



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Governor Deval L. Patrick
Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray
Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

Press Release Contacts: Reginald Zimmerman — 617-626-1052 or reginald.zimmerman@state.ma.us;
Catherine Williams — 617-626-1809 or catherine.williams@state.ma.us

EEA Secretary Sullivan Marks Completion of the Financing Forest Conservation Commission Report

[The Commission on Financing Forest Conservation's report](#)

BOSTON – Monday, February 13, 2012 – Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. was joined today at the State House by forest and conservation leaders along with state legislators to celebrate the completion of a land conservation report by the Massachusetts Commission on Financing Forest Conservation.

Created in 2009, the commission was established by the Legislature, with its members appointed by the Patrick-Murray Administration. The commission consists of representatives from the private and non-profit sectors, the research community, and legislative members.

The commission was charged with developing a set of recommendations to advance the goal of forest conservation in Massachusetts – with specific focus on identifying financing mechanisms. Today the commission formally presented its findings and was honored at a public ceremony.

“Since taking office in 2007, the Patrick-Murray Administration has committed to strengthening Massachusetts' national leadership in land and forest conservation; and the creation and support of this commission is one of the examples of that commitment,” said Secretary Sullivan. “I want to thank all the members of the commission for providing a thoughtful and wide-ranging set of recommendations, which will shape the Commonwealth's forest conservation policies for years to come.”

The main principle behind the commission's final report is that the best way to sustain forestry in the Commonwealth, and the natural benefits and recreational opportunities that they uniquely provide, is to simultaneously pursue conservation and sustainable economic development strategies.

The Commission's report emphasizes four themes: aggregation for conservation, mitigation, compact land development and targeted forest-based economic development.

The commission's formation was inspired by the work of conservationist David Foster and Harvard Forest in creating the well-known “Wildlands and Woodlands” vision for the New England landscape, calling for a 50-year conservation effort to retain at least 70 percent of New England in forestland, permanently free from development.

“We are grateful to see our ideas help to catalyze the public discussion of the future of the forests of Massachusetts and New England, and salute Secretary Sullivan and Assistant Secretary Cooper for their dedicated work to keep Massachusetts in the forefront of conservation innovation in the twenty-first century” said David Foster, Director of the Harvard Forest and a member of the Commission, and Jim Levitt, Director of the Harvard Forest's Program on Conservation Innovation, who served to staff the Commission's work.

Preserving working forests and supporting rural economies is one of the Patrick-Murray Administration's three goals for land conservation. Under the leadership of Governor Patrick, state,

local and community partners have worked to conserve more than 88,000 acres of land in less than five years.

Partnerships with private landowners and the land trust community were critical to this remarkable accomplishment. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust has a strong and successful record of supporting working landscapes and conserving forests in the North Quabbin area. Its executive director, Leigh Youngblood, served as chair to the Commission on Forest Financing Conservation.

“The recommendations in this report offer tangible opportunities for landowners and communities in Mount Grace’s region and across the state,” said Youngblood. “This report offers new incentives and funding sources for both private and public investment in land conservation.”

Strong interest and involvement from legislative leaders was an important component to the Commission’s work. Sens. Brewer, Petrucelli, and Tarr and Reps. Kulik and Straus served as members of the Commission.

“This commission has worked very hard to come up with good, strong ideas on forest conservation,” said Sen. Stephen M. Brewer. “The recommendations announced today will be very useful as we continue to work towards conserving our forested wildlands and woodlands for future generations while continuing to be fiscally responsible.”

“Even as we pursue and promote new industries in the Commonwealth such as biotechnology and the life sciences, we can’t forget the importance of our precious natural resources and longstanding industries such as forestry that have sustained the Commonwealth for so many years,” said Sen. Bruce Tarr. “The recommendations contained in the commission’s report will enable the foresters of the Commonwealth to use modern financial tools and methods to help manage these important natural resources.”

“Our forests are both an important environmental resource and a key part of our rural economy,” said Rep. Stephen Kulik. “This comprehensive report will guide us in wisely balancing conservation with sustainable management of our forest resources for the benefit of future generations.”

“As member of the Commission on Forest Financing Conservation and former House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, I am pleased by the work of David Foster and the recommendations presented by the Commission, which will help to maintain the valuable resources and benefits provided by these forests for the citizens of the Commonwealth,” said Rep. Bill Straus.

The commission’s report includes the following recommendations:

- Extend the **Conservation Land Tax Credit** limit from \$2 million annually to \$20 million annually.
- Explore the **Mohawk Trail National Forest** concept, utilizing working forest conservation easements.
- Support re-enactment of **enhanced federal tax incentives** for conservation.
- Utilize **Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trust Funds** to purchase forestland appropriate for OHV riding areas.
- Launch an initiative to conserve **institutional forest land** across the state.
- **Link forest landowner incentives** for forest conservation with programs that encourage sustainable forestry.
- **Support Chapter 61 improvements** that advance forest land protection in Massachusetts.
- **Inform towns and cities** regarding the availability of the Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program.

- Explore opportunities to use **federal new markets tax credits** in low-income rural census areas to provide investment incentives for wood fuel, timber, wood manufacturing plants, or tourism infrastructure.
- Promote **locally grown, value-added wood products**.
- Work with the State Tourism Office to enhance the state’s **rural tourism infrastructure**.

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100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114-2119 — (617) 626-1000 office / (617) 626 1181 (fax)