December 20, 2017

Matthew Beaton, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street
Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Environmental Bond

Dear Secretary Beaton,

Thanks again for the opportunity to meet with you and members of your staff team regarding the preparation of a new environmental bond bill that will be filed in February, 2018.

As you requested, I’m following up on our conversation with more specific recommendations for capital investments in the environment that encourage and sustain growth of key industries that depend on the availability of high quality protected land and water. In an era of climate change, these capital investments are also intended to complement the Commonwealth’s built infrastructure with its natural assets by protecting flood plains and wetlands. In doing so, we further protect wildlife and fisheries habitat.

I believe many of our following recommendations are consistent with your goals including climate change resiliency, conservation lands stewardship, rural economic development, deferred maintenance of state forest and parkland, and support of urban communities. You’ll also see that I am including some suggestions on enhancing our collective efforts with respect to environmental literacy for all residents of the Commonwealth.

Secretary’s Office

Environmental Literacy
Develop and maintain environmental literacy database for formal and informal educators to easily and rapidly share contacts, written and visual resources, model programs, and Massachusetts-based curricula which, among other things, can be used to connect students and teachers with green careers as well as environmental programs in Massachusetts colleges and universities.

Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity Program
The LAND program offers competitive grants to rural and suburban municipalities to acquire land for natural resource protection and outdoor recreation.
Parkland Acquisition and Renovation for Communities
PARC provides significant incentive for urban communities to invest in land acquisition and park creation and enhancement.

Conservation Partnership
Conservation Partnership grants assist nonprofits in acquiring land suitable for conservation or recreation (especially if they enhance climate change resiliency.)

Landscape Partnership
Landscape Partnership grants preserve large, un-fragmented, ecologically valuable lands, including working forests and farms, recreational areas, while leveraging investments from partners (especially if they enhance climate change resiliency.)

Land Deferred Maintenance
Statewide maintenance of state land holdings (especially at DCR facilities.)

Climate Change Planning
Comprehensive climate adaptation management plans provide the Commonwealth and its municipalities with tools needed to address the unavoidable consequences from rapid climate change. Damage from extreme weather events, excessive heat, and accelerated sea-level rise can cost billions, and a modest investment in planning for these unavoidable certainties would significantly lower the costs of such impacts.

Coastal Buy-Back
Structures on fragile beaches, banks and dunes face stronger and more frequent storms, erosion and property loss as a result of accelerated sea level rise. Willing owners can sell their property to the state if their properties have been repeatedly and substantially damaged due to such storms, and if they are located in sensitive resource areas, lowering cleanup costs associated with significant storms and allowing migration of coastal habitats.

Restorative Tree Planting
This new program will assist cities and nonprofits in planting trees on public and private land, which has been shown to result in significant energy savings. For example, increasing mature tree canopy cover in urban residential neighborhoods by 20 percent can reduce household cooling expenses by 50 percent, and heating energy use by 30 percent.

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Land Acquisition
As you well know, DCR is the steward of one of the largest state park systems in the country. Our 450,000 acres is made up of forests, parks, greenways, historic sites and landscapes, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds – all critical to our multi-billion dollar outdoor recreational economy.

DCR Deferred Maintenance Supports DCR deferred maintenance at state parks, forests and reservations. ($10 million dedicated in FY18 plan)

Aquatic Invasive Species
Aquatic invasive species harm water quality, ecological integrity and recreational opportunities on the Commonwealth’s freshwater resources. This program will help manage invasive species.
Recreational Trails
The Recreational Trails program supports non-motorized and motorized projects, as well as water trails, through federal grants made to cities, towns and local nonprofits. Trail projects support healthy communities, reduce vehicle miles by encouraging walking and biking, and support the state’s $10 billion outdoor recreation economy.

Department of Fish and Game

Land Protection
DFG’s Land Protection program identifies and protects the most ecologically important habitats - including sites that support rare species and exemplary natural communities, and provide public access for hunting, fishing, and passive wildlife-related recreation.

Endangered Species
The Natural Heritage Rare and Endangered Species Program requires adequate support to provide the best research and science to provide predictable and science based data for mapping habitat.

Division of Ecological Restoration (2300-7025)
The Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) conducts science-based research to establish goals, benchmarks, and measures of success. Using this data, DER leverages capital funds to remove and/or replace structures such as dams and culverts for ecological benefit, restoring the functionality of riverine systems and coastal estuaries.

Aquatic Restoration and Marine Restoration
These programs would provide funds for research, restoration, management, monitoring and equipment and planning related to the execution of fisheries habitat restoration projects.

Department of Environmental Protection

MassDEP Water Quality
Water Quality program carries out federal Clean Water Act mandates, including the assessment and monitoring of stream health critical to the issuance of fair, predictable and enforceable permits for wastewater, storm water and drinking water supplies. MassDEP’s Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) helps communities comply with new SWMI regulations, which incorporate science into water permits.

Department of Agricultural Resources

Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program
The APR program protects productive, working lands, fostering farm businesses and reinvestment, while protecting land that provides habitat, carbon sequestration, air and water filtration, scenic beauty and recreational opportunities.

Farm Viability Enhancement Program
This program seeks to improve the economic viability of farms through the development and implementation of farm viability plans, offering farmers environmental, technical and business assistance to expand or upgrade operations in exchange for an agricultural covenant on the farm property for a fixed term.
Urban Agriculture (within Farm Viability)
Urban agriculture offers innovative opportunities for economic development, improving property values and providing healthy food access to local markets. State funding for land acquisition and technical assistance is needed to facilitate local efforts, leverage investments, and ensure success of this growing movement.

Agricultural Environmental Enhancement
The Environmental Enhancement program cost-shares with farmers interested in installing conservation practices that prevent direct impacts on water quality ensure efficient use of water, or address impacts on air quality, helping producers comply with environmental regulations.

Many thanks again for inviting this feedback regarding the proposed environmental bond bill. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Gary Clayton
President
Mass Audubon