

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Biodiversity Conservation Goals



Maura Healey
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca Tepper
Secretary

Thomas O'Shea
Commissioner

Appendix C: Review of Existing State Efforts to Conserve Biodiversity

Executive Order No. 618 calls for a whole-of-government, whole-of-Commonwealth approach to biodiversity conservation, recognizing the crucial role of biodiversity in our state's health and well-being, economy, and collective future. Every state agency has a role in achieving the goals set for 2030, 2040, and 2050.

Review of Executive Branch Efforts

Over the past year, the Department of Fish and Game reviewed existing efforts and opportunities across Secretariats, all agencies within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), and the Department to identify key goals to achieve this initiative. Through interviews, workshops, surveys, and a thorough review of existing state policies and plans, the following summaries outline the mission, current role, and future opportunities to incorporate biodiversity conservation across the whole-of-government.

The Department of Fish and Game conducted one-on-one interviews with key staff from all Secretariats to discuss current work that intersects with the natural world and what incorporating biodiversity into other agency actions could look like. Each interview began with a brief presentation on the draft framework and proposed goals within several key themes: priority conservation, making room to move with landscape-scale and watershed-scale conservation, blue economy, green planning and design, food security, nature in the schools, and nature in the neighborhoods. Guiding discussion questions included how each agency directly or indirectly may affect biodiversity, through policy or practice, what each currently does to conserve biodiversity, and opportunities for future collaboration. The following summaries provide context for recommendations. Across all Secretariats, conversations were lively and enthusiastic.

Executive Branch Cross-Cutting Themes

Increasing Access to Nature

- Connection to nature is an important nexus between biodiversity conservation, open space, urban greenspaces, and tree canopy, mental and physical health, public health for the elderly, children, families, veterans, and those recovering from any number of conditions, including addiction and mental health crises. This initiative can support a shared value across Secretariats to achieve equitable access to nature for all people, taking a "One Health", or collaborative approach that recognizes the health of people, animals, and environment are intertwined, to meaningfully improve the quality of life for all who call Massachusetts home.

Incorporating Biodiversity in Planning and Design, Management of State Lands

- Better land stewardship and best management practices (BMPs) for biodiversity could be adopted by land-owning agencies, through policies and education. Examples discussed include incorporating native plantings, ecosystem restoration, tree planting, integrated pest management, invasive species removal, and better stormwater management into state properties to enhance biodiversity.
- Biodiversity can be incorporated into design guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMPs) issued by agencies related to new construction or redevelopment.

- Building climate resilience and better emergency planning offers an opportunity to address climate risks, prevention, and rebuilding while enhancing biodiversity. Nature-based solutions that benefit both biodiversity and climate resilience could be prioritized in all hazard mitigation efforts and emergency response.
- Joint projects should be pursued to maximize positive impacts on biodiversity. When possible, education and support from environmental agencies could help other Secretariats implement and achieve these goals. An example of partnership includes culvert upgrades by Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) with the support of the Department of Fish and Game to increase resilience and wildlife passage while maintaining the safety of public infrastructure and daylighting of urban streams to improve biodiversity and better manage flooding.

Workforce and Economic Development

- This initiative offers a key opportunity for workforce development. Achieving these goals will require a trained and motivated workforce who are able to carry this work out. We must build equitable career pathways for all to pursue careers in environmental science, wildlife biology, habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, green infrastructure, landscaping, and maintenance. Key attention should be placed to create opportunities for veterans, people with disabilities, and underserved and Environmental Justice (EJ) populations, and to support re-entry for ex-offenders returning to the workforce.
- Grant programs for workforce development, education, and the built environment should incorporate biodiversity criteria, alongside climate and environmental justice criteria, to result in more nature-positive outcomes.
- Education is important to help agencies link biodiversity to other state priorities like resilience, climate, and environmental justice that are already considered in the grant administration process.

Executive Branch Efforts

Governor's Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience

On the first full day of her administration, Governor Maura Healey signed Executive Order No. 604 establishing the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience. With an unprecedented level of interest in climate action, including investments from the federal government and partnerships with the private sector, local governments, public health, academia, and philanthropy, the task of the Climate Office is to build new and effective frameworks for action. In its first year, the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience, in collaboration with each of the Secretariats, completed a comprehensive review of the present organization, staffing, and policy-making practices of executive department agencies and offices relative to climate change.

In 2023, Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer published the [Recommendations of the Climate Chief](#) which outlines a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis and presents thirty-nine recommendations focused on concrete strategies around funding, protecting environmental justice communities, and advancing workforce and economic development. One such recommendation, in support of Executive Order No. 618, calls for the Department of Fish and Game to develop nation-leading biodiversity conservation goals for 2030, 2040, and 2050, elevating biodiversity as key to climate mitigation and adaptation. The report highlights that climate change is accelerating biodiversity loss and that biodiversity conservation enhances an ecosystem's resilience and capacity to sequester carbon.

In addition, the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience's yearly [report card](#) conducts a comprehensive review of progress towards Massachusetts' nation-leading climate goals. The report card features two key areas—Natural and

Working Lands and Climate Adaptation and Resilience—that will be supported by the goals and strategies for restoring nature’s resilience to climate stresses and enhancing its ability to store and sequester carbon.

Executive Office of Administration and Finance

The Executive Office of Administration and Finance (A&F) develops and executes cost-effective public policy initiatives and services that ensure the financial stability, efficiency, and effectiveness of state and local government. A&F oversees all financial and administrative aspects of state government, including the Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office (FFIO), which is tasked with implementing a whole-of-government approach to ensuring the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can leverage the historic opportunities available for federal funding, and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), which is responsible for capital planning, public building construction, facilities management, and real estate services for the Commonwealth.

FFIO’s process is dependent on current opportunities and agency leadership and guidance to share their priorities. Previously, they have highlighted notable federal funding opportunities for biodiversity, climate, and environmental justice and celebrated existing partnerships to leverage federal funds—including funding for MassDOT’s Roadside Pollinators Initiative and the America the Beautiful Challenge. For future opportunities, FFIO would consider championing high-priority conservation and restoration projects identified by this initiative and sees the opportunity to add value in connecting needs across agencies to foster collaboration, adding capacity to support resilience and environmental justice.

DCAMM already collaborates with EEA on decarbonization, resilience, and biodiversity. DCAMM cited budget constraints and the need by state agencies for maintenance and support. They appreciated the direction given around environmental justice, affordable housing, and carbon-neutral design, and would like to see the same for biodiversity. They identified that most state-owned buildings and properties are under the care and control of individual state agencies and see a role for better incorporation of biodiversity in design standards in planning for major redevelopments and new construction. DCAMM identified opportunities for better guidance to state agencies for biodiversity-friendly practices, such as educational resources on integrated pest management, pollinator habitat, mowing, and minimizing impervious cover.

Executive Office of Economic Development

The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) promotes vibrant communities, growing businesses, and a strong middle class. EOED prioritizes economic opportunity for residents, collaborative leadership in communities, and an environment that supports job creation and business growth. In December 2023, the Healey-Driscoll Administration unveiled its economic development plan [Team Massachusetts: Leading Future Generations](#), a statewide plan to guide the state’s economic development and investments over the next four years. The plan positions Massachusetts as an innovative, mission-driven, high-growth economy that solves the big problems facing our world by curing disease, addressing climate change, improving health care, and educating our young talent.

EOED identified its wide-ranging grant opportunities—for infrastructure, workforce development, and more—through the Community One Stop for Growth, which spurs economic development by investing in public infrastructure, preparing sites and cleaning up brownfields to prepare them for development, and supporting vibrant downtowns, as well as Seaport Economic Council grants and dredging programs, which invest in the state’s 78 coastal communities. EOED discussed opportunities to promote biodiversity through its existing funding opportunities, particularly prioritizing projects that incorporate nature-based solutions and improve climate resilience for infrastructure improvements. Seaport Economic Council highlighted the role of Massachusetts’ nation-leading seafood industry in the state’s

economy, and a shared priority to sustain it into the future. They shared current grants that support shoreside infrastructure like docking, refrigeration, and facilities, fund public access points for recreational fishing, and invest in ecosystem restoration projects for habitats like eelgrass and salt marshes that boost marine productivity. Additionally, the Council is supportive of efforts to combat food insecurity by providing infrastructure for processing seafood for food pantries; pilot programs in Gloucester and Martha's Vineyard were discussed.

Additionally, EOED includes the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT), which positions Massachusetts as a year-round leisure and business travel destination and highlights all our state has to offer visitors, including history, culture, cuisine, and outdoor activities. MOTT already collaborates with the Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation (MOOR) to promote outdoor recreation and improve public welcoming and access to outdoor spaces, which can indirectly support biodiversity efforts. Opportunities discussed with MOTT include the creation of a Biodiversity Trail to highlight nature's importance to our history, heritage, and culture as a state; promoting outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing, and education opportunities; and encouraging eco- and agrotourism in rural regions.

Executive Office of Education

The Executive Office of Education (EOE) works to connect all Massachusetts residents with a high-quality education regardless of their circumstances, zip code, or socioeconomic status. From birth to post-secondary education, EOE works with the Department of Early Education and Care, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (K–12), Department of Higher Education, and the state's 29 public colleges and universities to connect programs and policies across the entire public education system. EOE's core values include advancing equity and inclusion, maintaining a holistic perspective, embracing collaboration, championing innovation, and centering fulfillment.

In discussion of the "Nature in the Schools" theme and draft goals to enhance biodiversity education, EOE identified multiple areas for collaboration: curriculum, elementary and secondary education, higher education, workforce development, and facilities maintenance. While EOE highlighted the challenges of creating a new curriculum, they shared the possibility of incorporating biodiversity and place-based environmental education by providing "push-ins", or materials that educators can overlay with current coursework. EOE highlighted the success of the [Innovation Career Pathways](#) program and noted that over 60 schools have a clean energy pathway where biodiversity and nature-based solutions could be included. Additionally, they noted over 70 high schools have immersive environmental science programs, where hands-on learning opportunities could be created for biodiversity. Additionally, for elementary and secondary education, EOE highlighted the potential to collaborate with vocational-technical schools that have landscape and environmental programs. For adult workforce training, EOE highlighted their partnership with Commonwealth Corporation's Career Technical Initiative, which seeks to address the persistent need for skilled labor in construction, trades, and manufacturing and runs in vocational schools in the evening. Current programs are focused on leveraging [Chapter 74](#) equipment for training programs, but with more research into the certificates and training needs, this could support workforce development for careers in conservation, biology, and ecological restoration.

For elementary and secondary schools, EOE highlighted the potential to boost food security and support local food systems by boosting the Sea to School and Farm to School programs. Piloted in partnership with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries' Seafood Marketing program, Sea to School brings locally caught seafood to school lunchrooms and education around sustainability and conservation. For facilities, EOE cited ongoing work with DCAMM to assess the climate resiliency of all facilities could be an opportunity to incorporate biodiversity-friendly practices and nature-based solutions.

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is comprised of eleven agencies, as well as the MassHealth program, and seeks to promote the health, resilience, and independence of all people and protect public health. EOHHS works with many of Massachusetts' most vulnerable residents: supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; older adults; blind, Deaf, and hard of hearing residents; those struggling with substance use disorders, mental illness, or co-occurring illness; refugees and immigrants; system-involved youth; survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking; and so many more people throughout the Commonwealth. Over 23,000 employees work hard to decrease health disparities, build a strong social safety net, fight hunger and food insecurity, address social determinants of health, support our workforce, and increase the accessibility and affordability of care. EOHHS provides access to medical and behavioral health care, substance use disorder treatment, long-term services and supports, and countless nutritional and financial benefits. EOHHS connects older adults and individuals with disabilities with employment opportunities, housing, and supportive services. All told, EOHHS services and supports impact every single Massachusetts resident—and agencies and programs directly serve 1 in every 3 residents.

EOHHS highlighted the strong connection between healthy ecosystems and public health, with particular focus on the connections between physical and mental health and the outdoors, open space, and recreation. They connected the Mass in Motion program with the proposed “Nature in the Neighborhoods” theme, and the potential to collaborate to get all people outside and reconnect with biodiversity, particularly those with sight, hearing, and mobility challenges. They emphasized the need to prioritize equity when it comes to investing in biodiversity and restoring degraded areas to ensure all have access to the life-giving benefits of nature. They highlighted disparities in food security, public health outcomes, and access to nature. The importance of urban greenspaces and biodiversity was noted as a way to address equity, public health outcomes, and create community resilience to climate change. Solutions include tree planting, green infrastructure, daylighting streams, and ensuring access to walking trails and parks. Potential collaborations between the Department of Public Health, MassHealth, and Department of Transition Assistance were identified, as well as examples of how to plug biodiversity into existing programs like the [Mass in Motion](#) program, that's working to advance health equity, could consider biodiversity as part of the tool kit.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) was established in 2023 to create more homes and lower housing costs for Massachusetts residents. EOHLC also distributes funding to municipalities, oversees the state-aided public housing portfolio, and operates the state's Emergency Family Shelter (EA) program. EOHLC is working to make housing more affordable through the Affordable Homes Act—an initiative to increase housing production and invest in livable communities—and the MBTA Communities Law, working with 177 communities to improve zoning and optimize multifamily housing construction around the state's public transportation corridors.

EOHLC supports biodiversity conservation with their mission of encouraging dense, transit-oriented development on brownfields or already developed land while preserving existing open space. They highlighted the important connection between affordable housing and access to greenspace with physical and mental health, particularly as we face the impacts of climate change. EOHLC discussed opportunities to educate municipalities, developers, and public housing communities on the value of incorporating biodiversity-friendly practices—like green infrastructure, tree canopy, and urban gardens—into planning, design, and maintenance, for cost-saving, community wellness, and resilience.

EOHLC cited the opportunity to inform design guidelines for 234 public housing authorities, for landscape planning, civil engineering, site design, and more. They currently have green design guidelines but are interested in creating biodiversity guidelines, and their sustainability program for capital improvement could incorporate biodiversity standards as well as resilience and decarbonization. For non-public affordable housing developers, work could be done

with architects, engineers, and municipalities to suggest the adoption of biodiversity guidelines. EOHLC provides technical assistance to municipalities on how to build housing and foster smart growth, but does not currently have a toolkit on green design and biodiversity. EOHLC cited shared goals for improving wastewater treatment facilities statewide, which is often a barrier to housing construction, in addition to being a threat to public health, biodiversity, and shellfish.

Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) cultivates a skilled workforce across industries, provides economic stability for workers affected by job loss, injury, or illness, and upholds standards for safe working conditions. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development supports Massachusetts jobseekers, workers, and employers through three key strategies: cultivating a skilled workforce for a range of industries throughout Massachusetts, supporting economic stability for impacted workers following a job loss, injury, or illness, and protecting the rights, health, safety, wages, and working conditions of workers.

EOLWD highlighted current efforts to provide grant opportunities and workforce development to accelerate the clean energy transition and empower people to pursue green jobs. They noted the trend for people entering the workforce or transitioning careers to have the desire to do something meaningful to improve society. They also noted careers in climate, clean energy, environmental stewardship, and restoration offer ways for job seekers to fulfill that desire to make a difference. EOLWD proposed incorporating pathways to jobs in biodiversity conservation in current and future grant programs. Additionally, EOLWD highlighted one of the best ways to develop the workforce quickly is through apprenticeship programs. In past years, they have expanded what apprenticeship programs can look like, including more creative approaches for non-traditional trade careers. EOLWD cited opportunities to create apprenticeships for habitat restoration, biodiversity-friendly landscaping, wildlife conservation, land management, and more.

Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) is responsible for the policy development and budgetary oversight of its secretariat agencies, independent programs, and several boards which aid in crime prevention, homeland security preparedness, and ensuring the safety of residents and visitors in the Commonwealth. They provide oversight and development for the Commonwealth's agencies, boards, and commissions in areas such as criminal justice, law enforcement, homeland security, and emergency preparedness and response. EOPSS includes 12 agencies, and although they face budget constraints, they expressed enthusiasm for this initiative. EOPSS highlighted undergoing a similar process for climate and environmental justice, shared the Best Practices Guide for Incorporating Resiliency and Decarbonization they recently developed, and hoped a similar model or roadmap can be used to incorporate the recommendations for biodiversity into their operations.

EOPSS discussed the possibility of expanding existing workforce development and re-entry opportunities for incarcerated individuals for clean energy careers to include ecological restoration, land stewardship, and wildlife roles. However, they noted limitations in funding and securing sustained employment for formerly incarcerated individuals past six months. EOPSS highlighted the Department of Corrections, a large landowner, as a key partner in fostering biodiversity stewardship and education. They are already trying to launch community gardening programs at correctional facilities, have a farm in Concord at which land is leased to farmers, and have the idea of launching a farm-to-table cooking education initiative for incarcerated people. Additionally, EOPSS highlighted opportunities to have all land-owning departments incorporate biodiversity-friendly practices like native plantings and tree canopy into maintenance and landscaping. The Massachusetts National Guard at the Camp Edwards Army National Guard training site at Joint Base Cape Cod is a [model for collaboration](#) across Secretariats to steward biodiversity on public lands.

Additionally, EOPSS highlighted opportunities to collaborate with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) on resiliency and hazard mitigation efforts statewide, all while advancing biodiversity. EOPSS highlighted the need for accelerated adaptation to protect first responders and communities from the increasing risks of climate change, including extreme weather, drought, increased precipitation, extreme heat, and more frequent wildfires. Preventative measures like emergency removal of hazardous dams, culvert upgrades, better water management and drought conservation, coastal resilience, and prescribed burns could reduce risks.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) oversees roads, public transit, aeronautics, and transportation licensing, and registration across the state. MassDOT's mission is to deliver excellent customer service to people traveling in the Commonwealth by providing transportation infrastructure that is safe, reliable, robust, and resilient. MassDOT works to provide a transportation system that can strengthen the state's economy and improve the quality of life for all.

MassDOT's Environmental Program provides strategic environmental policy guidance, conducts environmental reviews, and completes environmental permitting to support transportation projects. The Environmental Program is responsible for MassDOT Highway Division-wide environmental policy and permitting activities in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations to ensure timely environmental approvals that facilitate the construction of transportation projects. MassDOT is currently undertaking the development of a State Wildlife Transportation Action Plan (SWTAP) to formalize the current framework MassDOT uses to incorporate natural resource priorities into transportation planning to benefit wildlife conservation, landscape connectivity, and driver safety. The Environmental Program also has several longstanding partnerships with the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), Division of Marine Fisheries, and Division of Ecological Restoration.

In 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) entered into an interagency agreement to streamline Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) review through detailed early project coordination, reducing impacts through the evaluation of preliminary project designs and investigating creative cost-effective mitigation opportunities. This partnership launched the former [Linking Landscapes](#) initiative, a proactive wildlife and transportation collaborative between NHESP and MassDOT that supported species conservation, habitat restoration, and efforts to improve landscape connectivity through monitoring, volunteer support, and efforts targeted efforts to reduce road mortality through increasing awareness, barrier fencing, and better crossings. MassDOT supports species conservation with two successful long-term partnerships with MassWildlife. Since 2017, MassDOT Highway Division has maintained a nesting box for peregrine falcons on the Gillis Bridge to restore this species. A natural predator of the rock pigeon, restoring peregrine falcons decreases long-term maintenance needs for bridge infrastructure from impacts of this non-native species whose guano causes premature aging of bridges. Additionally, MassDOT partners to conserve northern long-eared bats, an endangered species, through acoustic surveys, construction of bat boxes, and helping to protect some of their most important habitats through the installation of bat gates and fences.

MassDOT also partners with the Division of Marine Fisheries to create artificial reefs from used construction materials like demolished concrete, steel, and stone. Artificial reefs provide fish with habitat to shelter, feed, and spawn, and can mitigate the loss of natural reef habitat. In 2019 MassDOT donated used mini concrete barriers from a maintenance building demolition project in Taunton. The used material went towards creating reef habitat at locations off the coast of Massachusetts. Additionally, MassDOT Aeronautic Division collaborates with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to conduct gull surveys and roost monitoring using drone technology. MassDOT has also partnered

with DCR on a specific project at the South Dike area of Wachusett Reservoir and another nature-based solution project involving the design and construction of catch basins near the reservoirs.

MassDOT's Rivers and Roads Program aims to improve project design and resource management, to build long-lasting roadways, while also protecting rivers and streams. Over 300 trainees have attended the courses including: MassDOT designers, construction engineers, hydraulics engineers, environmental personnel, consulting engineers, scientists, and planners; municipalities; environmental agency staff; and members of non-governmental organizations. Attendees learn about fluvial geomorphology, and how we can use this field of study to supplement traditional highway engineering practices. Training courses explain how to avoid future damage by using new design practices where river-road conflicts exist. They also coordinated the [Massachusetts Culverts and Small Bridges Working Group](#), which included numerous Department of Fish & Game (DFG) staff and published key recommendations for future projects. Municipalities throughout the Commonwealth and MassDOT often struggle with the regulatory requirements and high costs associated with completing needed culvert and small bridge replacements. The Working Group developed a series of recommendations to address these challenges: advance the recommendations and actions of the State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP); expand technical assistance and training programs; expand grant programs and provide additional financing options; research and innovation; revise engineering standards; streamline environmental permitting; and continue the Working Group.

MassDOT also includes the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). Many Massachusetts citizens may recognize the North Atlantic right whale and roseate terns, brook trout, Blackstone Valley Mill, and striped bass environmental license plates. First issued in 1994, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) was the first philanthropic organization in the state to partner with the RMV to develop specialty plates. Today, revenue from the MET license plate program funds biodiversity conservation and ecological restoration. By purchasing a plate, each driver is taking part in supporting the endangered North Atlantic right whales, restoring our fragile rivers and fish populations, and maintaining the life-sustaining link between our waterways and all who live in Massachusetts.

For future opportunities, MassDOT highlighted ongoing efforts to design with resilience in mind and prioritize opportunities through the Resilience Improvement Plan of the Beyond Mobility report—while taking every chance to integrate context-sensitive design to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife, above and beyond regulatory requirements. They highlighted a key opportunity to increase support for local municipalities to incorporate the same policies and practices, highlighting funding constraints and capacity as the main barrier for cities and towns. Local governments working with shoestring budgets have an overwhelming need for transportation upgrades—support to replicate MassDOT's approach on a town-by-town, city-by-city level will increase outcomes for biodiversity.

Executive Office of Technology Services and Security

The Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) seeks to provide secure and quality digital information, services, and tools to customers and constituents when and where they need them. As the lead enterprise information technology and cybersecurity organization for the Executive Branch, EOTSS provides responsive digital and security services that enable taxpayers, motorists, businesses, visitors, families, and other citizens to do business with the Commonwealth in a way that makes every interaction with government easier, faster, and more secure. EOTSS also oversees and manages the enterprise technology, and digital infrastructure and services for over 125 state agencies and over 43,000 state employees.

EOTSS highlighted the fruitful, ongoing partnership with DFG to use creative digital tools to educate the public about our state's natural resources and public access. EOTSS highlighted the Data Hub as an effective way to increase access and

transparency to environmental data, providing a successful example of the water quality data dashboard for Massachusetts swimming beaches. Additionally, they discussed ongoing work to improve the user experience of Mass.gov pages through improving readability, accessibility modifications, and providing the Chatbot to answer common questions. They highlighted the success of the Chatbot for MassWildlife in answering common questions about hunting and fishing regulations, reducing trivial calls to call centers, and connecting people with staff able to address more complex issues. Discussion of opportunities included continued efforts to improve digital experiences and access to information—from educational resources to permitting processes to GIS data layers for planning purposes.

Executive Office of Veterans Services

On March 1, 2023, the Healey-Driscoll Administration established the Executive Office of Veterans Services, which oversees programs and services for Massachusetts veterans, including Chapter 115 benefits for eligible veterans. It also manages two Veterans Homes in Holyoke and Chelsea and the Memorial Cemeteries in Agawam and Winchendon. EOVS's mission is to provide the highest quality programs, benefits, and advocacy to Massachusetts veterans alongside federal and local partners. They focus on veteran community building, employment, and suicide prevention. There are roughly 220–280 thousand vets in Massachusetts, with upwards of 320,000 with a more inclusive definition. The majority are over 55 years in age, and all have served over 90 days of active duty.

EOVS highlighted current efforts to help veterans reconnect with nature, through employment, volunteering, and outdoor recreation. EOVS also emphasized that nature is essential for physical and mental health, and that connecting veterans with the outdoors is important for both veterans and their families. EOVS shared current programs such as the Wet Vet program, which coordinates free fishing trips for veterans, and Operation Blue, a program that provides free scuba diving for vets. MassWildlife shared information about their seasonal two-day waterfowl hunt for military and veterans and their paraplegic hunt which often includes veterans. MassWildlife expressed interest in support from EOVS to promote existing opportunities and events with veterans and their families, such as free public archery ranges, angler education programs, and educational events, both in-person and virtual, which can be more accessible for those with limited mobility. EOVS highlighted the potential to grow outdoor recreation programming with this initiative for both veterans and their families.

MassWildlife highlighted opportunities to expand the Hunters Share the Harvest program, which provides venison donated by Massachusetts hunters to food pantries to combat food insecurity. This year, the program has provided nearly 20,000 meals, with over 40% provided to service veterans at the Food for Vets food pantry. EOVS could be a key partner in connecting veterans with this opportunity. Additionally, EOVS highlighted the strong possibility of workforce development within this initiative, connecting more veterans with careers in the environment and stewardship, especially for those who are younger in age and just returning from active duty. They highlighted a workforce pathway from military police officer to environmental police officer.

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) oversees the Commonwealth's six environmental, natural resource and energy regulatory agencies. Massachusetts is the first state in the nation to combine energy and environmental agencies under one Cabinet secretary. EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, EEA works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. EEA includes six main Departments and numerous offices, boards, commissions, and other entities.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG), with the support of the Consensus Building Institute, conducted an in-person EEA-wide Biodiversity Workshop, one-on-one interviews with key staff, and a comprehensive inventory of all agencies to review all existing efforts for biodiversity conservation and identify opportunities. Each level of engagement began with a brief presentation on the draft framework and proposed goals within several key themes: priority conservation, blue economy, green planning and design, food security, nature in the schools, and nature in the neighborhoods. Guiding discussion questions included how each agency currently works to conserve biodiversity, how their work is supported by the federal government, supports municipalities, and engages the public, and what opportunities exist for future collaboration. The following summaries provide context for recommendations. Across all EEA agencies, there's a high level of enthusiasm and excitement to support the implementation of these nation-leading goals.

Numerous goals and strategies were identified throughout this process, but some common themes and areas arose. EEA and its agencies identified the following as the biggest opportunities to strengthen biodiversity conservation efforts:

Priority Land Conservation, Restoration, and Planning

- Enhancing focus on biodiversity within the Resilient Lands Conservation Coalition and ensuring land use plans reflect desirable places to conserve and develop from a biodiversity perspective
- Incorporating biodiversity goals and metrics into the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) scoping processes and conducting internal staff training on how biodiversity impacts all aspects of environmental review and analysis
- Improving climate data curation to support biodiversity conservation efforts, such as high-resolution air temperature projections to support applications related to climate refugia. Staying updated on climate change stressors and hazards that most significantly impact biodiversity (e.g., warming, hydrologic changes, loss of seasonal snow cover, etc.).
- EEA policy guidance for proposed Commonwealth capital and maintenance project planting that would stipulate plants native to eco-region, plants that create natural communities and strengthen ecosystem function, and restrict plants that impact eco-system function, like cultivars
- Highlighting biodiversity as an important value for improved siting of infrastructure and housing in public communications about decarbonization and net zero efforts
- Continuing to develop and implement initiatives like the Statewide Hydraulic Model as a Stream Crossing Planning Tool and improving understanding of baseline extents of Wetland Resource Areas
- Expanding Natural Resource Damage (NRD) cases and funding to implement more restoration projects
- Continuing efforts within the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to prioritize nature-based solutions that enhance biodiversity
- MassWildlife partnering with DCR to identify which properties are biodiversity hotspots, develop management plans, and promote and prioritize wildlife and plant management
- Expand the use of drone technology to support natural resource inventory and research

Sustaining Farms and Fisheries

- Improving the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan and create a marine version of BioMap (called OceanMap) to identify critical marine biodiversity hotspots
- Establishing a New England or Northeast corridor to support migration of these species which are regional species of greatest conservation need
- Make MassWildlife Habitat Management Grants more accessible to farmers and foresters
- Developing best management practices that support farmers in maintaining production while protecting listed species, including financial resources to support needed management changes

- Providing state matching funds for farms that enroll in NRCS programs such as the environmental quality incentives program (EQIP) and conservation stewardship program (CSP) that enhance biodiversity (e.g., native pollinator plantings)

Education and Engagement

- Creating a campaign aimed at building a true ethic of stewardship among those who use and enjoy the outdoors, especially focused on habitat improvement and biodiversity conservation
- Supporting urban forestry and reforestation planning with a focus on biodiversity and multi-sector engagement
- Increasing boat ramp monitor staffing at DCR-operated boat ramps to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species

EEA Climate and Resilience Team

The EEA Climate Team highlighted their priorities to develop and track progress to the Natural and Working Lands goals and metrics identified by the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050, pursuant to the amended Global Warming Solutions Act. They lead and support policy and program development to implement these goals to help the Commonwealth meet net zero. The team also engages with the GWSA Implementation Advisory Committee, their working group participants, and other key stakeholders on climate mitigation measures and develops public education and outreach campaigns on climate action.

The EEA Resilience and Finance Team highlighted numerous existing efforts and opportunities. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program, which funds climate resilience planning and projects in Massachusetts's 351 cities and towns, prioritizes nature-based solutions, which often have biodiversity co-benefits. The MVP decision support tool, Guides for Equitable and Actionable Resilience (GEAR), provides Massachusetts communities access to data and guidance to assess climate change impacts, as well as actions and case studies for building community resilience. It includes information on how ecosystems can support climate resilience, including heat resilience and coastal resilience.

Additionally, the implementation of the ResilientMass Plan supports both climate resilience and biodiversity. The ResilientMass Plan includes the Natural Environment as one of its sectors and lays out hazards related to the loss of biodiversity, habitats, and native species due to climate change impacts. Agencies have proposed biodiversity-positive actions to advance resilience goals, including aquatic biodiversity conservation for freshwater mussels (MassWildlife), priority dam assessments and dam removals (MassWildlife), grants for private Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (MDAR), and many others. Agencies can submit annual proposals for funding actions that advance their ResilientMass Plan actions, and many past funded projects have been geared toward enhancing biodiversity. Additionally, the climate resilience metrics initiative under development focuses on state-led actions that can enhance resilience.

Department of Agricultural Resources

The mission of the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) is to cultivate a robust and equitable agricultural economy, promote a safe and resilient food system, and preserve a healthy environment for Massachusetts farmers, animals, and consumers. Biodiversity thrives in transition zones—areas where forest meets open space, wetlands abut upland, developed land connects with undeveloped parcels. Massachusetts farmers steward thousands of miles of these transition zones around the Commonwealth, and their ability to produce crops and remain viable depends upon their careful tending to these transition zones.

MDAR supports farmers, and particularly their stewardship of the land that promotes biodiversity, in several ways:

- Farmland protection and viability programs help keep land in production and stewarded wisely
- The pollinator team supports the protection and enhancement of critical pollinator habitat and species
- The urban agriculture work supports increased green space in cities, attracting and providing habitat for beneficial insects and small mammals
- The composting program helps turn organic waste into nutrient-rich soil amendments
- The regulation of fertilizers and pesticides helps ensure that farmers have access to the tools that they need to produce their products and the skills to use them in ways that protect natural resources
- The invasive species program helps identify and control invasive plants and insects that pose a threat to native species

Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) strives to protect, preserve, manage, and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the Commonwealth to promote healthy, livable, and sustainable communities, and to connect people to these resources through recreation and education. DCR manages state parks and oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts. DCR maintains several programs and efforts related to biodiversity.

Forest management includes such programs as the Service Forestry Program, the Forest Stewardship Program, the State Parks and Recreation Forest Management Program, Foresters for the Birds, Bird Habitat Assessment Program, the Climate Forestry Program, the Climate Stewardship Incentive Program (C-SIP), the EQIP/CSP Forest Stand Improvement Program, and the DCR/UMass Conservation Based Estate Planning Program. Additionally, through Project Shade, DCR is addressing impacts of extreme heat in parks and facilities. While focus is installation of shade, project is expanding tree canopy in pilot projects and will feature bioretention basins with pollinator species where appropriate.

DCR conducts extensive research and monitoring that includes a broad spectrum of biodiversity topics. The Research Office External Research Partnerships has an estimated 100 active biodiversity-related external partner-led research projects. The Research Office has identified biodiversity as a priority and will work to align and synchronize DCR research with the intent and requirements of Massachusetts EO 618 and subsequent guidance from DFG. Monitoring programs include the Deer Management Program, the Habitat Management Monitoring Program in Focus Areas, the Rare Plant Monitoring and Protection, Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) Program, macroinvertebrate monitoring, fisheries studies including the Quabbin creel survey, phytoplankton monitoring, and invasive zooplankton monitoring.

DCR also manages numerous species recovery and habitat restoration projects. These include the Shorebird Recovery Program, the Common Loon Conservation Program, the Growing Wild Movement, the Native Plant Palette, the Vernal Pool Survey and Verification, the Grassland Bird Program, the Bat Program, the Wildlife Program, the Coastal Restoration/Salt Marsh Sparrow Program, the Prescribed Fire Program, the Landscape Architecture Section that supports and promotes biodiversity.

In addition, DCR manages several invasive species programs including the Invasive Plant Management Program, the Aquatic Invasive Plant Management, the DCR Weed Watchers Program, the Invasive Forest Pest Mitigation, the Asian Long-Horned Beetle Eradication Program, the Terrestrial Invasive Species Inventory and Control, and the Aquatic Invasive Plant Monitoring and Removal. DCR also provides support for municipalities through such programs as pollinator planning, invasive aquatics, management forest stewardship, community stewardship grants, and landscape-scale restoration grants.

In looking forward, DCR has suggested several initiatives, including but not limited to the following:

- EEA policy Commonwealth capital and maintenance project planting that would stipulate plants native to eco-region, plants that create natural communities and strengthen eco-system function, and restrict plants that impact eco-system function, like cultivars.
- Increased boat ramp monitor staffing at DCR-operated boat ramps to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species
- Work with MassWildlife to learn what DCR sites are biodiversity hotspots, develop management plans, and promote and prioritize wildlife/plant management.
- Expanded use of drone technology to support natural resource inventory and research. Proposed projects include: Forest Inventory and Monitoring (tree canopy assessments, forest health, invasive species mapping); Wetland and Riparian Zone Monitoring; Wildlife Research (wildlife tracking, population surveys, habitat assessments); Land Use and Environmental Impact Assessment (land cover mapping, erosion and sediment monitoring, restoration project evaluation); Infrastructure condition monitoring; Disaster Response and Management (damage assessment, flood impact analysis, emergency response planning).

Department of Energy Resources

The Department of Energy Resources' (DOER) mission is to create a clean, affordable, resilient, and equitable energy future for all in the Commonwealth. DOER has several biodiversity efforts such as the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program for solar siting, which includes greenfield subtractors; a pollinator adder; increased incentives for the built environment; and prohibition on BioMap land unless siting in a solar overlay district. Encouraging agrivoltaics with a decision-making tool for agricultural units to determine solar installations' potential impact on sunlight and shading and incentivize dual-use arrays that generate electricity while allowing continued crop production. UMass Clean Energy Extension provides certification to SMART Solar Tariff Generation Units (STGUs) through their Pollinator-Friendly Certification Program, which qualifies the STGU for a Pollinator Adder on its incentive payment. DOER promotes pollinator habitat as part of its Leading by Example efforts through grant programs such as the Public Entity Decarbonization Grants; tools such as a pollinator habitat calculator that helps identify energy, cost, and climate benefits of converting lawns to pollinator-friendly habitat; and partnerships such as the Pollinator Habitat on State Lands Working Group which includes representatives from DFW, DCR, MDAR, and MassDOT.

Department of Environmental Protection

The Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) works to fulfill Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution, which guarantees the people's right to clean air and water as well as the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic qualities of their environment. MassDEP's mission is to protect and enhance the Commonwealth's natural resources—air, water, and land—to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of all people, and to ensure a clean and safe environment for future generations.

DEP identified the following present and future ways to support biodiversity conservation. MassDEP's Water Management Act Program regulates the amount of water withdrawn from Massachusetts ground and surface water resources. This ensures adequate supplies for current and future needs. The Water Management Act permitting process specifically requires permittees with withdrawal point(s) impacting a coldwater fish resources to take appropriate steps to mitigate impacts, after consultation with MassDEP and other EOEAA agencies. Mitigation activities are those undertaken to offset the impacts of withdrawals by improving streamflow or aquatic habitat.

The Wetlands permitting process considers the impacts of proposed work in wetlands resource areas on fisheries, shellfish habitat, and wildlife habitat. As part of the ResilientMass Plan, DEP is developing a Statewide Hydraulic Model as a Stream Crossing Planning Tool. By integrating data from hydrological models, crossing assessments, and aquatic

connectivity models, the tool will provide a preliminary design that will facilitate a shift away from culvert replacement in-kind, enabling Massachusetts' aquatic communities to maintain connectivity and identify and improve upon fragmented habitats. Proposed amendments to the Wetlands, 401 Water Quality Certification, and Waterways Regulations include the revision of stormwater requirements, the development of land subject to coastal storm flowage standards, and reducing and clarifying regulatory processes for some climate restoration and adaptation projects. These changes will support the resiliency of the resource areas and benefit biodiversity. MassDEP enforces its statutory and regulatory responsibilities, and through those actions may require restoration that can benefit biodiversity. The Natural Resources and Damages program recovers damages and enters enforceable settlements that support the restoration of habitat and resources for biodiversity. Other MassDEP programs negotiate settlement agreements that have biodiversity benefits.

Department of Fish and Game

The Department of Fish and Game's mission is to conserve the Commonwealth's abundant marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife, plants, and natural communities, as well as the habitats that support them, for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) includes four divisions—Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), and the Office of Fishing & Boating Access (OFBA).

DER restores and protects rivers, wetlands, and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment. DER partners with nonprofits, towns, individuals, and groups to carry out ecological restoration projects. MassWildlife is responsible for the conservation of freshwater fish and wildlife in the Commonwealth, including endangered plants and animals, and restores, protects, and manages land for wildlife to thrive and for people to enjoy. DMF strives to manage the Commonwealth's living marine resources in balance with the environment, resulting in sustainable fisheries, stable availability of diverse, healthy seafood, and enriched opportunities that support our coastal culture. OFBA provides access to public waters in Massachusetts, including great ponds, rivers, and coasts. OFBA constructs and maintains boat access sites, shore fishing areas, and sport fishing piers at more than 300 locations.

In 2024, DFG released an ambitious five-year strategic plan, [Connections: Together for Nature](#), for 2025–2030. Created collaboratively across the four Divisions, the plan focuses the Department's work on solutions at the intersection of biodiversity, climate change, and environmental justice and allows us to leverage the necessary funding and resources to expand our impact, respond with urgency to the climate change and biodiversity loss, and above all, better serve the people of the Commonwealth.

Department of Public Utilities

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is responsible for the structure and control of energy provision in the Commonwealth; monitoring service quality; regulating safety in transportation and gas pipeline areas; and siting of energy facilities. The mission of DPU is to ensure that utility consumers are provided with the most reliable service at the lowest possible cost; to protect the public safety from transportation and gas pipeline-related accidents; to oversee the energy facilities siting process; and to ensure that ratepayers' rights are protected.

The DPU Siting Division is charged with reviewing proposed energy infrastructure to ensure they provide a reliable energy supply for the Commonwealth with a minimal impact on the environment at the lowest possible cost. The Siting Division considers impacts on open space, tree canopy, and wildlife habitat, which supports biodiversity conservation when reviewing sites. The DPU Electric Power Division reviews utility vegetation management programs that have been approved by the DPU Rates Division for maintaining transmission and distribution line rights-of-way. Vegetation removal

and maintenance could impact local flora and fauna habitat, thus affecting biodiversity in those rights-of-way. DPU recently approved revisions to the SMART program including the SMART Factor to provide for rebate payments for reimbursement of reasonable costs for certification as pollinator-friendly and to provide for the Distribution Companies' recovery from ratepayers through the SMART Factor of their rebate payments.

Office of Coastal Zone Management

The mission of the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) is to balance the impact of human activities with the protection of coastal and marine resources through planning, public involvement, education, research, and sound resource management. CZM is the lead policy, planning, and technical assistance agency on coastal and ocean issues within EEA and implements the state's coastal program under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act.

CZM's major program efforts include coastal habitat, coastal water quality, federal consistency review, mapping and data management, marine invasive species, ocean management, port and harbor planning, public access, seafloor and habitat mapping, and managing coastal resiliency.

CZM highlighted several current efforts to address biodiversity, including but not limited to:

- CZM is supporting direct restoration of current and future habitat through securing federal funds for projects at Upper Bass River, Yarmouth; Sawmill Brook, Manchester; Pamet River, Truro; and Puritan Bogs, Bourne.
- Shoreline restoration projects funded through CZM's Coastal Resilience Grant Program, which can have coastal habitat and water quality co-benefits
- The CZM Coastal Habitat and Water Quality Grants, which provide funding for remediation of stormwater runoff, a leading source of water quality impairments in the coastal watershed, and for comprehensive restoration planning
- Coordinating the Marine Invader Monitoring and Information Collaborative (MIMIC) (DMF participates) since 2006 to track and provide early detection for a specific list of marine invasive species.
- Protection of diadromous fish runs by promoting and supporting permit conditions at intakes and discharges that minimize impacts to eggs, larvae, in-migrating adults, and out-migrating juveniles. Restoration of diadromous fish runs through improved water quality and habitat restoration planning is a priority in the CZM Coastal Habitat and Water Quality Grants.
- Working with DMF on the siting of artificial reefs to enhance recreational fishing opportunities by increasing hard structure habitat, which then increases local species diversity
- CZM uses its MEPA comments and federal consistency authority to support activities in offshore wind development that minimize impacts on endangered whales.
- Through the ocean plan, CZM oversees and works with MassWildlife and DMF to update core habitat areas for three protected tern species, three protected whale species, and several sea birds
- The Salt Marsh Working Group, along with the UMass Gloucester Marine Station, facilitates coordinated efforts to assess and monitor salt marshes
- Tidal wetland assessment efforts, of which the most recently implemented is the Sentinel Site Monitoring Program (2015) to track changes in salt marsh vegetation as an indicator of rising sea levels
- Piloting phase two of a passive sediment augmentation concept for salt marsh sediment conservation

CZM highlighted numerous opportunities for current and future collaboration to support coastal and marine biodiversity:

- Update and improve CZM's Ocean Management Plan (OMP), which is a key to conserving the most important marine and coastal habitats for biodiversity

- Create a mapping tool identifying marine biodiversity hotspots—rare seascapes and species—to further marine biodiversity conservation and restoration using a combination of trawl data, geology, biology, and monitoring to identify the most rare, different, and specialized habitats

Office of Environmental Justice and Equity

The Massachusetts Office of Environmental Justice and Equity (OEJE) is committed to ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of all environmental and energy benefits and burdens. OEJE works with all agencies under the Secretary to ensure every policy and program is designed with equity at the center, ensuring all voices are heard and included in shaping the solutions.

OEJE will play a role in supporting this initiative. The Office already funds an Urban Forest and Tree Nursery Strategic Plan to accelerate efforts to expand tree canopy statewide, particularly in Gateway Cities and neighborhoods with Environmental Justice (EJ) populations. Additional opportunities for collaboration include expanding to other strategies that focus on biodiverse greenspaces, like community gardens, Miyawaki forests, food forests, green infrastructure, and pollinator pathways.

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review process provides meaningful opportunities for public review of potential environmental impacts of certain projects for which certain actions by state agencies are required. It requires state agencies to study the environmental impacts of projects requiring state permitting, financial assistance, or land disposition, and to use all feasible measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate damage to the environment or, to the extent damage to the environment cannot be avoided, to minimize and mitigate damage to the environment to the maximum extent practicable.

For opportunities to support this initiative, MEPA highlighted that environmental review procedures could incorporate biodiversity principles (e.g., alternatives analysis for projects). Additionally, they highlighted that biodiversity could be part of development of climate resiliency and GHG policy. Finally, ongoing data tracking for development projects that could incorporate biodiversity metrics (e.g., acres of land conserved).

Massachusetts Environmental Police

The mission of the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) is to protect the environment and natural resources of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through enforcement, education, and public outreach. MEP Officers—also known as Game Wardens, Conservation Officers, or Natural Resource Officers—continue the tradition of one of the oldest law enforcement missions and responsibilities in our nation. MEP is also the primary enforcement agency of the Commonwealth’s boating and recreational vehicle laws and regulations.

Massachusetts Environmental Trust

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) was originally established to ensure that \$2 million in settlement funds, generated by the landmark federal lawsuit filed against the state for violating the Clean Waters Act, went directly to pollution remediation and water quality improvement projects in Boston Harbor and nearby coastal waters. Since that time, MET has funded nearly 1,000 projects and awarded over \$28 million. Through an annual competitive application process, MET awards grants to organizations whose programs support our mission to protect and conserve threatened marine animals and to preserve and restore river and estuarine ecosystems throughout the Commonwealth.

Today, programs funded by MET are as diverse as the ecosystems they help to protect and restore, from the preservation of at-risk marine mammals, including the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, to reducing nutrient pollution and controlling invasive species in our rivers and ponds, to supporting educational programs that shape our schoolchildren into tomorrow's environmental stewards. Over the years, grant awards have prioritized ecosystem health and biodiversity, endangered species and habitat conservation, human health and the environment, environmental education, youth in environmental philanthropy, and environmental monitoring. More recently, MET has streamlined its grant focus to supporting at-risk marine animals and improving the natural systems that marine animals and freshwater wildlife rely on for survival.

Division of Conservation Services

The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) offers grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations for the acquisition of conservation and parkland, as well as for park renovation and development. DCS also reviews Conservation Restrictions, administers the Conservation Land Tax Credit Program, and supports Conservation Districts. DCS co-convenes the Resilient Lands Conservation Coalition, a public/private statewide partnership intended to advance the pace and magnitude of land protection, management, and restoration in four primary areas: forests and landscapes, coastal, farms and food, and urban.

DCS supports biodiversity conservation through numerous grant programs. DCS offers multiple grant programs that prioritize the acquisition of the most important lands for species, identified with BioMap. The specific grant programs include Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) program, Landscape Partnership program, and Conservation Partnership program. Another relevant grant program, the Riparian Zone Replanting Program, aims to replant and restore understocked riparian areas throughout Massachusetts. One of the major program goals is to increase tree and plant biodiversity and to ecologically restore cold water streams and other rivers, streams, and tributaries. The DCS Cool Corridors Grant Program also aims to increase tree biodiversity and ecological diversity through planting trees in areas that are impacted by the urban heat island effect.

DCS expects to soon offer a new grant program—the Land Conservation Assistance grant—in which land trusts, municipalities, and other conservation stakeholders will be able to apply for funds to hire consultants and contractors to perform a variety of tasks including grant writing, negotiation with landowners, and conveyancing to facilitate more land conservation outcomes. Another new grant program that will be posted shortly, the Forest Reserves Grant Program, is intended to support the protection of forests that will, among other goals, likely support the protection of important NHESP-designated critical natural landscape habitat and NHESP-designated forest core habitat.

Office of Outdoor Recreation

The Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation (MOOR) seeks to promote Massachusetts as a great place to come play outside. It aims to make Massachusetts one of the most inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible places for outdoor recreation in the country. MOOR is guided by three pillars: promoting outdoor recreation, inclusive outdoor recreation for all, and sustaining the outdoor recreation industry.

MOOR highlighted numerous opportunities to support this biodiversity initiative, through existing and new programs. MOOR currently promotes inclusive outdoor recreation through its Inclusive and Accessible Outdoor Recreation Grants Program and Trails for All initiatives. These ongoing efforts support diverse audiences in gaining access to outdoor spaces, and outdoor recreational activities (e.g., boating, fishing, etc.) that ultimately build an appreciation for biodiversity conservation and stewardship. Additionally, MOOR Outdoor Recreation Business Alliance aims to develop

and support the growth of the outdoor recreation business sector, which in turn contributes to a strong business alliance with the government for both land conservation and biodiversity restoration and stewardship.

Office of Climate Science

The Healey-Driscoll Administration launched the Office of Climate Science (OCS) within EEA to increase state agency, municipal, and public access and understanding of statewide climate change projections and trends and to provide technical assistance and guidance. OCS is responsible for providing and managing Massachusetts climate data and their associated projections on ResilientMass Maps and Data Center; providing technical assistance on climate science and data resources to support climate resilience projects; developing climate data fact sheet for interagency uses; and planned development of a Massachusetts climate science report to provide foundational science to inform climate hazards and impacts assessments in the next iterations of Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment.

Drought Management Task Force

The Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) chaired by EEA and MEPA, consists of officials from state and federal agencies and professional organizations with responsibility for areas likely to be affected by drought conditions. It also includes representatives of agencies that provide data used to assess the severity of drought conditions or that can respond to drought conditions, and public health and safety professionals.

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) provides wholesale water and sewer services to 3.1 million people and more than 5,500 businesses in 61 communities in eastern and central Massachusetts. MWRA maintains hundreds of miles of water and sewer pipes, and dozens of other facilities that regularly require either upgrades or replacements.

Energy Facilities Siting Board

The Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) is an independent state board that reviews proposed large energy facilities including power plants, electric transmission lines, intra-state natural gas pipelines, and natural gas storage tanks. To obtain EFSB approval, a proposed facility must demonstrate that it would provide a reliable energy supply, with a minimum impact on the environment, at the lowest possible cost. DPU administratively supports the work of the EFSB and its staff, but the nine-member EFSB makes its decisions independently. EFSB staff also conducts DPU siting-related cases that do not fall within the EFSB's jurisdiction.