**Forest Service**

**Eastern Region**
**Regional Office**

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**File Code:** 3360 **Date:** April 13, 2022
**Route To:**

**Subject:** Request for approval of the MA Forest Legacy Assessment of Need

**To:** Associate Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has submitted a major update to their Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Assessment of Need (AON) for approval. The proposed update incorporates the addition of 18 new towns in northwestern Massachusetts in what is known as the Mohawk Trails region, into their Forest Legacy Area (AON approved July 2020). These changes are identified as "major changes" necessitating approval from the Chief of Forest Service or designee (FLP Implementation Guidelines May 2017, Part 6: Forest Action Plans, page 21).

The Eastern Region State and Private Forestry review of the update concluded that the request met all FLP requirements. The update meets the requirements as set forth in Section 7 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.) as amended by Section 1217 of Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624:104 Stat. 3359), the Federal Agriculture and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127:110 Stat. 888), and the FLP Implementation Guidelines, May 2017.

In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee have endorsed the update. I recommend the proposed updated AON be approved.

(for)
GINA OWENS
Regional Forester

Enclosure

cc: Mark Buccowich, Kirston Buczak, Scott Stewart, Constance Carpenter, Peter Beringer, Peter Church, Lindsay Nystrom

Forest Service | Washington Office | 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

**File Code:** 3360 **Date:** January 30, 2023
**Route To:**

**Subject:** Approval of Massachusetts's Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need

**To:** Regional Forester, Region 9

This letter is in response to the proposed update to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need in the state's Forest Action Plan. The proposed update incorporates the addition of 18 new towns in northwestern Massachusetts in what is known as the Mohawk Trails region, into their Forest Legacy Area.

The updates passed regional approval and our staff has reviewed the updates and I approve.

Jaelith Hall-Rivera

JAELITH HALL-RIVERA
Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

cc: Kriston Buczak, Susan Ellsworth, Scott Stewart, Claire Harper

# Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program
# Assessment of Need

Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation

Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry

2022

## PREFACE

Massachusetts forests are a major resource to the Commonwealth and constitute an inter-generational legacy. Today, despite being the third most densely populated state in the nation, sixty percent of Massachusetts remains forested. However, because of increasing population and demand for land for development, these forests have been divided up into smaller and smaller parcels and are highly threatened.

The 2022 Forest Legacy Assessment of Need for Massachusetts provides a comprehensive, long range process to identify and protect privately-owned woodlands that are under threat of parcelization, fragmentation, and conversion to non-forest uses.

As appropriate, periodic review and revision to this assessment will be made to meet the future needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship

Bureau of Forestry

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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# I. INTRODUCTION

The forests of Massachusetts are an invaluable resource providing benefits ranging from recreational opportunities and tourism to clean water and air, food, wood products, and wildlife habitat. Our forests continue to face many threats and challenges, as they did when Massachusetts joined the Forest Legacy Program in 1993. These include ensuring landowners have enough economic incentive to retain and manage forest land, the removal of forests for housing and commercial development, and maintaining a viable forest products industry. It remains in the best interests of the state of Massachusetts to continue to encourage the conservation and management of its forests.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) was established in 1990 through an amendment to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. The purpose of the FLP is to identify and protect environmentally important private forest land that is threatened by conversion to non-forest uses and to provide the opportunity for the continuation of traditional forest uses. The FLP uses both fee-simple land purchases and permanent conservation easements to protect important forest areas from development and fragmentation.

The first Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need was written for Massachusetts in 1993. Over the next 25 years it was amended and updated multiple times to designate additional areas for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Area. These amendments were completed in 2000 (Taconic Range Forest Legacy Area), 2001 (Nashua River Greenway Forest Legacy Area), 2010 (North Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Area), 2013 (Heritage Corridor), 2016 (Western Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area), and 2020 (Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area which joined all previously approved FLAs into one FLA and added land in central and southeastern Massachusetts). This document will incorporate new towns in northwestern Massachusetts into the Forest Legacy Area.

# II. MASSACHUSETTS FORESTS:

# PAST AND PRESENT

## A. Massachusetts Forest History

When one walks in the woodlands of Massachusetts, it is easy to get the feeling that the forest around you has not changed for centuries. While it is true that forests change very slowly in relation to our lives, they are a dynamic environment. The forests of Massachusetts have been altered by both natural disturbances and human influences for hundreds of years.

### 1. The First Forest

When European settlers arrived, they found forests dominated by red oak, white pine, and hemlock. Elk, caribou, mountain lion, and timber wolves roamed the woodlands. Deer, quail, skunk, grouse, and hare were largely confined to settlement areas or younger forests that had been affected by natural disturbances.

For the next 200 years the forests of Massachusetts were cut to establish farms and to harvest wood for houses, barns, forts, ships, furniture, fuel, charcoal, and potash. By the early 1800s, only 20% of the land in Massachusetts was forested. Elk, caribou, and mountain lion had disappeared. Hunting and trapping decimated wild turkey and beaver. The removal of the forest canopy encouraged small, brushy growth favored by deer, grouse, and hare.

During the mid-1800s, the industrial revolution, reports of fertile farmland to the west, the opening of the Erie Canal, the California Gold Rush, and the offer of free land to Civil War veterans led many Massachusetts farmers to abandon their farms and move west.

### 2. The Second Forest

Trees that had seed capable of being established in grassy pastures, such as white pine and grey birch, began to form a forest on abandoned farmland in Massachusetts. By the early 1900s, the earliest farmland to be abandoned had grown into pine stands that were ready to be harvested. The opening of the Panama Canal and improved railroads expanded the marketplace from New England to the rest of the nation and the world. Containers were needed to ship commercial goods and the white pine forests of Massachusetts provided wood for the manufacture of shipping crates. The stage was set for the

heaviest commercial exploitation of the Commonwealth's forests to date. In 1908 at the peak of the "boxboard boom", the sawmills of Massachusetts produced almost 400 million board feet of lumber. For comparison in 2006, 47 million board feet of lumber was produced by Massachusetts sawmills (De Le Cretaz et al. 2010).

After the pine was removed, the young oaks and maples already established grew quickly to form the next forest. This was a great boon to deer, and in 1910 a century-long deer hunting ban was lifted. Populations of black bear, wild turkey, beaver, and grouse were still in decline.

### 3. The Third Forest

During the turn of the century, as Massachusetts' second forest was undergoing extensive cutting, public concern over the fate of the Commonwealth's forest resources was growing. The Trustees of Reservations (now The Trustees) and the Massachusetts Forest and Park Association (now the Environmental League of Massachusetts) were formed during this time and public acquisitions of large parcels of land including Mt. Greylock, Middlesex Fells, and the Blue Hills Reservation began. In 1904 the legislature created the office of the State Forester. A State Forest Commission was established and in 1915 the first state forest, Otter River State Forest in Winchendon and Templeton, was purchased.

Insects, diseases, and natural disasters played a large role in changing the composition of the forest at this time. A fungus imported from England introduced the chestnut blight and within 15 years American chestnut was virtually eliminated. This tree had been one of the primary components of the Massachusetts forest, providing durable lumber and food for both people and wildlife, especially wild turkeys, whose population declined afterwards. Dutch elm disease was also established in the early 1900s and slowly killed most American elms, the state tree of Massachusetts. Gypsy moths reached epidemic proportions at this time, defoliating thousands of acres of red and white oak. The Great Hurricane of 1938 roared through Massachusetts and blew down 880,000,000 board feet of timber.

The wood products industry languished during the Depression. Mobilization for the war effort brought renewed activity for forest industries, but generally this was a period of low exploitation of Massachusetts' forests. The hardwood stands that were established after the white pine was cut were not yet mature and the abundance of natural gas and oil made cordwood less popular.

Social shifts in our population were also taking place and would affect the forest. During the 1940s and 1950s urban dwellers began leaving cities in large numbers for suburban developments that cut into forest land. As farming became less profitable, many farmers sold their cropland and forests to developers and urban dwellers looking for a rural experience. Forest land was chopped into smaller parcels, making management less practical. The new country dweller had different uses and priorities for forest land and woodlots became more important as sources of recreation than as income.

Today, Massachusetts has more forest cover than it did 150 years ago despite the state population being five times higher. Our forests provide us with quiet woodlands, scenic vistas, thriving wildlife populations, a timber resource for our wood industry, recreational opportunities and clean water and air. Despite these vital benefits, our forests still face many threats, particularly from development. Between 2012 and 2017, approximately 24,700 acres of forest or other undeveloped land were converted to development in Massachusetts, a pace of 13.5 acres per day (Ricci et al. 2020). Looking at a regional scale a recent report from Harvard Forest and Harvard University states that we are in a second

wave of forest destruction and that if the current rate continues, 1.2 million acres of farms and forest land will be lost in New England to development in the next 50 years (Foster et al. 2017).

# B. The Forest Resource Base

### 1. Forest ownership

Although Massachusetts is often thought of as an urban state an estimated 60% of the land area, about 3 million acres, meets the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis definition of forest land (Butler 2017). According to a report by the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Forest Research Station, *Future Forests of the Northern United States*, forest area in the northern United States is projected to decrease between 3.5 and 6.4 percent over the next 50 years, with losses concentrated around existing urban and suburban areas (Shifley and Moser 2016).

As of 2020, 68% of the forest land in Massachusetts is privately owned and 70% of that forest land is family owned (Butler et al. 2016). The 32% of forest land that is publicly owned is either state (18%), municipal (12%), or federal government (2%) owned. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns and manages 575,000 acres of forest land between the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game. Forest land under state ownership is protected through Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which requires a two-thirds vote of the legislature to dispose of any land acquired by Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) agencies.

The Commonwealth has also sought to protect land through permanent conservation restrictions. Conservation restrictions are the most significant and fastest-growing means of protecting environmentally sensitive land. Massachusetts was a leader in their development being the first state in the nation to amend its statutes to recognize this new property right. While Massachusetts is 44th among states in terms of land area, it is ranked 10th in terms of acres preserved for conservation and has more land trusts than any other state except California (Mass.gov 2018). There are more than 135,000 acres of land held in EEA agency conservation restrictions (CRs), over 80,000 acres of land trust held CRs, and a significant acreage held by municipalities (correspondence with R. O'Connor, EEA, Division of Conservation Services, 1/22/18).

When Massachusetts joined the Forest Legacy Program, the number of individual landowners in Massachusetts was increasing dramatically. In 1972 the U.S. Forest Service estimated that there were 103,900 forest landowners in the Commonwealth. By 1984 that number had more than doubled to 235,200. Most of these new landowners bought parcels ranging in size from 1 to 9 acres. During the same period 25% of the parcels ranging in size from 100-199 acres were sold. Thus, many of the larger forested tracts were being broken up into smaller parcels. Today it is estimated that there are over 212,000 owners of private forest land in the state (Catanzaro and Kittredge 2017) and that parcels between 1 and 9 acres represent 91% of the ownerships (Caputo and Butler 2021). It is estimated that there are 39,000 family forest ownerships of more than 10 acres, with an average of 42 acres in Massachusetts (USDA Forest Service 2021).

## 2. Forest Composition

Massachusetts' forests lie in the transition zone between the pure coniferous woodlands of the north and the mixed deciduous woodlands of the Mid-Atlantic States. A long growing season, well-distributed rainfall, and fertile soils have resulted in forests that contain a rich mixture of many species. White pine, hemlock, oak, red maple, and hickory occur throughout the Commonwealth, while birch and sugar maple are concentrated in the fertile soils of western Massachusetts. There are pockets of red spruce at high elevations in the Berkshire Mountains and pitch pine grows with oaks on the dry, sandy soils of Cape Cod and the Islands.

Published in 2016, the *Future Forest of the Northern United States*, states that forest area in the region is currently concentrated in the 40-to-80-year age class and is expected to increase in mean age over time, resulting in a paucity of early-successional habitats and low structural forest diversity. Closed-canopy habitat classes are expected to gain acreage at the expense of open-canopy habitat classes. The historical trend of steadily increasing live wood volume over time is projected to level off or decline under all scenarios, with little variation attributable to differing assumptions about future climate conditions. The area of the maple-beech-birch forest-type group is expected to increase relative to nearly all other groups. Projected forest removals resulting from forest conversion are likely to average about 13% of total removals, with the remainder resulting from harvesting; in some populous Eastern States, forest conversion could account for more than 50% of all removals (Shifley and Moser 2016).

## 3. Forest Wildlife

Most fluctuations in wildlife populations can be traced to habitat change. As the forests of the Commonwealth shifted between forest and farmland, wildlife populations changed. Due to the variety of coastal, inland, farm, and woodland habitats and the rich mixture of woodland species, Massachusetts has a diverse array of wildlife.

Mass Audubon's Breeding Bird Atlas 2, for which surveys were completed from 2007 to 2011, recorded 222 species of birds in the state, many of which depend on forested lands. The northern hardwood forest provides an abundant and varied habitat for approximately 80-100 breeding bird species, while the pine and oak forests contain fewer species. Wooded wetlands also support diverse birdlife, especially if they contain water courses with brushy or marshy edges (Massaudubon.org 2017).

The varied terrain of thickets, woods, and abandoned fields in the Commonwealth provide an ideal habitat for mammals. More than 50 species of terrestrial mammals regularly occur in Massachusetts. Black bear has been increasing in numbers and distribution since the 1970s. The statewide population of bears is estimated to be over 4,500 animals and is growing and expanding eastward, with breeding animals in northern Middlesex County (Mass.gov 2017). One of our medium sized predators, the eastern coyote, is now well established throughout the state, except on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. A popular game species, the white-tailed deer, is common throughout the state and is valuable for its regulated hunting season. All the above species as well as many species of amphibians, reptiles, and fish are affected by changes in the forests of Massachusetts.

To promote conservation of the most critical habitats in Massachusetts and to guide the stewardship of these areas, the Department of Fish and Game and the Nature Conservancy developed BioMap2. BioMap2 identifies Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes (Figure 1) that are essential to safeguarding the diversity of species and their habitats, intact ecosystems, and resilient natural landscapes across the state.

Core Habitat consists of 1,242,000 acres that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Core Habitat includes:

- Habitats for rare, vulnerable, or uncommon mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, invertebrate, and plant species;
- Priority Natural Communities;
- High-quality wetland, vernal pool, aquatic, and coastal habitats; and
- Intact forest ecosystems.

Critical Natural Landscape consists of 1,783,000 acres complementing Core Habitat, including large natural Landscape Blocks that provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience. It includes buffering uplands around coastal, wetland, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity. Critical Natural Landscape may overlap with Core Habitat and includes:

- The largest Landscape Blocks in each of 8 ecoregions; and
- Adjacent uplands that buffer wetland, aquatic, and coastal habitats.

| | Total Acres | Percent of State | Acres Protected |
|---|---|---|---|
| Core Habitat | 1,242,000 | 24% | 559,000 |
| Critical Natural Landscape | 1,783.000 | 34% | 778,000 |
| BioMap2 Total (with overlap) | 2,092,000 | 40% | 861,000 |

*Table 1. BioMap2 Total and Protected Acres in Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes. (Woolsey et al. 2010)*

### 4. Forested Wetlands

Forested wetlands occupy poorly drained areas that are subject to flooding during periods of high rainfall. These areas are often overlooked because they lack surface water for much of the year. Forested wetlands provide important functions such as flood and sediment control, ground and surface water purification and fish and wildlife habitat.

Red maple swamps are common throughout the state. Other types of forested wetlands in Massachusetts include floodplain forests found along major rivers and streams, black spruce bogs, Atlantic white-cedar swamps and vernal pools. Vernal pools are small, temporary bodies of freshwater, filled during wet spring and autumn months, and dry during the summer.

Wildlife that favor forested wetlands include the red-shouldered hawk, wood duck, spotted salamander, black bear, white-tailed deer, and beaver. Forested wetlands with a permanent source of water, such as a small brook or stream, provide ideal conditions for beavers who create an entire new habitat of dead trees and marshland. This habitat, in turn, will support a rich variety of wildlife and has significant environmental value in Massachusetts

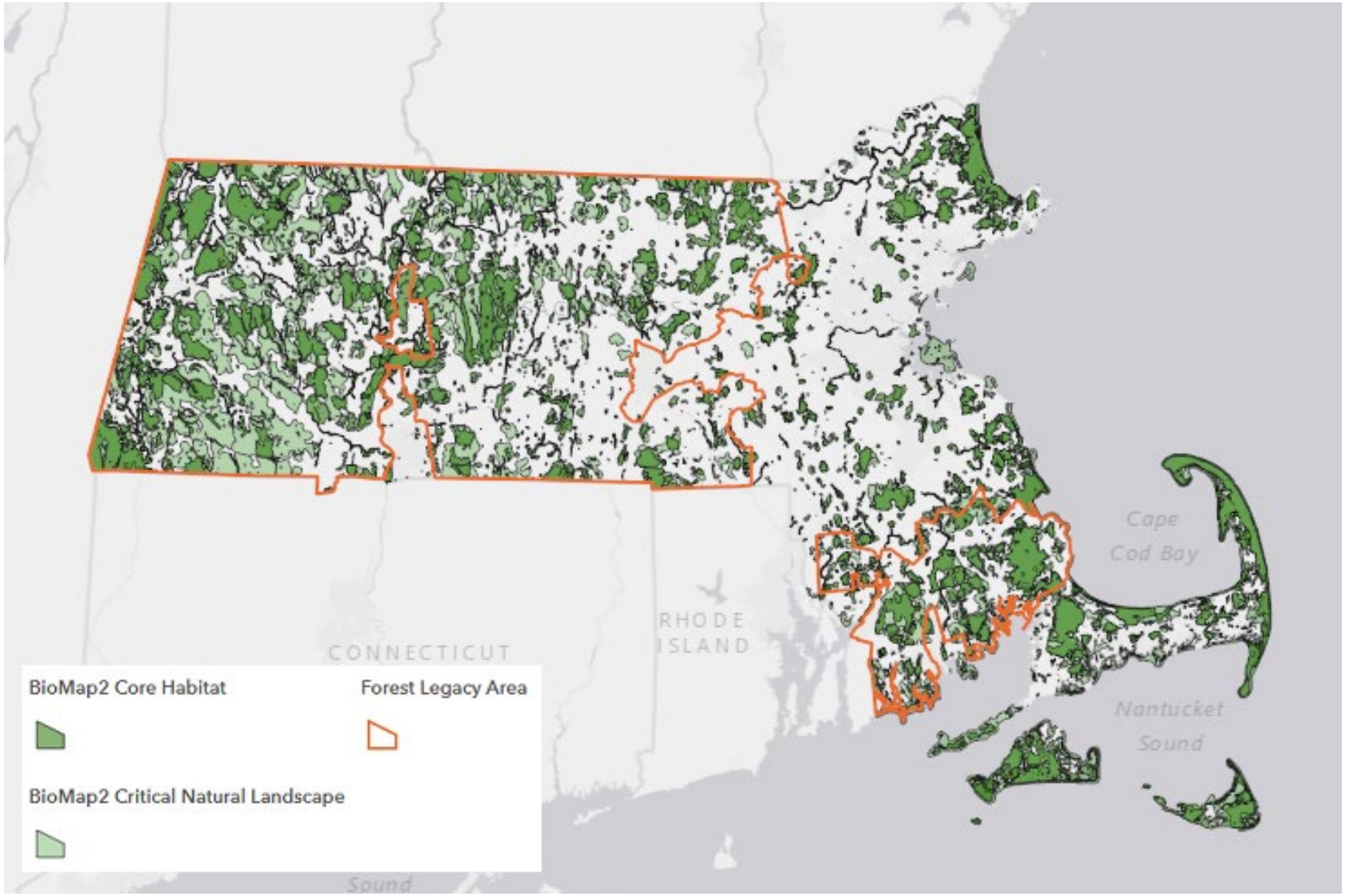


*Figure 1. BioMap2 Map of Massachusetts*

## 5. Geology, topography, and outstanding geologic features

The topography of Massachusetts was formed by glacial action that occurred 10 to 15 thousand years ago Throughout Massachusetts there are numerous examples of landforms shaped by moving ice. Some features, such as drumlins and terminal and recessional moraines, were formed by glacial deposits. Other features such as lakes, swamps and waterfalls were formed by debris that clogged valleys and dammed streams as the glacier retreated.

The Taconic Mountains form a mountain border with New York State. Elevations range from 1200 to 2800 feet. Mount Greylock, the state's highest peak at 3,491 feet, is in the northeastern part of the Taconic Province. The Taconics, although classified as hills, comprise the state's only "mountainous" region.

The Berkshire Valley, a long, narrow, lowland running north and south between the Taconic Mountains and the Berkshire Hills, includes both the Hoosic and Housatonic River valleys. The area, underlain by less resistant rock than surrounding regions, has eroded to provide a striking contrast with the bordering hills.

The Western Highlands (Berkshire Hills) lie between the Berkshire and Connecticut valleys. The topography is rugged; elevations, which range from 700 to 2000 feet, are highest in the northwestern part of the province. The eastern section is dissected by major rivers which flow east and south to the Connecticut River.

The Connecticut Valley Lowland is a wedge-shaped area extending from southern Vermont to the Connecticut border. The Lowland, about 20 miles wide at its greatest width, is in a large geologic fault bordered by an escarpment on either side of the Valley. The topography is generally flat to rolling, except for a few ridges, such as Mt. Holyoke and Mt. Tom, which rise above the valley and are notable landmarks. The Quabbin Reservoir, which serves as Boston's drinking water supply, is in this region. Much of the land around the Quabbin is protected to ensure the quality of the drinking water (EEA 2017).

The Central Highlands are comprised of the eroded plateau east of the Connecticut Valley Lowland. The topography is generally rugged but more subdued than that of the Western Highlands. Elevations range from 700-1,200 feet, except for single mountains, such as Mt. Wachusett at 2,006 feet. The eastern part of the Highlands is bounded by an escarpment that slopes down to join the Coastal Hills. There are also two major drinking water supplies here in the Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoirs.

The Coastal Hills region is the largest physiographic province in the state. Its low-lying plateau (elevations 200 to 700 feet) surrounds the Boston and Narragansett basins and borders the Coastal Lowlands. Best known of the Coastal Hills are the Blue Hills which rise to the south of Boston and dominate the skyline for miles around.

The Boston Basin is a very distinct topographic feature of the Massachusetts coast. Its lowlands (up to 150 feet in elevation) are surrounded by hills which rise abruptly forming a ring around the entire basin. The major relief within the lowlands area is provided by a series of more than 50 drumlins. The Narragansett Basin, similar to the Boston Basin, is a lowland (up to 200 feet in elevation) surrounded by the eastern uplands of the Coastal Hills.

The Coastal Lowlands include a narrow strip in the northeastern part of the state and all land south of the Narragansett Basin, Cape Cod, and the islands of Nantucket sound. The landscape is flat to rolling and elevations range from sea level to 200 feet. Much of Cape Cod is still in the process of change; wind and wave action change the shape of the present landscape.

### 6. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources include the remains of sites, structures, or objects used by humans in the past. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is charged with preserving this important heritage. According to the MHC, settlement has existed in Massachusetts for 11,000 years and patterns of use, abandonment, and reuse characterize the landscape.

Throughout all settlement periods, including prehistoric times, the most densely populated areas in the state have been the three lowland regions; the coastal lowlands, the Connecticut River Valley, and the Housatonic Valley. The central and western uplands have consistently been less densely settled according to the MHC. While trade and industrial technology grew and flourished in the market centers and cities of the core lowland areas, agricultural activities dominated the upland areas. Settlers cleared the land for crops and pastures and depleted much of the forests across the state. Wood was valued for timber and fuel; white pine was especially prized for ship masts. By the early to mid-1800's however, farming was no longer profitable, and a period of farm abandonment ensued. Abandoned fields reverted to forests that enfolded the stone walls and homesteads dotting the landscape and now are part of our cultural heritage and record.

Many cultural resource sites are fragile and subject to a variety of negative impacts from diverse sources. Particularly vulnerable are sub-surface cultural resource sites that can be destroyed or damaged by soil mixing, compaction, or erosion. According to the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Cultural Resource Management Guidelines, without appropriate controls, forest management programs can be detrimental to archaeological resources. The Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act and its associated Best Management Practices, if properly applied, should result in minimal soil compaction and erosion.

## C. Forest Benefits

The citizens of Massachusetts benefit greatly from our forest resources. We rely on the forest to supply recreational opportunities, clean water, benefits to human health and society, wildlife habitat, and a healthy forest industry. The key to good land management is to meet these diverse needs on a sustained basis without sacrificing the integrity and the productive capacity of the resource base. Much work has been done to gather information on the forest resources, to assess our impacts on them and to prioritize policies and actions for resource conservation. These efforts will guide future conservation efforts in the state.

### 1. Recreation

Recreation on private and public land is a dominant use of Massachusetts forest land. Many owners of conserved private land permit the use of their land for hiking. However, the state is the largest owner of recreation and conservation land (EEA 2017). Common recreation activities on publicly owned land include hiking, nature study, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, and hunting.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game both manage forest areas that are used heavily for recreation. It is estimated that outdoor recreation generates $10 billion in annual consumer spending in Massachusetts and the tax revenue generated equals $739 million annually (Oriel 2013). It is estimated that forest-based recreation contributes $2.2 billion annually to the Massachusetts economy. Fall foliage viewing is the largest contributor, followed by camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, snowmobiling, and downhill skiing (NEFA 2015).

### 2. Clean Water

The forests of Massachusetts protect our water resources. The purity of water reaching a stream, its total amount, and the regularity of flow are all affected by the conditions of the surrounding forest, the soils in that forest, and other plant cover.

Massachusetts has 77 public water supply systems that have an active surface water source, serving a total population of more than 5 million. The Quabbin Reservoir, Ware River, and Wachusett Reservoir water supply system provides 250 to 300 million gallons of water per day and serves 2.36 million customers.

The state manages more than 100,000 acres of forest within these watersheds and about 75% are actively managed and growing at a rate of 10 million board feet of timber each year. Forests protect the water supply from threats such as point source pollution from residential lawn care, septic systems, residential fuel oil storage, storm water discharge, and state regulated underground storage tanks.

### 3. Benefits to Human Health and Society

Climate change is a challenge that faces all of us today. Massachusetts forests play a beneficial role by removing carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere and storing it in live wood, soil, leaf litter, and dead wood. In New England our forests offset more than 20% of the region's carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, New England's forests remove over 760,000 tons of air pollution each year, which is worth an estimated $550 million in health benefits (Foster et al. 2017). Forests also help to protect people from flood damage as these forests store and slow runoff from storms. When forests are permanently cleared for development, we lose this ability to store carbon, filter our air and water, and mitigate flooding.

### 4. Wildlife Habitat

Traditionally, wildlife managers have focused their attention on those species considered "consumptive" (those that are hunted or fished). Today in addition to focusing on game species an emphasis is placed on preserving biodiversity and protecting rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitat. Managing a forest to promote game species and wildlife biodiversity provides an economic benefit to the state. As noted above, $1.99 billion was spent on wildlife related recreation in 2011.

Wildlife populations are entirely dependent on their habitat, so the link between wildlife and forests is a crucial one. Forests can be managed to enhance a certain wildlife species, such as ruffed grouse or white-tailed deer, protect important habitat elements like forested wetlands, seeps, and vernal pools, or generally improve habitat by providing a variety of food and cover. Planning a timber harvest with this diversity in mind can greatly enhance wildlife habitat.

## 5. Forest Industry

Our forests provide a variety of products. Timber can be harvested for construction materials or value-added products like furniture, firewood, paper products, or pellets. Non-timber products such as maple syrup, nuts, fruits, and mushrooms are also harvested from Massachusetts forests.

The forest industry is one of the oldest in Massachusetts, beginning at a time when a sawmill was present in every village, providing local jobs and a source of native lumber. A healthy forest industry prevents the loss of rural character and agricultural heritage and preserves the local rural economy.

Today, Massachusetts residents use more wood than is harvested within the state. More and more, wood is leaving the state for processing and approximately 98% of the wood that residents do purchase and use is imported (de le Cretaz et al. 2010). There has been a progressive decline in both the number of local sawmills and sawmill output. The number of sawmills in the state has decreased steadily from 130 in 1971 to 32 sawmills and 12 portable band mills reported in a survey from 2005. The amount of lumber that was produced during that time declined by 80%. As of 2006, there were 16,801 total people employed by the forestry, logging, wood products, and pulp and paper industries in the state (de le Cretaz et al. 2010). This includes approximately 156 professional foresters and 298 timber harvesters licensed to practice in Massachusetts at the time. This is a more than 50% reduction from 1983 when 38,000 people in Massachusetts were employed by the forest products industry.

Despite a rather small primary manufacturing capacity, Massachusetts is home to a diverse array of secondary manufacturers. The North-East State Foresters Association (NEFA) 2015 report "*Forest Based Economy of Massachusetts*" identified 8,500 workers employed in paper manufacturing and an additional 4,600 workers employed in secondary wood products manufacturing in Massachusetts. Forest industry growth has largely recovered from the economic downturn of 2008 with Massachusetts ranked 2$^{nd}$ in New England by NEFA for forest based Gross State Output valued at $5.2 billion in 2015.

## 6. Energy from Wood

The 1970s oil crisis generated much interest in fuelwood as a source of home heating. One million cords of wood were used in Massachusetts during the 1981-1982 season. Since then home fuelwood burning has generally decreased but has fluctuated depending upon the price of oil and natural gas. Wood pellet stoves have provided a cleaner and easier option for homeowners and are gaining in popularity. There is one wood pellet manufacturer in the area with a plant in southern New Hampshire and another in the Albany, NY area.

There is one biomass electricity plant in Massachusetts and several in northern New England that utilize wood biomass from Massachusetts' forests. There are also many thermal biomass units in the state providing heat for public and private buildings, such as schools, colleges, hospitals, and manufacturing plants, that utilize sawmill residues or forest biomass. The Massachusetts Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards requires retail electricity suppliers (both regulated distribution utilities and competitive suppliers) to obtain a percentage of the electricity they serve to their customers from qualifying renewable energy facilities. As of May 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) has granted Statements of Qualification for six generation units producing biomass power. To qualify for the standard, forest biomass must be sourced from Massachusetts forests covered by a forest cutting plan or from third-party certified woodlands if outside Massachusetts (Mass.gov 2021). In December 2017, DOER published regulations creating the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (APS).

APS recognizes thermal energy from wood when burned in a qualifying unit. They anticipate that the primary participants will be homeowners with qualifying wood pellet systems. As of January 2021, 82 participants have been qualified.

Energy suppliers in Massachusetts must have renewable energy credits covering at least 20 percent of their total supply. This creates a potential income source for businesses and families participating in the RPS and the APS, and therefore should create a greater demand for locally grown and harvested forest products. After converting BTUs to megawatts (3.412 million BTUs = 1 megawatt), one ton of wood pellets produces the equivalent of 4 megawatts of thermal energy. If a participating homeowner burns 8 tons of pellets a year and the credits are worth $20 per megawatt, they could earn $640.00.

### 7. Maple Syrup

In Massachusetts there are over 300 maple producers who make more than $5 million worth of syrup annually. This is a vital source of farm income in the rural part of the Commonwealth. The maple industry also represents an important tourist attraction. It is estimated that these syrup producers bring in about 60,000 tourists to the state who spend over $2 million during syrup boiling season, generating considerable economic spin-off benefits to rural communities.

### 8. Christmas Trees

There are over 400 Christmas tree growers in Massachusetts, most of whom are part-time producers. Over 50,000 Christmas trees are harvested in Massachusetts annually, with a retail value to the growers of over $2 million. Good markets exist for these trees in southern New England, on a retail and wholesale level. The potential exists to produce over one million trees annually in Massachusetts.

### 9. Enhancing Urban Areas

The trees, soil, water, and wildlife in our communities make up the urban forest. City trees are intermingled with buildings, streets, sidewalks, overhead and underground utilities, parking lots, cars, parks, and people. This man-made environment makes growing conditions difficult for trees and other plants. Special care is needed to plan for and maintain the urban forests of our towns and cities.

Proper management of street plantings provides communities with amenities such as reduced noise pollution, cleaner air, more moderate temperatures, windbreaks, habitats for wildlife, increased property values, and a more aesthetically pleasing environment. Ninety communities in Massachusetts have been recognized as members of the Tree City USA program, sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation. Tree City USA is an awards program that provides public attention and national recognition for local commitments to community trees and forests. In addition, two Tree Line USA Awards have been earned by local utility companies, and five Tree Campus USA Awards were given to colleges and universities for their dedication to urban forestry management.

### 10. Quality of Life

Forest land provides strong economic, ecological, and aesthetic benefits for citizens of the Commonwealth. The open space provided by our forests contributed to the economic boom Massachusetts experienced during the 1980s. Businesses assessing relocation consider the quality of life, including scenic surroundings, open land, and clean water, to be more important than factors such

as taxes and land costs. Three hundred and thirty communities in Massachusetts (94% of communities) associated the "quality of life" in their communities with the presence of natural areas, panoramic vistas, rural atmosphere, traditional town centers and historic buildings. Amenities such as these are vitally linked to the forest land and urban forests of the Commonwealth.

In 2014, 22.9 million domestic visitors and 2.2 million international visitors came to Massachusetts, generating $19.5 billion in direct spending and $1.2 billion in state and local taxes. The Massachusetts travel and tourism industry supports 132,000 jobs across the Commonwealth and $4.1 billion in paid wages. The tourism industry, worth an estimated $2 billion annually to Massachusetts, is largely dependent on the maintenance of the existing character of the forest. Therefore, any activity, private or public, which may profoundly impact the landscape and affect the forested ambiance, directly affects the residents of the state as well as its attractiveness for tourism.

Massachusetts is currently implementing an urban tree program called Greening the Gateway Cities (GGC). GGC is a partnership between the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Urban & Community Forestry Program, the Department of Energy Resources, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, along with Gateway Cities and local grassroots organizations. GGC is an environmental and energy efficiency program designed to reduce household heating and cooling energy use by increasing tree canopy cover in urban residential areas in the state's Gateway Cities. The program plants trees (ranging from 6ft to 10ft tall) with a goal of covering 5-10% of the target neighborhoods in new tree canopy cover. Trees are planted by DCR Bureau of Forestry, Urban & Community Forestry crews hired from local communities.

### 11. Air quality

Forest cover affects air quality in many ways. The forest filters particulates from the air, shades, and cools forest interiors through evapotranspiration, and reduces wind and consequent drying. It is also becoming widely recognized that forests may play an important part in helping to mitigate the effects of global warming through long-term sequestration of carbon.

The international consensus on climate released in 2007 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level (Pachauri and Reisinger 2007).

Many reports have shown that, second to reducing our worldwide consumption of fossil fuel energy, increasing the sequestration of carbon in trees and wood products is of utmost importance in helping to mitigate the buildup of atmospheric carbon and the resultant greenhouse effect. Improved forest management and wood utilization can increase the amount of carbon absorbed by forest stands, as well as effectively delaying the release of carbon dioxide through long-term storage in wood products.

Forests are important for removing carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, from the atmosphere and storing it for long periods of time. Carbon dioxide is stored in the roots, stems, branches, and leaves of trees, and in the forest soil. It is estimated that 50 percent of carbon in a forest is stored in the forest soil, 36 percent is stored in living plants and trees, 8 percent is stored in deadwood, and 6 percent is stored in the leaf litter (Catanzaro et al. 2016). When forest soils are disturbed, and trees are removed for development, much of the stored carbon is returned to the atmosphere, and the carbon storage capacity of Massachusetts forest lands is reduced.

## 12. Mineral resources

There are a variety of mineral resources in Massachusetts, but relatively few are of commercial quantity or quality. Historically, many of the minerals listed below were commercially exploited, but now only sand, gravel, limestone, traprock, and granite remain commercially significant. Non-metallic minerals present in Massachusetts include alum, asbestos, barite, clay, coal, corundum, emery, cyanite, feldspar, garnet, graphite, lime, lithium compounds, mica, novaculite; precious stones of beryl, chiastolite, jasper, rhodonite, spinel, and tourmaline; sand and gravel, silica; stone including granite, limestone and marble, sandstone, traprock, talc, and sandstone. Metallic minerals include copper, gold, iron, lead, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, silver, tin, and zinc.

Sand and gravel are ubiquitous in Massachusetts and resulted from glacial deposition. Especially prevalent in major river basins, these deposits serve as groundwater aquifers. Extensive outwash plains in Plymouth County, Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard are substantial areas of sand and gravel and constitute the stratum for water supply in those areas. Commercial exploitation of sand and gravel constitutes the greatest competitive use of the forest from the standpoint of mineral extraction. Limestone is confined to Berkshire County, in the western part of the state, and though prevalent is mined significantly in two quarries. Thus, in terms of area, limestone mining has little effect on the forest resource, except in a localized way. Traprock is mined as well with major quarries located in the Connecticut River Valley.

# III. THE FUTURE OF THE FOREST RESOURCE: CRITICAL ISSUES

## A. Forest Fragmentation

The pattern of forest ownership and the impacts it will have on community land use in the future is of great concern for forest planners. Of the 3 million acres of forests in Massachusetts, 68% is in the private ownership of individuals, corporations, farmers, and the forest industry. The remaining 32% is in public control of state, county, municipal, or federal government. Public land has increased greatly since 1993 when 84% of land was privately owned.

The Harvard Forest Wildlands and Woodlands report published in 2017 stated that development in New England eliminated 24,000 acres of forest each year from 1990 to 2010. At that rate, another 1.2 million acres of farms and forest land will be lost to development in the region in the next 50 years. They stated that in 2010, after 150 years of increasing forest land acreage in New England, forested acres in the region began declining (Foster et al. 2017).

The division and sale of large, forested tracts in southern New England threatens the integral value of forest ecosystems. Forest Service landowner survey results show in 1972, there were 103,900 private forest owners who collectively owned 2,432,300 acres for an average of 23.4 acres per owner. Twelve years later in 1984 the number of owners increased to 235,200, but the forest-base remained nearly the same. Today, 93% of forest ownerships are between 10 and 99 acres in size. (Butler, et al. 2016).

Breaking up large forest blocks into multiple small ownerships ultimately leads to forest fragmentation where a once contiguous forest is divided by roads, utility corridors, and housing development. The remaining habitat in these disconnected, small forests experiences loss of biodiversity, declines in forest health, and increases in invasive species. When fragmentation becomes extensive, plants and animals are unable to migrate and reproduce leading to population decline.

Additionally, small parcels are usually uneconomical to manage and may lead to forced sale to a developer with little intent to keep the property in its natural state. Though the tract may not be developed or subdivided immediately, its speculative ownership removes it from the roster of lands managed for future productivity and open space. With the shrinking acreage of contiguous ownership, management of forest lands will be increasingly difficult and less cost-effective. The future of the region's already weak forest products industry is at stake, while clean air and water, recreation, wildlife, and aesthetic values of the state's woodland are threatened.

Massachusetts' current use programs - Chapters 61 for forest lands, 61A for agriculture land, and 61B for recreation land - give preferential tax treatment to landowners who maintain their property as open space for timber production, agriculture, or recreation. Chapters 61 and 61A allow substantial property tax deferment for woodland owners who follow an approved forest management plan. Though Chapter 61B also avails forest landowners tax relief, no management plan is required. The current use programs do not permanently protect land as properties can be withdrawn upon payment of penalties. The laws do, however, grant a transferable right of refusal to the town if classified land is to be sold for conversion to another use.

As of January 2018, there were 492,801 acres of forest land and 13,574 landowners enrolled in Ch. 61 and Ch. 61A. That is 25% of the private forest land in the state. This is a significant increase from 1990 when 270,000 acres, or 10% of private forest land, were enrolled in the program.

## B. Availability of Timber to the Wood Products Industry

Increasing fragmentation of the resource base, combined with a shorter tenure of ownership of forest land, has had a great impact on the timber industry in the Commonwealth. Loggers and sawmillers face difficulties in obtaining timber from smaller parcels of land. Escalating operating costs, expensive machinery, fuel and labor expenses, and a shrinking labor pool have accompanied a rise in what the harvester must pay to buy standing timber.

Many landowners are not aware of the value of the timber on their woodlands and many that are may be reluctant to harvest timber. In a recent forest landowner survey, respondents most commonly listed: to enjoy beauty or scenery, to protect nature or biological diversity, to protect water resources, privacy, and to protect or improve wildlife habitat as their most important reasons for owning forest land. Each of these was listed on over 64% of the responses. Firewood and timber production were listed on only 30% and 17% of the responses, respectively. Seventy-five percent of respondents have harvested firewood from their land and over 30% have harvested timber (Butler et al. 2016).

The wood industry must do a better job of assuring landowners that a timber harvest can be completed without extensive damage to the remaining trees and educating them about the ways management can enhance the values they deem important, such as habitat, water protection, and biodiversity.

## C. Impacts on Wildlife

Although stable populations of much of our wildlife, including wild turkey, black bear, and white-tailed deer have been reestablished, many species still need our protection. The variety, frequency, distribution, and health of Massachusetts' wildlife depends directly on the size, species, and distribution of forest trees, but contiguity and connectivity are also important ecosystem requirements. Wildlife biologists are questioning the utility of setting aside relatively small, unconnected preserves to protect wildlife. They are advocating a system of linkages or "corridors" between these preserves so they may continue as biologically diverse ecological systems in an increasingly fragmented and urbanized land base. Protecting existing riverside corridors, an infrastructure upon which wildlife is vitally dependent, is a beginning. The Massachusetts Riverways Project was initiated to achieve that goal.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and state agencies, developed the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS) computer program which mapped an Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI) for all communities in Massachusetts. The IEI delineates the relative wildlife habitat and biodiversity value of any point on the landscape based on landscape ecology principles and expert opinion.

Another tool used to assist with identifying priority areas for land protection is BioMap2. The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game, through MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed BioMap2 to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of climate change. BioMap2 combines NHESP's 30 years of rigorously documented rare species and natural community data with spatial data identifying wildlife species and habitats that were the focus of MassWildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan. BioMap2 also integrates The Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, well-connected, and intact ecosystems and landscapes across the Commonwealth, incorporating concepts of ecosystem resilience to address anticipated climate change impacts.

## D. Sustainable Forestry

Sustainable forestry focuses on the retention, conservation, and health of forest land in the face of increasing development so that our forests continue to provide the multiple benefits that citizens of the Commonwealth expect. This includes maintaining a viable forest products industry, sufficient economic incentive for landowners to retain and manage forest land, and attention to the protection and management of Massachusetts wildlife. It also involves education of the private landowners who control the fate of our forests.

Cooperation between the diverse groups who use the forest resource is vitally important to the goal of sustainable forestry. These groups include the forest industry, passive recreation users, wildlife managers and observers, watershed managers, foresters, forest landowners, hunters, anglers, local land trusts, and any other group who has an interest in maintaining a viable, healthy and productive forest for all users.

Forest landowners need improved techniques for realizing timber, wildlife, and recreational benefits from the same piece of forest land. Charging hunting and recreation fees to users is an option that is popular elsewhere in the eastern United States. Favorable tax programs for landowners who practice wildlife management are another option.

The Massachusetts Working Forests Initiative, begun in 2009, is a suite of programs designed to aid landowners in sustainable forest management and long-term conservation, while providing local forest products to our economy, enhancing wildlife habitat for declining species, and permanently protecting forest land. It includes a wide network of partners including Mass Audubon, the Franklin Land Trust, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, and UMass Amherst. The program includes funding for forest stewardship planning and has aided in the significant increase of forest land under management plans and enrolled in the Chapter 61 programs. As a result, timber harvests on properties with forest stewardship plans has increased from 1% in 2003 to nearly 20% of the total state harvests in 2017 and the volume of timber harvested under a management plan increased from 10% to nearly 40% of all timber harvested in the state.

## E. Conserving the Land Base

The problems caused by forest fragmentation must be addressed. Most forest landowners in Massachusetts retain ownership of their property for less than ten years and the goals of each successive landowner often differ. In monetary terms, the development potential of forest land in Massachusetts almost always exceeds its value for forestry uses. These factors make preservation of our forest land a difficult task. The Commonwealth uses two tools as an important part of the solution: conservation restrictions and the Chapter 61 current use property tax law. Figure 2 shows all land in Massachusetts that has been permanently protected.

Land trusts have been active in Massachusetts and have contributed a great deal to land protection. In some cases, land trusts have assembled development packages for properties which include a lease to the original landowner for farming or timber production and a limited cluster development on a corner of the farm acreage so that the landowner can realize some income from the property. They also purchase lands on occasions when rare or unique features are at stake and the possibility of a gift of the land or an easement does not exist. Many will hold land for future purchase by a governmental entity. Currently the Division of Conservation Services estimates that there are more than 80,000 acres in Massachusetts protected by conservation restrictions held by land trusts.

Generally, one of the ultimate stewardship goals of a land trust is the use and management of land for the public benefits that are derived from open space and natural area protection. The kinds of features of interest to land trusts include, but are not limited to, areas which contain unique wildlife, high quality wildlife habitat, rare plants or unusual plant communities, interesting or unusual geologic or archaeological features, or particularly large open space areas unbroken by development. Size of the areas for consideration is usually less important than quality and public benefits and recreation opportunities. One important aspect of land trusts is that they are community based and usually operate within a specific geographical area and represent a local perspective on the value of land to the community.

New and innovative approaches to keeping forest land in an undeveloped and productive state are gaining popularity in the Commonwealth. A healthy forest industry with profitable markets is a vital part of this picture.

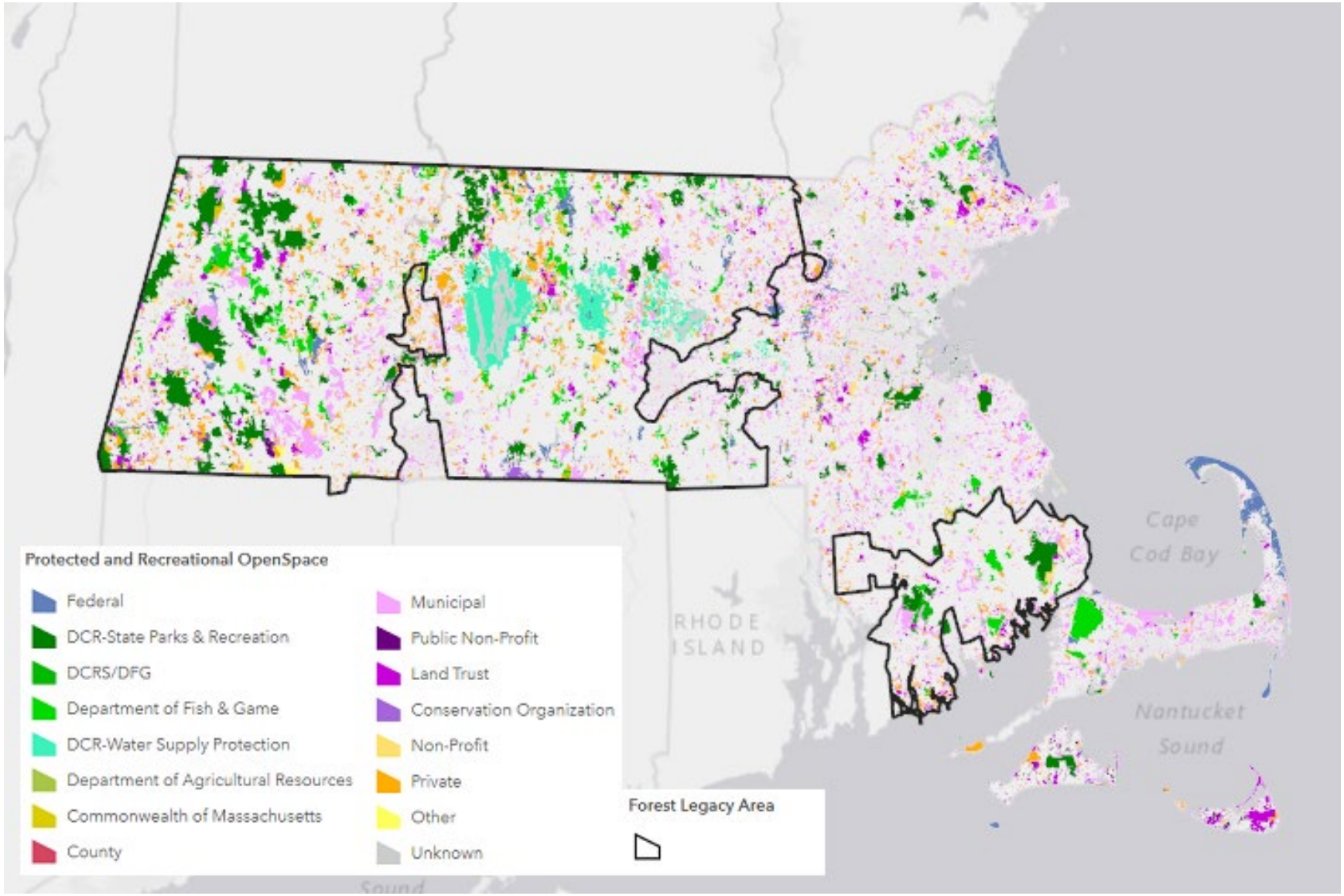


*Figure 2. Massachusetts Protected Open Space Map*

# IV. THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM: ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

## A. Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program

The forests of Massachusetts contribute greatly to our economy and provide the ecological systems and visual landscapes essential to our quality of life. Historically, demands for raw materials (wood, land for development and agriculture) have competed with the need to protect and conserve natural resources (water supply, recreation areas, wildlife). Meeting these diverse needs on a sustained basis without sacrificing the integrity and the productive capacity of the resource base is the challenge that we face in the Commonwealth.

Several social and economic trends have significantly affected the balance of natural resource utilization and protection in the Commonwealth. Increasing residential and commercial pressure has led to the development of substantial areas of forested land, raising questions of water supply protection and altering the visual landscape to which communities are accustomed. Development pressures are compounded by the fact that agricultural and wood products industries cannot match other economic incentives for land ownership.

Massachusetts is fortunate to have a strong network of land trusts and related conservation organizations, along with local, state, and federal government support for land conservation. Partnerships have developed from this network, which have demonstrated a sound record of land conservation state-wide. Through their collective efforts, these partnerships have cultivated a landowner public that is knowledgeable of, and receptive to, the concept and benefits of land conservation.

In the fall of 1991, a committee was convened to implement the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts, composed of state resource management professionals and private sector representatives of land trusts and other conservation related organizations, such as Watershed Associations. These organizations already had a constituency, had demonstrated their willingness, and could be counted on to develop public support and program accountability. The expertise of the land trusts, other conservation related organizations, and state land conservation agencies played a key role in the genesis, evolution, and success of the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts.

Since the beginning of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program, a significant number of new and updated resources and tools have been developed. The most significant of these is the general

availability of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and data. The Massachusetts Forest Action Plan includes detailed GIS analysis and discussion of relevant information about both public and private lands and addresses the issue of how best to maintain the integrity of forest lands for future generations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additional resources and tools are available to state agencies and all partners involved in the forest conservation community. These resources will enable state agencies and partners to identify new Forest Legacy Areas and prioritize projects in which to conduct landscape scale forest conservation. Additionally, outreach and education information has been developed with the intent to help woodland owners make informed decisions about the future of their land. Below is a partial list of these resources:

**Losing Ground:** "Over the past 40 years, the landscape of Massachusetts has been transformed by new residential and commercial development. Eastern and southeastern Massachusetts have undergone the most change, but virtually every community in the Commonwealth has experienced rapid growth driven by economic and demographic factors. Starting in 1991, Mass Audubon has analyzed these changes every five years using the most up-to-date technology and methods, providing conservationists, town planners, and agencies with information for planning and advocacy."

**MAPPR 2.0:** "Mapping and Prioritizing Parcels for Resilience (MAPPR) allows land conservationists to identify the parcels within an area of interest that are the highest priorities for protection based on habitat quality, climate change resilience, and other metrics such as parcel size and adjacency to existing protected parcels."

**Resilient and Connected Landscapes:** "The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscapes project is the first study to comprehensively map resilient lands and significant climate corridors across Eastern North America. Released in October 2016, the study took eight years to complete, involved 60 scientists, and developed innovative new techniques for mapping climate-driven movements."

**Massachusetts Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP):** "This Plan presents the 570 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Commonwealth, the 24 types of habitat that support these species, and the actions necessary to conserve them."

**Massachusetts Wildlife Climate Action Tool:** "The Massachusetts Wildlife Climate Action Tool can be used by local decision-makers, conservation managers, land trusts, regional planners, landowners, and community leaders in Massachusetts who are interested in taking action in response to climate change. Users can access information on climate change impacts and the vulnerabilities of various fish and wildlife and their habitats. The tool also allows users to explore adaptation strategies and actions to help maintain healthy, resilient natural communities in the face of climate change."

**BioMap2:** "BioMap2 is designed to guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts by focusing land protection and stewardship on the areas that are most critical for ensuring the long-term persistence of rare and other native species and their habitats, exemplary natural communities, and a diversity of ecosystems."

**The Critical Linkages Project:** "The University of Massachusetts Amherst is working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and state agencies to complete a comprehensive analysis of areas in Massachusetts where connections must be protected and restored to support the Commonwealth's wildlife and biodiversity resources. The Critical Linkages project is

developing spatially explicit tools, including models, maps and scenario-testing software, for use in mitigating the impacts of roads and railroads on the environment."

**Nature's Network:** "Nature's Network is a collaborative effort facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Science Applications program that brings together partners from 13 states, federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and universities to identify the best opportunities for conserving and connecting intact habitats and ecosystems and supporting imperiled species to help ensure the future of fish and wildlife across the Northeast region."

In addition to these resources and the extensive analysis of Massachusetts' natural resources that has been done, new initiatives, programs, forums, and networks have developed that have impacted the direction of forest conservation in Massachusetts and the whole New England region. Some of these are listed below:

**Wildlands and Woodlands:** "Wildlands and Woodlands is a science-based conservation vision for the New England landscape. The project is led by the Harvard Forest and Highstead and is advanced by partnerships, organizations, agencies, and individuals across the region."

**Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference**: "The Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers from land trusts; urban and rural community groups; colleagues from federal, state and local government agencies; students; and philanthropists to participate in a full day of workshops and discussions that focus on fostering a green future in our state through land conservation and greening strategies."

**The Massachusetts Forest Forum**: **"**The Forest Forum is a diverse group that includes: about 30 forest landowners, private and public foresters, timber harvesters, mill owners, land trusts and environmental organizations, and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The Forum has met each spring and fall since 2004 and was created to improve the viability of Massachusetts' forests, forestry, and forest products industry by using sustainable practices."

**Land Trust - State Agency Retreat**: The first Land Trust – State Agency Retreat was convened to improve the partnership between the land trust and state agency communities and increase conservation in Massachusetts. One of the products of that retreat was a guide to all state agency land conservation programs and grants, so that land trusts could match the land project with the most appropriate program. Discussion topics are chosen that will help improve land conservation and stewardship and guest speakers are invited to present and discuss new innovative approaches to land conservation.

These initiatives provide new opportunities for the land conservation community to learn from one another. Participation and involvement in these ongoing discussions provides innovative ideas and insight from many forest conservation stakeholders and is proving to be beneficial in the advancement of land conservation. Many local, regional, state-wide, and multi-state partnerships have evolved from these efforts and together they are focused on addressing the continued forest fragmentation, parcelization, and conversion threats to the Massachusetts and New England forest.

These partnerships, along with all the GIS data, tools, and resources now available, have transformed the once typical single tract project proposals submission for Forest Legacy Program funding consideration from Massachusetts. Massachusetts, with the foresight of its many partners, has evolved to submission of landscape scale multi-tract / multi-landowner projects. Massachusetts and its partners recognized the need to focus on landscape-scale projects, not only to connect the fragmented resources

among many landowners, but to also be competitive with other states that have the advantage to still have many large blocks of land under single ownerships.

These projects have been highly successful in increasing the pace of forest conservation here in Massachusetts; however, they are also complex and require a significant amount of coordination and collaboration among many partners. What goes on behind the scenes in these highly complex projects is most often not quantified in terms of what these projects have done to leverage additional forest conservation outside of the Forest Legacy Program.

The purchase, by Fee or Conservation Restriction, of these environmentally important and threatened forested lands under the Forest Legacy Program from knowledgeable, willing owners will protect valuable woodland from conversion to non-forest uses in perpetuity. Moreover, since private forest land acquired under the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts is required to be managed under a Forest Stewardship Plan that addresses traditional forest uses and environmentally important public values, the protection of these environmental values and the properties' contribution toward rural economies will be ensured.

## B. Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Goal

The goal of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program is to prevent the conversion of environmentally important forest land to non-forest uses, and to provide the opportunity for the continuation of traditional forest uses. The importance of large, landscape scale, collaborative projects with multiple Partners in achieving this goal cannot be emphasized strongly enough. Massachusetts has worked with Federal, State, and Municipal Governments; qualified non-profit organization such as land trusts and watershed associations; and other conservation organizations with great success. This includes collaborative projects that cross state boundaries.

These projects will also need to seek out and utilize multiple funding sources (Federal, State, and Municipal Governments; qualified non-profit organizations; conservation/environmental philanthropic organizations) for both acquisition and due diligence related expenses, as they contribute to the FLP cost-share requirements. The donation of acquisition and due diligence related expenses toward the FLP required cost-share from willing sellers has to-date been exemplary.

There remains the need for long-term funding for the continued monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easements acquired with FLP funds or donated as an FLP cost-share.

## C. Eligibility for a Forest Legacy Area

The history of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area is catalogued in Appendix A and represents the evolution of our state program. In early 1992, land trusts and other conservation organizations across the state were invited to submit potential Forest Legacy Areas that would meet Forest Service eligibility criteria. From those proposals, the committee selected five areas for recommendation to the US Forest Service. Since the approval of the original AON in August 1993, Massachusetts Forest Legacy Areas were created or expanded six times. In 2020, the individual Forest Legacy Areas were joined into a single Forest Legacy Area and land was added in central and southeastern Massachusetts.

Many forest lands across Massachusetts meet the Forest Service eligibility criteria for a Forest Legacy Area. To determine the outstanding ones, each area, in addition to documentation of environmentally important public values within its boundaries, will be evaluated within its local, regional, state-wide, and multi-state context. Floodplains, extensive wetlands, high elevation forests with characteristic vegetation, threatened and endangered species habitats, coastal plain aquifers, riverine and coastal shorelines all constitute distinctive, regionally occurring, natural resources in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Forest Action Plan, provides analyses that aids Massachusetts in the identification of environmentally important forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest use. Its data and analysis have been used in the selection of land for the Forest Legacy Area and can be used in the development of project proposals that prioritize areas of the Commonwealth where environmentally important resources and threats occur.

Ideally, future proposals for additions to the Forest Legacy Area will embody multiple environmentally important public values; enjoy public support; be threatened with conversion to non-forest use; abut and/or plan to connect existing permanently protected public open space tracts, blocks, and corridors; be delineated by physical infrastructure, or natural or municipal boundaries; and contribute to forest conservation at the local, regional, state-wide, and/or multi-state scale.

## 1. Forest Legacy Area eligibility criteria

For inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program, area must include lands that:

a. Are threatened by present or future conversion to non-forest uses

b. Contain one or more of the following environmentally important public values:

   i. Timber and other forest commodities;

   ii. Climate resilience;

   iii. Scenic resources;

   iv. Public recreation opportunities;

   v. Riparian areas;

   vi. Fish and wildlife habitat;

   vii. Known threatened and endangered species;

   viii. Known cultural resources; and

   ix. Other ecological values.

c. Provide opportunities for continuation of traditional forest uses

d. Reflect environmentally important public values at a landscape-sale (local, regional, state-wide, and/or multi-state)

## 2. Designation Requirements for Forest Legacy Areas

A Forest Legacy Area can be nominated for designation at any time by submitting a written proposal to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee. Proposals for FLAs must include the following elements:

a. Location of geographic area on a map and a written description of the proposed FLA boundary;

b. Summary of the analysis used to identify the FLA and its consistency with the eligibility criteria;

c. Identification of important environmental values;

d. List of public benefits that will be derived from establishing FLA; and

e. Documentation of the public involvement process.

FLA boundaries must encompass forest lands with significant environmental and other resource-based values. Areas may also include non-forested areas, such as farms, if they are an integral part of the landscape and are within logical boundaries.

# D. Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area

The combination of Massachusetts' FLAs into a single FL in 2020 provided easier administration and greater opportunities for land protection. This update also provides the opportunity to add new areas to the state FLA. The proposed additions are areas with significant areas of forest land that provide critical benefits or are under significant threat from development or environmental factors.

The addition includes northwestern Massachusetts, and results in the inclusion of 176 cities and towns in the FLA. The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area is shown in Figure 3. The Cities and Towns included within the boundary of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area, either the entire city/town or any portion of the city/town, are listed in Table 2.

## 1. Process for designating Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area

The 2020 Massachusetts Forest Action Plan analyzed the forest resources of Massachusetts through five criteria based on the Montreal Process:

- Forest Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity
- Ecosystem Services
- Productive Capacity of the Forest
- Socioeconomic Benefits
- Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework

The Montreal Process criteria are linked to the three national priorities designated by the U.S. Forest Service State & Private Forestry (S&PF):

1. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses
2. Protect Forests from Threats
3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

Using the combined parameters of the Montreal Process Criteria and the S&PF National Priorities, DCR conducted a GIS analysis of the state to identify high priority forest resources. The data layers that were derived from this analysis include:

1. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses Overlay (Figure 4)

2. Protect Forests from Threats Overlay (Figure 5)
3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests Overlay (Figure 6)
4. Synthesis Overlay
    a. Forest Vulnerability (Figure 7)

Figures 4 through 7 show this analysis and eligibility criteria in relation to the chosen Forest Legacy Area.

The State Lead Agency, in consultation with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, identified 18 new towns in northwestern Massachusetts for inclusion in the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area and are recommending them to the Forest Service for designation. The addition of the towns in what is known as the Mohawk Trail region has been in discussion since 2016. At a meeting with the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Steering Committee on November 17, 2020, town representatives voted to support inclusion of the partnership towns in the Forest Legacy Area. This proposal was developed with the committee's unanimous support and input. The committee discussed the proposal over email and at their July 21, 2021 meeting. They were given the opportunity to comment on the final draft proposal. The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area includes 158 previously approved towns (see Appendix A for history of Massachusetts Forest Legacy Areas).

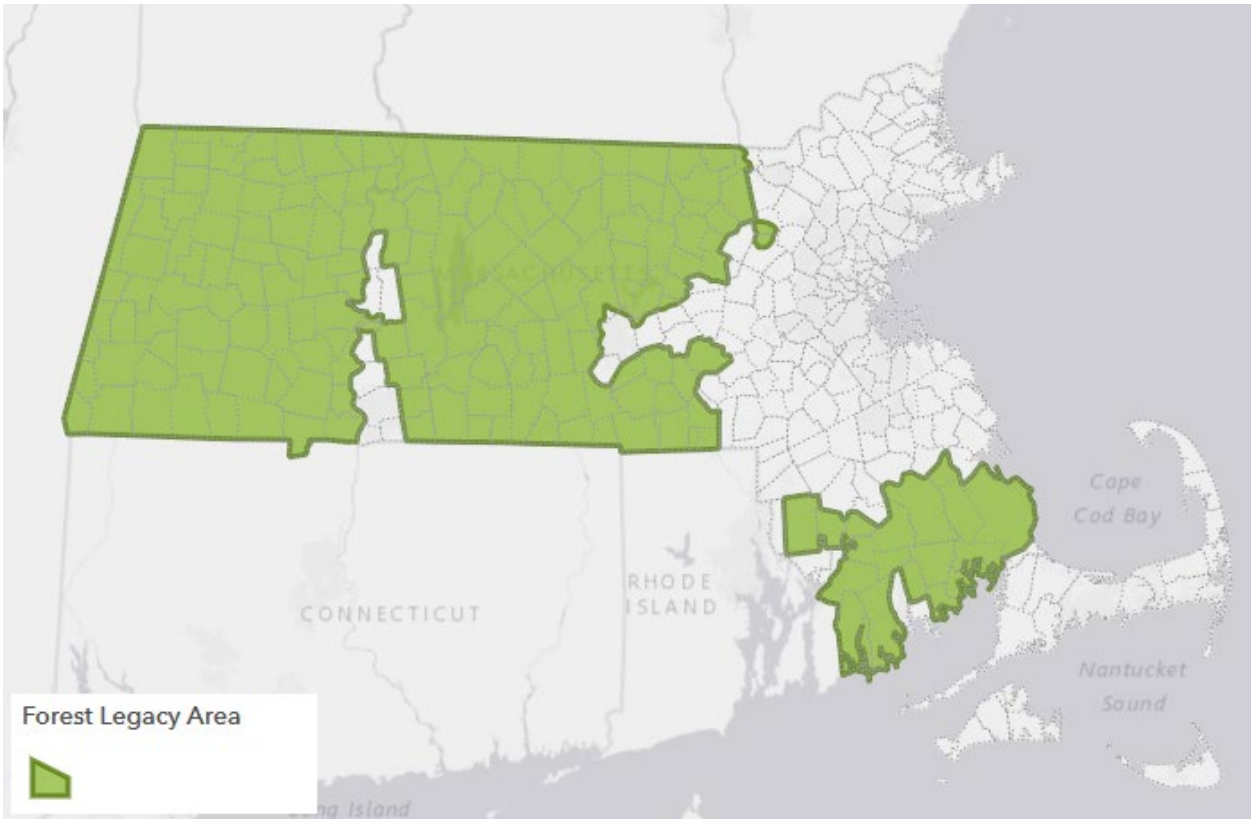


*Figure 3. Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area Map*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Acushnet | Easthampton | Mattapoisett | Rutland |
| Adams | Egremont | Mendon | Sandisfield |
| Agawam | Erving | Middleborough | Savoy |
| Alford | Fall River | Middlefield | Sheffield |
| Ashburnham | Fitchburg | Millbury | Shelburne |
| Ashby | Florida | Millville | Shirley |
| Ashfield | Freetown | Monroe | Shrewsbury |
| Athol | Gardner | Monson | Shutesbury |
| Ayer | Gill | Montague | South Hadley |
| Barre | Goshen | Monterey | Southampton |
| Becket | Grafton | Montgomery | Southbridge |
| Belchertown | Granby | Mount Washington | Southwick |
| Berkley | Granville | New Ashford | Spencer |
| Berlin | Great Barrington | New Braintree | Sterling |
| Bernardston | Greenfield | New Marlborough | Stockbridge |
| Blackstone | Groton | New Salem | Stow |
| Blandford | Hadley | North Adams | Sturbridge |
| Bolton | Hampden | North Brookfield | Sutton |
| Boxborough | Hancock | Northampton | Templeton |
| Boylston | Hardwick | Northborough | Tolland |
| Brimfield | Harvard | Northbridge | Townsend |
| Brookfield | Hatfield | Northfield | Tyngsborough |
| Buckland | Hawley | Oakham | Tyringham |
| Carlisle | Heath | Orange | Upton |
| Carver | Hinsdale | Otis | Uxbridge |
| Charlton | Holden | Oxford | Wales |
| Charlemont | Holland | Palmer | Ware |
| Cheshire | Holyoke | Paxton | Wareham |
| Chester | Hopkinton | Pelham | Warren |
| Chesterfield | Hubbardston | Pepperell | Warwick |
| Clarksburg | Huntington | Peru | Washington |
| Clinton | Lakeville | Petersham | Webster |
| Colrain | Lancaster | Phillipston | Wendell |
| Concord | Lanesborough | Pittsfield | West Boylston |
| Conway | Lee | Plainfield | West Brookfield |
| Cummington | Leicester | Plymouth | West Springfield |
| Dalton | Lenox | Plympton | Westford |
| Dartmouth | Leominster | Princeton | Westminster |
| Deerfield | Leverett | Rehoboth | Westport |
| Dighton | Leyden | Richmond | Wilbraham |
| Douglas | Littleton | Rochester | Williamstown |
| Dudley | Ludlow | Rowe | Winchendon |
| Dunstable | Lunenburg | Royalston | Windsor |
| East Brookfield | Marion | Russell | Worcester |

*Table 2. Cities and towns in Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area*

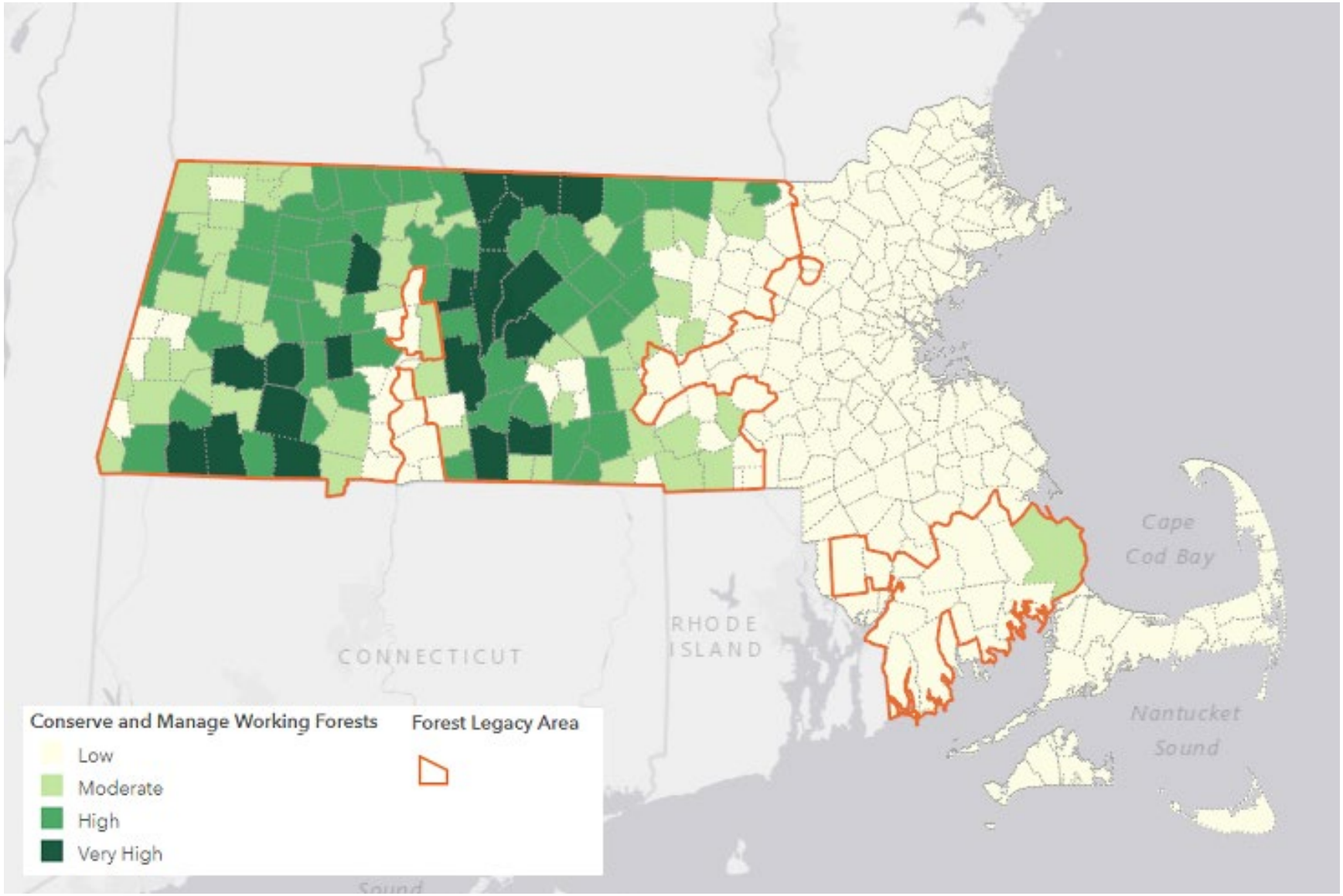


*Figure 4. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses*

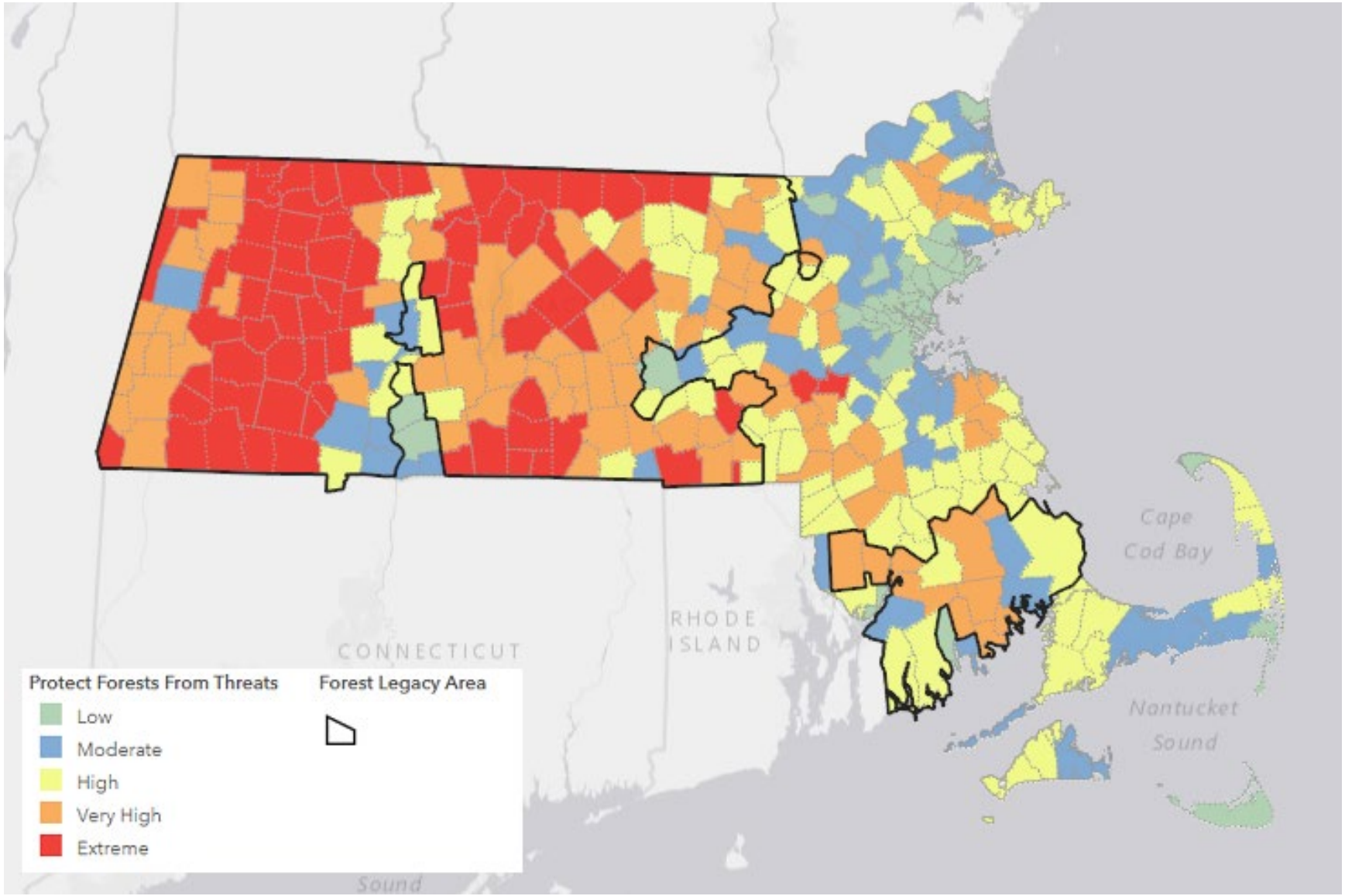


*Figure 5. Protect Forests from Threats*

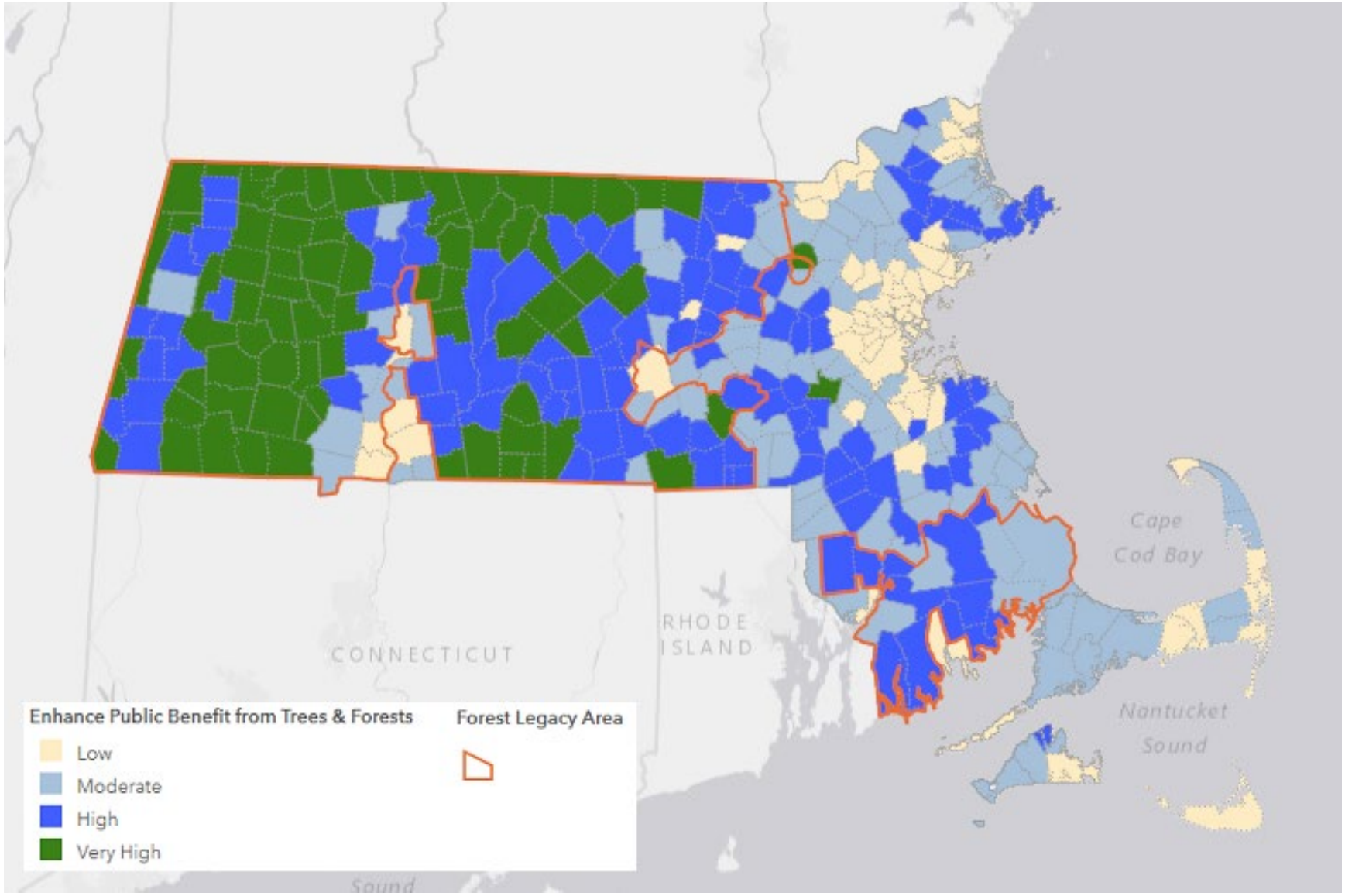


*Figure 6. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees & Forests*

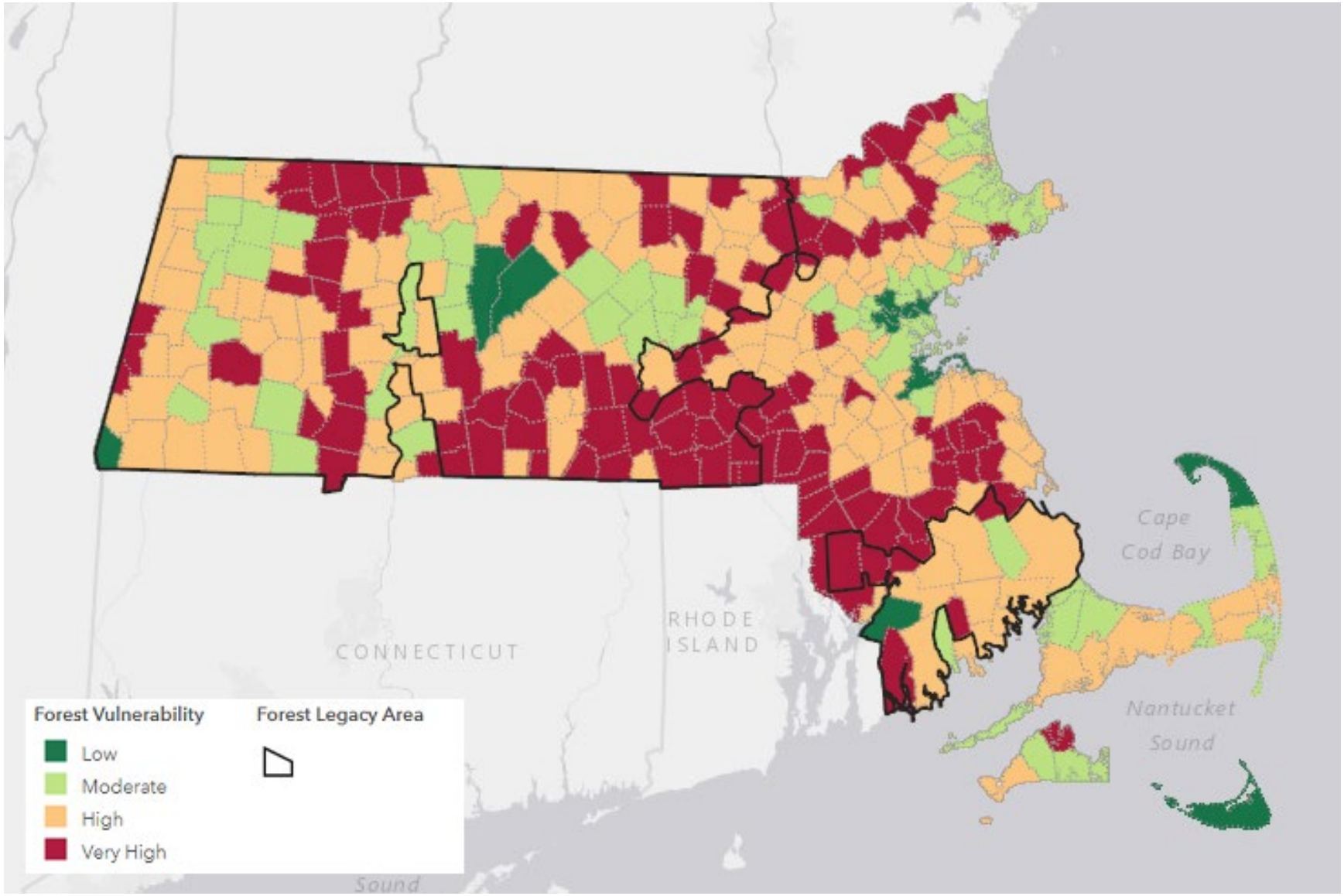


*Figure 7. Forest Vulnerability*

**2. MA Forest Legacy Area Boundary Description**

The boundary description of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area follows:

A. Beginning at the intersection of the Massachusetts / Connecticut state line at the town boundary between the Towns of Agawam and Longmeadow, thence westerly along the southern boundary of the towns of Agawam, Southwick, Granville, Tolland, Sandisfield, New Marlborough, Sheffield, and Mount Washington to the New York state line, a distance of 51.4 miles;

B. Thence northerly along the western boundary of the towns of Mount Washington, Egremont, Alford, West Stockbridge, Richmond, Hancock, and Williamstown, to the Vermont state line a distance of 49.8 miles;

C. Thence easterly along the northern boundary of the towns of Williamstown, Clarksburg, Florida, Monroe, Rowe, Heath, Colrain, Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, Warwick, Royalston, Winchendon, Ashburnham, Ashby, Townsend, Pepperell, Dunstable, and Tyngsborough to the Merrimack River, a distance of 93.3 miles;

D. Thence southerly along the Merrimack River to the Tyngsborough / Chelmsford town line, a distance of 4.5 miles;

E. Thence southerly along the boundary of the towns of Tyngsborough, Westford, Littleton, Boxborough, Stow, Bolton, and Berlin to Interstate 495 in Hudson, a distance of 35.3 miles;

F. Thence southerly along Interstate 495, to Interstate 290 in Marlborough, a distance of 1.0 mile;

G. Thence westerly along Interstate 290 to Plantation Street in Worcester, a distance of 10.2 miles;

H. Thence northerly along Plantation Street to Route 70, a distance of 0.7 miles;

I. Thence northerly along Northeast Cutoff to East Mountain Street, a distance of 0.7 miles;

J. Thence westerly along East Mountain Street to West Boylston Street, a distance of 1.5 miles;

K. Thence westerly along West Mountain Street to Doyle Road in Holden, a distance of 0.8 miles;

L. Thence westerly along Doyle Road to Shrewsbury Street, a distance of 0.8 miles;

M. Thence westerly along Shrewsbury Street to Route 122A, a distance of 0.8 miles;

N. Thence westerly along Route 122A to Salisbury Street, a distance of 1.0 mile;

O. Thence southerly along Salisbury Street to Fisher Road, a distance of 2.0 miles;

P. Thence southerly along Fisher Road / Stonehouse Hill Road to Reservoir Street, a distance of 2.1 miles;

Q. Thence southerly along Reservoir Street to Olean Street in Worcester, a distance of 0.2 miles;

R. Thence southerly along Olean Street to Cataract Street, a distance of 0.05 miles;

S. Thence southerly along Cataract Street to Mower Street, a distance of 0.85 miles;

T. Thence westerly along Mower Street to Route 122, a distance of 0.2 miles;

U. Thence westerly along Route 122 to the Paxton town line, a distance of 0.8 miles;

V. Thence southerly along the boundary of the towns of Paxton, Leicester, and Oxford to the Millbury town line, a distance of 12.0 miles;

W. Thence easterly along the boundary of the towns of Millbury, Grafton, Upton, and Hopkinton to the Holliston town line, a distance of 27.3 miles;

X. Thence southerly along the boundary of the towns of Hopkinton, Upton, Mendon, and Blackstone to the Rhode Island state line, a distance of 22.4 miles;

Y. Thence westerly along the boundary of the towns of Blackstone, Millville, Uxbridge, Douglas, Webster, Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Holland, Wales, Monson, and Hampden to the East Longmeadow town line, a distance of 50.4 miles;

Z. Thence northerly along the boundary of the towns of Hampden, Wilbraham, Ludlow, and Granby to Route 116, a distance of 20.6 miles;

AA. Thence southwesterly along Route 116 to Pearl St in South Hadley, a distance of 0.01 miles;

BB. Thence westerly along Pearl St to Route 47, a distance of 1.9 miles;

CC. Thence northerly along Route 47 to the Hadley town line, a distance of 0.7 miles;

DD. Thence westerly along the southern boundary of the town of Hadley to the center of the Connecticut River, the boundary of the city of Holyoke, a distance of 0.5 miles;

EE. Thence southerly along the eastern boundary of the towns of Holyoke, West Springfield, and Agawam in the center of the Connecticut River to the Connecticut / Massachusetts state line at the point of beginning, a distance of 21.5 miles

Excluding the towns of Amherst and Sunderland and portions of the town of Hadley as described as follows:

A. Beginning at the boundary of the towns of Sunderland, Montague, and Deerfield in the center of the Connecticut River, thence southerly along the eastern boundary of Deerfield, Whately, Hatfield, and Northampton in the center of the Connecticut River to the confluence of the Fort River and the Connecticut River, a distance of 18.2 miles;

B. Thence easterly and northerly upstream along the Fort River to a point where it crosses Bay Road in the town of Hadley, a distance of 0.7 miles;

C. Thence southerly along Bay Road to Lawrence Plain Road, a distance of 0.1 miles;

D. Thence southerly along Lawrence Plain Road to Churma Road, a distance of 1.1 miles;

E. Thence easterly along Churma Road to its end at a cul-de-sac, a distance of 1.3 miles;

F. Thence northerly along a line from the cul-de-sac to the intersection of South Maple Street and Bay Road, a distance of 0.4 miles;

G. Thence easterly along Bay Road to the Amherst town line, a distance of 0.6 miles;

H. Thence southerly along the boundary of the town of Amherst to the South Hadley town line,

a distance of 1.1 miles;

I. Thence easterly along the boundary of the towns of South Hadley and Granby to the Belchertown town line, a distance of 4.0 miles;

J. Thence northerly along the western boundary of the towns of Belchertown, Pelham, and Shutesbury to the Leverett town line, a distance of 8.8 miles;

K. Thence westerly along the southern boundary of the town of Leverett to the Sunderland town line, a distance of 2.1 miles;

L. Thence northerly along the western boundary of the town of Leverett to the Montague town line, a distance of 5.7 miles;

M. Thence westerly along the southern boundary of the town of Montague to the point of beginning, a distance of 1.8 miles.

And including, in southeastern Massachusetts, the following area:

A. Beginning at the northwest corner of the town of Rehoboth where it meets the towns of Seekonk and Attleboro, thence easterly along the northern boundary of the towns of Rehoboth, Dighton, Berkley, Lakeville, Middleborough, Plympton, Carver, and Plymouth to the Atlantic Ocean, a distance of 53.2 miles;

B. Thence southerly along the eastern boundary of the town of Plymouth to the Bourne town line, a distance of 19.9 miles;

C. Thence westerly along the southern boundary of the towns of Plymouth, Wareham, Marion, and Mattapoisett to the Fairhaven town line, a distance of 43.5 miles;

D. Thence northerly along the boundary of the town of Mattapoisett to the Acushnet town line, a distance of 3.7 miles;

E. Thence westerly along the boundary of the town of Acushnet to the Acushnet River, a distance of 3.2 miles;

F. Thence northerly along the boundary of the town of Acushnet to the Freetown town line, a distance of 6.1 miles;

G. Thence westerly along the boundary of the town of Freetown to the Dartmouth town line, a distance of 1.4 miles;

H. Thence southerly along the boundary of the town of Dartmouth to Buzzard's Bay, a distance of 9.7 miles;

I. Thence westerly along the coast and the boundary of the towns of Dartmouth and Westport to the Rhode Island state line, a distance of 46.5 miles;

J. Thence northerly and westerly along the boundary of the town of Westport and the city of Fall River to Mount Hope Bay, a distance of 15.1 miles;

K. Thence northerly along the boundary of the city of Fall River and the towns of Freetown and Berkley to the Berkley Bridge, a distance of 25.5 miles;

L. Thence westerly on Berkley Bridge to the boundary of the town of Dighton, a distance of 0.1 mile;

M. Thence southerly and westerly along the boundaries of the Town of Dighton and Rehoboth

to the boundary of the town of Seekonk, a distance of 16.6 miles;

N. Thence northerly along the boundary of the town of Rehoboth to the point of beginning, 8.9 miles.

And including, in north central Massachusetts, the following area

A. Beginning in the center of the town of Carlisle, Massachusetts, at the Intersection of Lowell Street and Route 225, thence, southeasterly along Route 225 to its junction with River Road, a distance of 1.7 miles;

B. Thence, southwesterly along River Road, crossing the town line between the towns of Carlisle and Concord and into the town of Concord, at which point it becomes Monument Street, to its junction with Liberty Street, a distance of 3.6 miles;

C. Thence, southwesterly along Liberty Street to its junction with Estabrook Road, a distance of 0.2 miles;

D. Thence, northerly along Estabrook Road to its junction with Barnes Hill Road, a distance of 0.2 miles;

E. Thence, westerly along Barnes Hill Road to its junction with Barret's Mill Road and Lowell Street, a distance of 0.4 miles;

F. Thence, westerly along Barret's Mill Road to its junction With Strawberry Hill Road, a distance of 0.7 miles;

G. Thence, northwesterly along Strawberry Hill Road to its Intersection with the town line between the towns of Acton and Concord, a distance of 1.7 miles;

H. Thence, northeasterly along the town line to a comer and its intersection with Pope Road, a distance of 0.9 miles;

I. Thence, northerly along Pope Road to its intersection with West Street in the town of Carlisle, a distance of 0.1 miles;

J. Thence northerly along West Street to its intersection with Acton Street, a distance. of 1.6 miles;

K. Thence, easterly along Acton Street to its intersection with Route 225, a distance of 0.9 miles;

L. Thence easterly along Route 225 to Carlisle center, its junction with Lowell Street and the point of beginning, a distance of 1.5 miles.

# E. Project Evaluation and Prioritization Process

### 1. Project Evaluation Factors

Each year, the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee will solicit project applications from the land conservation community. Projects applications will be accepted until the second Monday in July. The nominator of a proposed Forest Legacy Program project may utilize these evaluation factors to provide a persuasive argument for the project area. This list is provided as a guideline for future project applications.

a. Threat by conversion to non-forest uses:

   i. Type and level of threat

   ii. There are various kinds and degrees of threat to valuable forested areas, such as encroaching housing development, improved town roads, sewer line and power line extensions into undeveloped areas, and fragmentation of land ownership into smaller, less manageable parcels. In determining the threat to a project area, factors to consider include the following:

      - Project area is in danger of conversion to non-forest use within 5 years.
      - Project area may remain wooded but will become further fragmented.
      - Project area is not under CH 61 or other forest management program.
      - Project area may remain wooded but, is in danger of being over-harvested.

b. Contain one or more important values:

   i. Forest commodities such as

      - Timber
      - Cordwood
      - Pulpwood
      - Biomass
      - Carbon storage and sequestration
      - Non-timber forest products and agroforestry (i. e. – maple syrup, berries, mushrooms, bark, burls, cones, nuts, herbs, etc.)

   ii. Climate Resilience

      Massachusetts forests will play an important role in climate resiliency and mitigation. Factors to consider include:

      - Project area contains a significant amount of land identified as an area of average, slightly above average, above average, or far above average Terrestrial Resilience according to The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Land Mapping Tool (https://maps.tnc.org/resilientland/)
      - Project area includes an important climate corridor with confirmed species diversity, the protection of which is more likely to sustain native plants and animals under both current and future climate conditions
      - Existing and/or potential terrestrial carbon storage

   iii. Scenic Resources

      The scenic aspects of a natural resource area may often be subjective, but there are means of measuring the special qualities that make a given project area stand out, such as:

      - Project area is along a designated scenic road (Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act MGL Ch. 40 Sec. 15C)

iv. Public recreation opportunities

Recreational use of a proposed project area by the public is an important component. Documents such as the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP) will provide the project proponent needed information on the relative importance of the following factors:

- Water based recreation is present - boating, swimming, fishing, rafting, canoeing.
- Trail based and or day use recreational opportunities exist - hiking, picnicking, horseback riding, ice skating, cross country skiing.
- Natural resource recreational activities are available - camping, hunting, nature touring, etc.
- Adjacent land is protected.

v. Riparian areas

In an urbanizing state such as Massachusetts, one of the most important forest "products" may be water. Proper management of forest lands can increase the quality and quantity of water for the residents of the Commonwealth. Factors to be included in determining the value of riparian areas:

- Project area is situated on waters that are identified as Coldwater Fish Resources by MassWildlife.
- Project area has extensive (over 300') river or wetland shoreline.
- Project area includes floodplain components.
- Project area contains a minimum 80' strip of native trees and shrubs as a natural buffer and sediment filter, per USFS guidelines outlined in Riparian Forest Buffers.
- Project area contributes to important public ground supply wellhead protection areas and / or surface water supply area.
- Project area contains important wetlands; especially isolated wetlands and/or certified and potential vernal pools.

vi. Fish and wildlife habitat

Preventing the fragmentation of forest tracts into smaller units is crucial to maintaining viable populations of particular wildlife species. Factors to be considered include:

- Project area contains outstanding habitat, as evaluated per the Massachusetts Forest Action Plan, Massachusetts Wildlife Action Plan and Mass Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program BioMap2,
- Project area contains ecologically recognized habitat for one or more bird species that include:
  - ◊ Forest interior nesting birds
  - ◊ Significant populations of resident species

- ◊ Neo-tropical migrant species
- ◊ Areas for resting and feeding of migratory species.

- Project area exhibits connective habitats, corridors, habitat linkages and areas that reduce biological isolation.
- Project area contains known threatened and endangered species.

As urbanization and fragmentation of forest land continues the need to give special attention to threatened species of fish, wildlife and plants increases. Project areas should be inventoried for such natural habitats that may contain imperiled species, considering the following factors:

- Project area contains plant or animal species on Massachusetts state list as Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern (consult Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program at MassWildlife).

vii. Known cultural resources

Material evidence of the earlier human occupation in Massachusetts comprises a unique and irreplaceable resource, as do historic features and vernacular landscapes. Factors to consider:

- Project area contains recorded archeological sites; e.g. burial, midden, fire pit, or artifacts of Contact, Woodland or Archaic periods.
- Project area includes historic features; e.g. charcoal kilns, church or village sites, battle sites, historic roads, paths or lookouts.

viii. Productive soils

Of the 3.2 million acres of forests in Massachusetts, nearly 67% are classified as "prime," based on the productive soils upon which they grow. This classification system is useful in determining the importance of individual tracts:

- Project area contains soils of Prime, or State or Local significance for agriculture.
- Project area contains soils of Prime, or State or Local significance for forestry.

ix. Other ecological values

In addition to the characteristics already outlined, an area may exhibit additional or exceptional conditions that are important and add to the quality of the project application, such as:

- Project area contains old growth forest.
- Project area provides a mix of ecological communities.
- Project area includes ecological communities which are dwindling in Massachusetts, such as vernal pools, mature riparian floodplain forest, and pine barrens.
- Project area provides immediate watershed/water supply protection.

c. Provide opportunities for continuation of traditional forest uses.

   Maintaining traditional forest uses is important in that it permits owners to remain on the land without increasing demand for high-cost services such as schools, street clearing or repair by the town. Positive factors which reinforce this include:

   i. Project area will remain available for sugar bush operation, cordwood or timber management under a Forest Stewardship Plan.

   ii. Project area will continue to serve watershed and water filtration role.

   iii. Project area will continue to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

d. Local, Regional, State-wide, Multi-state values

   Through careful selection, project applications should have not just local, but regional, state, and multi-state significance. The features and functions of these units should include:

   i. Linkages for recreational values, such as trails, especially along river greenbelts, mountain ridges and parcels which connect existing publicly owned lands.

   ii. Public access to boating and swimming relative to the needs of local population centers and the effects of projected land use change.

   iii. Public or private drinking water supply protection (ground or surface water).

   iv. Scenic qualities having their basis in the traditional New England natural and cultural landscape.

   v. Areas that can provide connectivity to conserve and protect important environmental values that will maintain environmental values and provide for mitigation and adaptation strategies.

**2. Project Prioritization Process**

The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Coordinator will collect project applications and distribute them to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee. Committee members will be given at least one week to read each project brief. If more than one application is submitted in a funding year, Committee members will be asked to score the project based on the National Scoring Criteria. A scoring sheet similar to the example below (Figure 10) will be distributed to Committee members for this process.

Project proponents will be invited to attend a Forest Legacy Committee meeting where they will be asked to present their project to Committee members and answer any questions they may have. After the presentations are complete and the Committee's questions have been answered a vote will be held for each project, with a vote in favor indicating the project is ready to be submitted to the Forest Service for consideration for funding. A simple majority vote will move a project forward. After voting, projects will be ranked by the Committee. In the case that the number of projects submitted exceeds the number of projects the state is allowed to submit for federal consideration, or the total FLP grant request for all submitted projects exceeds the federally allowed maximum, the highest ranked projects will be submitted to the Forest Service.

| Project Name | National Criteria | | | | Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Importance ( 0-30 ) | Threatened ( 0-20 ) | Strategic ( 0-30 ) | TOTAL POINTS | |
| Project A | | | | | |
| Project B | | | | | |
| Project C | | | | | |
| Project D | | | | | |

*Figure 10. Example Massachusetts Forest Legacy Project Scoring Sheet*

# V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The responsibility for Forest Legacy Program implementation in Massachusetts is through the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. As of September 2019, the Forest Legacy Committee subcommittee was rejoined with the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The committee was designed to provide land conservation acquisition expertise. Consultation with this committee, which broadly represents the many facets of the Massachusetts forestry community, constituted the initial phase of public participation when the program was first implemented.

The committee is tasked with developing the assessment which would make the case for the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts, representing its various constituencies. Further, the committee considers nominations for Forest Legacy Areas and chooses those areas to be eligible for initial funding.

All documents submitted to the Forest Legacy Committee supporting Forest Legacy Area nominations are public records and available through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry, Forest Legacy Program. A summary of historical Massachusetts Forest Legacy Areas can be found in Appendix A. Full copies of prior Assessment of Need documents and amendments are on file and available by request from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry.

When a new Forest Legacy Area is being considered for recommendation for addition to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program public notification will entail:

- Review, comment, and approval by the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee which members diversely representing the forestry community.
- Notification and request for response of regional land trusts, community land trusts, watershed associations, and units of state and local government.

Regarding the proposed expansion of the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area, letters were sent to town governments, land trusts, and conservation organizations in the affected areas soliciting their comments and support. Responses are included in Appendix D.

# VI. SUMMARY

The Forest Legacy Program will continue to enhance an existing network of governmental and private organizations working together, employing sophisticated techniques to protect the most special and most threatened resources in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee believes this document clearly shows the vital need for the Forest Legacy Program in the Commonwealth and substantiates the ability and readiness of that committee to effectively deliver a successful program in a timely manner.

Authorization for conducting the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts was affected by Governor William F. Weld in a letter dated October 3, 1991 and is contained in Appendix B. Additionally, the State Stewardship Coordinating Committee minutes of August 27, 1991, authorizing the establishment of a Forest Legacy Program Subcommittee, are in Appendix C.

A summary of the historical Massachusetts Forest Legacy Areas can be found in Appendix A. Full copies of the AONs are on file and available by request from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry. This Assessment of Need is incorporated into the Massachusetts Forest Action Plan as Appendix D.

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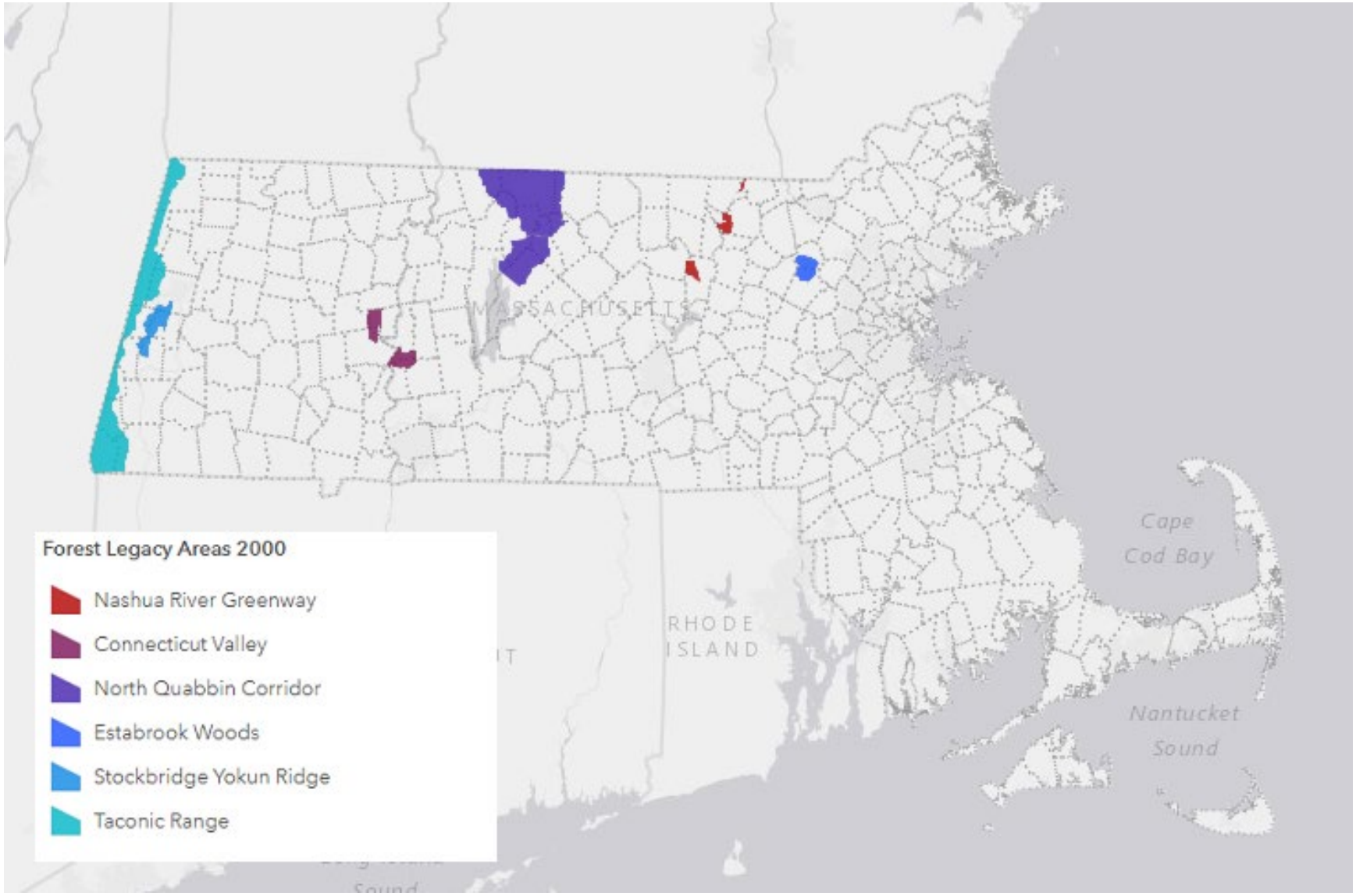
# VIII. APPENDICES

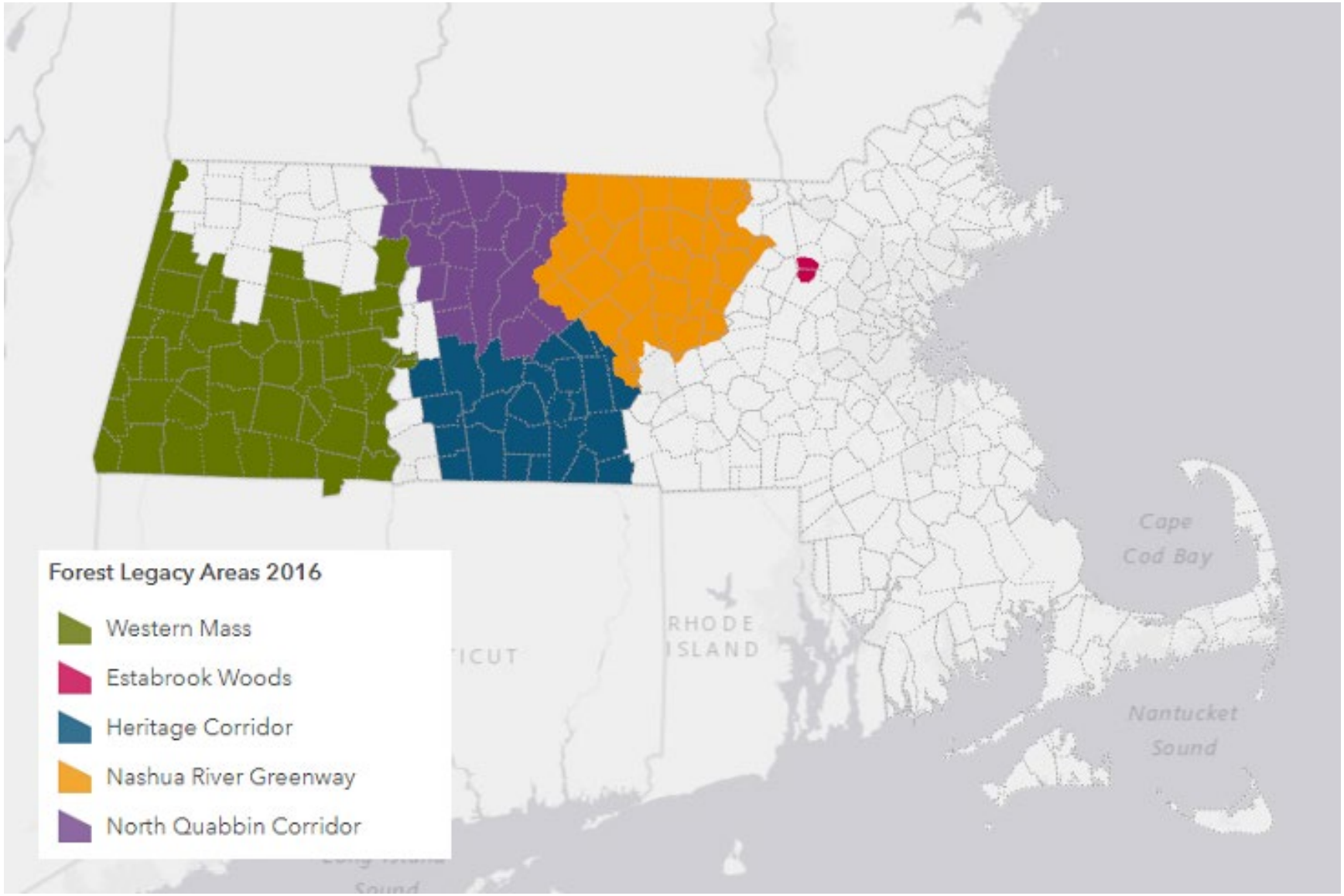
# APPENDIX A

Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area History

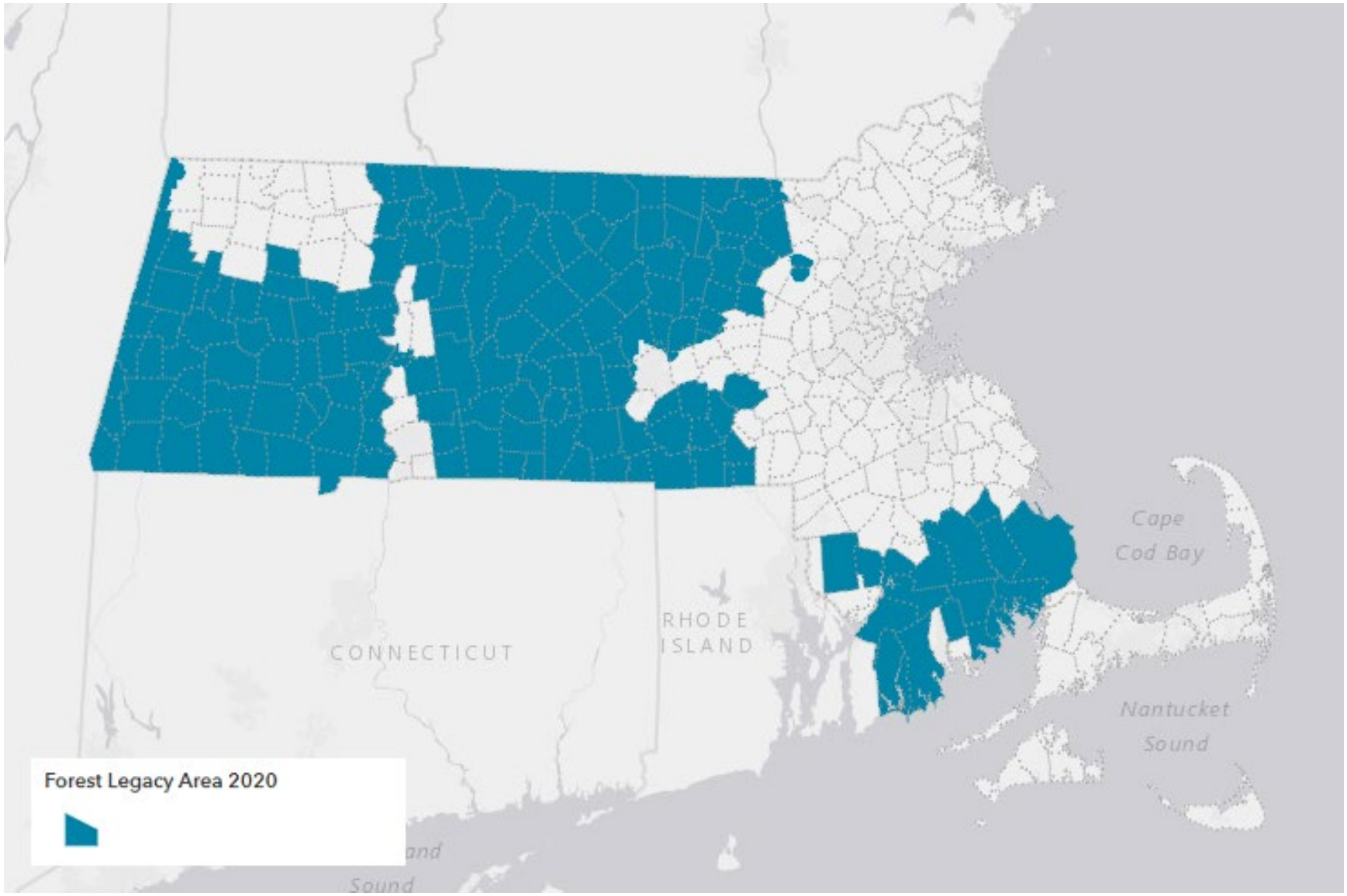
Maps and Descriptions




*Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area Map, 2000*




*Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area Map, 2016*




*Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area Map, 2020*

## Estabrook Woods Forest Legacy Area

The Estabrook Woods Forest Legacy Area was established on August 5, 1993. This 2,000-acre forested area was a green island amidst a sea of development 20 miles outside of Boston. The area supports a diversity of rare and endangered plants and animals identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program and is entirely within the Concord River watershed.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the Estabrook Woods Forest Legacy Area**

| | |
|---|---|
| Carlisle | Concord |

## Nashua River Greenway Forest Legacy Area

The Nashua River Greenway was established on August 5, 1993. On June 1, 2001, an amendment to the Assessment of Need was approved which expanded the area significantly. Two-thirds of Massachusetts' population receives their drinking water from the central part of the state and this FLA's goal was to increase water supply area management and protection.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the Nashua River Greenway Forest Legacy Area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ashby | Gardner | Oakham | Sterling |
| Ashburnham | Groton | Paxton | Templeton |
| Ayer | Harvard | Pepperell | Townsend |
| Barre | Holden | Petersham | West Boylston |
| Berlin | Hubbardston | Phillipston | Westford |
| Bolton | Lancaster | Princeton | Westminster |
| Boylston | Leicester | Rutland | Winchendon |
| Clinton | Leominster | Northborough | Worcester |
| Dunstable | Littleton | Shirley | |
| Fitchburg | Lunenburg | Shrewsbury | |

## North Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Area

The North Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Area was established on August 5, 1993. On December 17, 2010, an amendment to the Assessment of Need was passed to expand the area. After the original area was established, development pressure in the area increased and advances in GIS technology revealed the ecological significance throughout the expansion area.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the North Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Athol | Hardwick | Orange | Templeton |
| Barre | Leverett | Pelham | Warwick |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bernardston | Lyden | Petersham | Wendell |
| Erving | Montague | Phillipston | Winchendon |
| Gill | New Salem | Roylston | |
| Greenfield | Northfield | Shutesbury | |

## Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

The Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Areas was established on October 25, 2013. This area is ripe for becoming a new bedroom community for the cities of Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and Boston. The FLA is 70% forested and contains 473 miles of major rivers and streams.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Belchertown | Hampden | Oakham | Wales |
| Brimfield | Holland | Palmer | Ware |
| Brookfield | Leicester | Paxton | Warren |
| Charlton | Ludlow | Rutland | West Brookfield |
| Dudley | Monson | Southbridge | Wilbraham |
| East Brookfield | New Braintree | Spencer | |
| Granby | North Brookfield | Sturbridge | |

## Western Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area

The Western Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area was established on October 11, 2016. This amendment to the Assessment of Need incorporated 3 existing Forest Legacy Areas (Connecticut Valley and Stockbridge Yokun Ridge established August 5, 1993, and Taconic Range established December 7, 2000) into this area as well as adding many towns in Berkshire, Hampden, and Hampshire counties. This 1.25-million-acre FLA contains some of the largest blocks of intact natural landscape in southern New England.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the Western Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agawam | Goshen | Lenox | Russell |
| Alford | Granville | Middlefield | Sandisfield |
| Becket | Great Barrington | Monterey | Sheffield |
| Blandford | Hadley | Montgomery | South Hadley |
| Chester | Hancock | Mount Washington | Southampton |
| Chesterfield | Hatfield | New Marlborough | Southwick |
| Cummington | Hinsdale | Northampton | Stockbridge |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dalton | Holyoke | Otis | Tolland |
| Deerfield | Huntington | Pittsfield | Tyringham |
| Easthampton | Lanesborough | Plainfield | Washington |
| Egremont | Lee | Richmond | West Springfield |

## Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area, 2020

In 2020, the existing Forest Legacy Areas were combined into a single FLA called the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area. Forty towns were added in three regions of Massachusetts: north central, south central, and southeast.

**Towns Within or Partially Within the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Area**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Acushnet | Fall River | Mendon | Sandisfield |
| Agawam | Fitchburg | Middleborough | Sheffield |
| Alford | Freetown | Middlefield | Shirley |
| Ashburnham | Gardner | Millbury | Shrewsbury |
| Ashby | Gill | Millville | Shutesbury |
| Athol | Goshen | Monson | South Hadley |
| Ayer | Grafton | Montague | Southampton |
| Barre | Granby | Monterey | Southbridge |
| Becket | Granville | Montgomery | Southwick |
| Belchertown | Great Barrington | Mount Washington | Spencer |
| Berkley | Greenfield | New Braintree | Sterling |
| Berlin | Groton | New Marlborough | Stockbridge |
| Bernardston | Hadley | New Salem | Stow |
| Blackstone | Hampden | North Brookfield | Sturbridge |
| Blandford | Hancock | Northampton | Sutton |
| Bolton | Hardwick | Northborough | Templeton |
| Boxborough | Harvard | Northbridge | Tolland |
| Boylston | Hatfield | Northfield | Townsend |
| Brimfield | Hinsdale | Oakham | Tyngsborough |
| Brookfield | Holden | Orange | Tyringham |
| Carlisle | Holland | Otis | Upton |
| Carver | Holyoke | Oxford | Uxbridge |
| Charlton | Hopkinton | Palmer | Wales |
| Chester | Hubbardston | Paxton | Ware |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chesterfield | Huntington | Pelham | Wareham |
| Clinton | Lakeville | Pepperell | Warren |
| Concord | Lancaster | Petersham | Warwick |
| Cummington | Lanesborough | Phillipston | Washington |
| Dalton | Lee | Pittsfield | Webster |
| Dartmouth | Leicester | Plainfield | Wendell |
| Deerfield | Lenox | Plymouth | West Boylston |
| Dighton | Leominster | Plympton | West Brookfield |
| Douglas | Leverett | Princeton | West Springfield |
| Dudley | Leyden | Rehoboth | Westford |
| Dunstable | Littleton | Richmond | Westminster |
| East Brookfield | Ludlow | Rochester | Westport |
| Easthampton | Lunenburg | Royalston | Wilbraham |
| Egremont | Marion | Russell | Winchendon |
| Erving | Mattapoisett | Rutland | Worcester |

USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Eastern Region Regional Office

626 East Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 800
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414-297-3600

**File Code:** 3000; 3360
**Date:** July 20, 2020

Mr. Peter Church
State Forester
Department of Conservation and Recreation
Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114-2119
Peter.Church@state.ma.us

Dear Mr. Church:

I am writing in response to your letter dated January 29, 2020, requesting approval of the changes to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Assessment of Need (AON) dated January 2020. The updated AON captures local knowledge of private forest issues, major changes to the Forest Legacy Areas (FLA) and reflects regional landscape goals.

According to FLP Implementation Guidelines, these changes to the FLA are identified as "significant changes" necessitating approval from the Chief of the Forest Service, or designee (FLP Implementation Guidelines May 2017, Part 6: Forest Action Plans, page 21).

The Eastern Region State and Private Forestry review of the changes to the AON concluded that the request met all FLP requirements. I forwarded a memo to the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry recommending approval which is enclosed.

Congratulations! Enclosed is a copy of the letter from the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry approving the Massachusetts FLP updated AON dated January 2020.

Please contact Kirston Buczak kirston.buczak@usda.gov, FLP manager, at (414) 297-3609 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert Lueckel

ROBERT LUECKEL
Acting Regional Forester, Eastern Region

Enclosures

cc: Lindsay Nystrom (Lindsay.Nystrom@state.ma.us), Mark Buccowich, Kirston Buczak, Neal Bungard, Scott Stewart, Connie Carpenter

**Forest Service** **Washington Office** **1400 Independence Avenue, SW**
**Washington, D.C. 20250**

---

**File Code:** 3360 **Date:** July 8, 2020
**Route To:**

**Subject:** Approval of Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need Update

**To:** Gina Owens, Regional Forester, Eastern Region

This letter is in response to your letter of February 14, 2020, regarding the proposed update to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Assessment of Need that includes significant updates to Forest Legacy Areas.

Our staff has reviewed the update, and I approve.

JOHN PHIPPS
Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

cc: Kirston Buczak, Mark Buccowich, Scott Stewart

**Forest Service** **Eastern Region Regional Office** **626 East Wisconsin Avenue Suite 800 Milwaukee, WI 53202 414-297-3600**

**File Code:** 3360 **Date:** FEB 14 2020
**Route To:**

**Subject:** Approval Request of Massachusetts Forest Legacy Assessment of Need Update

**To:** Chief

**Attn:** Associate Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

The Department of Conservation and Recreation of Massachusetts has submitted a major update to their Forest Legacy Program (FLP) Assessment of Need (AON). The proposed update that is enclosed captures local knowledge of private forest issues, includes major Forest Legacy Area (FLA) changes, and reflects regional landscape goals. The FLP Implementation Guidelines define a proposed FLA as a "significant amendment" necessitating approval from the Chief of the Forest Service or designee (FLP Implementation Guidelines May 2017, Part 6: Forest Action Plans, page 21).

The Eastern Region State and Private Forestry review of the update concluded the request met all FLP requirements. The update meets the requirements as set forth in Section 7 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.) as amended by Section 1217 of Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624:104 Stat. 3359), the Federal Agriculture and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127:110 Stat. 888), and the Forest Legacy Program Implementation Guidelines, May 2017.

In addition, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee have endorsed the update. I recommend the proposed updated AON be approved.

Robert Lueckel

ROBERT LUECKEL
Acting Regional Forester, Eastern Region

Enclosure

cc: Michael Bohne, Peter Church (peter.church@state.ma.us), Lindsay Nystrom (lindsay.nystrom@state.ma.us), Gina Jorgensen, Mark Buccowich, Scott Stewart, Kirston Buczak, Constance Carpenter

# APPENDIX B

Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Authorization Letter

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133

WILLIAM F. WELD
GOVERNOR

ARGEO PAUL CELLUCCI
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

October 3, 1991

Mr. Michael Rains, Director
Northeast Area State & Private Forestry
USDA Forest Service
5 Radnor Corporate Center
100 Matsonford Rd.
Radnor, PA 19087

Dear Mr. Rains,

I am writing in response to a request to name a lead agency to cooperate with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service on the Forest Legacy Program in Massachusetts.

I am designating the Department of Environmental Management's, Bureau of Forest Development as the lead agency for this project. The Bureau is headed by Chief Forester Warren Archey who will serve as the principal contact for the Legacy program in the Commonwealth.

I am excited about the potential of this program to provide new means for the protection of critical forest lands in the Commonwealth, and look forward to its successful implementation.

Sincerely,

Bill Weld

William F. Weld
Governor

cc: Peter Webber, Commissioner DEM
Warren Archey, Ghief Forester

# APPENDIX C

State Stewardship Coordinating Committee minutes of August 27, 1991, authorizing the establishment of a Forest Legacy Program Subcommittee

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
**Department of Environmental Management**

P. O. Box 155
Clinton
Massachusetts
01510
(508) 368-0126

**Division of**
Forests & Parks
Region 3

TO: Massachusetts Stewardship Committee

Enclosed please find minutes of August 27, 1991 Stewardship Coordinating Committee Meeting.

Next Stewardship Committee Meeting
September 26th, 1991 at Auburn Rink at 9:30

Other Meetings
5 Year Plan Revision Subcommittee Meeting
September 16th, 1991 at the Auburn Rink, 9:30 a. m.

Forest Legacy Program - overview of new Forest Service Program. Tom Quink, Forest Legacy Coordinator, Subcommittee will be established to propose "Legacy Areas" throughout Massachusetts. No money available to purchase "rights" from willing landowners for this current year.

Land Trust Association in Massachusetts will meet with T. Quink to discuss Forest Legacy Program.

SIP Report - Chairman Bob Lear explained that some of the SIP Practices for Massachusetts will be ready for full Stewardship Committee review by September 26th.

5 Year Plan - Chairperson S. Campbell handed out a progress report. The 5 Year Plan subcommittees' timeline for the next few months and next year were discussed along with the idea of training sessions for resource professionals.

Mike Fleming informed the committee of an upcoming Stewardship Video conference February 15th, 1992. One site for visiting will probably be at Univ. of Mssachusetts Amherst. Contact Dave Kittredge.

The idea of a Full Time Stewardship Coordinator position was discussed. Hugh Putnam suggested that Mike Fleming spend as much time as possible on the program. Mike explained that some of his workload will be reassigned to other Bureau of Forestry Personnel.

# APPENDIX D

Letters of Support

January 3, 2022

Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers.

BNRC's mission is to protect and preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Berkshires for public benefit and enjoyment. In northern Berkshire County our greatest conservation success has been the acquisition and permanent protection of 1000 acres along the Hoosac Range ridgeline connecting Savoy and Florida State Forests, where BNRC also hosts a section of the Mahican-Mohawk Trail.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation in the MTWP region would enable BNRC to continue to build on the success at the Hoosac Range and provide a funding opportunity to expand our work with private landowners who wish to protect their land from unwanted development, but who are not financially able to donate their land or a conservation restriction outright. The protection of these important forest lands would also enable the expansion of BNRC's High Road initiative in northern Berkshire County, where BNRC is seeking to secure recreational and ecological connectivity into the Adams and North Adams communities to promote a Town-to-Trail recreational access model.

From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The forests of the MTWP region provide benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage. People are drawn to the area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people

BERKSHIRE
Natural Resources Council
THE LANDKEEPERS



20 Bank Row
Pittsfield MA 01201
413 499 0596
bnrc.org

in the region make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the region, along with agriculturally based economic opportunities. We hope very much that the program can be expanded.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jenny Hansell
President

BRPC
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

JOHN DUVAL, Chair
MALCOLM FICK, Vice-Chair
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer
THOMAS MATUSZKO, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

January 17, 2022

Ms. Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation in Massachusetts to include the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region. The MTWP region encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the State. While many of the State's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely unfragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat that includes the Hoosic, Deerfield, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of three different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

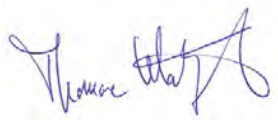
A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the area along with agricultural economic opportunities. People are drawn to this area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history and the forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The BRPC is a member of the MTWP and has participated in its formation and activities since its inception. We strongly support the goals of the partnership that include the conservation of forests and the municipal financial sustainability of our rural communities. Accordingly, any protection of land must occur via a Conservation Restriction so that the property remains on the municipal tax rolls and the forest land conservation is revenue neutral. Land must not be acquired in fee title by the State or Federal government since this would increase public land ownership and remove the property from municipal tax rolls. This would result in financial hardship to the community, as Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) have

historically been underfunded and inadequate. The guiding principle of the MTWP is to support forest conservation and natural resource-based economic development that sustains the region's ecosystems while improving the financial viability of municipalities.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to conserve their forested land via a Conservation Restriction. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



Thomas, Matuszko
Executive Director

Kyle Hanlon, BRPC Representative to the MTWP &
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Executive Committee


Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

January 6, 2022

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Deerfield River Watershed Association strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The Deerfield River Watershed Association is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to advocating for the protection of the Deerfield River and its watershed. We are an active partner with the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership and support their mission. We work to ensure thoughtful development policies and appropriate land use practices for the Deerfield River watershed in Massachusetts and Vermont.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the area along with agricultural economic opportunities. People are drawn to this area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people here make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup. The forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to accomplish conservation agreements on their forested land. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Jim Perry
President, Deerfield River Watershed Association

FRANKLIN LAND TRUST

*P.O. Box 450*
*Shelburne Falls, MA 01370*
*(413) 625-9151 Executive Director*
*(413) 625-9152 Donor Services*
*www.franklinlandtrust.org*



Lindsay Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Franklin Land Trust enthusiastically supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership region of Massachusetts.

The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the Commonwealth. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The Franklin Land Trust's conservation region includes 11 of the 21 MTWP towns and is at the core of our conservation efforts. This past June we partnered with two of these towns, the MA Department of Fish and Game and New England Forestry Foundation to conserve over 700 acres contiguous with 2000 acres already protected. Previous large scale conservation projects within the expansion region include 750 acres in 2014 adjacent to the Dubuque State Forest and the 440 acre Hall Tavern Farm in 2012. The opportunity for additional and significant forest conservation exists in this region and expanding funding opportunities is key to further efforts.

The forests of the MTWP provide a variety of opportunities and benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage. People are drawn to the area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as

hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people in the region make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, , or tapping sugar maples for syrup.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the MTWP region along with agriculturally based economic opportunities. The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important voluntary option to conserve forested lands. We hope very much that the program can be expanded to include the 21-towns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Curren
Executive Director

# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Ms. Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation in Massachusetts to include the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region. The MTWP region encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the State. While many of the State's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely unfragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat that includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of three different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the area along with agricultural economic opportunities. People are drawn to this area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history and the forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments is a member of the MTWP and has participated in its formation and activities since its inception. We strongly support the goals of the partnership that include the conservation of forests and the municipal financial sustainability of our rural communities. Accordingly, any protection of land should occur via a Conservation Restriction so that the property remains on the municipal tax rolls and the forest land conservation is revenue neutral. Land should not be acquired in fee title by the State or Federal government since this would increase public land ownership and remove the property from municipal tax rolls. This would result in financial hardship to the community, as Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) have historically been underfunded and inadequate. The guiding principle of the MTWP is to support forest conservation and natural resource-based economic development that sustains the region's ecosystems while improving the financial viability of municipalities. Therefore, our support for land conservation under this program is strictly limited to protection of forest land via a Conservation Restriction so that the land remains in private ownership.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to conserve their forested land via a Conservation Restriction. We support the expansion of this program, if a Conservation Restriction approach is taken, to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
Franklin Regional Council of Governments

cc.: Bill Perlman, Chair FRCOG Executive Committee
Jerry Lund, Chair – Franklin Regional Planning Board
Emily Johnson, FRCOG Representative to the MTWP & Franklin Regional Planning Board Executive Committee

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY**
**HARVARD FOREST**

324 NORTH MAIN STREET
PETERSHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
U.S.A. 01366

PHONE 978•724•3302
FAX 978•724•3595
HTTP://HARVARDFOREST.FAS.HARVARD.EDU

Lindsay Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Harvard Forest strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural Landscape.

The Harvard Forest is dedicated to conservation and sound stewardship of New England's forests. Through collaborations with state, nonprofit, and regional partners, our research addresses environmental issues such as land cover change, forest growth, and forest carbon storage and sequestration. These efforts seek to apply both our extensive scientific results to pressing societal problems and to identify major research questions at the heart of management challenges and issues.

A Forest Legacy designation would promote the continued existence and viability of healthy forests in the region. Beyond the significance of maintaining the rich forest-based economy of Western Massachusetts, the mature forests of the MTWP region sequester and store a significant quantity of the Commonwealth's carbon, which will allow it to serve as a key contributor towards the Commonwealth's goal to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to accomplish conservation agreements on their forested land. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Thompson on behalf of the Harvard Forest Executive Team

Hilltown Land Trust
AN AFFILIATE OF THE TRUSTEES

Ms. Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

January 6, 2022

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

Hilltown Land Trust strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers.

Hilltown Land Trust protects land and promotes ecological diversity and health, respectful land stewardship, historic character, and natural beauty in 13 rural towns west of the Connecticut River. One of our primary functions is to work with private landowners who wish to protect their land from unwanted development, helping landowners craft conservation plans that address their goals and needs. The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation into our region would allow access to another funding source for private landowners and would be particularly helpful to those landowners who are not financially able to donate their land or a conservation restriction outright.

From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The forests of the MTWP region provide benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage. People are drawn to the area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people in the region make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup.

Hilltown Land Trust
AN AFFILIATE OF THE TRUSTEES

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the region, along with agriculturally based economic opportunities. We hope very much that the program can be expanded.

Sincerely,

Sally Loomis
Executive Director

# Hoosic River Watershed Association

Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

December 28, 2021

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Hoosic River Watershed Association strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The Hoosic River watershed Association is a citizens' group dedicated to monitor the river watersheds health and advocate for the river. We are dedicated to the conservation, habitat restoration and enjoyment of the Hoosic River and its watershed through education, research and advocacy. We envision a watershed that is ecologically sound and adds to the quality of life for its residents in the three State region of Massachusetts, Vermont and New York. We view the MTWP as a partner in managing and yet protecting the environment. Wood utilization that creates economic well-being and skilled craftsman keeps a community vibrant and healthy. Proper forest management assists with water infiltration and shade that improves the quality of life for humans and watersheds. Promoting recreation in the area helps form an appreciation for the natural environment.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the area along with agricultural economic opportunities. People are drawn to this area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people here make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup. The forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to accomplish conservation agreements on their forested land. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kawczak

Andrew Kawczak, President, Hoosic River Watershed Association

P.O. Box 667, Williamstown, MA 01267 office@hoorwa.org 413-458-2742

MASSACHUSETTS FOREST ALLIANCE
249 Lakeside Avenue, Marlborough Massachusetts 01752-4503
www.MassForestAlliance.org | (617) 455 - 9918 | info@MassForestAlliance.org



January 10, 2021

Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom:

I'm writing in reference to the potential expansion of the Forest Legacy Program designation to cover the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Forest Alliance (MFA) strongly supports this expansion.

MFA was one of the organizations that helped create MTWP and, through its enabling legislation, we have a seat on the MTWP board. Kate Lindroos Conlin currently represents us in this board seat. We're strong believers in the concept of natural resource-based tourism coupled with a strong forest economy to accelerate rural economic growth. Besides these economic benefits, there are also valuable ecosystem services that forests provide in the area, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat, and carbon storage.

Our landowner members love their forests and want to protect them for future generations. However, there is a scarcity of funding to accomplish this goal, and a waiting list of potentially interested landowners.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Program to the MTWP area would help ameliorate this issue, by making more funding available to secure conservation restrictions. With the recent permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which supports FLP), the program has been strengthened and is assured funding over time, making expansion easier to justify.

We strongly support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Egan
Executive Director


Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

January 6, 2022

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Deerfield River Watershed Association strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The Deerfield River Watershed Association is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to advocating for the protection of the Deerfield River and its watershed. We are an active partner with the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership and support their mission. We work to ensure thoughtful development policies and appropriate land use practices for the Deerfield River watershed in Massachusetts and Vermont.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the area along with agricultural economic opportunities. People are drawn to this area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people here make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup. The forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to accomplish conservation agreements on their forested land. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Jim Perry
President, Deerfield River Watershed Association

NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION

Lindsay Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

January 27, 2022

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

NEFF is dedicated to helping the people of New England sustain their way of life, protecting forest wildlife habitat and ecosystem services, and helping forests and communities mitigate and adapt to climate change. NEFF accomplishes this primarily through forestland conservation and the advancement of Exemplary Forestry in New England. NEFF also currently serves as the Administrative Agent for the MTWP, offering administrative, programming, and technical support to the Partnership, of which forest conservation is a cornerstone goal.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the MTWP area along with agricultural economic opportunities. The region has a rich rural character and history, and many people here make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup. The forests of the MTWP region provide a variety of benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important option to apply for funding to accomplish conservation agreements on their forested land. We support the expansion of this program to encompass this critical forested corner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Robert T Perschel

Robert Perschel, Executive Director
New England Forestry Foundation

*Town of Adams* • **Massachusetts 01220**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

ADAMS TOWN HALL
8 PARK STREET, RM 210
TEL. (413) 743-8300 x170
FAX (413) 743-8316

November 17, 2021

Lindsay Nystrom
DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry
355 West Boylston St, Route 110
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom:

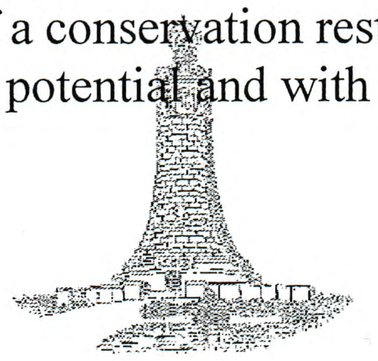
The Town of Adams Board of Selectmen wishes to express its full support of the expansion of the Forest Legacy Areas designation into the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership region.

Adams, an area of 23 square miles, lies along a valley surrounding the Hoosac River and between the Taconic Mountain Range to the west and the Hoosac Mountain Range to the east; 81% of which comprises the agricultural, deciduous and evergreen forests, emergent and forested wetlands, and pasture/hay areas of the town. These areas include woodlands, state owned forested areas, and natural wildlife habitats in various biological topography. Some of these areas are privately owned and managed.

The Town of Adams has partnered with 20 other towns in the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership, in an area of the state that highly values its natural resources and biologically diverse ecosystem. This particular area supports a wide variety of tree species, which in turn provides habitats for a larger diversity of both plants and wildlife alike; an important factor when facing the rapidly changing climate and its, at times, drastic impact on these species in the evolving landscape.

Conserving this biodiversity requires conscious and vital action, including the expansion of the Forest Legacy Designation. Doing so will emphasize the importance of retention and bolster the ecodynamics of the Adams and other Berkshire County areas in order to conserve the wide variety of woodland species, plants, animals and natural systems. In turn, this will protect this natural treasure and support private land owners with possibilities and alternatives to help preserve the forested lands that are already here. It is our hope that the program expansion will take place to include this area and to conserve and preserve our natural resources.

Additionally, the program design based upon having a willing seller and a willing buyer is particularly attractive. The willingness of the landowner to participate of their own volition is an important aspect of the Forest Legacy Program for our town residents. Compensation for, or purchase of land after being appraised by a qualified independent appraiser who determines the value of a conservation restriction as the difference between the appraised value of the land with development potential and with the development potential removed is a valuable detail of the program.



It is our belief that the expansion of the Forest Legacy Program would provide a beneficial option to landowners in Adams, as well as other local towns, and support the preservation of the natural resources and ecosystem simultaneously.

Very truly yours,

**Adams Board of Selectmen:**

John C Duval

John Duval, Chair

Christine Hoyt

Christine Hoyt, Vice Chair

Richard Blanchard

Richard Blanchard, Member

Joseph Nowak

Joseph Nowak, Member

Howard Rosenberg

Howard Rosenberg, Member

Lindsey Nystrom
DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry

June 28, 2021

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Conway Selectboard strongly supports the expansion of Forest Legacy Areas designation into the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership region.

The Town of Conway (37.8 square miles) lies in the foothills of the Berkshires just west of the Connecticut River Valley, a region rich in agriculture, forested lands, streams, rivers and wetlands. 83% of the town of Conway is forested, 2.2% are wetlands, and 9% is agricultural use. Forested lands include working woodlands, state forest, wildlife management resource area and town owned forests, with the majority in private ownership.

Conway is one of 21 towns, who comprise the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership.
This region of the state holds a richness and diversity of habitats indicating quite a lot of strong forest ecosystem functionality. Species diversity (high number of species), ecosystem diversity (the variety of physical environments and biotic communities on this landscape), and genetic diversity (unique organisms within a species necessary for long term survival against climate change)all interconnect here.

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests along with agriculturally based economic opportunities, which includes the growing and harvesting of forest products.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Areas programs would provide our private landowners with an important option for preserving forested lands. We hope very much that the program can be expanded.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Conway Planning Board
Beth Girshman, Chair
Jennifer Mullins, Vice Chair
William Moebius
Susan Fentin

CITY OF NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Mayor
**Thomas W. Bernard**

December 22, 2021

Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

On behalf of the City of North Adams I am pleased to support expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) region of Massachusetts.

The MTWP encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the Commonwealth. While many of the rural areas in Massachusetts have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with astounding habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape.

The forests of the MTWP provide a variety of opportunities and benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage. People are drawn to the area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people in the region make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup.

The City of North Adams is a member town of the MTWP. Forested lands include private properties, working woodlands, state forestland, wildlife management resource areas, and public forest and watershed land, which complements the city's identity as a cultural destination, anchored by Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), and which serves as living laboratories for students at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA).

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the MTWP region along with agriculturally based economic opportunities. The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important voluntary option for applying for funding to conserve forested lands in North Adams.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Bernard

Thomas W. Bernard
Mayor

10 Main Street • North Adams, Massachusetts 01247
mayorbernard@northadams-ma.gov • (413) 662-3000

# Town of Rowe
FRANKLIN COUNTY
MASSACHUSETTS
01367

*Settled as Myrifield 1763 ▪ Incorporated as Rowe 1785*

321 Zoar Road
P.O. Box 462
Rowe, Massachusetts 01367
www.rowe-ma.gov
email: admin@rowe-ma.gov
Ph: 413-339-5520 ext. 100
Fax: 413-339-5316
**Board of Selectmen**


September 16, 2021

Lindsey Nystrom
DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry
355 West Boylston Street, Route 110
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Rowe Selectboard strongly supports the expansion of Forest Legacy Areas designation into the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership region.

Rowe is a beautiful hill town (24.07 square miles) just North of the Deerfield River Valley and bordered by the Green Mountains of Vermont. Included in the Town are forested woodlands, wetlands, fields, and agricultural land. Pelham Lake Park has a core area that is a wild nature preserve with the remainder of the Park managed to preserve habitat and encourage ecosystem diversity. Forested Lands include town owned forests, private ownership, and recreation areas.

The Town of Rowe is one of 21 towns who comprise the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership. This region of the state holds a richness and diversity of habitats indicating an abundance of strong forest ecosystem functionality. Species diversity (high number of species), ecosystem diversity (the variety of physical environments and biotic communities on this landscape), and genetic diversity (unique organisms within a species necessary for long term survival against climate change) all interconnect here.

A Forest Legacy Areas designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests along with agriculturally based economic opportunities, which includes the growing and harvesting of forest products.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Areas programs would provide our private landowners with an important option for preserving forested lands. We hope very much that the program can be expanded.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Chuck Sokol, Chair
Rowe Board of Selectmen

Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair

Ed Silva, Selectman

cc: Rowe Park Commission

TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN

# OFFICE OF TOWN MANAGER

Charles T. Blanchard, Interim Town Manager
cblanchard@williamstownma.gov | 413.458.3500

31 North Street, Williamstown, MA 01267 | www.WilliamstownMa.gov

December 21, 2021

Lindsey Nystrom
DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The Williamstown Select Board supports the expansion of Forest Legacy Areas designation to complete the entire Town of Williamstown and the rest of the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership region.

The Town of Williamstown (46.86 square miles) is surrounded by mountains including the Taconic Range, Mount Greylock, and the extensions of the Green Mountains. The Hoosic River is the main watercourse and connects the region to the Hudson River. About 83% of the town of Williamstown is classified as open lands, consisting of forests and farm lands in Chapter 61, Chapter 61 A, Chapter 61 B, restricted, nonprofit, state land, town owned land, and unprotected land. Forested lands include working woodlands, state forest, the Mt. Greylock State Reservation, several MA- DFW Areas, and institutional research forest, and Town-owned forests, with the majority of the rest in private ownership.

Williamstown is one of 21 towns, which comprise the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership. This region of the state holds a richness and diversity of habitats indicating strong forest ecosystem functionality. Species diversity (high number of species), ecosystem/habitat diversity (the variety of physical environments and biotic communities on this landscape), and genetic diversity (unique organisms within a species necessary for long term survival against climate change).

A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests, as well as supporting agriculturally based economic opportunities, which includes the growing and harvesting of forest products.

The expansion of the Forest Legacy Areas programs would provide additional private landowners with an important option for preserving forested lands, in addition to some of the residents living on the Taconic slope. We hope very much that the program can be expanded.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles T. Blanchard

Charles T. Blanchard, Interim Town Manager
Town of Williamstown

TOWN OF
**Berkshire County**

WINDSOR
**Massachusetts**

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
1890 Route 9, Suite 1
Windsor, Massachusetts 01270
Telephone 413-684-3811 Fax 413-684-3806

Lindsey Nystrom
Department of Conservation and Recreation
355 West Boylston Street
Clinton, MA 01510

Dear Ms. Nystrom,

The town of Windsor Select Board strongly supports the expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation for the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership region of Massachusetts.

The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) encompasses a 21-town area in the northwestern corner of the state. While many of the state's rural areas have been lost to suburban development, this region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire Counties remains largely un-fragmented and intact, with 81% of the MTWP region (or ~345,450 acres) currently forested. Bordered by the Green Mountain National Forest to the north, the region contributes to a large regional forest block that supports biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and includes the Deerfield, Hoosic, and Westfield Rivers. From an ecological perspective, the region is a convergence of several different types of forests, with an astounding amount of habitat diversity for an area of its size. Much of the remaining old growth forest in Massachusetts is located in the MTWP region, and 60% of the region has been designated as BioMap2 Core Habitat or Critical Natural landscape. Windsor is home to Windsor State Forest, Notchview reservation, the Moran nature preserve, land belonging to the town of Dalton water district, NorthEast forestry Preserve and many acres of private property protected from development.

The forests of the MTWP provide a variety of opportunities and benefits locally and beyond, including water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat and diversity, water and air purification, and carbon storage. People are drawn to the area for its natural resource-based tourism activities such as hiking, skiing, camping, fishing, and snowmobiling. The region has a rich rural character and history, and a significant number of people in the region make their living from the forests, whether running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood off their woodlots, harvesting timber for furniture or flooring, working as foresters, or tapping sugar maples for syrup.

The Town of Windsor (35.2 sq Miles) is located in Berkshire and is a member town of the MTWP. The town is rich in forest and agricultural lands, streams, rivers, and wetlands. Forested lands include private properties, working woodlands, state forestland, wildlife management resource areas, and town-owned forests, with the majority of the land in private ownership. Windsor is a very rural town with many acres of privately owned woodlands. Both private and public lands host many miles of snowmobiling and skiing trails.
A Forest Legacy designation would recognize the importance of retaining healthy forests in the MTWP region along with agriculturally based economic opportunities. The expansion of the Forest Legacy Area designation would provide private landowners with an important voluntary option for applying for funding to conserve forested lands in our town. We hope very much that the program can be expanded to include our town and region.

Sincerely,

Douglas McNally
Windsor Select Board Chair