

April 2, 2019

Dear Chairs Michlewitz and Rodrigues and members of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Fiscal Year 2020 State Operating Budget. We greatly appreciate the work you and your staff put into crafting the budget. On behalf of the Green Budget Coalition, we are writing to share our budget priorities and request support for adequate funding of our environmental agencies.

The Green Budget Coalition has advocated for 1 percent of the overall budget to support environmental protection. We have not seen that level of funding since the early 2000s. Both DEP and DCR have seen staff size shrink by 30% compared to FY09. At the same time, agency responsibilities continue to increase with the necessary emphasis on climate change, adaptation and resiliency. It is important that we restore funding so the environmental agencies can carry out their mandated work. To that end, we have focused on four priority line-items this year to get us closer to our goal. These line-items were selected for the critical impact they have across the Commonwealth, as well as the large return they provide on investment.

We urge both the House and Senate Committees on Ways & Means to include these priorities in their respective budgets:

Department of Conservation and Recreation: State Parks and Recreation (2810-0100)

- Funding request: \$47,000,000 (from \$40.25M in FY19 and \$42.24M in H1)

Responsibilities include: stewardship, management and safety of our parks, beaches, forests, pools, skating rinks, and campgrounds. These properties are currently understaffed, with only two rangers for the entire Berkshires, and a Park Support Operations crew of only 15 professionals responsible for all of the parks.

Additionally, we request that the House and Senate budgets include the DCR Earmarks line-item (2810-0122) for all specific park projects to help insure that the increases to the State Parks and Recreation line-item goes towards staffing.

DCR Watershed Management (2800-0101)

- Funding request: \$1,500,000 (from \$1.1M in FY19 and \$1.12M in H1)

Responsibilities include: protecting our water resources by providing scientific information, policy guidance, technical assistance, and resource management, protects and restores DCR's 300 lakes and 51 freshwater swimming beaches, provides technical assistance to municipalities, and conducts research, drought and flood mapping, and water needs forecasting.

Department of Fish and Game: Division of Ecological Restoration (2300-0101)

- Funding request: \$885,156 (from \$1.255M in FY19 and \$1.34M in H1)

Responsibilities include: restoring and protecting our rivers, wetlands, and watersheds to improve streamflow, protect drinking water supplies, reduce flooding and storm damage, restore fisheries habitat, and create healthier, more resilient ecosystems and communities.

Department of Environmental Protection: Administration (2200-0100)

- Funding request: \$31,500,000 (maintain H1 funding at \$31,500,000 up from \$29.13M in FY19)

Responsibilities include: ensuring clean water, protecting wetlands, compliance and enforcement, waste reduction and recycling, reducing toxics, cleaning up contaminated sites, emergency response, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to comply with the Global Warming Solutions Act.

More than 100 DEP staff took advantage of the Early Retirement Incentive Program in 2015. Of note is that staffing shortages have resulted in enforcement actions for serious violations dropping by more than 50% and fines collected from violators dropping by nearly 75% according to a 2017 [Boston Globe](#) article. With last year's budget increase, DEP was able to post nearly 30 jobs. This year's proposed increase would keep that trend going and enable additional restoration of key staff.

Investing sufficient resources will enable our environmental agencies to carry out their missions. With adequate budgets agencies can focus on:

- Providing technical assistance to communities to ensure their resiliency to climate change impacts.
- Consistent, predictable and fair administration of environmental laws.
- Improving water quality so we have clean water to drink and healthy rivers, lakes, and ponds for recreation and wildlife.
- Managing pollutants that contribute to climate change and increasing the state's resilience to climate change impacts.
- Making sure our parks are accessible, safe, and clean and facilities are well maintained and staffed.
- Protecting critical wetlands.
- Restoring habitat to protect plant and animal species.

For any questions, please contact Casey Bowers, Legislative Director at the Environmental League of Massachusetts: cbowers@environmentalleague.org or 617-742-2553.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

The Green Budget Coalition
(Members listed below)

Green Budget Coalition

Organizational Endorsers:

Appalachian Mountain Club
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Audubon Society
Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts
Arborway Coalition
Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)
Charles River Watershed Association
Clean Water Action
Climate Action Business Association
Environment Massachusetts
Franklin Park Coalition
Friends of Alewife Reservation
Green Newton
Kestrel Land Trust
LivableStreets Alliance
Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
Project Green Schools
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Climate Action Network
Massachusetts Farm to School
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
Massachusetts Sierra Club
Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC)
Mystic River Watershed Association
Nashua River Watershed Association
OARS: For the Assabet, Sudbury and Concord River
The Trustees
Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA