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Patrick-Murray Administration Awards Nearly \$2 Million in Grants to Protect 722 Acres of Land in Nine Communities

[Map of the Communities Statewide](#)

BOSTON – Thursday, December 22, 2011 – Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. today announced that land conservation grants totaling over \$1.9 million will help nine Massachusetts municipalities purchase 722 acres of farms, wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitat.

The Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grants will fund land conservation projects in **Berlin, Bolton, Easton, Framingham, Georgetown, Leverett, Monson, Northampton** and **Phillipston**.

Since 2007, the Patrick-Murray Administration has conserved more than 88,000 acres of land throughout the Commonwealth, the equivalent of 49 acres per day. Under this unprecedented conservation effort, more than 15,500 acres of pristine habitat have been preserved and more than 150 parks have been created or restored.

The nine grants announced today will help fund a variety of projects – including one in Northampton that will add to the highly used Mineral Hills Conservation Area. Other grants will fund projects to connect open space and trail networks, and protect rare species habitat, key water resources and working farms and forests. Northampton’s highly popular Mineral Hills Conservation Area

“With Governor Patrick’s dedication and leadership to land conservation, we’ve achieved some significant results in partnership with municipal officials, private land owners, and land trusts,” said Secretary Sullivan. “Through partnering with communities, we are leveraging further investment in our local economies, preserving open space for public recreation, and protecting vital wetlands and wildlife habitat.”

Since 1961, EEA's LAND (formerly known as Self Help) awards have helped cities and towns acquire land for conservation and outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, wildlife watching, fishing, hunting, and cross-country skiing. Funding for the grants comes from the Energy and Environment Bond Bill signed by Governor Patrick in 2008. To qualify for the reimbursement grants, communities must fund projects upfront through local, federal, or private sources and the protected open space must be open to the public.

Municipalities may use grant funds for outright land purchases or partial interests, such as conservation restrictions, and for associated acquisition costs.

Monies from this round of grants will leverage more than \$5.2 million in additional non-state dollars raised by Massachusetts cities, towns and land trusts.

“This is wonderful news,” said Sen. Marc Pacheco, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. “By protecting these important habitats, wetlands, and forests we not only provide the public with additional recreation opportunities, but also help to protect our environmental and public health. I applaud the Patrick-Murray Administration for their continued commitment to land conservation and ensuring these resources are available for future generations.”

“It is wonderful to see areas being protected that abut other protected properties creating green necklaces in some of the most beautiful areas of the Commonwealth,” said Rep. Anne Gobi, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The following communities have been selected to receive LAND grant funding:

- **Monson – Quinlan Memorial Project – \$253,120** to protect 139 acres of forested upland within a large undeveloped area that has long been a conservation priority and which abuts other protected land owned by the town and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation. An actively managed forest, the parcel also protects a town drinking water aquifer and supports diverse wildlife – classified as BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, defined as an area that is well suited to support ecological processes, disturbances, and wide-ranging species. Trails are already established and provide good connections to other public lands.
- **Berlin – Mt. Pisgah Area Protection Project: Eager Forest – \$ 232,646** will be used as part of a multi-year effort to preserve priority farms, woodlands, and wetlands in the Mt. Pisgah region. This 57-acre property serves an important wildlife corridor, classified as BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape. The property will be open to the public for low impact recreation, such as hiking, fishing and hunting.
- **Leverett – Teawaddle Hill Farm – \$237,600** to preserve a 147-acre farm, which has been active for over 200 years, through the purchase of a conservation restriction. The farmers have been restoring the property, currently raising cattle and producing maple syrup. The farm includes 40 acres of open pasture, 100 acres of woodland, a sugarbush, and wetlands. This project forms an important connection between adjacent conservation lands, and is classified as BioMap2 Core Habitat. Multiple project partners have come together for this project, including the town of Leverett, The Kestrel Land Trust, and The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. Trails and woods roads run throughout the property and will be open to the public for low impact recreation.
- **Phillipston – Houghton Project – \$115,200** to protect a former orchard and hill property that forms an important link between over 5,000 acres of other

- conservation lands and has significant frontage on 1,000 Acre Swamp, an area of local and statewide conservation focus. The project is identified as BioMap2 Critical Natural Landscape. The 97-acre project includes an outright acquisition and a conservation restriction component. The property will be open to the public for low impact recreation.
- **Northampton – Mineral Hills Bookends Project – \$408,960** for a 96-acre project that consists of two parcels at high-risk for development and will add to Northampton’s highly popular Mineral Hills Conservation Area. The southern six-acre “bookend” is a parcel that was cleared for a house lot. The lot will be restored and the road discontinued after city acquisition. The larger 90-acre northern parcel includes wetlands, woodland, and Biomap 2 Critical Natural Landscape. This project will add to the trail network of this growing conservation block spanning the Northampton-Westhampton border, and will be open to the public for passive recreational use.
 - **Bolton – Weatherbee Farm – \$96,404** for a 12 acre conservation restriction that will protect an historic farm and 1789 homestead – the James Houghton House and the William Coolidge House. The farm is directly adjacent to Bowers Springs Conservation Area, in Bolton and Harvard, from which it can be accessed by the public for low impact recreation and outdoor education.
 - **Framingham – Eastleigh Farm – \$500,000** for a conservation restriction on the 112-acre farm, which produces raw milk products. A working farm since the 1700s, it includes woodlands and pasture as well as significant wetlands, and BioMap2 Core and Critical Natural Landscape habitat. The restriction will also establish an important link to other protected land in the area, including Callahan State Park and several properties owned by Sudbury Valley Trustees. The property will be open to the public for low impact recreation.
 - **Georgetown – Driftway Farm – \$153,000** for protection of a 32-acre forest that abuts the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's Crane Pond Wildlife Management Area and to establish public access to a planned new section of the Border-to-Boston Rail Trail. The property includes extensive wetlands and BioMap2 Core Habitat, and is located within the town of Newbury's public drinking water supply area. Protection will prevent the loss of this forest to development in this fast-growing town. The property will be open to the public for low impact recreation.

FY13 Award

- **Easton – Governor Ames Estate – \$500,000** for a one-of-a-kind project that will protect 30 acres of the historic Ames Family Estate and open it as a community park. Located in the center of downtown Easton, the estate is a beautiful and important piece of 19th century Massachusetts architectural and cultural history and the grounds of which were designed as an arboretum, with meadows, woods, ponds, and a wetland. The town is partnering with The Trustees of Reservations, which will acquire the fee interest and operate the park, which it anticipates opening to the public in 2013.

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