

# Forests as Climate Solutions



# Massachusetts Forests

Acres in MA: 5,175,349

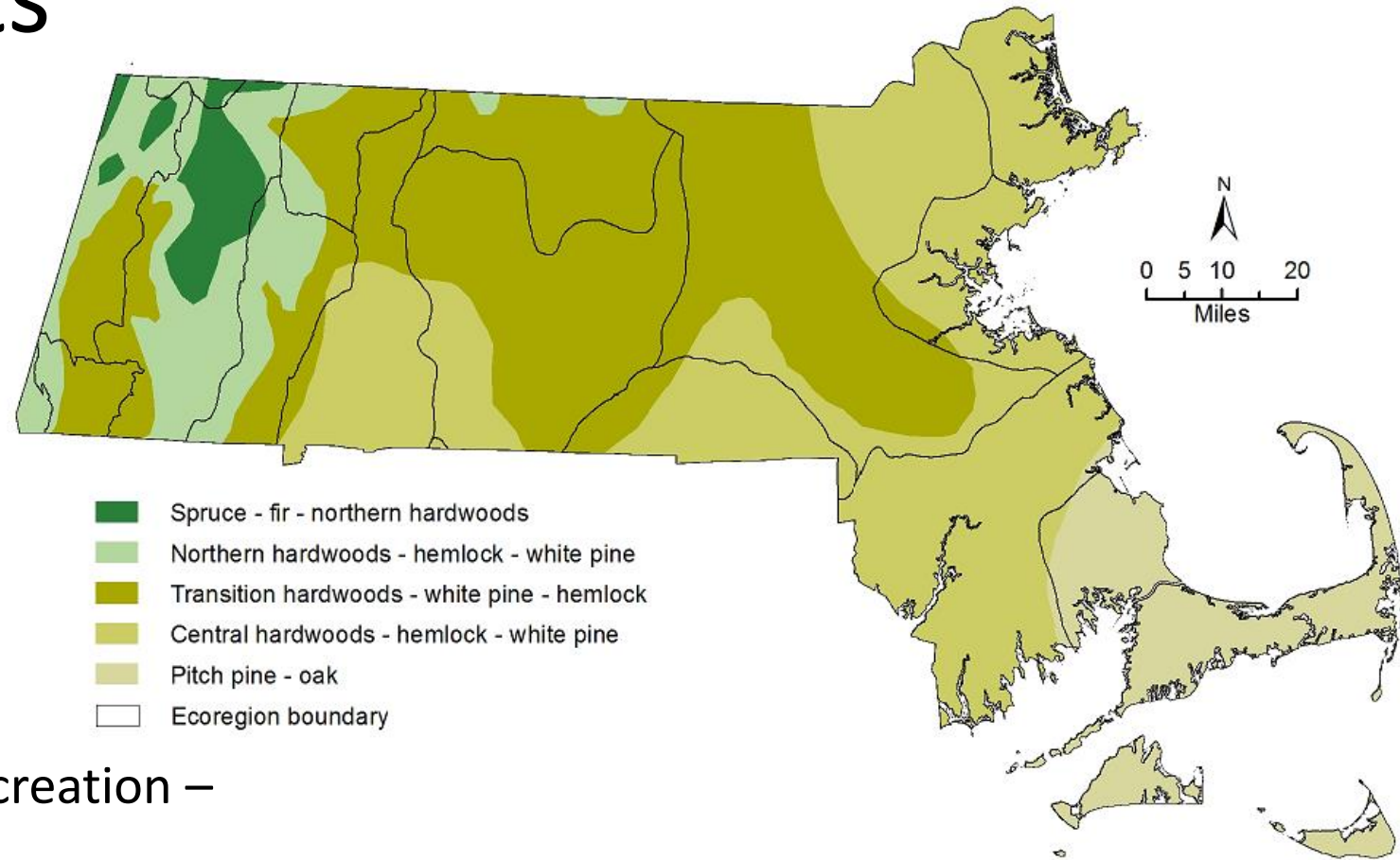
Acres Forested: 2,984,347 or 57%

- Acres Privately Owned: 1,911,815

- Acres Publicly Owned: 1,072,532

- Acres State Owned: 525,377

- Dept. of Conservation & Recreation – State Parks Division
- Dept. of Conservation & Recreation – Water Supply Protection Division (MWRA System)
- Dept. of Fish & Game – Division of Fisheries & Wildlife



# Campaign Climate Platform: Forestry Positions

- Establish Strategic Forest Reserves to provide [ecosystem services] & preserve our matured forests to draw down carbon.
- Establish a Forest Protection Program that will provide enhanced incentives to willing private landowners to keep their trees growing rather than harvesting them.
  - Reward private landowners who manage their forests for reducing emissions over each harvest cycle, including by increasing intervals between harvests, conserving the oldest mature trees, protecting soil carbon during harvest, and other improved harvesting and management practices.
- Place a temporary moratorium on commercial harvesting on state-owned public forest land. Within the first year develop and implement a science-based state forest management plan that accounts for the impacts of climate change on our forest resources and the role our forests can play in protecting the climate.

# 2050 Clean Energy and Climate Plan: Key Forestry Related Recommendations

- Protect 40% of the Commonwealth's land by 2050 (currently 27%)
- Expand the protection, management, & restoration of Natural and Working Lands and their capacity to remove and store carbon
- Incent sustainable forest management practices that will allow us to produce forest products over the long term
- Encourage use of more durable forest products from local forests
- Create a Forest Viability Program to strengthen local sawmills and the forest economy

DECEMBER 2022

## Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050



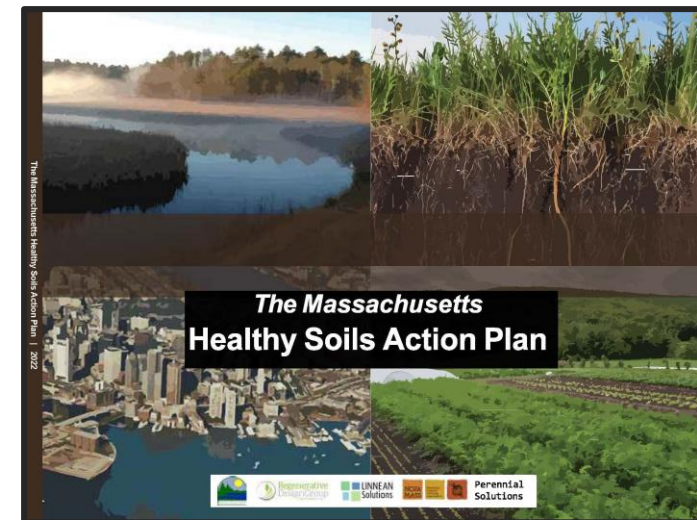
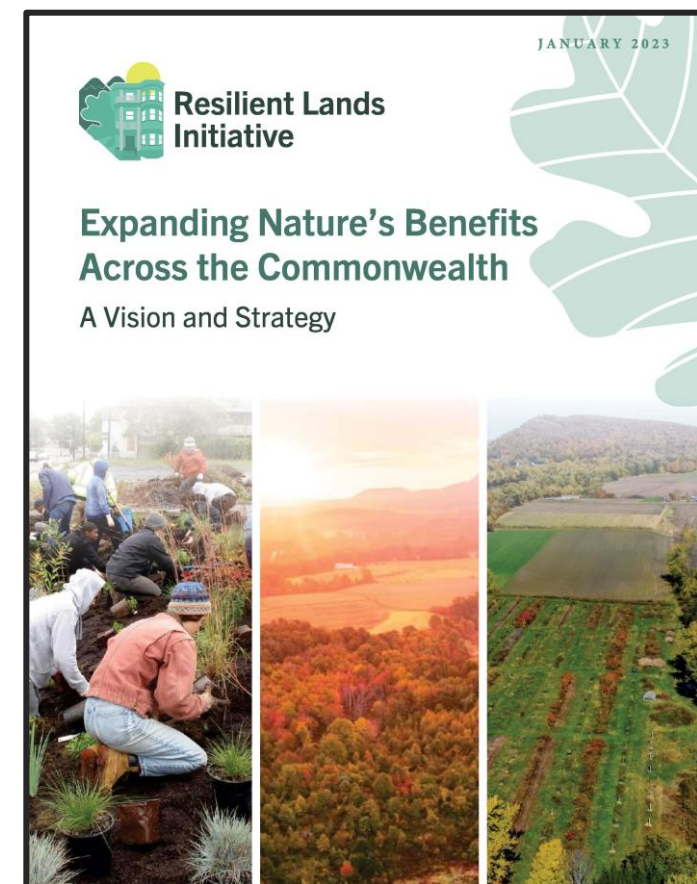
# Resilient Lands Initiative & Heathy Soils Action Plans: Key Forestry Related Recommendations

**Resilient Lands Initiative:** Protect and improve the quality of life for MA residents through land conservation, restoration, and stewardship initiatives that conserve and enhance the health of forests, farms, and soils.

- No net loss of forests
- Modify existing landowner tax incentive or launch the Forest Resilience Program to pay incentives to landowners to adopt verified forestry practices to expand carbon storage
- Support realization of Clean Energy & Climate Plans goals including protecting at least 30% of the remaining undeveloped land in MA by 2030 & increasing by 5% the use of long-lived durable wood products
- Seek to increase the percentage of long-lived forest products from existing harvests

**Healthy Soils Action Plan:** An assessment of the condition of MA soils and a blueprint for how to protect and properly manage soils to support thriving ecosystems and communities.

- Seek to protect healthy forested soils through strategic conservation of additional forest parcels
- Increase and adapt active forest management practices to bolster resistance to degradation from and resilience to climate change



# Why We Manage Forests & Harvest Timber

	DCR State Parks	DCR Water Supply Protection	DFG Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
<b>Goals</b>	For a range of ecosystem services in a manner that promotes forest health and improves ability to resist, respond to, and recover from stress that comes from invasive plants and insect pests, drought, and severe storms.	Increase the resistance and resilience of watershed protection forests to disturbance by deliberately diversifying forest age structure and composition	Restore and manage critical habitats to help conserve the diversity of wildlife and plant communities in the Commonwealth
<b>Area Managed</b>	280,196 acres of state parks and forests	96,751 acres of watershed land DCR manages in support of the MWRA system (Quabbin, Wachusett, and Ware River Watersheds)	143,294 acres of wildlife management areas

- DCR & DFW also jointly hold an additional 5,136 acres
- About 1,450 acres, or <1% of state forests, are harvested per year
- Agencies bid out harvesting work to private companies



## Pause Active Forest Management on State Forest Land for 6 Months

- To ensure future land management decisions fully account for climate mitigation & resilience:
  - The Administration will develop and follow an updated set of climate-oriented forest management guidelines; and
  - Only contracted and public safety projects meeting established exemption criteria will proceed during the pause.

## Issue Climate-Oriented Forest Management Guidelines

- New climate-oriented guidelines will be developed and used for all state forest management projects.
- Project review will resume after six months, allowing a reasonable but fixed period for guideline development.

## Key Action Plan Items:

- Expeditiously develop, in consultation with a select group of outside experts and through a public process, climate-oriented management guidelines that we will implement & promote;
- Apply the updated management guidelines to state forest management projects and to incentives for private and municipal landowners; and
- Affirm that state forest management projects follow the updated guidelines before proceeding.



## Expert Advisors: Forest Management Guidelines

Richard Birdsey	Senior Scientist	WoodWell Climate Research Center
Paul Catanzaro	State Extension Forester & Professor	UMass Amherst
Tony D'Amato	Professor, Forestry Program Director	Univ. of Vermont
David Foster	Professor, Former Harvard Forest Director	Harvard University/Harvard Forest
Ali Kosiba	Extension Assistant Professor of Forestry	Univ. of Vermont
Meghan MacLean	Lecturer of Quantitative Ecology	UMass Amherst
Laura Marx	Climate Solutions Scientist	The Nature Conservancy
William Moomaw	Professor Emeritus, International Environmental Policy	Fletcher School, Tufts University
Todd Ontl	Climate Adaptation Specialist	U.S. Forest Service
Christopher Riely	Forester & Conservationist	Sweet Birch Consulting, LLC
Jen Shakun	Bioeconomy Initiative Director	New England Forestry Foundation
Jonathan Thompson	Research Director & Senior Ecologist	Harvard University/Harvard Forest

## Facilitator

Susan Podziba	Public Policy Mediator	Podziba Policy Mediation
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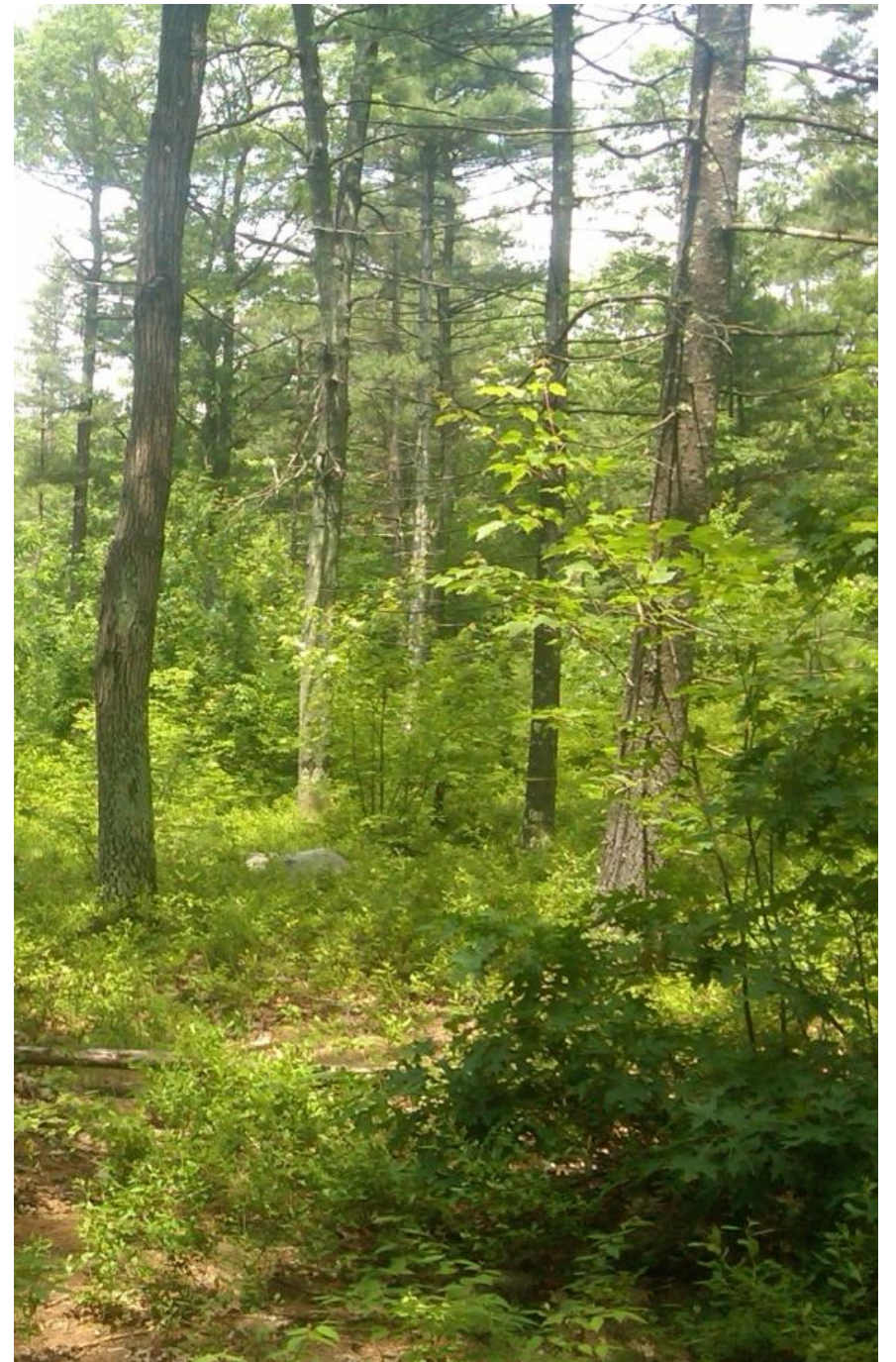


## Reduce Forest Land Conversion & Increase Permanent Forest Land Conservation

Strategically conserve additional forest land to permanently preclude conversion and improve land use to minimize forest loss.

### Key Actions:

- Implement the Resilient Lands Initiative to guide land conservation and related efforts of the state and other entities, with a focus on policies, programs, & investments that conserve forest land.
- Provide the resources to realize the Clean Energy & Climate Plans' objective of protecting 30% of MA by 2030 & 40% by 2050, much of that land to be forested.
- Set, and commit to attaining, goals for:
  - Forest land conservation (currently ~35% of forest land is protected); and
  - Reduced land conversion (e.g., by 2030 reduce the conversion rate by 50%)
- To achieve these goals:
  - Engage stakeholders Re: land conservation/use goals & strategies;
  - Enhance EEA land conservation & land use programs;
  - Partner with landowners, land trusts, & municipalities; and
  - Pursue complementary policies (e.g., solar siting).

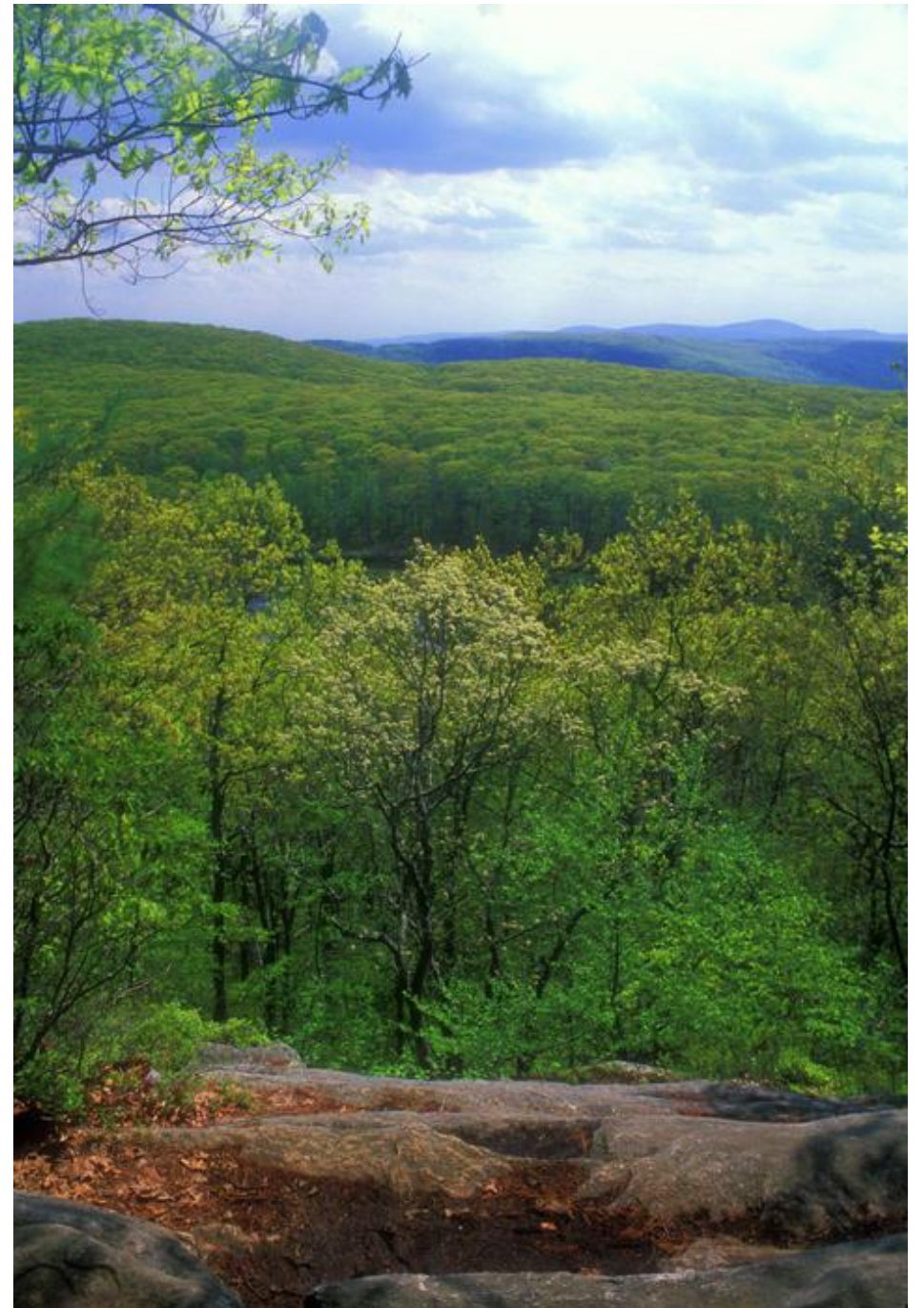


## Expand Forest Reserves

Pursue a new focus on and investment in public and private forest Reserves. These are areas where no active forest management is intended & nature takes its course; for carbon sequestration and storage, habitat, & other benefits.

### Key Actions:

- Set and commit to realizing a goal for a percentage of forest land to be held as Reserves;
- Consider permanent designation of Reserves, e.g., by statute;
- Increase land conservation funding and target investments at creating or enlarging Reserves with the best prospect for multiple benefits including provision of key habitat and long-term carbon sequestration; and
- Work with land trusts & municipalities to establish Reserves on their holdings and across land held by multiple owners.
- Consider other Reserve Types (e.g., Representative Natural Areas)
- Convene DCR's Forest Reserves Scientific Advisory Committee and involve other experts & stakeholders to inform Reserve expansion.



## Support Forest Landowners, Businesses, & Rural Communities

Expand incentives and programs to protect private and municipally-owned forests, encourage landowners to manage them using climate-oriented forestry techniques, and help forestry businesses improve their technology and business practices.

### Key Actions:

- Offer financial incentives for climate-oriented forestry such as:
  - Property Tax: Evaluate Ch. 61 changes or creation of Ch. 61C for “Carbon”.
  - Grants: Fund landowner adoption of desired forestry practices.
  - Carbon Rights: Acquire carbon; for a term or permanently.
  - Ecosystem Services: Provide compensation for land benefits.
- Strategically support local markets for durable wood products from sustainably harvested wood.
- Offer incentives to promote practices in the woods and at the sawmill that reduce carbon loss & environmental impact & increase competitiveness.
- Fund measures to increase the % of harvested wood used for long lived products.
- Involve forestry business owners, municipal officials, landowners, etc. in policy & program development.

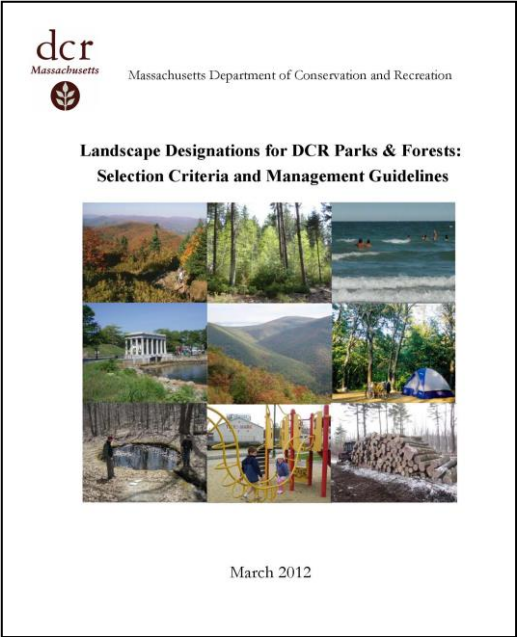
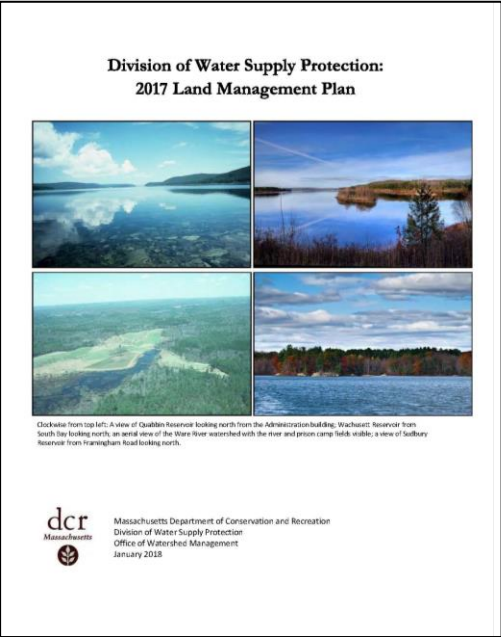
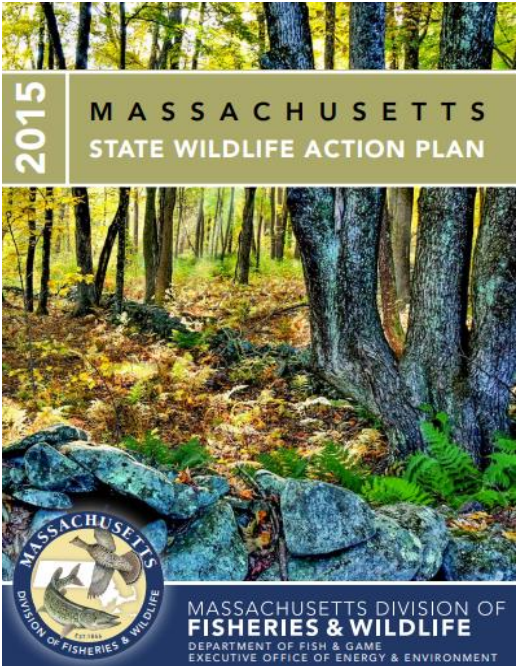
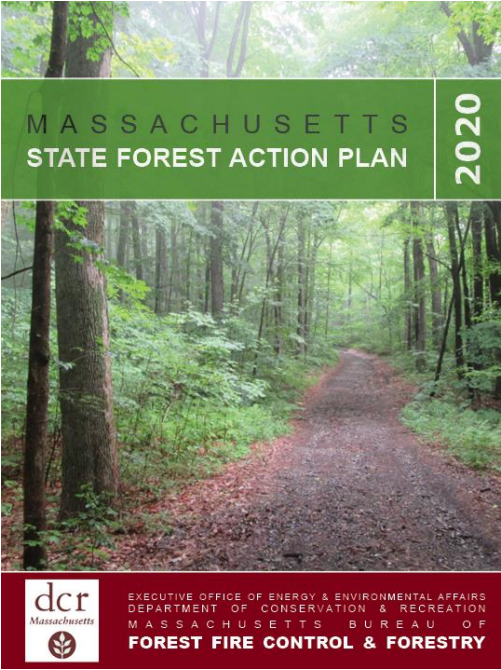


# Integrate & Make Public Best Science, Research & Management Practices

Acquire more field data, systematically integrate research into conservation & management practices, & make information public.

## Key Actions:

- Fund more collection of field data about forests, carbon sequestration and storage, and the use of harvested wood;
- Better integrate research to inform forest goals & policies for climate mitigation (including Forest Carbon Study that is underway);
- Develop a web-based dashboard sharing information about forest status & trends;
- For timber harvesting on state lands, be transparent about management objectives and results of harvesting;
- Work with other states on an emissions accounting & policy framework for meeting net zero with land-based carbon sequestration.



# Process: Parallel Efforts & Public Engagement

## 1) Forest Management Guidelines

Timeline: Start now, finish in six months

Engagement: Public Meetings & Written Comment

## 2) Land Conservation & Reserve Expansion

Timeline: Start now, apply in FY24 as feasible, with approach fully in place for FY25 spending.

Engagement: Public/stakeholder involvement/participation re: goals, reserve permanency, multi-jurisdictional reserves, collaborative land conservation, funding strategy, project selection criteria, etc.

## 3) Landowner Incentives

Timeline: Start now. Use FY24 funds for “pilot” efforts, develop fully actionable items for FY25, consider legislation for next filing deadline.

Engagement: Public/stakeholder involvement re: type(s)/scale of incentives, actions required of landowners, etc.

## 4) Forestry Business Assistance

Timeline: Start now. Use FY24 funds for “pilot,” have fully conceived program in place for FY25.

Engagement: Forestry business owners & associated interest groups help develop program details (e.g., eligible applicants, appropriate projects, project evaluation criteria, program requirements, etc.)



## Next Steps – Roll Out

- Public Announcement - Issuance of Press Release
- Engagement with Boards, Commissions, & Stakeholder Groups
- Launch of Forests as Climate Solutions Website
- Release of Capital Budget & Announcement of ARPA Spending
- Commencement of Parallel Policy/Program Development Efforts:
  - Creation of New Forest Management Guidelines
    - Experts Convened
    - First Public Meeting Scheduled
  - Evolution of Land Conservation/Forest Reserve Approach
  - Development of Landowner Incentives
  - Establishment of Forestry Business Assistance Program



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