

An Act to Require Separate Carbon Accounting for Working Lands and Natural Lands and to Eliminate from Massachusetts Net-Zero Carbon Emissions Goal Any Carbon Offsets Sold to Entities Outside of the Commonwealth

H.895 sponsored by Representative Lindsay Sabadosa

Background:

In recognition of the critical importance of our Natural and Working Lands in meeting our goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA, Chapter 21N), as recently amended¹ now requires measurement and reporting of carbon flows for all natural and working lands in Massachusetts. This legislation lumps all such lands together into a single category, and thereby obscures fundamental differences among lands managed for different purposes. H.895 would further amend GWSA to provide more meaningful and useful information regarding carbon flows to and from these lands.

To this end, H.895 would:

A. Require separate carbon accounting for:

1. Agricultural lands
2. Forested lands managed for wood products
3. Forested lands held in parks and reserves not open to logging
4. Any other lands as may be proposed by the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs

B. Ensure that these different categories are clearly and separately analyzed in order to provide a basis in fact for developing policies and practices to enhance their actual contributions to meeting our net-zero goals.

C. Prevent the unfair appropriation of carbon accumulation on reserved land to first offset emissions from working lands before offsetting any other emissions that would better serve public health, safety, and welfare.

D. Ensure that land-based carbon accumulation in Massachusetts is not counted twice, here and somewhere else, in order to provide an accurate picture of the extent to which Massachusetts lands balance Massachusetts carbon emissions.

Why this is important:

Sound policy requires a sound foundation in fact. H.895 helps to build this foundation by providing critical information on the carbon flows to and from our Natural and Working Lands while preventing unfair withdrawals from our common carbon bank.

¹ By Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021: An Act Creating A Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy.