



Legislation Summary: An Act increasing the conservation land tax credit:

Bill numbers: HB2839/SB1940

Sponsors: Sen. Bruce Tarr, Rep. Bradley H. Jones, Jr., and Rep. Smitty Pignatelli

The LWVMA supports this bill.

Important lands of the Commonwealth should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability through acquisition or, in this case, the provision of a tax credit to donors of significant land rights to the public interest. The bill would raise the annual cap of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) program from \$2 million to \$5 million per year and amend the definition of "public or private conservation agency" to include realty trusts organized for conservation purposes pursuant to Chapter 203. This category includes many land trusts operating in the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has protected about half of the high-priority conservation land identified in collaboration between the environmental agencies and conservation community. Statewide conservation plans recommend ultimate protection of about 1 million acres of those remaining acres. Assuming these remaining "top-priority conservation" lands of the state are owned by about 100,000 owners, the potential applicant pool for this program is huge.

The CLTC will deliver benefits to the citizens of Massachusetts. Each \$1 of state tax credits has leveraged \$4.28 of private land donated value. Enacted in 2008, program was launched in the fall of 2011. For calendar years 2011 through 2018 combined: The total appraised value of the donated conservation land was \$62.75 million, costing the state \$14.7 million in tax credits and permanently protecting 12,056 acres.

Land conserved under the CLTC program helps generate revenue from private sector activity in forestry and agriculture and saves public revenues in water supply protection.

The LWV believes that we must promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest and that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability.