



**For immediate release  
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**Contact: Wendy Fox  
617-626-1453**

## **DCR HOSTS PUBLIC MEETING IN LENOX TO DISCUSS UPPER HOUSATONIC RIVER ACEC**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will hold a public meeting in Lenox on May 28 to discuss the Commonwealth's newest Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and establish a volunteer stewardship committee.

Last March, the Upper Housatonic River ACEC, a region of the southern Berkshires comprising 12,280 acres in Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Washington, was designated by Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles as the Commonwealth's 30th ACEC. The new designation promises greater protection for the region's unique natural and cultural resources.

**The public meeting will be Thursday, May 28, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., in the Lenox Town Hall Auditorium, 6 Walker Street, Lenox.**

At the meeting, ACEC program staff members will explain the ACEC designation, describe the area's resources, and answer questions about the effects of designation. Meeting attendees will have an opportunity to discuss stewardship goals for the area and schedule a future meeting to determine whether a volunteer stewardship committee will form. Interested residents, municipal staff members, and representatives of municipal boards and local or regional organizations are encouraged to attend.

ACEC committees build on existing partnerships and foster coordinated local and regional, public and private management of natural and cultural resources. Such committees are different for each ACEC, and structure and format are determined by the people who volunteer to become involved.

"Secretary Bowles and I strongly encourage the formation of an ACEC stewardship committee," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "Such committees help bring together interested parties to promote environmental education and sound resource management and protection."

An ACEC designation protects ecosystems and encourages appreciation and stewardship of a unique ecological area. The designation provides a framework for citizens, communities, and

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600  
Boston MA 02114-2119  
617-626-1250 617-626-1351 Fax  
[www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)



Deval L. Patrick  
Governor

Timothy P. Murray  
Lt. Governor

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, Executive  
Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Commissioner  
Department of Conservation & Recreation

agencies to ensure the long-term preservation and management of these areas. Stewardship committees identify goals and objectives, design management strategies, conduct public outreach, and initiate or support various resource protection and recreation projects.

Throughout the ACEC nomination review process, numerous comment letters were received from municipal bodies, non-governmental organizations, and residents indicating a strong commitment to forming and participating in a stewardship committee. Committees can include interested groups and individuals who volunteer to help manage the resources of the ACEC.

The new ACEC includes a 13-mile corridor of the Housatonic River, adjacent floodplains, tributary streams, and the western slopes of October Mountain State Forest. Coldwater tributary streams support more than 30 fish species, and large expanses of wildlife habitat support more than 30 rare species. The ACEC provides scenic beauty and exceptional recreational opportunities. More than 63 percent of the ACEC is conservation land, including more than 6,000 acres owned by DCR and the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

For more information about the ACEC program, visit [www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/index.htm) or contact Elizabeth Sorenson, ACEC Program director, at 617-626-1394 or [elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us](mailto:elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us).

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*The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr). Contact us at [mass.parks@state.ma.us](mailto:mass.parks@state.ma.us).*