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Governor Baker Signs Climate Change Strategy Executive Order
Order Works to Reduce Carbon Emissions, Protect Residents and Municipalities, Build More Resilient Commonwealth

BOSTON – Building on the Baker-Polito Administration’s strong leadership to mitigate and adapt to climate change, Governor Baker today signed an Executive Order which lays out a comprehensive approach to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard residents, municipalities and businesses from the impacts of climate change, and build a more resilient Commonwealth. The Order, Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth, represents the collaboration between the Office of the Governor, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, and key state, local and environmental stakeholders.

“Combatting and preparing for the impacts of climate change will require a holistic approach across state and local government and collaboration with stakeholders from all corners of the Commonwealth,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “By signing this Executive Order, our administration is taking an important step to protect public health and safety, local infrastructure, small businesses, and our state’s abundant natural resources from the effects of climate change.”

“Cities and towns across Massachusetts are on the front lines of climate change and our administration stands ready to help them meet this challenge,” said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. “Building on our administration’s commitment to municipalities through the Community Compact and Green Communities programs, the Executive Order signed by Governor Baker continues to enhance strong state and local partnerships, and provides
direct support and technical assistance to help cities and towns adapt to climate change.”

“The Baker-Polito Administration, in addition to cities and towns across Massachusetts, continues to reduce carbon emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change,” said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton. “This Executive Order builds on those innovative efforts to ensure the Commonwealth is collaborating in a proactive, strategic manner across state government and with our local partners and stakeholders to address this challenge.”

The Executive Order ensures that Massachusetts will continue to lead by example and collaborate across state government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resiliency within government operations. The Order also directs the Executive Offices of Energy and Environmental Affairs and Public Safety and Security to lead the development and implementation of a statewide comprehensive climate adaptation plan that will provide a blueprint for protecting the built and natural environment of the Commonwealth, based on the best available data on existing and projected climate change impacts. Additionally, each Executive Office within the Baker-Polito Administration will be required to designate a Climate Change Coordinator who will work to complete a vulnerability assessment for each office, and assist with implementation and coordination of adaptation and mitigation efforts across state government.

"Addressing the challenges of climate change requires a broad and comprehensive strategy,” said Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack. “This Executive Order will ensure state and local officials have the resources and support needed to promote sustainable growth and development that protects communities and natural resources across the Commonwealth."

Recognizing the need to strengthen the resilience of communities throughout Massachusetts, the Executive Order directs the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to coordinate assistance to cities and towns as they prepare for the impacts of climate change.

“Communities are currently dealing with the impacts of a historic drought and the effects of extreme weather events,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Daniel Bennett. “This Order will enhance state and local collaboration, helping communities to more quickly recover from violent storms and extreme weather.”

“Worcester has adopted a comprehensive clean energy program and will build the region’s largest municipal solar array on a capped landfill, because we recognize that we all have a stake in the health of our planet,” said Worcester City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr. “I look forward to continue working with the Baker-Polito Administration to make the Commonwealth a leader in the effort to reduce greenhouse gases and safeguard our children’s future.”

“The Governor’s Executive Order on climate change will have a positive impact on communities across the Commonwealth by giving municipalities the resources and
capacity to assess local climate risks and plan for a changing climate,” said Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll. “Salem is already preparing for the effects of climate change with a variety of planning efforts and capital investments, and this Executive Order will enable municipalities to work toward long-term solutions to protect the safety and well-being of residents, as well as our infrastructure and economy.”

To further position Massachusetts to meet the state’s environmental requirements under the Global Warming Solutions Act, the Executive Order directs the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to engage stakeholders, examine emission limits from a range of sectors, and outline a timeline to promulgate regulations to ensure the Commonwealth meets statewide carbon reduction targets. In addition, the Baker-Polito Administration will work with state and regional transportation leaders, and environment and energy agencies to outline additional steps necessary to develop regional policies to reduce transportation sector emissions. The work will be concurrent with efforts to continue to lead on reform of regional electric energy markets so that power generators can all compete to meet the state mandates for clean energy. The state will also complete a comprehensive energy plan that will enable forward-looking analysis of energy demands and strategies for meeting these demands that include conservation, energy efficiency and other demand-reduction resources.

“As directed by the Governor, MassDEP will work with stakeholders to develop the needed rules to ensure meeting 2020 emission limits mandated by the Global Warming Solutions Act,” said MassDEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg. “These rules will be completed per the schedule in the Executive Order and in the immediate future, MassDEP will have its website up and running for people to comment and learn the latest about the development of these rules.”

“With the stroke of a pen, Governor Baker has moved the Commonwealth’s conversation about GWSA implementation and climate change from legal quibbling to getting the job done, while also acting to protect our economy and communities from climate threats that are now unavoidable,” said Conservation Law Foundation president Bradley Campbell. “CLF looks forward to working with the administration to develop meaningful, effective regulations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions as the law requires and change destructive patterns of development that ignore climate risk.”

“We applaud Governor Baker’s leadership in making the Commonwealth more resilient to the impacts of climate change,” said Wayne Klockner, State director of the Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts. “We look forward to working together to better prepare the Commonwealth’s citizens and natural assets for the impacts of a changing climate.”

The Executive Order, which will be reviewed again in 2019 and every five years thereafter, builds upon significant efforts already ongoing across the Baker-Polito Administration to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Initiatives and programs underway across state government include vulnerability assessments and resiliency plans within the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, Department of Transportation, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, and MassPort. To address
mitigation, the Commonwealth has been working since 2008 to implement the Global Warming Solutions Act, and has numerous policies and initiatives in place to help meet emissions reduction limits. Other existing initiatives and grant programs include the Dam and Seawall Repair Fund, the Coastal Resiliency Grant Program, the Lead by Example Program, the Community Clean Energy Resiliency Initiative. Climate change initiatives are also currently underway at regional planning agencies and in inland and coastal communities across Massachusetts.

“Massachusetts has long been recognized as a frontrunner on protecting the environment from the disastrous immediate and long-term dangers of climate change,” said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst). “As communities continue to prepare for climate change, this necessary measure will undoubtedly bolster the Commonwealth’s commitment to undertaking more efforts to combat climate change in the future.”

“Crafting and implementing an effective response to the challenges posed by climate change requires an ongoing, collaborative effort between state and municipal officials,” said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading). “The Baker-Polito Administration’s Executive Order will help to ensure the Commonwealth is taking the steps necessary to address the problems associated with climate change, not only over the next three years, but well into the future.”

“Building coastal storm resilience and an environmentally sound energy future demand that we carefully plan today to take effective action now and in the future,” said Senate Minority Leader Bruce E. Tarr (R-Gloucester). “This Executive Order is a critically important tool for making that happen, and we have no time to waste.”

“We must protect our Commonwealth from the harmful effects of climate change. If we do not, the costs will be astronomical,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton), founding chair of the Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change and vice chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. “Climate change is happening now; we see it through our current drought, as well as extreme weather events throughout the country. And in addition to establishing this comprehensive climate adaptation plan, we cannot forget that we have an obligation to meet the emissions reduction requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act. I commend the Baker-Polito Administration for using science as the basis for this executive order, and I look forward to seeing these plans come to fruition across our state government. This is a good first step to ensuring that these commitments will be made, and now the legislative branch must step up in the next session to codify a climate adaptation management plan in statute, as well as pass a comprehensive energy plan.”

“Climate change is already harming communities across the Commonwealth,” said State Representative Frank Smizik (D-Brookline), Chairman of the House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change. “By coordinating adaptation planning on the state level, we can make resources and information accessible for all regions to prepare for the economic, health, and safety impacts of climate change. Governor Baker’s Executive Order is a critical first step in addressing our state’s vulnerabilities and protecting our communities.”