

At the Statehouse for State Forests!

October 28, 2025

By Tara Wallace



On Wednesday, October 15, 2025, Sierra Club MA Forest Protection team and allies were at the Statehouse delivering a petition with 1,000+ signers from across the state urging Governor Maura Healey to set aside the public forests of the Quabbin, Ware, and Wachusett watersheds as protected reserves, free from logging, pesticides, and prescribed burning. We started with a rally in front of the statehouse with remarks from

Representatives Gentile and Sena, Zack Porter of Speak for the Trees, and Dr. William Stubblefield. It was such a wonderful opportunity to come together as a team, many of us meeting in person for the first time outside of our weekly zoom meetings, and to hear the wise words of our insightful speakers.



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The Quabbin, Ware, and Wachusett watersheds contain among the most carbon dense, biodiverse, and connected forests in Massachusetts, while maintaining a clean and constant water supply for eastern communities. Yet each year they are subject to logging projects that crush the critical soil structure and remove the oldest trees that are more effective at sequestering carbon dioxide and removing pollutants than younger trees. Large, old trees also offer unique nesting cavities for many species and play a vital role in creating stable, mature ecosystems, supporting biodiversity, and managing stormwater. Action to permanently protect these public lands from logging is essential as the Quabbin, Ware, and Wachusett watershed forests provide all these benefits and they safeguard the drinking water for 2.7 million bay state residents!

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Passing legislation is an excellent way to ensure permanent protection, so we delivered information to multiple legislative offices after delivering the petition to Governor Healey's office. It was invigorating to traverse our state capital together, engaging with elected officials and their staff to galvanize their support for the following forest protection bills. These would permanently protect 462,000 acres as intact ecosystems that are influenced primarily by natural processes in our forests and parks — a level of protection that now exists for only 1% of the state's land base:



H.952, AN ACT RELATIVE TO WATERSHED FOREST PROTECTION would designate over 100,000 acres of state owned watershed lands as parks or reserves. It is sponsored by Representative Carmine Gentile. (Learn more here: [Fact Sheet H.952](#))

H.953 AN ACT RELATIVE TO FOREST PROTECTION would update century-old public land policies written before we recognized the climate crisis and global loss of biodiversity and would help address these concerns by designating 312,000 acres of forest lands controlled by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as parks or reserves. It is sponsored by Representative Carmine Gentile. (Learn more here: [Fact Sheet H.953](#))

H.1048 AN ACT RELATIVE TO INCREASED PROTECTION WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS would add 50,000 acres of state owned Wildlife Management areas as reserves. It is sponsored by Representative Danillo A. Sena. (Learn more here: [Fact Sheet H.1048](#))

H.1013 / S.553 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MUNICIPAL REFORESTATION PROGRAM would set up a structure to provide funding to municipalities throughout the Commonwealth to create a robust urban tree canopy cover in strategic locations, especially in treeless areas. It is sponsored by Representatives Steven Owens and Jennifer Balinsky Armini. (Learn more here: [Fact Sheet H.1013/S.553](#))

We still have work to do to get these bills supported and on the floor for a vote - and we need your help! Sign our [petition](#) to preserve public land, [contact your state representative and senator](#) asking them to co-sponsor the bills. We have a [template letter for fast action](#) or you can write your own: First click on the bill number, then click on Petitioners. If your Rep's or Senator's name is not on the list, then ask them to "Please co-sponsor these bills, which would protect our state-owned lands as permanent reserves, with similar protection to that of our National Parks." If their names are listed as Petitioners, then thank them for co-sponsoring.

Together we can get these invaluable bills voted on and passed!

