

# Patrick Administration Announces Conservation of Over 200,000 Acres of Land by Department of Fish and Game

## Agency Praises 75 Conservation Partners and Hundreds of Conservation-Minded Landowners Critical to the Habitat Protection Effort

WEST STOCKBRIDGE — Tuesday, October 29, 2013 — The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and its Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) today joined state officials and conservationists at the Maple Hill Wildlife Management Area to celebrate the protection of over 200,000 acres of Massachusetts land after the agency acquired 3,525 acres of conservation land during fiscal year 2013. The agency now manages 200,442 acres statewide.

“Governor Patrick’s historic commitment to open space protection has resulted in approximately 40,000 of these acres conserved since 2007,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rick Sullivan. “I thank DFG and the many conservation organizations and individuals who contributed to this achievement.”

“Land conservation depends on partnerships with conservation organizations, land trusts, sportsmen and conservation-minded landowners and financial support from these groups and the state and federal government,” said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin. “We are grateful to 75 partners that have worked with us during the Patrick Administration and appreciate the support of all people in Massachusetts who contributed to the milestone achievement of 200,000 acres protected.”

DFG and MassWildlife jointly administer the agency’s [land protection program](#). Under Governor Patrick’s Administration, the agency has invested more than \$64 million for land acquisition and conserved almost 40,000 acres. The agency’s commitment to land conservation dates back to the early 1900s, but DFG managed just 3,375 acres prior to 1954. Acquisition from 1954 to approximately 1983 relied largely on sportsmen’s license dollars. Since the passage of the first open space bond bill in 1983, approximately 30,000 acres are attributable to the Land Stamp funding collected from purchasers of fishing, hunting and trapping licenses.

“Sportsmen and women have played an important part in the conservation of wildlife lands,” said MassWildlife Director Wayne MacCallum. “Since the passage of the 1990 sportsmen-initiated legislation requiring the purchase of a Wildlands Conservation Stamp, the amount of state wildlife lands has increased from less than 50,000 acres to more than 200,000 acres.”

“The protection of open space for wildlife and the citizens of Massachusetts now and for the future has been a priority of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board,” said George Darey, Chairman of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board. “We are mindful of and very appreciative of the sporting public’s willingness to shoulder some of those costs.”

DFG has acquired conservation properties throughout the state in reaching the 200,000 acre milestone. Highlights from recent years include the following projects:

Paul C. Jones Working Forest, 3,486 acres in Leverett and Shutesbury. In December 2011, working in partnership with the Kestrel Land Trust, Franklin Land Trust, W.D. Cows, Inc., the Open Space Institute and the U.S. Forest Legacy Program, the agency acquired a Conservation Restriction on 3,486 acres of working forest land for \$8.8 million, with about \$3 million in state funding. The conservation restriction ensures that the property will not be developed, protecting critical wildlife habitat and providing public access for hunting, fishing, hiking and other recreation. The forest will continue to be sustainably managed by W.D. Cows, providing for diverse wildlife habitat and supporting local forest harvesting and processing jobs.

Flagg Mountain Wildlife Management Area, 160 acres in Conway. In May 2013, working in partnership with the Franklin Land Trust, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, DFG/DFW was able to protect Flagg Mountain from development. The agency acquired the property at no cost to the Commonwealth due to an \$850,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program. The Flagg Mountain Wildlife Management Area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife and plants, including white-tailed deer, black bear, moose, wild turkey, red fox, mountain columbine and numerous songbirds. The new area abuts approximately 330 acres managed by the New England Forestry Foundation, which links to the 93-acre Buckland State Forest, forming a wildlife corridor of more than 580 acres.

West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area, 320 acres in West Brookfield. In December 2011, the agency acquired the property using \$570,000 in open space bond funds and celebrated the creation of the new 320-acre West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area with project partner the East Quabbin Land Trust. The new area provides diverse habitats of managed hayfields, wet meadows, old orchards, mature upland forests and brushy field habitats. Many wildlife species including white-tailed deer, wild turkey, black bear, otter, mink, black duck, mallard, song birds, diverse insects and amphibians all use the land. Conservation of the property will sustain the coldwater fishery in Mill Brook that hosts a native population of eastern brook trout and protect the water quality of this tributary to Lake Wickaboag. The property is open to the public for hunting, fishing, bird watching, hiking, cross-country skiing and other non-motorized outdoor recreation.

Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area, 39 acres in Townsend. DFG/DFW acquired 39 acres of land along the Squannacook River from the Rossbach family in December 2012 for \$225,000. The property directly abuts the 49-acre former Bellerman property acquired by the agency in 2006 and is now part of the Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area. The area consists of more than 1,700 acres in fee and over 900 additional acres in conservation restrictions. It stretches along the river through the towns of Ashby, Townsend, Groton, Shirley and Ayer. The Squannacook River is one of the few cold water fisheries in eastern Massachusetts and is stocked with trout both in the spring and fall. Rare species associated with the Squannacook River include freshwater mussels, dragonflies, salamanders, fish and turtles.

Halfway Pond Wildlife Management Area, 152 acres in Plymouth. Over three fiscal years starting in 2009, DFG and DFW established a new 152-acre wildlife management area adjacent to Halfway Pond in Plymouth. The agency acquired the land from A.D. Makepeace Company for a total cost of just over \$3.1 million. Halfway Pond is a rare coastal plain pond that contains an incredibly rich array of natural resources,

including 18 state-listed rare species. Healthy bald eagle chicks were observed in a nest adjacent to the pond during the spring of 2013.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water and terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's rivers, lakes and coastal waters.