



## FACTS ABOUT H.953: AN ACT RELATIVE TO FOREST PROTECTION

***“Unsurprisingly, disturbing the forests of Massachusetts as little as possible and allowing forests to grow and age...is generally the best approach for maximizing carbon, ecological integrity, and soil health.”***

—Report of the Massachusetts Climate Forestry Committee, December 28, 2023

**An Act Relative to Forest Protection (H.953)** would update century-old public land policies written before recognition of global climate change and biodiversity loss. This bill would address these concerns by designating all state-owned lands under the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as parks or reserves, consistent with the latest climate and biological science.

### What this law would do:

- **Permanently protect 311,000 acres of intact ecosystems** influenced primarily by natural processes, similar to national parks — protection that now exists for only 1% of the state’s land base.
- **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 logging.** Only 18% of carbon in a logged tree is stored in long-lived wood products. Most becomes short-lived products or is burned for energy.
- **Sustain native biodiversity** by preserving about 6% of the state’s land base — an important step toward the international goal of protecting 30% of 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 communities facing sea-level rise, and every resident, as we all depend on intact forests for physical and mental health.
- **Provide direct benefits to people**, including clean air and water, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and natural forest environments that contribute to public health and well-being.
- **Allow vegetation management only in park areas**, for purposes such as ensuring public health and safety, removing invasive species, and maintaining recreation sites, roads, and trails.
- **Prohibit the Commissioner from approving or providing for harmful uses**, such as land sales or exchanges, new gas pipelines, commercial solar or wind facilities, early-successional habitat creation, all cutting of wood for biomass, and most pesticide and herbicide use.
- **Safeguard sacred and historic sites** by prohibiting resource extraction and development.
- **Take immediate action to fulfill the commitment by the Governor** to employ forest ecosystems to mitigate global warming by increasing reserves on public and private land.

### 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.

Bill H.953 is available here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/H953>