



Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

protecting wetlands, open space and biological diversity through education and advocacy

July 30, 2018

The Honorable Jeffrey Sanchez, Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Opposition to H.4677, An Act authorizing the town of Westminster to acquire state forest land

Dear Chairman Sanchez:

Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) is the non-profit association representing more than 2,000 conservation commission and other professional environmental members in towns and cities across Massachusetts. Our association provides educational resources and technical assistance to Massachusetts' conservation commissions, which are the municipal boards responsible for administering the state Wetlands Protection Act, municipal wetland bylaws and ordinances, and managing municipally-owned conservation land. Our association protects Massachusetts' natural resources through our education and advocacy efforts.

MACC opposes House Bill 4677, "An Act authorizing the town of Westminster to acquire state forest land" because this bill appears to by-pass the land disposition process established by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) Article 97 "No Net Loss Policy".

In 1972, Massachusetts voters approved Article 97 of the state constitution to provide greater protection for public parks, conservation areas, forests and watershed lands. Public lands provide the Commonwealth with many benefits including protecting drinking water supplies, clean air, agricultural lands, forests, recreational areas and tourism. Disposing, or changing the use of such municipal or state land requires a favorable two-thirds vote of each branch of the legislature. EEA's No Net Loss Policy was established to protect Article 97 lands and provide a consistent approach to the process.

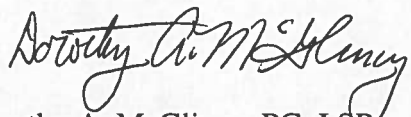
H. 4677 proposes to convert 85 acres of forested land to solid waste management and disposal. We believe the proposed, convoluted conveyance process requires close attention to make sure the proposed use does not destroy or threaten a unique or significant resource. It is unclear whether the environmental process proposed in this bill is fully consistent with EEA's No Net Loss Policy.

Additional time should be provided to study whether this bill provides adequate safeguards to our public lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact our office at (617) 489-3930.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions



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