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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
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Dear Friends,

The Healthy Soils Action Plan (HSAP) is a very important document because it is the first time that the value of the soil has been highlighted and explained and a menu of achievable action steps outlined from which options can be selected for improving our soil health – the foundation for all our ecosystems and life in our forests, farms, wetlands, and green spaces near us. The HSAP is the first such plan in the nation that focuses on all land cover types – farms, forests, wetlands, lawns and developed land. It is this holistic approach that is a key strength of the plan.

The soil that covers the five million acres of the Commonwealth is the foundation for our food, our forests, our drinking water, and the biodiversity of our many unique ecosystems. The quality of our soil is also increasingly important in helping us to adapt to the impacts of climate change because our soils regulate water quality, flooding, heat islands, drought response, and the productivity of trees and forests and farm crops. The good news is that though our soils have been significantly degraded over many decades; there are steps we can take to significantly protect and restore them. The 2020's are the decade to focus on reducing impacts from climate change and restoring our ecosystems, and it all begins with our soil. This is also the decade where we must bring social justice to our natural resource decisions, including the health of nearby soils.

Dozens of meetings with soil experts, land managers, farmers and foresters, planners and advocates have resulted in a plan that is based in science and research and one which realistically looks at a wide range of actions to improve our soils and the ecosystems that rely on them. Whether you are a farmer, a forest landowner, a resident with a small yard or a municipal planner; there are recommendations in this plan of which you can be a part. This plan shows the importance of our soils and the value of protecting, restoring and caring for them and the many benefits to our residents from taking these steps.

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs looks forward to working with the many healthy soil stakeholders to move ahead on the priority recommendations of this important plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bethany A. Card".

Bethany A. Card, Secretary