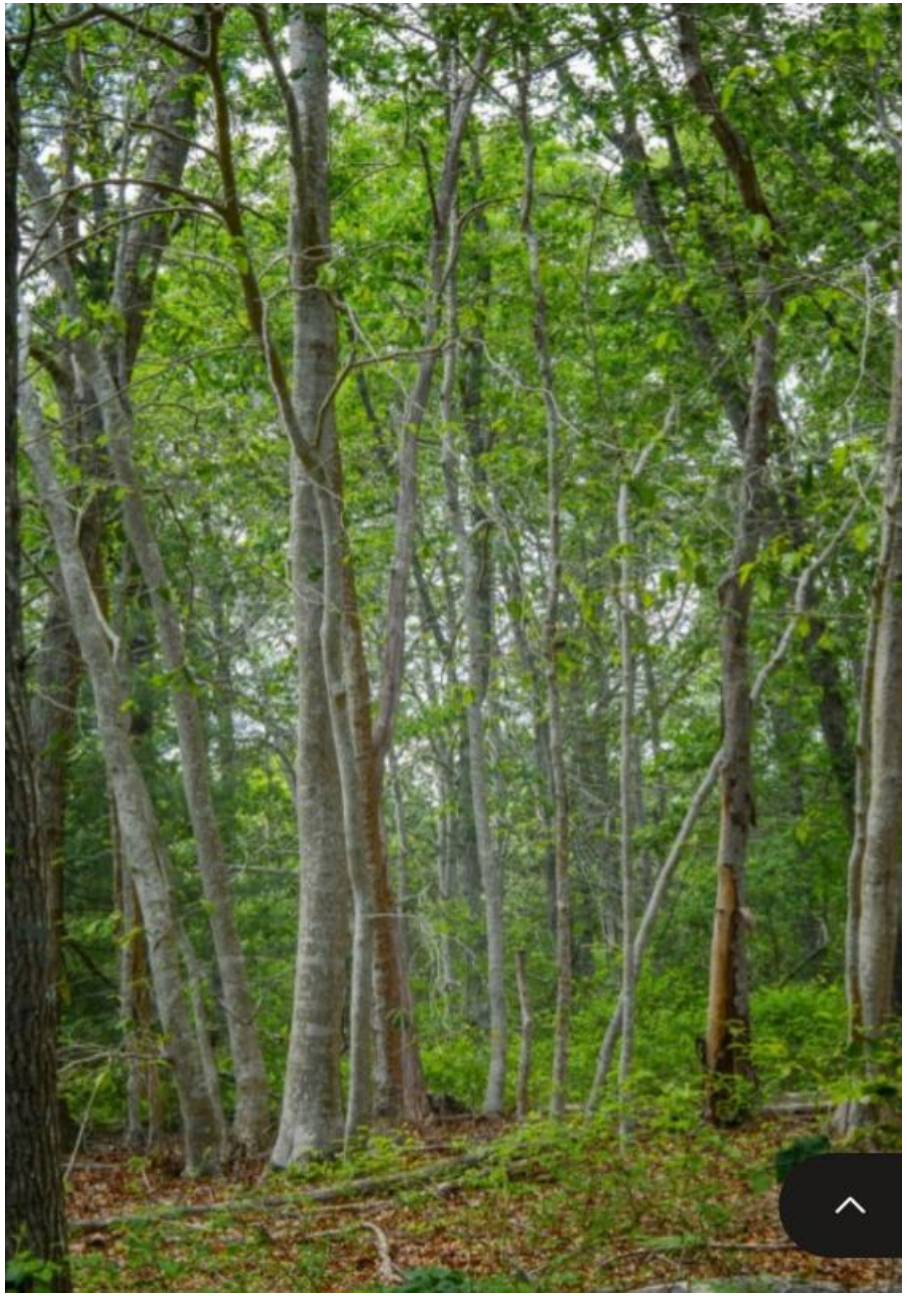


Photo: Barnstable Land Trust

DIVISION OF CONSERVATION SERVICES

FY27-28 Tribal Land Acquisition Grant Information Session

October 19, 2026

Grant Program Overview

The Tribal Land Acquisition program was created in 2024 to provide financial assistance to Massachusetts tribal governments in acquiring land (in fee) or a conservation restriction to support restoration of tribal relationships to their ancestral land.



Photo: Westport Land Conservation Trust

Program Details

- Open to Massachusetts tribal governments, and to other entities supporting the acquisition of land by tribal governments.
- Land acquired through this program must be protected in perpetuity as conserved open space.
- Maximum grant award is **$500,000**
- No match is required, but projects that use multiple funding sources are encouraged.
- All funds must be expended **by June 30, 2027 or June 30, 2028**, depending on the details of your project and contract.

Grant program priorities:

- Organizational characteristics
- Land acquisition restores tribe to ancestral homelands
- Biodiversity & natural resource protection
- Climate resilience
- Stewardship planning
- Overall quality and importance of the project
- Financial contribution



Eligible Project Costs

- Acquisition (of land or restriction)
- Title search
- Baseline Documentation Report
- Chapter 21E assessment
- Survey
- Legal fees associated with the acquisition
- Other contractual services to facilitate the transaction



Photo: Buzzards Bay Coalition

Program Options: Types of Applicants

- **Tribal governments need not be federaly or state recognized to be eligible.** Eligible tribal governments include both state- and federally-recognized tribes as well as any tribal government that can provide documentation of their indicia of tribal identity, system of government, and Massachusetts locus
- **Supporting organizations are also eligible.** A nonprofit organization (such as a land trust), municipality, or other entity may also apply for funding to purchase the CR, APR, or WPR for a project led by a tribal government.

Program Options: Land Protection

Perpetual land protection may be accomplished in several different ways:

- Conservation Restriction (CR)
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)
- Watershed Protection Restriction (WPR)
- Perpetual, judicially-enforceable charitable trust obligation.

Tribal governments may need to sign a limited waiver of sovereign immunity that enables the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to enforce the restriction or charitable trust as well as the grant terms.

Program Options: Funds Held in Escrow



- While primarily a reimbursement program, EEA may consider requests for funds to be held in escrow in anticipation of a closing.
- EEA would provide the grant funds to be held in escrow by a closing agent until the time of the closing on the property. Funds would go directly to the seller, eliminating the need for the applicant to be reimbursed by EEA.
- **This option is still being explored by EEA and is not yet guaranteed to be possible for any given project.**

Application Requirements

- Application form (completed in the online Grants Management System)
- The appropriate type of **appraisal** for the project
- Budget (itemized)
- Project narrative
- Maps
- Survey
- Authorization letter from appropriate governing body
- Letter of commitment from CR/APR/WPR holder
- Additional letters of commitment or support, if applicable
- **Grant deadline: December 17, 2026**

Grants Management System (GMS)

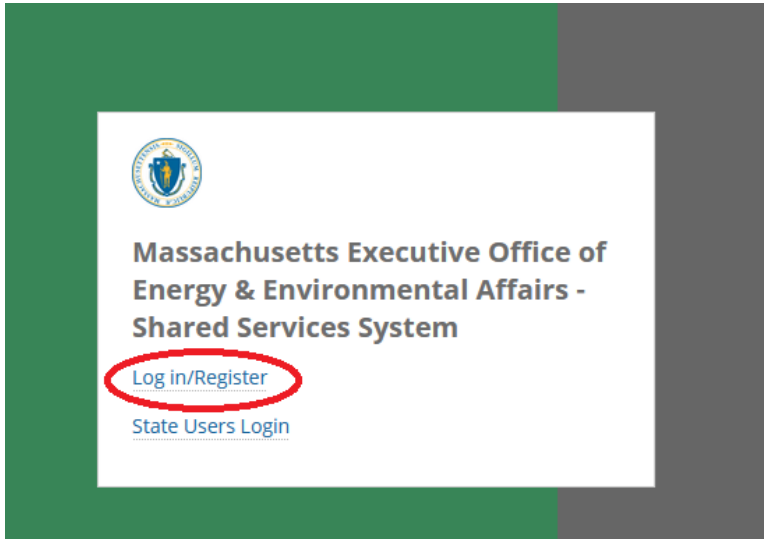
- Centralizes grants management in one place. Applications are submitted, reviewed, and managed through this system.
- Will soon be used for all EEA grant programs (applicants can browse all grant opportunities).
- Requires that each applicant create an account, which can have multiple users.
- Consultants and partners may still assist with creating application materials, but the **application must be submitted by a person directly affiliated with the applicant** (staff, board/commission member, etc)

Grants Management System (GMS)

Sign up for GMS: Visit Grants Management System (GMS) | Mass.gov for instructions

Watch our instructional playlist on YouTube: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzQVK6KiTOqyPW5PUOcFE42iRJgdm8LA_&si=Wm2l78OgFDZ-1nA_

See our user guide at the GMS Portal: Help - Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Grants Management System



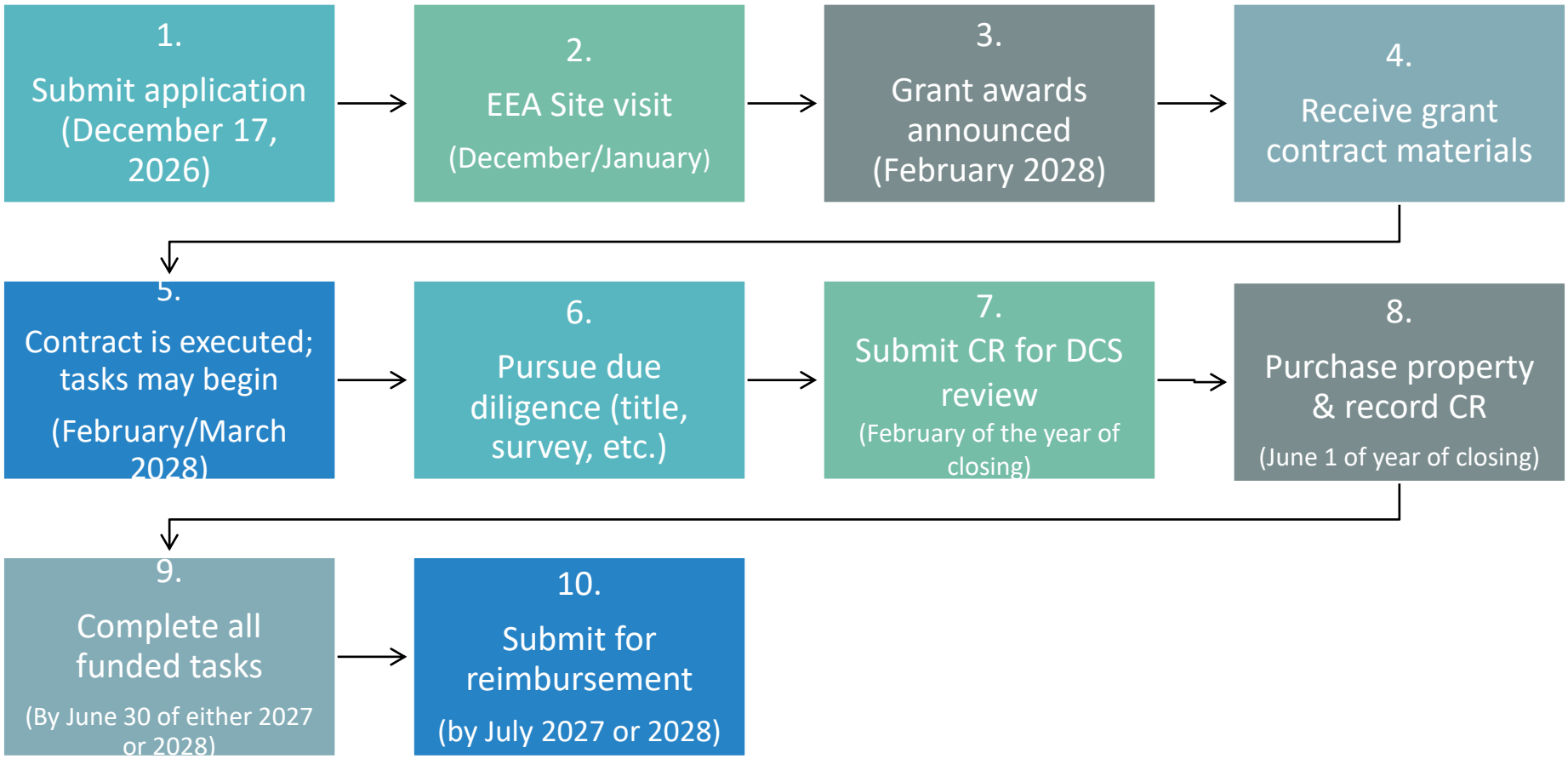
Selection Process for DCS Grants

- All projects are visited by DCS staff, then scored and ranked (rating system is included in the grant bid package)
- Recommendations are reviewed and approved by EEA's Secretary and the Governor's office
- ***Estimated*** grant award announcement date is February 2027.



Photo: Essex County Greenbelt

Grant Timeline & Project Requirements





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https://www.mass.gov/grant-programs-offered-by-the-division-of-conservation-services

Photo: Greater Worcester Land Trust