



May 9, 2013

Sen. Marc Pacheco, Chair  
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture  
State House, Rm. 312B  
Boston, MA 02133

Rep. Anne Gobi, Chair  
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture  
State House, Rm. 473F  
Boston, MA 02133

**Re: H.657 and S.361, An Act to Protect the Natural Resources of the Commonwealth; a.k.a. The Public Lands Preservation Act (PLPA)**

Dear Chairman Pacheco, Chairwoman Gobi and members of the committee:

The undersigned organizations are longstanding proponents of the need to strengthen the Article 97 process to protect public lands, and longstanding partners with Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Balsler on efforts to pass Article 97 "no net loss" legislation. We write in support of H.657 and S.361 - An Act to Protect the Natural Resources of the Commonwealth ("PLPA" hereinafter). This bill is a redraft of legislation filed in past sessions. We have been working with Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Balsler to address concerns raised over the prior bills, and to ensure the PLPA strikes a balance between no net loss of Article 97 conservation/natural resource lands and providing a fair and predictable land disposition process for municipalities and the legislature.

We respectfully ask the Committee for additional time to finalize the language with Rep. Balsler and Sen. Eldridge, and with your Committee, before the bill moves forward.

The PLPA would codify into statute the current land disposition policy established in 1998 by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). This policy, like the PLPA, has as its goal no net loss of Article 97 land. Because of its carefully-crafted exemptions, we believe the bill would do this without placing undue burden on municipalities or the legislature. Passing the PLPA would ensure that the intent and legacy of land protection would continue on, even as leadership in the administration and the legislature shifts over time.

We look forward to working with the sponsors and your committee on H.657/S.361.

Sincerely,

Ken Pruitt  
Managing Director  
Environmental League of Massachusetts

Stephen Long  
Director of Government Relations  
The Nature Conservancy

*(signatories continue on next page)*

*(signatories, continued)*

Wesley Ward  
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