'The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment; and the protection of the people in their right to the conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources is hereby declared to be a public purpose'. - Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution

Public Lands Preservation Act

Lead Sponsors: Senator James B. Eldridge (Acton) and Representative Ruth B. Balser (Newton)

In 1972, Massachusetts voters approved Article 97 of the state constitution to provide greater protection for public parks, conservation areas, forests and watershed lands. Disposing of or changing the use of such municipal or state land requires a favorable two-thirds vote of each branch of the legislature.

The Public Lands Protection Act (PLPA) would codify current state policy that there be no net loss of lands or easements protected under Article 97, while establishing a transparent and timely process for the transfer or change in use of state and municipal Article 97 land. The bill would ensure that the integrity of Article 97 is upheld, while providing clear cost- and time- effective guidelines for municipalities to follow when submitting proposed Article 97 dispositions to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for review.

The PLPA would:
- Require that replacement land of comparable acreage, location and natural resource value be provided for each Article 97 disposition
- Require prior notification to EOEEA
- Increase transparency and efficiency in decision making process by EOEEA
- Establish waiver exemption from replacement land requirement in specific circumstances
- Provide clarity, increase efficiency, and reduce costs for municipalities and state agencies seeking disposition of Article 97 land
- Establish requirement for EOEEA to make recommendations to legislature on specific dispositions, to better inform legislative action

Benefits
Public land provides the Commonwealth with many benefits, including protecting drinking water supplies, clean air, agriculture, forestry, recreation and tourism. Article 97 lands were protected using taxpayer dollars or donor contributions, and this bill will ensure that Article 97 dispositions don’t undermine this protection.

Supporting Organizations
Over 100 public and private organizations support the Public Lands Protection Act, including the Environmental League of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, Mass Audubon, The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts, Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club, The Trustees, and many more (see over).

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PUBLIC LANDS PRESERVATION ACT SUPPORTERS

**Private**

- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Arborway Coalition
- Association to Preserve Cape Cod
- Barnstable Land Trust
- Berkshire Environmental Action Team
- Berkshire Natural Resources Council
- Boston Climate Action Network
- Brookline GreenSpace Alliance
- Charles River Conservancy
- Charles River Watershed Association
- Clean Water Action
- Connecticut River Conservancy
- Conservation Law Foundation
- East Quabbin Land Trust
- Emerald Necklace Conservancy
- Environment Massachusetts
- Environmental League of Massachusetts
- Essex County Greenbelt Association
- Essex County Trail Association
- Franklin Land Trust
- Friends of Harold Parker State Park
- Friends of Peru State Forest
- Friends of Robinson State Park
- Friends of the Blue Hills
- Friends of the Burlington Landlocked Forrest
- Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation
- Gateways Farm
- Green Berkshires
- Gun Owner's Action League
- Housatonic River Initiative
- Jones River Watershed Association
- Lincoln Land Conservation Trust
- Mass Audubon
- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
- Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
- Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters
- Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
- Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals
- Merrimack River Watershed Council
- Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
- Nashua River Watershed Association
- New England Forestry Foundation
- New England Wild Flower Society
- Newton Conservators
- North County Land Trust
- North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership
- Richmond Land Trust
- Sheffield Land Trust
- Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter
- Soule Homestead Education Center
- Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance
- Southwest Corridor Park Management Advisory Committee
- Sudbury Valley Trustees
- Taunton River Watershed Alliance, Inc.
- The Esplanade Association
- The Kestrel Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Trustees of Reservations
- Wachusett Greenways
- Waltham Land Trust
- Whately Land Preservation
- White Oak Land Conservation Society

**Public**

- Andover Conservation Commission
- Arlington Conservation Commission
- Ashland Conservation Commission
- Berlin Conservation Commission
- Beverly Conservation Commission
- Boxford Conservation Commission
- Brewster Conservation Commission
- Brookline Conservation Commission
- Burlington Conservation Commission
- Carlisle Conservation Commission
- Carver Conservation Commission
- Chicopee Conservation Commission
- Concord Natural Resources Commission
- Conway Conservation Commission
- Danvers Conservation Commission
- Douglas Conservation Commission
- Dudley Conservation Commission
- Essex Conservation Commission
- Foxborough Conservation Commission
- Franklin Conservation Commission
- Gloucester Conservation Commission
- Hadley Conservation Commission
- Harvard Conservation Commission
- Hingham Conservation Commission
- Holden Conservation Commission
- Holliston Conservation Commission
- Hopkinton Conservation Commission
- Huntington Conservation Commission
- Ipswich Conservation Commission
- Kingston Conservation Commission
- Lawrence Conservation Commission
- Lee Conservation Commission
- Leverett Conservation Commission
- Lincoln Conservation Commission
- Longmeadow Conservation Commission
- Medfield Conservation Commission
- Mendon Conservation Commission
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Norfolk Conservation Commission
- North Andover Conservation Commission
- Norton Conservation Commission
- Norwell Conservation Commission
- Palmer Conservation Commission
- Peabody Conservation Commission
- Pepperell Conservation Commission
- Plymouth Conservation Commission
- Provincetown Conservation Commission
- Rehoboth Conservation Commission
- Rockport Conservation Commission
- Rowley Conservation Commission
- Saugus Conservation Commission
- Sherborn Conservation Commission
- Somerville Conservation Commission
- Southwick Conservation Commission
- Stoneham Conservation Commission
- Stow Conservation Commission
- Templeton Conservation Commission
- Topsfield Conservation Commission
- Wachusett Conservation Commission
- Wenham Conservation Commission
- West Brookfield Conservation Commission
- Weston Conservation Commission
- Weston Planning Board
- Winthrop Conservation Commission
- Wrentham Conservation Commission

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