A Land Conservation Vision Summary for Massachusetts - 2010

The Massachusetts landscape in 20 years has intact working farms and forests accessible to people with streams with good water quality and adequate flow and high value ecological areas protected and people with an emotional connection to the land living in thoughtful development in existing villages and cities with good access to open spaces.

Before we reach this future, we need to deal with development that fragments the landscape due to insensitive zoning and a public not educated about this problem and landowners under financial pressure not educated about the positive use of estate planning tools in an environment where climate change and invasive species expand, people are not connected to the land and funding for land conservation is often a challenge.

The strategies to reach the future vision need to be heavily focused on improving zoning regulations, incentives and investment based on a comprehensive, smart growth, science-based plan that has broad-based public education and involvement and focuses on connecting neighborhoods and villages to the land, especially working landscapes.
IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS 2013

CONNECT PEOPLE TO LAND

(5) Outdoor classrooms within a 10 minute walk to all schools. Land Trusts teach teachers about that land and hold classes there.

(5) Encourage Community Gardens via tax rebates for landowners

(3) Expand “Mass Lift”

(3) Google maps and MassGIS linked so everyone can see our protected open space

(2) Integrate nature to school curricula and work with Mass Department of Education

(2) Work with farmers – keep farmers farming into the future

(2) Expand scouting

(1) Partner with Public Health

(1) Offer kids work in outdoors

(1) Go beyond kids – boomers too

(1) Set statewide metrics for this goal – how many kids are we reaching?

(1) Take kids out on trails!

(1) Take “one day” for getting on land

(1) Work more on trails – pay farmers and forest owners to create trails

(1) Expand Mass Agricultural classroom

Improve physical education to open space

Do we focus intensive programs for small groups or offer large groups an overview?

Connect people through Green Connections

Land Trusts put this on agenda

Keep the Gateway Cities Park Program going

Funding for Land Trusts to do “River Classroom” type programs

Summer reading – “nights out for nature” – things parents like to do
CONSERVE WORKING LANDS

(3) Implement Working Lands Enterprise Zones in Regional Plans (both land conservation and economic development)

(1) Increase Agricultural Commissions in Region planning

(1) Pass Forest Stewardship tax credit

(1) See green cemeteries as working land

State buys more local lumber

Inventory institution non-profit religious lands

State/ fed support for private forest carbon credits

Buy CR’s on Land Trust fee land at about 10% of fair market value and reinvest funds to conserve more land

Land Trust engage with LAND grants

Buy Land for new farmers to farm who can’t afford it

Prison farms should be model working farms

CONSERVE OUR WATER RESOURCE AREAS

(2) Identify critical groundwater recharge areas to recharge aquifers – but not prime habitat

(2) Better sub-basin protection for springs, seeps, intermittent streams

(1) Get regular citizens to think about water

(1) Plan for fracture drilling

(1) Funding for water curricula “where does your drinking water come from”

(1) Bring DEP drinking water protection grants back

Find a way to educate people about water resources maybe not “water sheds”

Replicate “Littleton” keep water local” treatment pilot

Water “ extension service”

Create State Revolving Fund for water supply acquisitions

Focus on whole river basins

Revive the New England River Basins Commission

Non Profits advocate for MWRA $ for Wachusett Reservoir projects
IMPROVE ZONING

(7) Technical assistance for Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ) via grant funding or in the Green Communities Act Program – link to more state grants like landscape partnership (use to promote technique)

(5) Bring back the Watershed Initiative

(3) Make OSRP easier; less time planning and more action

(2) Case studies or projections of land use scenarios with fiscal impacts

ACEC program revitalized

Tweak Chapter 40B as per Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ)- get positive on Chapter 40B

Common Septic; to encourage density in rural areas

Transportation- link road standards to planning and zoning

Coordinate efforts at land conservation think bigger than local (call for state leadership to better plan at more than local level

Deal with climate change adaptation (include in Green Communities criteria)

Open space committee; put state funding towards an annual event

Target water supply lands throughout state working with utilities (success like DCR/MWRA)

Give town meeting examples that suite their circumstances

Let graduate schools get involved with Natural Resource Protection Zoning

Create Master Plans that map sensitive environmental areas and areas where development would have the least environmental impact and provide incentives for development there (TDR, reduced permit fees) via an “green development endowment fund”