

Massachusetts Forest Update

August 2018

Massachusetts House Passes MFA-led Estate Tax Reform

For the last two years, MFA has led a push to reform the state estate tax code to allow forest and farm lands to be valued at their use value, not their highest and best use, when computing estate taxes. We reported earlier that we were successful in getting the Governor to put this language in the environmental bond bill, a package usually devoted to funding capital programs such as land conservation, park improvements, and energy saving programs. The Massachusetts House of Representatives passed the bond bill with overwhelming support last week, embracing the governor's language after a lot of hard work on the part of MFA and other partner organizations.

Forestland owners own land for many reasons – privacy, wildlife, family legacies, income generation, asset protection, and more. When in private ownership, that land is often enrolled in current use taxation, a program that reduces the property tax on the land, but also provides a false sense of security. In many communities, the full and fair land values are not shown on the tax bill, and someone paying a few hundred dollars a year may lose sight of the true value of the property. Currently, when a landowner dies without proper estate planning (and sometimes even despite it) forestland assets can result in tax bills that force the parcelization or development of that land. In Massachusetts, any estate with over one million dollars in assets must pay taxes on all but the first \$40,000. While it starts at just 0.8%, the tax climbs to 16% for the largest estates.

Under the proposed changes, forestland would contribute little to the valuation of an estate. Using the most recent Chapter 61 values, it would take almost 10,000 acres of the most productive forestland to have an estate's forestland alone be valued high enough to put it into the taxable bracket for estate taxes.

Working Forest Initiative hits 500,000 Acre Milestone

In late July, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that more than 500,000 acres of private forests have taken part to date in Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Forest Stewardship Program. The program supports and encourages private forest landowners' efforts to manage their forest using a long-term sustainable approach. The 500,000 acres represents 25% of all private forests across the state and nearly 800 square miles of land.

"By partnering with private land owners, the Administration is able to ensure that sustainable forest management practices are being carried out on the state's widespread, vital forest land," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew

Beaton. “The benefits of well-managed forests provide both immediate and long-term dividends in safeguarding our environment, and I am so proud of the hard work of the many individuals who have helped reach this incredible 500,000 acre milestone.”

The benefits of sustainable forest management practices include better habitat for wildlife, the protection of public drinking water supplies, making forests more resilient to the impacts of climate change, and creating sustainable jobs within rural communities. Importantly, each acre of woodlands removes one to two tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year and converts it to wood.

Modern Wood Heat Opportunities - Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

On August 15th the Statewide Wood Energy Team (SWET) coordinated a meeting between Jon Parrott, representing the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), Rick Moulton, the facility manager for the Narragansett Regional Schools, and planners at the CMRPC. The intent of the meeting was to familiarize regional planners at CMRPC with modern wood heating systems and begin discussing how the CMRPC can introduce modern wood heat to their stakeholder communities. Jon Parrott gave a great overview of the DOER’s Alternative Portfolio Standard program and the MassCEC’s rebate programs for modern wood heat, while Rick Moulton spoke about his positive experience with his school’s wood chip boiler. He is saving nearly \$200,000 on fuel costs annually. Once he finishes applying for APS eligibility, annual savings will be even greater.

The SWET is looking forward to further collaboration with the CMRPC. If you live in a community that is served by CMRPC and think modern wood heat would be a good fit for you or for your town, reach out to CMRPC and the SWET to help lead this effort! Contact: mwh-swet-ma@massforestalliance.org

Interested in Taking a Game of Logging Workshop? Let MFA Know

The Massachusetts Forest Trust recently held the last of 6 Game of Logging chainsaw workshops to teach landowners, land stewards, foresters and loggers how to use chainsaws safely in working in the woods. Taking part in the workshop series this spring were 21 landowners, 3 trail stewards, 2 students, 4 foresters, 6 licensed harvesters, and 1 arborist. 36 participants completed GOL Level I & II workshops, while 15 completed Level III & IV workshops.

These spring workshops were paid for by a grant from the USDA Forest Service through DCR. Certified Game of Logging instructor Bill Girard taught the workshops which were held on woodlands in Pelham, Chesterfield, Granville, Hawley, Northfield and New Salem.

Given the high demand for these safety workshops, the Forest Trust is now exploring holding one or two additional workshops farther east in the fall. Cost of the workshops will be about \$300 per participant for a two-day Level I & II workshop, possibly less if we can find more grant funding.

If you or anyone you know are interested in taking a Game of Logging workshop, let Greg Cox know by calling (413) 339-5526 or by email at gcox@crocker.com. **If you would be willing to host a workshop on your woodland in Worcester County or farther east, please let Greg know.**

Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program Is Seeking Applications

The Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program is now accepting project proposals for consideration in the federal fiscal year 2020 application process.

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the USDA Forest Service to protect environmentally important forests from conversion to non-forest uses. The federal government may fund up to 75% of project costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state or local sources.

The MA Forest Legacy Program FY 2020 Request for Proposals application instructions are posted at:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/06/27/Forest%20Legacy%20Program%20Application%20Instructions%20FY20.pdf>

Additional background information on the Forest Legacy Program is available at:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/forest-legacy-program>

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00 pm on September 10, 2018.

For more information please contact Lindsay Nystrom, MA Forest Legacy Program Coordinator at lindsay.nystrom@state.ma.us or 508-792-7714 x114.

Teachers: Apply for a GreenWorks! Grant

Project Learning Tree (PLT) is a national environmental program for educators and their students in grades pre-K-12 that uses forests to teach. In Massachusetts, PLT is sponsored by the Department of Conservation & Recreation with support from the Forest Alliance.

GreenWorks! is the service-learning component of PLT that provides grants of up to \$1,000 to PLT-trained educators who assist students in the implementation of

environmental improvement projects. Students help design projects to green their school or to improve an aspect of their neighborhood's environment.

These projects make a difference in young people's sense of responsibility toward their communities, and in their understanding of their relationship to the environment. The funds can be used by students to initiate recycling programs at their school, conserve water and energy, establish school gardens and outdoor classrooms, improve a forest, restore a natural habitat, etc.

For more information and to apply: go to <https://www.plt.org/resources/greenworks-grants/> Deadline for applications is September 30th.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Legislation Approved

Legislation designating a 21-town region in northwestern Massachusetts as the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership area was included in the Environmental Bond Bill approved by the Legislature in July.

The legislation would allow a formal Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership to be created if 11 towns vote to do so. The MTWP area includes towns in western Franklin County and northern Berkshire County. The designation does not include funding for the Partnership, which proposes to conserve woodlands in the partnership towns, encourage tourism, forestry and other types of natural resource-based economic development in the region, and help improve fiscal stability and sustainability of the local communities.

The state approval is just one of the steps for the partnership to become reality. Similar legislation must also be approved by Congress to allow U. S. Forest Service funding to match state funding.

For information about the partnership, see www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org/

Want Help Replacing an Old Wood Stove ?

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), in coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, has extended the 2018 Wood Stove Change-Out Program deadline to September 25th.

Any Massachusetts resident or business currently operating a non-EPA-certified wood stove or fireplace insert is eligible for a rebate of **up to \$1,750** when replacing an existing stove with an eligible model. Those that meet certain income requirements are eligible for rebates of **up to \$3,250**.

If you own an old wood stove and would like to replace it with a new, low-emission EPA-certified wood or pellet stove, visit Mass CEC's website at

http://www.masscec.com/commonwealth-woodstove-change-out?mc_cid=667e933a46&mc_eid=5036b1aa0d to find out more.

You will need to contact a [local stove professional](#) who will confirm that your old stove is eligible and submit a rebate application on your behalf after installing your new stove.

Act now to make sure you *don't miss the September 25th application deadline!*

Wood stove change-outs are one of the most effective ways to lower emissions from your wood stove and to get more heat out of your fuel!

Mass CEC also has incentive funds available to help homeowners and businesses convert their buildings to a form of modern wood heat. For more information on these programs, see <http://www.masscec.com/residential/clean-heating-and-cooling>

Should Your Town be a Heat Smart Community?

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) and the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) will soon be seeking new community applications for the HeatSmart Massachusetts program.

HeatSmart Mass is a community purchasing program similar to the highly successful Solarize Mass Program but for clean heating and cooling technologies, which include air-source heat pumps, ground-source heat pumps, modern wood heating, and solar hot water. These technologies provide heating at a fraction of the carbon emissions of traditional fossil fuel heating systems, all while offering a high level of comfort and cost savings when offsetting high-cost heating fuels such as oil, propane, and electricity.

Four pilot HeatSmart communities were selected in fall 2017 and launched their campaigns in early 2018. While their campaigns are still ongoing, they're off to a strong start and generating great interest! MassCEC and DOER plan to release community solicitation request applications for new interested Massachusetts towns in July 2018.

If your town is interested, here is how to prepare to apply for inclusion:

- Review the HeatSmart Mass Pilot Program Solicitation and Application materials. MassCEC and DOER anticipate that the application for the next round of the program will be similar to the pilot round application
- Familiarize yourself with the clean heating and cooling technologies and think about which ones might be a good fit for your town
- Contact key residents and town officials to gauge interest in participating
- Talk to local non-profits, community organizations, schools, banks, businesses, and utilities about forming strategic partnerships
- Review the pilot program FAQs

For more information, contact MassCEC at 617-315-9300, or visit their website at www.masscec.com .

EPA's Burn Wise Website Provides Information about How to Burn Wood Cleanly and Safely

Want information about which wood stoves or boilers burn the cleanest? Or about how to choose, install and maintain a wood burning system? Or tips about how to burn wood cleanly and safely?

If you do, you should check out EPA's Burn Wise website at www.epa.gov/burnwise

Burn Wise is a U. S. EPA program which promotes the importance of burning the right wood, the right way, in the right appliance.

Wildlife

New Publication about Managing Woodlands for Bat Habitat

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a new publication, *Beneficial Forest Management Practices for WNS-affected Bats*, aimed at explaining practical Beneficial Forest Management Practices (BFMPs) that land managers and woodland owners can use to increase benefits to bats as part of their forest management activities while avoiding and reducing potential negative effects.

Populations of some bat species have been decimated by a disease, white nose syndrome. As a result, species like the Northern Long-eared Bat have been placed on the Threatened Species list and are subject to special protections when doing forestry operations in summer months near known bat breeding areas.

For more information, visit: <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org>

Report Turkey Colonies

Sportsmen and women, birders, and other wildlife enthusiasts are asked to assist with MassWildlife's Annual Wild Turkey Brood Survey.

MassWildlife conducts a brood survey from June 1 through August 31 each year to estimate the number of turkeys in the state. The brood survey helps biologists determine productivity and compare long-term reproductive success while providing an estimate of fall harvest potential. Turkey nesting success can vary annually in response to weather conditions, predator populations, and habitat characteristics.

Citizen involvement in this survey is a cost-effective means of gathering useful data, and can be a fun way for people to connect with nature.

To take part, record sightings of hens, poults (newly-hatched turkeys), and males (both juvenile and adult). For help identifying male and female turkeys and determining if a male is a juvenile (jake) or an adult (tom), **please click here**. Be sure to look carefully when counting turkey broods - very small poults may be difficult to see in tall grass or brush. MassWildlife is interested in turkey brood observations from all regions of the state, including rural and developed areas.

Two ways to participate:

- **Report individual observations online**
or
- Download and print a **Turkey Brood Survey form** to complete over the course of the summer.
Mail completed forms to: Brood Survey, MassWildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581.

Former Mass Forester Named to West Virginia Forestry Hall of Fame

Russ Richardson, formerly a consultant forester from Shelburne, has recently been named to the West Virginia Forestry Hall of Fame.

After getting a forestry degree from the University of Montana and working for 3 years in the western US, Richardson was a consultant in Massachusetts from 1975 to 1989 before moving to West Virginia where he has operated a consulting forestry and real estate brokerage business with his wife, Paula.

Richardson has been known for being an outspoken advocate for sustainable forest stewardship. He has introduced and supported new ideas for the West Virginia forestry industry. He has also hosted several forestry tours on his property to promote new ideas such as non-timber forest products. In the world of advocacy, he is credited for his field-level work that provided direct benefit to the woodland owners and woods throughout West Virginia.

Forest Health

Scientists Puzzled by New Beech Disease

A mysterious ailment that causes leaves on American beech trees to blacken and then shrivel leading to eventual tree death has spread from Ohio to New York and

Pennsylvania in recent years. The new beech leaf disease has scientists puzzled because they don't know what is its cause, whether virus, bacteria or fungus.

While not a valuable timber species, beech is ecologically important in the eastern U.S. as an important source of food for wildlife such as bear, deer, turkeys and other nut eating species in areas where oaks are scarce. Because it can grow in deep shade and spreads by sprouts from mature trees' roots, beech can crowd out other more valuable hardwood species and create "beech hell".

For decades, large beech have been killed by beech necrotic root rot, a fungus spread by aphids which feed on beech leaves. The new leaf disease, which causes the leaves to blacken between the nutrient-carrying veins, then eventually shrivel, eventually killing the tree, was discovered first in 2012 in parks in Ohio. Since then it has spread to 9 counties in Ohio and parts of New York and Pennsylvania.

Asian Long-Horned Beetle Effort now 10 Years Old

Ten years ago, a major infestation of the highly destructive Asian long-horned beetle (ALBs) was discovered in two Worcester neighborhoods. Since then, state, federal and private agencies have worked to eradicate the beetles, which attack maple, birch, ash and other hardwood species, and restore trees to areas where thousands of infested trees had to be removed.

To date, 24,719 trees have had to be cut down in Worcester and surrounding towns to control the infestation within a 110 square mile quarantine zone in Worcester County. A smaller infestation of ALBs was discovered and quickly eradicated near the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. No new ALB infested trees have been discovered in Worcester since 4 infested trees were found and removed in November 2017. State and federal forest health teams continue to monitor and survey for the shiny black beetles and their damage, but so far in 2018, no new problems have been found.

In the meantime, replanting efforts by city, state and private organizations have tried to restore tree cover to neighborhoods severely affected by the forced tree removals.

For more information about ALBs, see www.mass.gov/guides/asian-longhorned-beetle-in-massachusetts

DCR Timber Showing in Colrain August 23rd

The Department of Conservation & Recreation will hold a timber showing for a planned timber harvest at the H.O. Cook State Forest in Heath on August 23rd at 2 p.m at the intersection of Ed Clark and Town Farm Roads in Colrain.

The showing is for the planned harvest of 2,712,603 board feet of timber in H. O. Cook State Forest in Heath. Bid forms and information about the harvest will be available at the showing, or from the Management Forester Nick Anzuoni by calling 413 442-8928.

Sealed bids for this timber sale will be received by the Management Forester at DCR's Western Region headquarters at 740 South Street in Pittsfield on or before 2 pm on September 13th, at which time they will be publicly opened and read.

DCR reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

Ask an Expert

Got a nagging question? A serious one, or a casual one? Think that others might have that same question? Send an e-mail to our executive director with "ask an expert" in the subject, and we'll try and identify an expert, ask them the question, and publish their answer in the next Forest Update.

**MFA Forest Update: Now accepting ads, both graphic and text !
Contact MFA to learn more, or place your ad.**

Upcoming Programs and Training

August 16	Experience of a Mass Timber Builder -- webinars
August 22	Forester Licensing Board – Amherst
August 23	DCR Timber Showing -- Colrain
September 9	Mass Town Forest Conference – Haverhill
September 11	Emerald Ash Borer Field Day – Easthampton
September 13	Emerald Ash Borer Update – webinar
September 15	Christmas Tree Growers Annual Meeting – Hatfield
September 15	Project Learning Tree workshop -- Lawrence
September 18	Capturing Carbon with Trees -- webinar
September 25	Western Mass Tree Wardens Meeting – Northampton

September 26

Northeast Wood Design Symposium -- Boston

Additional information about these and other events will be posted at www.massforestalliance.net/calendar as information becomes available.