Generating jobs and growing local economies by conserving land

From 1998 to 2011, Massachusetts conserved 131,000 acres of parks, natural areas, and working lands, helping to support the tourism, outdoor recreation, agriculture, forestry, and commercial fishing industries.

- Visitors to Massachusetts spend an estimated \$16.9 billion each year and generate \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes. The total economic impact of this travel is \$26.9 billion. Tourism supports nearly 125,000 jobs, which provides \$3.63 billion in wages per year.¹
- Outdoor recreation generates \$10 billion in consumer spending, \$739 million in state and local tax revenue, 90,000 jobs, and \$3.5 billion in wages and salaries each year in the state.²

- Agriculture, forestry, commercial fishing, and related processing activity are responsible for \$13 billion in output, and 147,000 jobs in Massachusetts.³

Realizing a valuable return on investment: natural goods and services

Lands conserved in Massachusetts provide a host of benefits that have a measurable economic value to the state and its communities. They include natural goods and services such as water quality protection, flood control, air pollution removal, and stormwater management.

- The Trust for Public Land analyzed the economic value of natural goods and services provided by lands conserved by Massachusetts between 1998 and 2011. For every \$1 invested in land conservation, \$4 in economic benefits is returned to the state.⁴



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Revitalizing communities and creating jobs

Investment in existing Gateway City⁵ parks and public outdoor swimming pools amplifies the economic benefits provided by these spaces through the improvement of their quality and through the creation of additional jobs and local economic activity.

- The Trust for Public Land analyzed the state's investment in Gateway City parks and found that it will create a total of 492 jobs and \$26.5 million in local wages and salaries. That is, every \$1 million invested in Gateway City parks will create 13.7 jobs.⁶
- The Trust for Public Land also analyzed the state's investment in public outdoor swimming pools and found that it will create a total of 390 jobs and \$24.2 million in local wages and salaries. That is, every \$1 million invested in outdoor swimming pools will create 11.8 jobs.⁷



SUSAN LAPIDES

Maximizing impact of state dollars

The Commonwealth's investment in land conservation leverages funding from federal, private, and local sources. By attracting support from other sources, the state shares the cost of conservation projects and maximizes its investment.

- The Trust for Public Land found from 1998 to 2011, grant programs in Massachusetts leveraged \$118 million in matching funds from federal and local governments, as well as private sources such as land trusts and foundations, for land purchases and conservation easements (i.e., voluntary conservation agreements with willing landowners to protect their land from development). That is, every \$1 of state spending on land conservation leveraged \$1.23 in additional contributions.⁸

End notes

1. Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, 2012 Annual Report, (March 2013).
2. Outdoor Industry Association, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy: Massachusetts*, (accessed July 22, 2012, http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/ore_reports/MA-massachusetts-outdoorrecreationeconomy-oia.pdf).
3. United States Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau, "2011 County Business Patterns (NAICS)" (accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/>); United States Department of Commerce, United States Census Bureau, "Annual Survey of Manufactures: Geographic Area Statistics: Statistics for All Manufacturing by State: 2011 and 2010" (accessed August 8, 2013, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ASM_2011_31AS101&prodType=table); Rigoberto Lopez and Chris Laughton. *The Overlooked Economic Engine: Northeast Agriculture* and supporting report (Farm Credit East, 2012); and United States Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, *Fisheries Economics of the U.S. 2011: New England*.
4. See full report for methodology at tpl.org/massachusetts.
5. A Gateway City is defined as municipality with a population greater than 35,000 and less than 250,000, a median household income below the Commonwealth's average, and a rate of educational attainment of a bachelor's degree or above that is below the Commonwealth's average.
6. See full report for methodology at tpl.org/massachusetts.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

Full report available at tpl.org/massachusetts
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