

April 21, 2010

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations urge your support of several proposed amendments to the House Ways and Means FY2011 budget. We are fully aware of the seriousness of the state's fiscal situation and the difficult choices that need to be made. However, every single person in the Commonwealth, no matter where they live or what their income, benefits from a clean and healthy environment.

Our environmental agencies continue to play catch up from previous deep budget cuts while being asked to do more. According to the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, the environmental agencies' budgets were disproportionately cut between FY 2001-2005. Overall funding for all environmental programs is a meager .6% of all state spending, down from 1% in FY '01. When adjusted for inflation, the environmental budget has been cut by an unbelievable 44% since FY '01.

These continuing budget cuts mean:

- Enforcement of our environmental laws is seriously compromised;
- More water bans and boil orders due to reduced technical assistance to communities for their drinking water treatment facilities
- Parks and campgrounds with no staff
- No water quality monitoring in many locations
- Pools opening later, closing earlier and fewer lifeguards
- Recycling grants to communities discontinued.

Please support the following amendments so that Massachusetts can regain its place as a leader in environmental protection and continue to be an attractive and healthy place to live.

Support Urban and State Parks, Amendment 210 (Rep. Scaccia) (line-item 2810-0100): DCR just announced the results of a year-long Forests Futures Visioning process and we heartily support their recommendations which will transform how we manage our state forests and parks. However, without adequate funding, all this work will be for naught. Our state forests and parks are a real draw for visitors both in and outside of Massachusetts -- and contribute millions of dollars to our economy -- yet we continue to shortchange these amazing resources. This amendment would increase funding for our park system by \$5.39 million.

Support the Department of Environmental Protection, Amendment 274 (Rep. Straus) (line-item 2200-0100): This amendment would increase the administrative line-item for DEP by \$200,000. With the most recent 9C cuts, DEP is down 325 positions since a high point in FY '04 and has experienced a 15% decrease in staff just since FY '08. DEP is responsible for implementing or enforcing 66 different statutes including the historic Global Warming Solutions Act. Without adequate resources, their ability to ensure that our air, water and land are free from pollution is severely compromised.

Support the Division of Ecological Restoration, Amendment 160 (Rep. Straus) (line-item 2300-0101) The newly formed Division of Ecological Restoration, that includes the Riverways Program, implements locally sponsored restoration projects and provides technical assistance to communities. In addition to the habitat benefits, ecological restoration projects improve public safety, protect drinking

water, and eliminate unsafe infrastructure such as failing dams and culverts. The two programs that merged to form DER have seen a 30% reduction in workforce since FY '09. DER projects leverage on average \$3 in federal and local funds for every \$1 of state funds. This amendment would increase their funding by \$40,000.

Support the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Amendment 161 (Rep. Straus) (line-item 2310-0300) For the past seven years with the exception of FY '09, no general funds have been appropriated for the Natural Heritage Program. This lack of support is especially alarming during a time when the effects of climate change on our most vulnerable species is just beginning to be understood, development continues to fragment open space and other threats to biodiversity (e.g., invasive species) go unaddressed. This amendment would restore \$250,000 to the Natural Heritage Program from the Mass. Environmental Trust.

Support the Office of Dam Safety, Amendment 85 (Rep. Kocot) (line-item 2800-0700) The recent heavy rains again pointed to the need for Massachusetts to deal with hundreds of aging, unmaintained and dangerous dams. This amendment would increase funding for ODS from \$410,151 to \$1,410,151 – restoring funding to FY '08 levels – a small price to pay to prevent a catastrophic dam failure.

Support MassGIS, Amendment 771 (Rep. Smizik) (line-item 1790—0150) Good data supports good decisions and MassGIS provides that data. Dozens of state agencies, all regional planning agencies, and most cities and towns use MassGIS information for a wide range of decisions, e.g., utility placement, most efficient new bus route, drinking water protection district, best places to develop or protect. Recent cuts have meant that MassGIS software and hardware maintenance is at risk. Currently, system overload means that 400 info requests a day cannot be met. This amendment would increase funding by \$100,000.

Support Land Protection, Amendment 28 (Rep. Straus) (line-item 2310-0316) This amendment will allow the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife within the Department of Fish and Game to expend revenue collected from a fee on hunting and fishing licenses intended for land protection. This spending does not affect the general fund. The collected fees are sufficient to increase spending, per this amendment, to \$1,000,000, consistent with the figure in the FY '10 budget.

We urge the House not to shortchange public health and natural resource protection.

Sincerely,

Environmental League of Massachusetts
Appalachian Mountain Club
Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Boston Harbor Island Alliance
Charles River Conservancy
Charles River Watershed Association
Conservation Law Foundation
Emerald Necklace Conservancy
Environment Massachusetts

Essex County Greenbelt Association
Friends of the Blue Hills
Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts
Hilltown Anti-Herbicide Coalition
Jones River Watershed Association
Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust
Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions
Massachusetts Association of Health Boards
Massachusetts Audubon

Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
Massachusetts League of Environmental
Voters
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
Merrimack River Watershed Council
Mystic River Watershed Association
Nashua River Watershed Association
Neponset River Watershed Association
North & South Rivers Watershed
Association
Parker River Clean Water Association

Safer Waters in Massachusetts
Save the Harbor/Save the Bay
Sheffield Land Trust
Sierra Club, Massachusetts Chapter
Sudbury Valley Trustees
Taunton River Watershed Alliance
The Trustees of Reservations
Trust for Public Land
WalkBoston
Wildlands Trust of Southeastern
Massachusetts