



Healthy Soils Initiative Sub-Committee

**Tuesday, August 18, 2026, 2:00pm – 4:00pm
Via Zoom***

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Subcommittee role and process
 - Purpose and scope
 - How the Subcommittee arrives at a recommendation
 - Between-meeting input
3. Cross-agency coordination on soil health: prioritizing opportunities
4. Public communication and outreach on soil health: prioritizing audiences
5. Next steps and September 29 meeting
6. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting
7. Adjourn

If you wish to attend this virtual meeting, please email Tom Anderson, Executive Secretary, at thomas.anderson@mass.gov and he will email you the link.

§ 20. Powers & duties of the State Commission

The state commission, unless otherwise specified, shall have the following powers and duties:—

(1) To encourage and assist educational work in the conservation and development of renewable natural resources, including soil, water, plant life, woodland, fish and wildlife, and recreation resources, the control and prevention of erosion, floodwater and sediment damages, and the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water, through co-operation with all federal, state, county, local, public and private resource agencies.

(2) To advise the director in developing policies of the division of conservation services relating to the operation of conservation districts and to carry out policies and programs affecting conservation districts.

(3) To perform the functions hereinafter provided for, relating to the establishment, change of boundaries, or dissolution of conservation districts.

(4) To secure the co-operation and assistance of agencies of the United States, the commonwealth and its political subdivisions in promoting the organization and operation of conservation districts.

(5) To disseminate information concerning the activities and programs of conservation districts.

(6) To allot money appropriated for establishing and maintaining conservation districts and conservation district divisions and for the operation of their projects and programs.

(7) To develop annual budgets for the operation and maintenance of conservation districts, conservation district divisions, and the state commission for submission to the director.

(8) To establish program priorities and advise conservation districts and divisions on those programs which contribute to the conservation and best use of the natural resources of the commonwealth.

(9) To develop a natural resource plan for the commonwealth every five years commencing in January, nineteen hundred and eighty-five.

(10) To accept contributions, gifts or grants of money or property, whether real or personal, from any source, private or public, including but not limited to, the United States or its agencies, in order to promote the purpose of this chapter.

(11) To establish, with the approval of the majority of the chairmen of the conservation districts, six conservation district divisions. In establishing said divisions, the state commission may include one or more conservation districts.

(12) To encourage educational activities which promote the conservation and development of renewable natural resources, including soil, water, plant life, woodland, fish, wildlife, recreation resources, prevention of soil erosion, floodwater and sediment damages and the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water through cooperation with appropriate federal, state, county, public and private agencies.

(13) To set fees for pamphlets, publications or services which shall not exceed the cost of providing such pamphlets, publications or services and to promote uniform fees set by district supervisors.

(14) To disseminate information regarding amendments to the general and special laws of the commonwealth, proposed changes in laws and rules and regulations which affect or shall affect businesses in the commonwealth; and, to establish educational outreach programs for the purpose of assisting small business to implement required changes in legislation.

(15) To assist in the development of a healthy soils program, as instructed by the director, to: (i) improve soil quality on lands utilized for commercial farming, suburban and urban lawns, yards and gardens, public and private forests, parks and other open or green spaces and non-paved outdoor areas of office complexes, mixed-use facilities, businesses, industries and colleges and other institutions; (ii) increase carbon sequestration or storage on such lands to help reduce harmful atmospheric greenhouse gases and the effects of climate change; and (iii) provide other measurable benefits, determined as applicable under the program to certain types of lands, related to climate change, plant growth, erosion control and water absorption and quality. The commission, in the development of the program or any significant change to the established program, if requested by the director, shall consult with 1 or more of the following organizations, as appropriate for the type of land intended to be covered under the program: (i) the department of agricultural resources; (ii) department of environmental protection; (iii) department of fish and game; (iv) the Nature Conservancy; (v) Massachusetts Forest Alliance Limited; (v) the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts, Inc.; (vi) Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation, Incorporated; (vii) the National Resources Conservation Services within the United States Department of Agriculture; (viii) Massachusetts chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association; (ix) the University of Massachusetts Extension; (x) the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and (xi) any individual or other organization designated by the director.

(16) To encourage and promote the use of healthy soils policies and practices by private and public landowners, including commercial farmers, and any assistance available to program participants, which may consist of grants, technical assistance or education on the benefits and implementation of healthy soils best practices, as the director may instruct, to achieve the purposes of the healthy soils program.

Scope of Services: Healthy Soils Initiative coordination vendor

A. Contract Monitoring and Support

- a. Assist with maintaining and managing EEA Challenge Grant contracts (23 projects as of 12/01/25), including:
 - i. Regular contact with vendors to answer questions and track progress.
 - ii. Work with each of these vendors to fine-tune their plan for maximizing the reporting, outreach, and implementation components of their contracts.
 - iii. Review and recommend for payment the request for reimbursement.
 - iv. Work with each vendor to ensure delivery goals are met and optimized; manage revisions to project scopes as needed.
 - v. Collect and post quarterly reports and other deliverables on the EEA website.
- b. Plan at least two online general coordination sessions per year between contracted vendors to build connections, share learnings, and foster collaboration.

B. Cross-Agency Coordination & Policy Integration Survey relevant agencies and organizations to identify existing programs and opportunities for integration. An important and known integration focus would be with the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plans (MCECP) for 2025, 2030, 2050 and its goals.

- a. Support EEA/Soil Commission in laying the groundwork for interagency coordination around soil health.
 - i. Conduct a scan of state agency programs and regulatory frameworks relevant to the Healthy Soils Action Plan (HSAP), including the MCECP Team, to identify potential synergies, barriers, and opportunities for alignment.
 - ii. Develop briefing materials, relationship maps, and internal recommendations to support EEA staff in convening interagency dialogue.
 - iii. Coordinate logistics and communication support for at least one annual interagency meeting led by EEA staff/State Commission to explore implementation of HSAP goals across agencies such as DEP, DCR, DOER, and MDAR.

C. Website & Public Communications

- a. Monitor and update the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Initiative website.
 - i. Although the website itself is maintained by the Commonwealth, the vendor will provide suggestions for the design and content that will make

the site more user-friendly and efficient in presenting the many topics and initiatives being undertaken for soil health.

- ii. Incorporate and post grant deliverables, reports, and helpful resources as they become available.
 - iii. Post announcements for upcoming workshops and relevant soil health events or tools.
- b. Develop a Healthy Soils Initiative newsletter and maintain an email contact list of stakeholders, partners, and interested parties.

D. Education & Outreach

- a. Lead public education efforts to increase awareness of soil health across diverse communities, its benefits and promote the Healthy Soils Initiative.
 - i. Work with conservation districts, MACD, MACC, municipal officials, schools, and non-profits to co-host events, trainings, and informational campaigns.
 - ii. Develop and disseminate accessible materials on soil health science, practices, and co-benefits (climate resilience, water retention, biodiversity, etc.).

E. Reporting to State Commission

- a. Provide regular briefings and updates to the State Commission for Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources at its quarterly meetings.
- b. Arrange for presentations from grant contractors and initiative partners to inform the Commission's understanding and oversight.

F. Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

- a. Establish metrics to assess initiative impact in alignment with HSAP goals.
- b. Recommend initiative improvements based on evaluation findings, stakeholder input, and emerging science.

G. Equity & Inclusion

Ensure initiative strategies and outreach are accessible, inclusive and supportive of underserved communities, diverse land managers, and urban/rural equity considerations.

H. Administration Overall administration and maintenance of this contract, including the following.

- Detailed monthly invoices for costs incurred by the vendor.

- Submission of quarterly reports on overall progress in a timely manner.
Reports should include:

- Progress on deliverables and objectives;
 - Any delays or changes to the overall implementation schedule with rationale and potential impacts to timeline for completion;
 - Financial updates including funds spent to date, total invoicing; reimbursement amounts and utilization of any matching funds.
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