



**Massachusetts Association
of Conservation Commissions**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

Effective January 1, 2022





Broad Strategic Goals

- Become a stronger, more inclusive, and recognized voice for open space, wetland resource area, and biodiversity protection.
- Empower informed, effective Conservation Commissions that are respected environmental leaders representative of their communities.

Specific Goals

A. Education

Maintain and enhance a vibrant, effective education program for Conservation Commissions (Commissions) that is easily updated to reflect current science, law, regulation, and policy.

B. Advocacy

Make MACC a stronger and more proactive voice for environmental protection.

C. Conservation Commission Support

Enhance respect for Commissions by providing means to connect and collaborate with Commissions, agencies, organizations and experts to share information, take action, and achieve goals.

D. Organization Sustainability and Growth

Enhance MACC's ability to do its work by ensuring structural soundness, staff retention, and long-term financial stability.

E. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Create a welcoming, equitable and empowering organization and provide guidance for Commissions to do the same.



A. Education

Maintain and enhance a vibrant, effective education program for Conservation Commissions (Commissions) that is easily updated to reflect current science, law, regulation, and policy.

Objectives

1. Sustain and expand educational opportunities for Commissions related to wetlands resource areas, open space, and biodiversity protection, and conservation land management.
2. Provide programs, media, and services to assist Commissions in their work, leading to updated knowledge and informed, timely decision-making/actions in the following areas:
 - a. Traditional issues such as wetlands resource areas, open space, and biodiversity protection; conservation land acquisition and management; and stormwater management,
 - b. Key emerging issues such as changing climate, loss of habitat, pollinator decline, and environmental equity, and
 - c. Education of the public and local officials about, e.g., the role and importance of Commissions, the importance of resource area functions and values, and biodiversity protection as part of climate change resiliency.

Actions

- Evaluate structure, content and implementation of MACC's educational programs including AEC, Fall Conference, Certificate Training Program, and workshops, and update as needed.
- Review, and, as needed, update the MACC Handbook (potentially with assistance from outside consultant).
- Educate Commissions in proper meeting and hearing procedures and record keeping.
- Offer Fundamentals Units frequently enough to allow Commissioners and agents to complete the Training Program in one year.
- Develop advanced training options for MACC's Certificate Program.
- Provide online access to regulations, policies, and information to aid Commissions in technical reviews.
- Develop and implement on-line training opportunities for Commissions and other environmental professionals.
- Educate, inform, and collaborate with municipal governments, state agencies, Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA), environmental organizations, and the public to enhance respect for Commissions and increase understanding about the importance of wetlands, open space, and biodiversity protection.
- Partner with other organizations that provide additional basic and advanced workshops on areas of Commission responsibility by, e.g., advertising each other's workshops and making some workshops available for Training Program credit.



B. Advocacy

Make MACC a stronger and more proactive voice for environmental protection.

Objectives

1. Advocate for the values of open space, wetlands, biodiversity, and the importance of Commission work - primarily focused on Massachusetts, and federal environmental issues when they affect the Commonwealth.
2. Expand and strengthen programs to advocate for strong science-based laws, regulations, and policies.
3. Defend relevant environmental laws; and react quickly to legislative, administrative, and legal threats.
4. Increase collaboration with experts and other environmental organizations on areas of mutual interest.

Actions

- Prioritize and summarize legislative bills and draft regulatory changes for the MACC membership.
- Collaborate with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), state agencies, Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists (AMWS), Mass Audubon, Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals (MSMCP), Environmental League of Massachusetts, Conservation Law Foundation, Sierra Club, The Trustees of Reservations, and others on climate change and other important environmental issues.
- Develop a presence at the State House and engage regularly with the Governor's office, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and other EEA agencies on Conservation Commission issues and needs.
- Actively engage in writing and promoting key legislation, regulations, and policies.
- Document challenges Commissions face in administering and enforcing wetlands regulations and bylaws and address these challenges.
- Review and, if needed, update the MACC model wetlands bylaw/ordinance.
- Encourage and assist communities to adopt the Community Preservation Act and non-zoning wetlands bylaws/ordinances.



C. Conservation Commission Support

Enhance respect for Commissions by providing means to connect and collaborate with Commissions, agencies, organizations, and experts to share information, take action, and achieve goals.

Objectives

1. Facilitate opportunities for Commissioners and staff to interact with each other and environmental professionals.
2. Provide Commissions with access to timely information and tools to operate more efficiently and effectively.
3. Give guidance to Commissions to encourage individuals to serve on Commissions or assist with volunteer projects by reaching out to new residents, the public at large, and college and high school students.
4. Provide Commissions guidance for retaining valuable Commissioners and filling vacant seats.
5. Inspire Commissioners and staff to seek out training opportunities and educational offerings.
6. Encourage Commissions to be supported by qualified professional staff.
7. Give Commissions tips and tools to educate, inform, collaborate with, and establish respect from municipal government, other environmental organizations, and the public.

Actions

- Strengthen and enhance the Helpline Q&A process; publish results as Frequently Asked Questions, or as articles in the *Conservation Quarterly*, on the website, etc.
- Create and promote a more effective and broadly used web forum.
- Provide tips from Commissioners and staff in the *Conservation Quarterly* and at conferences.
- Promote and raise money for the Fawcett Fund to provide scholarships for the Annual Environmental Conference and other educational programs.
- Work with MassDEP to simplify the Wetlands Protection Act regulations and procedures, and to enhance the agency's support for Commissions.
- Encourage Commissions to seek visibility and respect from the public, e.g., by hosting or sponsoring walks and talks on relevant topics, invasive plant removal projects, trail maintenance programs, articles (with photos, videos) for the town/municipal website, other websites, social media postings (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) and local newspapers.
- Increase coordination with MSMCP to provide information and guidance to Commissions on staffing and environmental issues.



D. Organization Sustainability and Growth

Enhance MACC's ability to do its work by ensuring structural soundness, staff retention, and long-term financial stability.

Objectives

1. Increase MACC's visibility and respect through new and enhanced programs, publications, and services; and efficient, productive organization structure and operations.
2. Increase funding base through donations, grants, bequests, and, if appropriate, creation of an endowment.
3. Work to ensure the Fawcett, Dawson and Standley Funds are sustainable.

Actions

- Review and, if needed, revise board, staff and committee structure and responsibilities to increase engagement, build programs, and enhance fundraising approaches.
- Review and address technology and office space needs.
- Review website and other media periodically for needed updates and improvements.
- Develop a bequest program and, if appropriate, create an endowment fund.
- Expand and re-evaluate individual, non-profit, governmental, and corporate memberships.
- Review all pricing including dues, program and exhibitor fees, and publication prices, and revise as needed.
- Revise Commission dues formula based on 2020 census data and explain rationale to Commissions.
- Seek grants and donations from diverse funding sources for specific projects and general needs. Expand Fawcett Fund scholarship program for Commissioners and staff. Publicize uses of all Funds when used for a project.
- Publish a comprehensive history of the conservation commission movement, which began with Massachusetts Commissions and MACC, to enhance local environmental protection nationwide. See 1969 Scheffey Book]
<https://rattlesnakeguttertrust.org/files/Andrew-J-Scheffey-Obituary-Greenfield-Recorder.pdf>



E. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Create a welcoming, equitable and empowering organization and provide guidance for Commissions to do the same.

Objectives

1. Integrate DEI into MACC operations and functions:
 - a. Promote diversity and inclusion when recruiting board and committee members, and staff and consultants.
 - b. Promote diversity and inclusion when selecting speakers, workshop topics, and conference events.
 - c. Promote participation and collaboration among groups and individuals with diverse backgrounds.
2. Encourage and assist Commissions to bring DEI into Commission structure, operations, and activities.

Actions

- Develop specific wording to include DEI in requests for proposals, speakers, instructors, new board members, and staff.
- Provide regular DEI training to all board members and staff.
- Research and make relevant publications and other information available to board members and staff.
- Publish a DEI-related article in the *Conservation Quarterly* with follow-up articles at least annually.
- Consider a tag line to include on MACC materials.
- Offer DEI training at Lunch & Learns, Fall Conference, and AEC.
- Incorporate DEI-related information into the Certificate Training Program.
- Provide DEI materials to assist Commissions and municipalities in appointing and hiring Commission-related members and staff.
- Encourage Commissions to seek, interview, and recommend diverse candidates for appointment.
- Reach out to MMA and others for DEI materials to provide to municipal authorities who search for and appoint new Commissioners and staff.