

SENATE No. 361

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

James B. Eldridge

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act protecting the natural resources of the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Martha M. Walz	8th Suffolk
Michael J. Barrett	Third Middlesex
Mary S. Keefe	15th Worcester
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Benjamin B. Downing	Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden
Ruth B. Balsler	12th Middlesex
Patricia D. Jehlen	Second Middlesex
Bruce E. Tarr	First Essex and Middlesex
Alice Hanlon Peisch	14th Norfolk
Jennifer E. Benson	37th Middlesex

SENATE No. 361

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 361) of James B. Eldridge, Martha M. Walz, Michael Barrett, Mary S. Keefe and other members of the General Court for legislation to protect the natural and historic resources of the Commonwealth. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 350 OF 2011-2012.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen
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An Act protecting the natural resources of the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 132B the
2 following chapter:-

3 CHAPTER 132C. PUBLIC LANDS PRESERVATION ACT.

4 Section 1. Definitions. As used in this chapter, the following words shall have the
5 following meanings: -

6 “Alternatives analysis”, a description of alternatives to a proposed disposition or change
7 in use of lands or easements protected under Article 97, including, but not limited to, an analysis
8 of the most reasonable alternative that does not require disposition or change in use under Article
9 97. An alternatives analysis must be performed by the proponent of the disposition to the
10 satisfaction of the executive office of energy and environmental affairs and its agencies. The
11 alternatives analysis may include analysis of cost, impact on current use, environmental impact
12 and non-financial advantages and disadvantages as a result of the proposed disposition or change
13 in use. The scope of alternatives shall extend to any sites that were available at the time the
14 proponent of the Article 97 disposition first notified the controlling agency of the Article 97 land.

15 “Appraisal”, a written statement independently and impartially prepared by a state
16 certified or state licensed appraiser setting forth an opinion as to the fair market value of an
17 adequately described property as of a specific date, supported by the presentation and analysis of
18 relevant market information.

19 “Article 97”, Article XLIX, as appearing in Article XCVII, of the Amendments to the
20 Constitution.

21 “Article 97 lands or easements”, land or easements taken or acquired for natural resource
22 protection purposes.

23 “Change in use” or “used for other purposes”, a conversion of Article 97 land or
24 easements or portions thereof, to uses inconsistent with natural resource protection purposes.

25 “De minimus conversion”, a disposition of less than 5000 square feet of Article 97 land
26 or easements to a political subdivision of the commonwealth; a disposition of Article 97 land or
27 easements for natural resource protection purposes; a change in use of less than 2500 square feet
28 of Article 97 land or easements to another public purpose; or a disposition or change in use of
29 Article 97 land or easements which the owner has determined have insignificant resource value,
30 are not useful to the owner’s operations, and do not benefit other Article 97 land or easements.

31 “Disposition”, "dispose" or “disposed”, the transfer of physical or legal custody or
32 control of lands or easements, or a portion thereof, by conveying, releasing or relinquishing,
33 leasing for any term, granting of interests in, or transferring by any other means physical or legal
34 custody or control, regardless of whether the transfer is for the same or different uses, or for
35 consistent or inconsistent purposes.

36 “Fair market value”, the price, expressed in terms of cash equivalents, at which property
37 would change hands between a hypothetical willing and able buyer and a hypothetical willing
38 and able seller, acting at arm’s length in an open and unrestricted market, when neither is under
39 compulsion to buy or sell and when both have reasonable knowledge of the relevant facts, and
40 assuming the property would or could be put to its highest and best economic use.

41 “Lands or easements”, lands; easements; conservation restrictions, agricultural
42 preservation restrictions and watershed preservation restrictions, as defined in section 31 of
43 chapter 184 as amended; and other restrictions or conditions contained in a deed, grant or other
44 instrument purporting to transfer or convey an interest in land, regardless of the term of such
45 easements, restrictions or conditions.

46 “Natural Resource Protection Purposes”, the protection, conservation, control, use,
47 increase or development of the resources and values described in Article 97 for the purposes set
48 forth in Article 97, including but not limited to the natural resources defined in section 1 of

49 chapter 21, as amended, and agricultural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources, public parks
50 and other public recreation areas.

51 “Owner”, the commonwealth, department, agency, authority, public instrumentality,
52 town, municipality or political subdivision that has care and control, custody or control of the
53 lands or easements for which there is a proposed disposition or change in use.

54 “Replacement land”, land or easements granted or to be granted to the owner or its
55 designee that are of equal or greater fair market value as the Article 97 land or easements to be
56 disposed or used for other purposes, or that have equal or greater value than the Article 97 land
57 or easements as if in the proposed use, whichever is greater; are of equal or greater size, and have
58 equal or greater resource value; provided, however, that Article 97 land or easements shall not
59 qualify as replacement land.

60 “Secretary”, the secretary of the executive office of energy and environmental affairs.

61 “Taken or acquired”, obtained by the commonwealth or its political subdivisions or any
62 instrumentality thereof by gift, purchase, devise, grant, exchange, lease, taking by eminent
63 domain or otherwise, or obtained with the use of public funds including land bank funds, or
64 dedicated, or used for a period of five or more years.

65 Section 2. In furtherance of the purposes of Article 97, and to ensure no net loss of
66 Article 97 land or easements, the person, party or entity proposing a change in use or disposition
67 of Article 97 land or easements shall, except in the case of a de minimus conversion:

68 (a) mitigate the loss of Article 97 land or easements by providing or paying for
69 replacement land, in addition to providing or paying any other mitigation or consideration
70 deemed appropriate by the general court; and

71 (b) prior to filing or presenting for filing a petition with the general court to authorize a
72 change in use or disposition of Article 97 land or easements, notify the secretary of the intention
73 to file or present for filing such a petition, together with information and documentation,
74 including but not limited to the following:

75 (i) a description of the Article 97 land or easements to be disposed or used for other
76 purposes, including legal description, location, name of owner, acreage, purpose for which the
77 Article 97 land or easements were acquired, current use and natural resource benefits, and a
78 description of the proposed disposition or change in use, including the name of any proposed
79 grantee, purpose of the proposed disposition or change in use, proposed new use, and anticipated
80 physical changes to or on the Article 97 land or easements;

81 (ii) copy of the deed or deeds conveying the Article 97 land or easements to the present
82 owner and any restrictions or easements affecting the Article 97 land or easements;

83 (iii) documentation from the owner indicating the owner's position with regard to the
84 disposition or change in use of the Article 97 land or easements, together with a copy of any
85 orders, certificates, permits, votes or other approvals issued or taken in connection with such
86 disposition or change in use;

87 (iv) a description of the replacement land, including legal description, location, name of
88 owner, acreage, current use, fair market value, and, if the landowner is a public entity, purpose
89 for which the replacement land was acquired;

90 (v) information regarding any municipal, state or federal funding used to acquire the
91 Article 97 land or easements to be affected by the disposition or change in use, and, if applicable,
92 such funding used or to be used to acquire the replacement land; and

93 (vi) an alternatives analysis to be approved by the executive office energy and
94 environmental affairs (EOEA) and its agencies.

95 In the case of a de minimus conversion, the person, party or entity proposing or
96 benefitting from the disposition or change in use of Article 97 land or easements shall pay fair
97 market value for the Article 97 land or easements to be disposed or used for other purposes, or
98 shall provide services or other consideration equal in value to the to the Article 97 land or
99 easements to be disposed or used for other purposes. Monetary payments shall be deposited in
100 an account available to the owner or that can be made available to the owner for natural resource
101 protection purposes.

102 Section 3. Upon notification by the person, party or entity proposing the change in use or
103 disposition of Article 97 land or easements, the secretary may grant a waiver releasing the owner
104 from the requirements set forth in Section 2, conditional upon:

105 (a) subsequent to disposition there being no change in use or physical change in the lands
106 or easements disposed other than change due to natural causes, provided the lands or easements
107 are currently serving a public natural resource purpose;

108 (b) any proposed change in use being temporary and within no more than five years from
109 the change in use the lands or easements reverting to the same state and use as existed
110 immediately prior to the change in use;

111 (c) the lands or easements proposed for disposition or change in use being occupied
112 primarily and substantially by pre-existing, non-encroaching buildings or sheds, which may
113 include immediately adjacent land containing out-buildings, paved areas or landscaped areas
114 appurtenant to, necessary for and used solely for said pre-existing buildings or sheds; or

115 (d) the lands or easements having an area of 2,500 square feet or less, the secretary of
116 energy and environmental affairs providing a statement that the lands or easements are
117 insignificant for natural resource purposes, and the lands or easements not being part of a

118 contiguous area of Article 97 lands or easements any part of which have been approved by
119 statute for disposition or change in use within the five years prior to filing of legislation
120 proposing disposition or change in use.

121 If a waiver is granted such waiver may be provided to the general court in lieu of the
122 requirements set forth in Section 3.

123 Section 4. The secretary may submit to the general court, the owner and the proponent of
124 the disposition or change in use a statement indicating: (a) whether the proposed replacement
125 land meets the definition of replacement land as set forth in this chapter,(b) any other
126 consideration that should be paid for the Article 97 land or easements, (c) other
127 recommendations, if any, to mitigate the loss or conversion of the Article 97 land or easements,
128 and (d) whether the secretary supports the proposed Article 97 disposition or change in use.

129 Section 5. Any sale, transfer, lease, or change in the control of use of any Article 97 land
130 held by a municipality shall be subject to a two-thirds Town Meeting or City Council vote in
131 support of the disposition.

132 Section 6. An owner that has taken or acquired Article 97 land or easements shall be
133 required to submit a report to the secretary upon a project's completion that shall include but not
134 be limited to a description of any replacement land conveyed, consideration paid, or other
135 consideration provided. The secretary shall compile an annual report of all dispositions of
136 Article 97 land or easements, which shall include a description of replacement land conveyed.
137 The report shall be filed with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate and the
138 Governor, and shall be made available to the public.

139 Section 7. EOEa shall adopt, amend, or repeal any regulations, as necessary, in order to
140 aid in the administration and enforcement of this chapter.