

OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT

An Act to create the Massachusetts outdoor recreation fund

Sponsored by Rep. Natalie Blais & Sen. Paul Feeney ([H.757](#), [S.488](#))

The importance of outdoor recreation in Massachusetts can not be overstated—thriving parks, forests, rivers, trails, and fields create healthier communities, sustain local economies, protect our natural resources, and foster deep care and concern for our shared environment.

Lowest income neighborhoods have **UNDER HALF AS MUCH PROTECTED LAND** as highest income neighborhoods.¹

Communities with the highest proportions of people of color have **LESS THAN 60% AS MUCH PROTECTED LAND.**

Many communities in Massachusetts enjoy a wealth of year-round outdoor recreational opportunities that go hand-in-hand with our commitment to protecting and preserving natural resources and special places. However, stark disparities exist as **Environmental Justice and other underserved communities receive fewer investments in parks, trails, and open spaces** and have scant access to outdoor opportunities.

A THRIVING
OUTDOOR
RECREATION
SYSTEM
CREATES...



CLIMATE
RESILIENCE



HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES



ECONOMIC
GROWTH

The time is now to invest in the outdoors

for all—the Outdoor Recreation Act will give the new Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation the support it needs to create a flourishing, equitable outdoor recreation system and economy.

- Right now, **Massachusetts ranks #50 nationally—dead last**—in per capita spending on parks and recreation²
- **Massachusetts ranks 32nd** in value added to growing the outdoor recreation economy³

THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT WILL EXPAND ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST—creating healthier communities, climate resilience, and economic growth.

¹ Sims, Katherine R.E.; Lee, Lucy G.; Estrella-Luna, Neenah; Lurie, Margo; and Thompson, Jonathan R.; Environmental Justice criteria for new land protection can inform efforts to address disparities in nearby open space (2022) ² Department of Conservation and Recreation Special Commission. 2021. Prepared by UMass Donahue Institute. ³ U.S. Dept. of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. 2019. Massachusetts Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account report



WHAT DOES THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT DO?

THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT would create a statewide dedicated fund to ensure the success of the newly created Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation and provide grants for outdoor recreational purposes, with priority given to projects that benefit underserved and Environmental Justice populations.

WHERE DOES THE FUNDING COME FROM?

Your next kayak, canoe, bike, skis, or running shoes could support a healthy environment! All existing sales tax revenues received by the Commonwealth from the sale of sporting goods would be placed in the Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund for the purposes of conservation, creation, preservation, and restoration of natural resources for recreational use.

**A SPORTING GOODS SALES
TAX CAN CREATE OVER
\$55 MILLION
IN REVENUE EACH YEAR⁴**

WHAT WOULD THESE FUNDS PAY FOR?

These funds would be put straight to work—providing new grant opportunities for cities, towns, state agencies, community development corporations, regional planning agencies, and non-profit organizations to create and improve parks, trails, athletic fields, and more—**directly benefiting the communities that need it most.**

**PRIORITY
FOR PROJECTS THAT BENEFIT
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE +
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

OUTDOOR RECREATION CREATES...

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES Everyone deserves **safe, affordable, equitable access** to vibrant parks, woodlands, rivers, lakes, and trails to congregate, exercise, and relax. Creating inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities and reducing barriers to access will have **innumerable benefits for community wellness, quality of life, and physical and mental health.**

CLIMATE RESILIENCE Conserving, protecting, and restoring natural resources for public enjoyment also **builds natural resilience to climate change!** Healthy forests, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and parks bolster our watersheds' and coasts' ability to absorb floods, withstand storm surges, and adapt to climate impacts. Ecological restoration strengthens essential fish and wildlife habitats and rebuilds healthy, biodiverse ecosystems. **Robust parks, shade trees, and green spaces fight urban heat island effect**—providing cooling shade, cleaner air, and shelter for our neighborhoods.

ECONOMIC GROWTH Outdoor recreation plays a significant role in the overall economy of Massachusetts, adding **\$9.5 billion to the state's GDP and directly supporting 93,000 jobs**, according to a recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. **Investing in outdoor recreation creates new jobs, sustains local economies, and boosts tourism.**⁵ From construction jobs to trail stewards to park interpreters landscape and facilities roles—growing the state's green economy offers the opportunity to create jobs and expand career prospects.

QUESTIONS? Jen Ryan, Deputy Director of Advocacy, Charles River Watershed Assoc. jryan@crwa.org
Linda Orel, Director of Government Relations, The Trustees of Reservations lorel@thetrustees.org

⁴ The Trust for Public Land

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis [Outdoor Recreation Value](#)