

Public Policy Update for MLTC February 2016

State Public Policy

Land Conservation: Land conservation *NGOs met with the leadership of EEA* on January 11 to advocate for more capital funding, better timing/transparency and a dialog on planning/ priorities.

- Capital funding for FY16 appears to be level-funded (\$45.58M, details below) and EEA may be able to increase the pace of land acquisition in subsequent years.
- EEA heard our request for better timing and transparency for the state agency land programs.
- EEA has committed to convening a dialog to discuss goals, planning and priorities.

FY16 Capital Spending:

	Acquisition	Deferred Maintenance
DAR	\$5.90M	\$180K
DCR	\$3.37M	\$530K
DFG	\$3.68M	\$1.290M

- Land Protection Grant Programs (Conservation Partnership and Landscape Partnership): \$3.13M
- Community Investment Grant Programs (Gateway City Parks, LAND, PARC, Small Communities, & Drinking Water Supply Protection): \$16.77M
- Signature Parks: \$8.72M
- Greening the Gateway Cities (tree planting): \$1.5M (\$500K ACP)
- Working Forest Preservation Restrictions: \$500K

Conservation NGOs are preparing to ***advocate for FY17 capital funding*** in a meeting requested with the Governor’s budget office (Executive Office of Administration and Finance).

TTOR and Mass Audubon leadership met with ***Governor Baker*** to express support for land conservation funding and the Community Preservation funding. The NGOs asked for the governor’s help on the NED pipeline to continue to uphold the public trust on permanence of conservation lands.

The Governor has committed \$10M in surplus state funds in his FY16 State Operating Budget, if available, to the ***Community Preservation Act*** program. The Community Preservation Coalition continues to push for \$25 million annually for CPA from the state budget surplus. Legislation is pending before the Joint Committee on Revenue to increase the state match for CPA.

In September, the Revenue Committee approved the bill that would increase from \$2 million to \$5 million of the annual cap for the ***Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) Program***. The committee amended the bill allowing nonprofit trusts to be eligible for the credit and referred the bill to the House Ways and Means Committee. Last year’s disagreement on tax policy appearing in the state budget means we need to focus on moving a stand-alone bill.

The Revenue Committee heard one of the bills in the Governor’s municipal reform package that includes changes relative to ***“right of first refusal”*** for municipalities on land owned by nonprofits. TTOR and Mass Audubon, and others (developers and nonprofits), provided testimony in opposition to the changes.

The Revenue Committee has heard several bills related to **PILOT** payments this session, the most recent earlier this week. Mass Audubon and TTOR provided testimony in opposition to these bills.

The Zoning Coalition continues to advocate for the **omnibus zoning bill**. The Legislature decided to refer the bill to a different committee than had heard it previously, so the Coalition is focused on educating the chairs and staff.

The Senate for the second time this legislative session unanimously approved the **Comprehensive Adaptation Management Plan** bill that would require the Commonwealth to prepare an adaptation action plan. We are working hard to convince the House of Representatives to approve the measure before the Legislative session closes at the end of July. The Adaptation Coalition, 40+ organizations representing engineers, architects, planners, and conservation and environmental organizations, continues to work to influence the Administration, grow the Coalition and educate members of our respective organizations.

The Governor filed his **FY17 State Operating Budget** in late January with 0.6 percent for environmental agencies – well short of the one percent goal. Advocacy on the Green Budget is focused on increasing funding for DCR parks, DEP air and water protection and DER restoration.

In January, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) released the update (required every 5 years) to the **Clean Energy and Climate Plan (CECP)**. The CECP provides the Commonwealth's path to meeting the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (25% from 1990 levels by 2020; and 80% from 1990 levels by 2050). The CECP included many commitments to nature-based solutions, such as tree planting and retention. Trees help reduce emissions by shading buildings from sun and wind thereby reducing heating and cooling costs -- trees also absorb carbon and provide resiliency co-benefits such as managing stormwater. The Baker Administration tree planting and retention program includes:

- Funding a robust tree planting and retention program in Gateway Cities.
- Enhancing a suite of incentives for smart growth and natural resources protection zoning
- Providing municipalities with model ordinances and sharing best management practices for developers

Energy: As the Legislature prepares an **omnibus energy bill**, the conservation community has been urging policymakers to include environmentally preferable considerations in the generation, siting and operation of our future energy supply.

- Provide a contracting preference for renewables that meet environmental standards.
- Retain environmentally preferable eligibility requirements for hydropower in the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

NGOs plan to meet with the Department of Energy Resources to **defend the regulations for eligibility requirements in the Renewable Portfolio Standard** for hydropower and utility-scale biomass. The consideration of changes is separate and apart from the EO562 process.

Federal Public Policy

Budget – the President released his \$4.1 trillion FY17 spending plan on February 9th. The topline numbers stick to the budget cap agreements set by the Budget Control Act passed back in October. We are working to pull together an analysis of funding levels in this budget. However, there are two budget items with direct impact to the Massachusetts: **\$170,000 for Taunton Wild & Scenic River and \$1m to support LWCF in the Silvio O. Conte USFW Refuge.**
