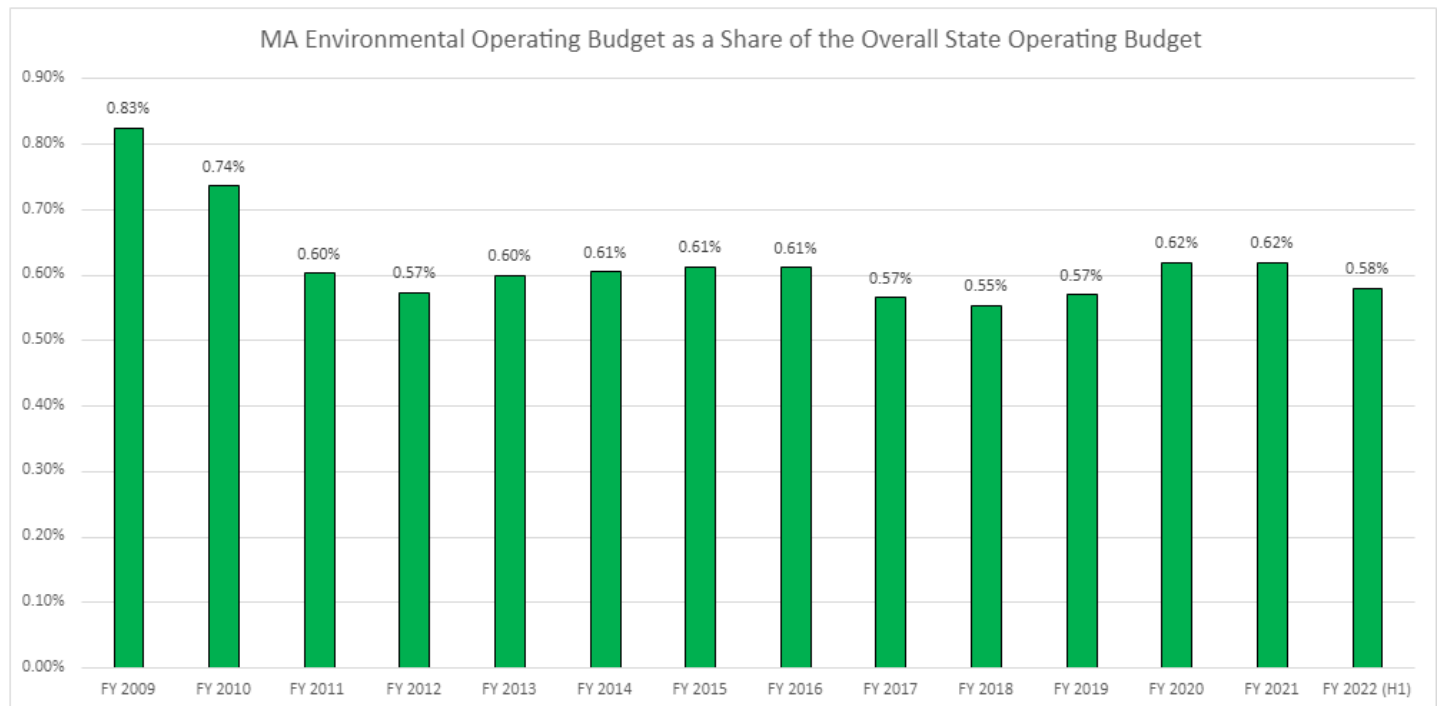




Green Budget FY22

Key points about the Massachusetts environmental budget

- Currently, 0.62% of the state’s operating budget goes to protect our environment. By contrast, in the early 2000’s, 1% of the state budget supported our environmental agencies.
- A healthy environment has been sustaining us through the pandemic and is in higher demand than ever. Tourism, agriculture, outdoor recreation, the fishing industry, and clean energy are important job and revenue generators.
- Current environmental agency funding is insufficient to meet demands and growing responsibilities.
 - The Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) have suffered drastic cuts during prior downturns and are just recovering from 2008.
 - Many DCR properties are understaffed or have such minimal staff presence that enforcement, safety, programming, and user experience are being negatively impacted – at a time they are being used more than ever.
 - MassDEP staff is stretched to cover its wide-ranging responsibilities. Additional staff are needed to monitor water quality, enforce solid waste bans, and deal with newer issues such as emerging contaminants (including PFAS) and climate change regulation.



The Green Budget includes the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Department of Agricultural Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Fish and Game.

Priority line-items

- Increase DCR’s State Parks and Recreation line item (2810-0100) to \$50M
- Increase MassDEP’s Administration line item (2200-0100) to \$40M
- Increase DER’s line item (2300-0101) to \$3M
- Increase NHESP’s line item (2310-0300) to \$1M

For more information: Casey Bowers, Legislative Director, Environmental League of Massachusetts,
cbowers@environmentalleague.org, 781-771-5404



Green Budget FY22 Department of Environmental Protection Administration

Request

Increase the Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Administration line-item (2200-0100) by \$6.88M to \$40M (from \$39.78M in FY21). H1 is \$33.12M.

Overview

- MassDEP has a broad set of critical responsibilities for public health and safety, including ensuring clean air and water, watershed planning and permitting, the safe management of toxics, enforcing environmental laws, reducing solid waste, the timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.
- The Administration line-item is the primary funding source supporting MassDEP's permit, compliance, and enforcement mission.
- This account funds personnel for statewide planning, monitoring, permit review, compliance inspections, enforcement, and technical assistance for the following environmental programs:
 - Clean Air
 - Solid and Hazardous Waste Management
 - Drinking Water Program
 - Wetlands and Waterways
 - Watershed Planning and Assessment
 - Industrial Wastewater Management
- MassDEP is continuing to spearhead significant water related initiatives. They are working with EPA to investigate pesticide products for toxic PFAS contamination, developing site-specific aluminum criteria for waterbodies for the first time, revising the statewide Stormwater Handbook, and developing a targeted statewide monitoring network with the U.S. Geological Survey. They are also undergoing a stakeholder input process to update water registrations to further protect water supply during periods of drought.

Examples of Need

- MassDEP's Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program is carved out of its operating budget, meaning that neither staff nor grantees know the scope of grants available until later in the year.
- More than 100 MassDEP employees took advantage of the Early Retirement Incentive Program in 2015. MassDEP currently has 75% of the FTEs it had in 2009; this dip in staffing levels contributes to significant work backlog. An addition of \$1 million for the MassDEP Administration line-item would enable the agency to hire back approximately 10-12 staff.
- Despite these staffing cuts, MassDEP faces additional responsibilities to comply with Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decisions (like the 2018 decision to uphold the state's ability to cut emissions from power plants,) and to implement new laws and regulations, including a new sewage discharge notification law.
- Deep budget cuts have jeopardized the ability of MassDEP to do its work. The agency is extremely limited in its ability to issue permits in a timely fashion, provide technical assistance, and enforce state law.
- According to an investigation in 2020 by the Boston Globe, MassDEP failed to submit watershed safety data to federal regulators, as required by the Clean Water Act, in addition to a 50% decrease in enforcement of serious violations and a 75% decrease in fine collections. This lack of action is a direct result of MassDEP's elimination of compliance and enforcement positions.



Green Budget FY22 Department of Conservation and Recreation: State Parks and Recreation

Request

Increase the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) State Parks and Recreation line item (2810-0100) by \$2.62M to \$50M (from \$51.53M in FY21 with earmarks). H1 is \$47.38M.

Overview

- DCR is responsible for the stewardship, management, and safety of our parks, beaches, forests, pools, skating rinks, and campgrounds including:
 - 450,000 acres of land across over 250 properties and nearly 2,000 miles of trails.
 - Forests that protect drinking water supplies for millions of people in the Commonwealth.
- DCR contributes to our quality of life, public health, and our economy.
- DCR's parks supports \$16.2 billion in annual recreation spending.
- State parks serve people of all income levels, offering access to natural treasures and beauty of Massachusetts.
- According to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) COVID-19 Community Mobility Report, DCR parks saw an average of 99% increase in traffic across the state, with a 300% increase in some counties.

Examples of Need

- The agency lost nearly 400 full-time positions (30% of its workforce) over eight years. The FY21 increase is helping reverse that trend, and there is further to go to restore services.
- DCR currently has approximately 896 full-time equivalent staff (FTEs), down from 1,279 in 2008
- The entire state is served by only a 15-person park operations support crew. DCR field managers are now spread across more properties, leaving many facilities and lands essentially unstaffed or infrequently monitored which impacts public safety and enforcement of environmental laws.
- Continued prioritization of the staffing of visitor centers.
- The impacts of climate change are worsening. DCR properties need to be prepared for flooding, new pests, risk of infections, and other climate risks.

Special Projects (2810-0122):

It continues to be helpful to assign special projects to a separate account (2810-0122) rather than the State Parks & Recreation account. Continuing that practice is appreciated.



Green Budget FY22 Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

Request

Increase MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program line-item (2310-0300) to \$1M (from \$500k in FY21). H1 is \$154,222.

Overview

- MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) is responsible for the protection, management, and restoration of the Commonwealth's most imperiled animals and plants and the sensitive communities and habitats on which they depend, including species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA).
- This line item funds NHESP staff and operations, including:
 - Recovering rare species populations through restoration efforts and active management of habitat.
 - Collecting, managing, and analyzing biological data on rare species and vulnerable natural communities to inform conservation efforts statewide.
 - Conducting regulatory reviews.
 - Providing educational programming, publications, and conservation tools to connect residents with nature and help guide state and partner conservation efforts – including the widely respected BioMap, Living Waters, and BioMap2.
- Over 400 native plant and animal species remain listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern under MESA. In the face of habitat loss, emerging diseases, invasive species, and climate change, this work is more important than ever.

Examples of Need

- Prior to FY04, annual funding for NHESP was more than \$500,000. In FY04, the NHESP line item was eliminated and was not restored until FY12. Until last year, the state provided \$154,000 for this important program, accounting for only 5% of NHESP's annual operating budget.¹
- Aside from the small line item and modest MESA regulatory review fees, the NHESP depends heavily on grants and donations from a voluntary state income tax check off to fund its operations.
- In recent years, the NHESP has consistently run a significant operating deficit. MassWildlife's current approach to addressing this deficit is unsustainable and places an excessive and unfair burden on hunters and anglers.
- Increased funding is needed to close the deficit, reduce reliance on fluctuating federal funds, meet strict regulatory review requirements, pursue BioMap3, and permanently protect biological diversity.
- The bulk of the requested funding is required to address the structural program deficit and *maintain existing NHESP operations*. Fully funding this request would enable the program to fill positions that have been put on hold. This will enable the program to expand science, mapping, management, and restoration efforts, and serve developers timely needs for regulatory review.
- If fully funded at \$1M, general funds would still account for less than 35% of the NHESP budget, providing outstanding leverage on this investment. Everyone benefits from well-managed natural areas and open spaces, clean waters, and healthy plants and wildlife populations. An investment in diversified and sustainable NHESP funding is an investment worth making.

¹ This does not include a \$70,000 and \$100,000 earmark for piping plover habitat restoration received in FY18 and FY19, respectfully, which was not provided in FY20 or 21.



Green Budget FY22 Division of Ecological Restoration

Request

Increase the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) FY22 operating budget line item (2300-0101) by \$400k to \$3M (from \$2.6M in FY21). H1 is \$2M.

Overview

- DER partners with municipalities, agencies, and NGOs to complete projects, such as dam removals, culvert replacement, salt marsh restoration, and urban river revitalization.
- DER staff guide restoration projects through design and permitting, positioning projects for successful implementation through state, federal, and NGO funding programs.
- DER projects support the Commonwealth's priorities for climate adaptation, public safety, and habitat restoration while generating significant economic benefits. DER's technical assistance and project leadership is critical to carrying out projects identified in Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plans, the 2018 State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan, and the Dam and Seawall Fund.
- DER will play a critical role in positioning the Commonwealth to take advantage of anticipated federal transportation and infrastructure stimulus funds. Through their work, they have a strong pipeline of shovel-ready projects that could use such funds to repair aging infrastructure, improve community safety and resiliency, and restore natural systems.
- DER's budget and staffing levels are still well below what's needed to meet existing community demands for support.

Examples of Need

- Requests for DER's technical, project management, and funding assistance far exceed DER's resources. There are 3,000 dams and 25,000 culverts and small bridges across the state, many of which are deteriorating and are vulnerable to threats from severe storms and flooding. Aging dams and culverts impact environmental health, public safety, municipal budgets, and community resiliency to climate change. Communities want to remove dams and upgrade culverts but lack the knowledge, technical skills, and funds to do so. In FY20, for example, DER received grant proposals to replace culverts from 78 municipalities requesting more than \$6.4 million in funds, but they only had \$750,000 to disperse for grant support.
 - The Massachusetts Culverts and Small Bridges Working Group (2020) calls for over \$50 million over four years to expand culvert and small bridge projects, as well as \$100,000 for expanded training programs. Should capital funding increase, operational funding for DER to increase capacity to assist municipalities must also increase.
- In 2020, DER secured a \$10 million federal grant through the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to support a partnership-based effort to protect open space and restore streams and wetlands on former cranberry bog farmland in southeastern Massachusetts. DER's Cranberry Bog Program helps farmers pursue land protection and restoration. It is anticipated that 25% of farmers may seek to retire bog lands over the next five years, which could result in over 3,000 acres of bogs going fallow. These conditions present a unique need and opportunity to restore wetlands and protect vast areas of critical habitat. Once restored, these lands can provide important climate adaptation benefits for water quality, flood control, biodiversity, and public recreation.

Return on Investment (operating and capital budgets)

- DER has 26 FTE's currently. Restoration staff manage projects, provide 1:1 technical assistance to municipalities and landowners, oversee grant programs, and develop training programs and tools for communities and landowners. With an FY22 increase, DER would be able to hire 4-5 additional project managers and staff that will



support watershed organizations and others in building their own capacity to lead and support restoration/adaptation projects.

- Each of DER's project managers oversees 5-10 dam removal, culvert replacement, or wetland restoration projects, completing 1-3 projects every year.
- On average, DER leverages \$5 in external funding for every \$1 of state capital investment.
- Every \$1 million in state investment, combined with leveraged funds, supports approximately 10 dam removal projects, 10 culvert replacement projects, or 150 acres of restored wetland.
- State investment through DER creates or sustains high-paying jobs in construction and engineering sectors (12.5 jobs per \$1 million spent).
- Completed restoration-adaptation projects also save communities money through avoided infrastructure maintenance and storm damage costs, and reduced expenses for emergency response, evacuations, and business shutdowns resulting from flooding and road closures.

