**Summary:**

The Next Gen Climate bill passed by the Senate on January 30, 2020 would update the goal of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) to Net Zero emissions reductions (current law calls for 80% reductions) from 1990 levels by 2050. The bill also officially recognizes the importance of carbon sequestration by natural and working lands towards meeting emissions reductions goals for the first time in Massachusetts, with a national ripple effect through the U.S. Climate Alliance Natural and Working Lands Challenge.

Natural climate solutions (NCS) are actions to protect, restore, and better manage natural and working lands, such as forests, farms, wetlands, and urban greenspace, to reduce and remove carbon emissions. With currently available practices, Massachusetts’ lands have the potential to remove and reduce an additional 2 million metric tons CO2e per year.

We are grateful to Senate President Spilka, Senate Ways and Means Chair Rodrigues, and Energy Committee Chair Barrett for providing the leadership on the Next Gen climate bill, and we applaud Senators Tarr, Pacheco, Hinds, and Comerford for speaking on the floor about the importance of natural climate solutions (NCS). We also thank Senators Eldridge and Gobi for their NCS amendments, and amendment co-sponsors Senators Brady, Creem, Cyr, Jehlen, Moore, O’Connor, Rausch, Timilty, and Tran. The final adopted NCS amendments were the product of bipartisan collaboration and a union of eastern and western legislators who recognize that every acre of the Commonwealth—whether urban, suburban or rural—has a role to play in NCS.

The Nature Conservancy, The Trustees, and MassAudubon were the lead NGOs working with the Senate to include the following NCS provisions:

* A definition of “natural and working lands” to the GWSA:

“Natural and working lands”, lands that: (i) are actively used by an agricultural owner or operator for an agricultural operation that includes, but is not be limited to, active engagement in farming or ranching; (ii)  produce forest products; (iii) consist of forests, grasslands, freshwater and riparian systems, wetlands, coastal and estuarine areas, watersheds, wildlands or wildlife habitats; and (iv) are used for recreational purposes, including parks, urban and community forests, trails and other similar open space land.”; and

* Natural climate solutions will be integrated into the Clean Energy and Climate Plan, which is updated every five years. This plan will include:
  + Baseline quantification of the carbon sequestered in natural and working lands,
  + Goals to increase and enhance the sequestration
  + Recommendations including, but not limited to, the conservation, enhancement and management of natural and working lands and future policy actions
  + Benchmarks and tracking of adoption of emissions reduction products, solutions and improvements used to achieve goals, including carbon sequestration from natural and working lands
  + Overall societal benefits of conservation, engagement and management of natural and working lands (ex. impacts on public health and ecosystem services)

In addition, we appreciate the efforts of our partners at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to advocate for the following provision:

* The bill establishes a Climate Policy Commission to track and assess public and private sector progress towards meeting emissions reductions goals under the GWSA.
  + The advisory council to the commission shall include a representative of the land use sector who can provide advice and input on the operation and policy of the commission.