



WILDLIFE LANDS ACQUISITION IN FY18

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) work together to protect the Commonwealth’s most important fish and wildlife habitat and to expand public access to land and inland waters for hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation and other wildlife-related recreation. To accomplish this dual mission, DFG/MassWildlife’s Land Protection Program uses funding from the Environmental Bond and the Wildlands Stamp Fund to purchase land in fee and conservation restrictions from willing landowners who seek to conserve their property. Some landowners donate their land or a conservation restriction to DFG/MassWildlife, which may result in an income tax deduction for the landowner.

Fiscal Year 2018 was a successful year for protecting land across the state that resulted in myriad public access benefits. Land agents in the five MassWildlife districts completed

a total of 47 projects covering 2,981 acres including 436 acres of gifted lands. The total acquisition cost of \$4.6 million improves Massachusetts’ climate change resiliency by protecting forests that absorb carbon dioxide, keeping land open along rivers, streams, and wetlands that work to absorb flood waters in extreme weather events, and by connecting large areas of wildlife habitat which allow plants and animals the ability to adapt to changing weather conditions.

Fifteen projects were completed in the Connecticut Valley District protecting 863 acres at a cost of \$1,092,220. One unique acquisition is an Eversource property in Montague. The 150-acre parcel contains several different habitats, including an oxbow of the Millers River, a rich mesic forest, an old gravel pit that now contains early successional forest, a three-acre hay field, steep ledges, a hemlock forest, a large vernal pool and an upland oak forest.

In the Southeast District, seven projects conserving 330 acres were completed for a total cost of \$354,600. The acquisitions include a gift of a conservation restriction on 165 acres in Halifax. Property acreage added to the footprints of the Hockomock Swamp WMA (West Bridgewater), the SE Mass BioReserve (Dartmouth), Upper Taunton River WMA (Bridgewater) and Burrage Pond WMA (Halifax).

In the Northeast District, eight land acquisition projects were completed, conserving 258 acres of land at a cost of \$835,250. One particular project in Dunstable added a 20-acre piece along the Nashua River, protecting 1,500 feet along both banks of Unkety Brook (a Coldwater Fish Resource) and 3,000 feet of frontage along the Nashua River. This additional frontage contributes to 2.5 miles of protected contiguous river frontage along the Nashua River.

The Western District completed 14 land acquisition projects protecting approximately 1320 acres of land and adding to nine different WMAs. The largest land project was completed with the help of an EEA Landscape Partnership Grant (LPG). This LPG funding helped MassWildlife acquire 466 acres in the Towns of Cumington, Plainfield and Ashfield. This land, which will become a part of the Swift River WMA, contains 4,474 feet of frontage along the North Branch of Swift River. In working on this LPG project with our partner, Franklin Land Trust, MassWildlife also obtained a conservation restriction over 126 acres of land with 5,071 feet of frontage along Meadow Brook. Both the Swift River and Meadow Brook are tributaries to the East Branch of the Westfield River and they are both excellent cold water streams.

Central District land acquisition staff completed four projects protecting 213 acres of land at a cost of \$386,080. In particular, acquisition of a portion of the Barringer property in Oakham provided MassWildlife with the opportunity to add 169 acres of high quality wildlife habitat, along with increased recreational opportunities, to the north extent of the Oakham WMA. This site is ranked as above average in resiliency to climate change due to the variability in topography interspersed with wetlands and open water habitats, which support numerous wildlife species. A diversity of wetlands are found on site including vernal pools, streams, open water pond influenced by beaver, graminoid marsh, small bog mats, and forested swamp.

The DFG/MassWildlife land acquisition team looks forward to another great year of conserving land for habitat biodiversity as well as for the public’s enjoyment of fish, wildlife and the habitats where they live. The total amount of acres conserved by DFG/MassWildlife is 221,138. To see a map of MassWildlife lands, visit www.mass.gov/dfw/wildlife-lands.

	WESTERN	VALLEY	CENTRAL	NORTHEAST	SOUTHEAST	TOTAL
WMA	46,673.3	19,649.2	39,266.8	17,347.4	43,937.2	166,874.0
WCE	17,371.6	8,827.4	9,364.3	2,099.7	11,378.5	49,041.5
Access	35.8	518.3	685.0	234.7	54.2	1,527.9
Sanctuary	427.5		367.9	552.5	73.0	1,420.9
WCR	69.4	2.4	856.9	127.0	37.9	1,093.6
Installation	2.4	579.2		107.8	108.4	797.8
Other				372.0	11.0	383.0
TOTAL	64,580.0	29,576.6	50,540.9	20,841.1	55,600.2	221,138.7

WMA (Wildlife Management Area) – Land owned outright by DFG/MassWildlife. Open to the public for hunting, fishing, trapping and other passive recreation. Subject to Wildlife Management Area Regulations

WCE (Wildlife Conservation Easement) – DFG/MassWildlife owns development and recreation rights. Open to the public for hunting, fishing, trapping and other passive recreation.

Access Areas – Property providing public recreation access to water bodies or adjacent conservation lands owned by a third party. (Does not include Office of Fishing and Boating Access boat launches, ramps or fishing piers)

Wildlife Sanctuary – Wildlife properties donated to MassWildlife and governed by statute and regulation, fishing, hunting, and trapping are prohibited; other public recreation access is permitted.

WCR (Wildlife Conservation Restriction) – DFG or MassWildlife owns development rights, but public access is not allowed. These lands buffer wildlife habitat by preventing unwanted development.