BOSTON – Tuesday, April 17, 2012 – Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr. today announced a land conservation grant of $500,000 that will help the town of Ashland purchase and conserve the 101-acre Warren Woods property.

This grant is through the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) program. Earlier this year EEA awarded nearly $2 million in grants to the nine communities of Berlin, Bolton, Easton, Framingham, Georgetown, Leverett, Monson, Northampton and Phillipston.

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

The grant announced today will allow the town of Ashland to purchase the last large undeveloped parcel in a town that has witnessed significant growth. In addition to encompassing a drinking water supply area, Warren Woods also includes forest area, wooded swamp and meadows that are already popular for public trail use.

Formerly part of the Henry Warren homestead, the property was gifted to Northeastern University, which sold other nearby holdings for development and is seeking to do the same with this property.

"This is wonderful news for the Town of Ashland and I am very pleased to have been able to work with the Administration to secure this valuable grant for my community," said Sen. Karen Spilka. "This program is a collaborative effort among the Administration, Legislature, and Town officials and these LAND grants continue to be a priority for us. This critical grant will help Ashland have the necessary resources and funds to protect Warren Woods, a beautiful, historic piece of land and ensure that it remains a place that residents and visitors can enjoy for generations to come. Today's investment in Ashland will preserve access to significant open space and improve the quality of life for current and future residents."

Since 2007, the Patrick-Murray Administration has conserved more than 90,000 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.

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 program 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.