



2007-2008 OTHER CRITICAL STATE CONSERVATION REFORM INITIATIVES

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Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 32,000 acres of conservation land, provide educational programs for 200,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Mass Audubon's mission and actions have expanded since our beginning in 1896 when our founders set out to stop the slaughter of birds for use on women's fashions. Today we are the largest conservation organization in New England. Our statewide network of 43 wildlife sanctuaries welcomes visitors of all ages and serves as the base for our conservation, education, and advocacy work.

Today the Commonwealth has a strong body of laws and programs dedicated to the protection of biological diversity. Current statutes and regulations are important conservation tools only when implemented with adequate political and financial support for enforcement. The rapid change in the Commonwealth's economy, and the resulting impact on our natural resources, requires reforms of existing programs in order to keep pace with present challenges and improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of state government.

Stewardship Through Efficiency, Transparency, and Accountability

Mass Audubon is eager to work with legislators and agency officials during the 2007-2008 session to address the following issues that are in need of reform:

- *Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund:* Need to amend section 35D of chapter 10 of the Massachusetts General Laws to permanently waive the application of indirect (overhead) cost charges on expenditures for endangered species recovery.
- *Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance Surplus Lands Disposition:* Need to amend section 548 of chapter 26 of the Acts of 2003 to establish stronger mechanisms for environmental agency review and municipal involvement prior to auction of surplus state lands
- *Conservation Restriction and Agricultural Preservation Restriction Reform:* Need to strengthen the durability and utility of conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions as innovative voluntary land protection tools
- *Forestry Reform:* Need to modify existing state forestry laws (M.G.L. chapters 61 and 132) to improve forest cutting standards and encourage sustainable forestry on private lands; enhance incentives for use of locally-harvested timber; and authorize the state to establish a system of forest reserves, including old growth, on state forests and state wildlife management areas
- *Water Conservation:* Need to provide financial incentives and technical assistance to municipalities and water districts for implementing water conservation and efficiency programs
- *Pilot Wetlands Mitigation Banking Program:* Need to amend section 89 of chapter 291 of the Acts of 2004 to limit wetlands mitigation banking program to state transportation projects
- *Off-Road Vehicle Riding:* Consider increasing penalties for illegal off-road and all terrain vehicle riding and violations on municipal and state conservation lands; dedicate penalties and registration fees towards enforcement
- *Annual Capital Spending Plan:* Need to require Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and its agencies to report to the legislature on all projects conducted through the capital budget, including the location, description, and acreage protected of all land conservation projects

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