



Environmental League of Massachusetts

2013-2014 Legislative Session Highlights

August 8, 2014

July 31 was the last formal session of the 2013-14 legislative session

Enacted into Law

Operating Budget (H. 4001) Sets a \$36.5B state budget, which provides \$219.9M for environmental programs (a \$16M increase over the FY14 funding level of \$203.7M). ELM led statewide advocacy efforts to restore funding to a number of critical environmental programs. Our advocacy helped bring about notable increases for Department of Conservation and Recreation state parks and seasonal staffing, Department of Environmental Protection air and water quality monitoring, Division of Marine Fisheries, and Department of Agricultural Resources.

Energy and Environmental Bond Bill (S. 2263)

Authorizes \$2.2 billion for four years of state environmental agency capital projects including land protection, habitat restoration, facility construction and maintenance, and stewardship of our parks and waterways. As a member of the Commonwealth Conservation Council, ELM advocated for a robust bond bill that supports existing programs and makes new programs possible. Highlights from the Environmental Bond include:

- Over \$350 million for land conservation programs, including \$111 million for a new urban park program to serve neighborhoods currently underserved with parks, matching grants for cities and towns, and opportunities for nonprofit partners to leverage local, federal and private investments to protect critical natural resources.
- \$120 million for coastal infrastructure; \$117 million to improve coastal and inland waterways, and \$75 million to assess and monitor waterways.
- \$62 million to improve the energy efficiency of state-owned buildings to reduce carbon emissions.
- \$25 million for a UMass Center for Urban Sustainability to research and advance urban agriculture, as well as \$8 million to support urban farms statewide to create jobs, stimulate local economies, and increase access to fresh local produce.
- \$20 million to protect and support working farms to protect farms under threat of development and stimulate the Commonwealth's agricultural industry.
- \$10 million for waste reduction and recycling to improve solid waste management.
- New programs to support comprehensive climate change adaptation management planning, to help communities identify vulnerabilities associated with climate change and develop adaptation plans.

Enhancing Natural Gas Pipeline Safety (H. 2933)

Establishes uniform leak classification and repair timelines to address serious public safety and energy issues. Requires survey and repair whenever road work is done, prioritizes repair in school zones.

Water Infrastructure (S. 2021)

Funds replacement of water and sewer pipes, pumping stations and wastewater treatment systems. Increases amount the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust (formerly the Water Pollution Abatement Trust) can spend, from \$88 million to \$138 million. The Trust provides financing to communities for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. We successfully advocated for the bill to define and incentivize green infrastructure (infrastructure that naturally and sustainably manages water and prevents flooding, filters pollutants and reduces health risks). We also pushed for another provision which passed – waterbanking, which enables municipalities to collect a reasonable fee to offset environmental impacts of new or increased water consumption and discharge.

Renewable Thermal (S. 2214) -- This bill was combined with the solar net metering bill.

Adds thermal energy (e.g., combined heat and power, biogas) as an alternative energy source under the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard. Includes important environmental and public health protections including best-in-class efficiency standards, emissions standards geared towards curbing GHGs and air pollutants, and fuel harvest sustainability requirements. The net metering section (the ability for solar users to be reimbursed for excess power that gets sent to the grid) raised the net metering cap to 5 percent for municipal projects and 4 percent for privately developed projects (a total increase of 3% overall from previous caps). The bill also established a task force to study and adjust net metering incentives.

Brownfields Redevelopment

\$15 million included in Supplemental Budget passed by House and Senate (H.3899) and an additional \$10 million was included in Economic Development bill that passed. The funds will support the assessment and clean-up of a backlog of contaminated properties, making them ready for redevelopment.

Community Preservation Act (H. 4001)

Provides up to \$25 million from the FY2014 state budget surplus to increase the state's contribution to the Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund, which helps our cities and towns preserve open space and historic sites, while creating affordable housing and recreational facilities.

Transportation Finance Act

Provides \$600 million on average in new revenue annually for our transportation system through a number of revenue sources including a three cent increase on the gas tax indexed to inflation. Also establishes a Project Selection Criteria Advisory Council that is developing criteria for how we spend our limited resources on projects that will meet multiple state goals including safety, congestion reduction, greenhouse gas emission reductions and public health.

Pending (for informal session or next session)**Public Lands Preservation (H. 657)**

Protects public lands set aside under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution for natural resource purposes.

Endangered Species Protections (H. 756)

Improves the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act by establishing and defining in statute “priority habitat,” thereby providing guidance to private landowners.

Healthy Families and Businesses (H. 235)

Creates a groundbreaking program to systematically replace toxic chemicals in consumer products with available, safer alternatives that are healthier for consumers, workers and the environment.

Land Use Reform (H. 1859)

Reforms outmoded zoning laws to discourage sprawl and gives communities and developers tools and incentives to support mixed-use development and natural resource protection.

Waste Performance Standard (S. 2336)

Directs the Department of Environmental Protection, by July 2015, to establish performance standards for municipal solid waste reduction on the basis of pounds per capita of solid waste disposed. Sets waste reduction goals for 2016 and 2021 and requires cities and towns to report to DEP the total weight of their solid waste disposed. Also directs the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Secretary to develop an action plan to help municipalities meet these goals. *Passed in the Senate.*

Solid Waste Reduction (H. 758)

Establishes performance standards for municipal solid waste reduction to incentivize recycling and reduce costs to municipalities.

Divest From Fossil Fuels (S. 1225)

Directs the state to implement a five-year gradual divestment of state pension funds from fossil fuel based companies. *A new version of the bill (H 4354) that would create a commission to study divestment got close to passage in the House and it is possible that a bill could pass during informal session.*

Mid-term Climate Planning (S. 1565)

Building off of the Global Warming Solutions Act, which sets greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020 and 2050, this bill would require the Commonwealth to adopt a target reduction for the year 2030. *Reported favorably by Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy*

Comprehensive Climate Adaptation Management Plan (S. 2028)

Directs Secretaries of Energy and Environmental Affairs and of Public Health to develop and adopt a comprehensive adaptation management action plan. *Passed in the Senate. Possible that a bill could pass during informal session.*

Transition to a Clean Energy Economy (formerly Coal Free MA) (H. 2935)

Would have required phase out of all coal-fired electric generation by 2020 and prioritized worker support and community stabilization by establishing a Community Transition Fund.

- *Since this bill was filed in late 2012, all of Massachusetts' coal-fired power plants have either closed and will be converted to other fuel sources (Salem Power Plant) or are scheduled to close (Brayton Point and Mt. Tom). Still to be determined is how to deal with the loss of property taxes and need for worker transition in affected communities.*

Carbon Tax (H. 2532)

Sets a tax on carbon emissions to send a price signal that will reduce the use of fossil fuels and foster innovation.

- *Currently, the MA Department of Energy Resources is undertaking a study of a revenue-neutral carbon tax for MA. Findings expected this fall.*