

Save Massachusetts Forests

H.912 – AN ACT RELATIVE TO FOREST PROTECTION

Background

The proposed *Act Relative to Forest Protection* (H.912) would update century-old public land policies written before we recognized the climate crisis and global loss of biodiversity. This bill would help address these concerns by designating 412,000 acres of forest and watershed lands controlled by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation as parks and reserves. We would permanently conserve 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.

What this law would do:

- **Fight climate change** by allowing forests to grow back and keeping them standing so they can maximize carbon removal from the atmosphere and optimize long-term carbon storage.
- **Prevent forest carbon loss from commercial forest management.** Only 18% of the carbon in a harvested tree is stored in long-lived forest products such as lumber. Most wood becomes short-lived products such as paper or is burned for heat or power, soon releasing its carbon.
- **Protect native biodiversity** by preserving about 8% of the state’s land base – an important step toward the goal of protecting 30% of our nation’s lands and waters by 2030.
- **Mitigate climate change impacts for all Massachusetts residents**, including environmental justice communities, which are especially vulnerable to climate change impacts, coastal areas facing sea-level rise, and urban centers that depend on intact watersheds for drinking water.
- **Provide direct benefits to people**, including clean air and water, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and potential for economic diversification.
- **Allow limited cutting of trees and other vegetation management** if it is proven to be necessary to protect public health and safety, control invasive species, reduce fire hazards, or preserve specialized habitats.
- **Prevent harmful uses**, such as land sales or exchanges; new gas pipelines; commercial solar or wind facilities; pesticide and herbicide spraying; or promotion of woody biomass energy.
- **Safeguard sacred and historic sites** by prohibiting destructive resource extraction and industrial development.
- **Take immediate action to fulfill the commitment by the Governor and Legislature** to employ forest ecosystems to mitigate global warming.

What this law would *not* do:

- Require additional funding.
- Reduce jobs in the private or public sectors.
- Affect how private landowners, municipalities, or counties use their land.
- Restrict how private foresters or loggers do business.
- Limit the Massachusetts wood products industry.
- Change Department of Conservation and Recreation private forest management programs.

H.912 is available here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H912>