

Mass Ready Act – Housing & Environment Permitting Reform

Healey-Driscoll Administration



Massachusetts is facing two significant challenges: a shortage of housing and increasing climate impacts like flooding and erosion. We need to tackle **both problems simultaneously**—and we can. The Healey-Driscoll Administration is committed to balancing the need for housing for all, protecting nature, and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

The approach outlined in the Mass Ready Act will provide expedited pathways to build the housing we need, while ensuring these buildings can withstand future conditions, are energy efficient, support access to transit and minimize impact to the environment. At the same time, the bill will fast track natural restoration projects. These efforts will help lower costs for housing and protect public safety, property, and the natural world that sustains us. This approach ensures we're not choosing between homes and nature—we're building both together.

Faster Permitting – Chapter 91 Waterways

The Mass Ready Act **will modernize and simplify the regulatory framework** for activities impacting state waterways.

- It introduces a new Chapter 91 Waterways **general license permit system** that aims to **streamline the approval process** for projects that previously required individual waterways licenses, while still **maintaining oversight** through compliance and public notification requirements.
- The general license permit system would apply to various activities, including housing, marsh restoration, culvert replacements, and invasive vegetation removal in tidelands, ponds, rivers, and streams.

Streamlining Processes – State Environmental Review & Wetlands

The Mass Ready Act streamlines environmental review and wetlands approvals for qualifying **housing** and **natural restoration** projects.

- It removes MEPA **environmental impact report requirements** for these types of projects, provided they adhere to specific standards and are deemed unlikely to harm the environment. However, the secretary can still step in and require additional review if warranted.
- The Mass Ready Act will eliminate duplicative administrative appeals processes, advancing appeals of local wetlands decisions straight to Superior Court. This will **save 6-9 months** in redundant process at DEP.

It will also allow DEP to support streamlined local approvals including:

- Specifying certain activities to be approved by local conservation commissions without a full notice of intent.
- Creating an **expedited approval pathway** for projects that provide significant ecological or resilience benefits.

Integration of Climate Resilience

- "**Resilience for changing climate conditions**" has been added as a protected interest in the Wetlands Protection Act, elevating climate resilience and easing permitting of related projects.

Flood Disclosures

Mass Ready ensures residents are aware of past flooding and future flood risk before they purchase or lease a home. This is a common-sense consumer protection measure for buyers and renters.

- **Modeled on flood disclosures in other states** and Massachusetts' lead disclosure protections.
- **Increases awareness** past flood damage, whether a building is in a floodplain, and measures to protect a building for flood damage. Notification form would be developed in consultation with flooding and housing experts.

Equipping the Building Code Board to Advance Resilience and Housing

Mass Ready gives the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) the expertise and directive to enhance the Massachusetts State Building Code to enable housing production and ensure new development can withstand current and future extreme weather conditions.

- **Establishes new board seats for climate risk, resilient design and housing interests**, a recommendation of the Unlocking Housing Production Commission.
- **Makes resilience a core objective** of the building code.