

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 906**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Dawne Shand***

*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 to accelerate and streamline wetlands restoration.**

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Dawne Shand</i>	<i>1st Essex</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>David O’Neill</i>	<i>Mass Audubon, 208 South Great Road Lincoln MA 01773</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Nicie Panetta</i>	<i>The Trustees of Reservations, 200 High Street Boston MA 02110</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/21/2023</i>
<i>Margaret R. Scarsdale</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Jacob R. Oliveira</i>	<i>Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>	<i>9th Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Simon Cataldo</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>David Paul Linsky</i>	<i>5th Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Samantha Montaño</i>	<i>15th Suffolk</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Tommy Vitolo</i>	<i>15th Norfolk</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Tram T. Nguyen</i>	<i>18th Essex</i>	<i>4/12/2023</i>
<i>Adrienne Pusateri Ramos</i>	<i>14th Essex</i>	<i>6/29/2023</i>

*James C. Arena-DeRosa*

*8th Middlesex*

*6/29/2023*

*Christopher J. Worrell*

*5th Suffolk*

*6/29/2023*

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 906**

By Representative Shand of Newburyport, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 906) of Dawne Shand and others for legislation to accelerate and streamline wetlands restoration. Environment and Natural Resources.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**

An Act to accelerate and streamline wetlands restoration.

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

1 Notwithstanding any special or general law to the contrary, the secretary of energy and  
2 environmental affairs shall undertake a Wetlands Restoration Streamlining Initiative to  
3 coordinate permitting pathways in support of innovative, nature-based, wetlands restoration  
4 projects.

5 The secretary shall designate a coordinator to lead the Initiative. The coordinator shall  
6 engage and organize state agencies including, but not limited to, the environmental policy act  
7 office, department of environmental protection, office of coastal zone management, division of  
8 fisheries and wildlife, natural heritage and endangered species program, division of marine  
9 fisheries, and division of ecological restoration, and any relevant federal agencies, to: (a)  
10 expedite nature-based wetlands restoration projects and coordinate permits for such projects; (b)  
11 align regulatory processes with the commonwealth’s climate mitigation, adaptation, and  
12 resiliency goals; (c) create a streamlined agency project review process; (d) expedite interagency

13 permitting efforts; (e) limit the trial time of nature-based restoration techniques that have  
14 established standards or credible evidence showing benefit and manageable risk; and (f) provide  
15 technical assistance and support to state, nonprofit and municipal project proponents to expedite  
16 the permitting process to restore wetlands.

17           The coordinator shall also consult experts including academic and practitioner scientists,  
18 municipalities, environmental nonprofits, state and federal agencies, and staff administering state  
19 resiliency and ecological restoration programs to identify permitting and funding challenges and  
20 solutions to streamline and accelerate nature-based restoration projects.

21           The coordinator shall only support nature-based solutions projects as defined by section  
22 1 of chapter 21N.

23           In consultation with experts and state agencies, the coordinator shall make the following  
24 recommendations: (a) regulatory reforms for nature-based wetlands restoration projects; (b)  
25 funding opportunities to address financial barriers and inequities created by state permitting  
26 requirements; and, if necessary, (c) recommendations for legislation to authorize such reforms.  
27 Reforms may include, but are not limited to, the promulgation of policies, guidelines, waivers,  
28 exemptions, and general permits for specific techniques; the clarification and improvement of  
29 regulatory definitions; and the adjustment of thresholds and size limits for landscape scale  
30 projects. Reforms shall include a recommendation for a general, unified permitting process for  
31 categories of wetlands restoration, including both coastal and freshwater wetlands, designed to  
32 enable state permitting to be completed within three months of submission of a complete  
33 application.

34 Not later than 90 days after passage of this act, the coordinator shall ensure agency staff  
35 have been identified and convened and shall address delays in pending permit applications for  
36 salt marsh restoration projects. Not later than 180 days after passage of this act, the coordinator  
37 shall produce draft proposals for stakeholders and agency staff, which shall include technical  
38 clarifying definitions and interpretations. Not later than 12 months after the passage of this act,  
39 the coordinator shall submit final recommendations to the secretary, the house and senate  
40 committees on ways and means, and the joint committee on environment, natural resources, and  
41 agriculture.