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Chairwoman Anne Gobi
Chairman Paul Schmid
Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture
State House
Boston, MA 02133

May 29, 2015

Re: In Support of *The Public Lands Preservation Act*, S402/H623

Dear Chairs Gobi and Schmid:

I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC) to encourage the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture to support *An Act to protect the natural resources of the Commonwealth*, otherwise known as *The Public Lands Preservation Act* (PLPA). MLTC represents approximately 130 land trusts and conservation organizations in every city and town in Massachusetts, many of which have partnered with state agencies, cities and towns to protect these Article 97 lands.

PLPA is an important bill as it would further the long-standing goal of preventing the loss of constitutionally protected public parks, farms, conservation land, forests, watersheds and other natural resource lands. These lands are major contributors to clean water, clean air, quality of life, recreational opportunities for people from all walks of life, habitat for our diverse species of plants and wildlife, a robust tourism industry, and a strong economy. They also play a key role in reducing carbon emissions and guarding against the impacts of climate change.

The bill requires that a municipality or state agency proposing disposition of or change in use of any lands or easements acquired for natural resource purposes (Article 97 land):

- (1) provide replacement land of comparable acreage, location, and natural resource value, i.e., *no net loss*; and
- (2) notify the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs and provide information that would allow the Secretary to assess the need for the disposition or change in use, the availability of feasible alternatives, and the suitability of the replacement land being provided.

PLPA is important to MLTC, its member organizations and the citizens that they represent, as it provides an orderly, transparent process to consider a disposition, and maintains the trust of families making the difficult decision to donate, engage in a bargain sale or otherwise conserve their lands. We encourage the Committee to promptly report out the bill favorably.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to working with you on this and other matters.

Sincerely,

Mary Griffin, Executive Director