

HOUSE No. 986

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Kathleen R. LaNatra

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 relative to the Department of Fish and Game.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Kathleen R. LaNatra</i>	<i>12th Plymouth</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>
<i>Patrick Joseph Kearney</i>	<i>4th Plymouth</i>	<i>2/5/2025</i>
<i>Steven George Xiarhos</i>	<i>5th Barnstable</i>	<i>4/21/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 986

By Representative LaNatra of Kingston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 986) of Kathleen R. LaNatra and Patrick Joseph Kearney relative to the Department of Fish and Game. Environment and Natural Resources.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act relative to the Department of Fish and Game.

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. Section 8 of chapter 21A of the general laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 official edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in the seventh paragraph, the words “public
3 access board,” and “and the”.

4 SECTION 2. Section 8 of chapter 21A is hereby further amended by inserting, in the
5 seventh paragraph, after the word “commission” the following words:- , division of fishing and
6 boating access, and division of ecological restoration.

7 SECTION 3. Section 8 of chapter 21A is hereby further amended by striking out, in the
8 eighth paragraph, everything after the phrase “public access” and inserting in place thereof the
9 following words:- as recommended by the division of fishing and boating access.

10 SECTION 4. Said chapter 21A is hereby further amended by striking out section 11B, as
11 appearing in the 2022 official edition, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

12 Section 11B. There shall be a division of fishing and boating access in the department of
13 fish and game. The division shall be under the administrative supervision of a director who shall
14 be called the director of fishing and boating access. Said director shall be appointed and may be
15 removed by the commissioner of the department of fish and game. The director, or a designee,
16 shall serve as the chief engineer of the division of fishing and boating access and the department.
17 The division may site, design, construct, operate, repair and maintain public access facilities,
18 including, but not limited to, boat launching ramps, car-top boat access areas, sportfishing piers,
19 shorefishing areas, and parking areas, which shall provide public access to great ponds and other
20 waters within the commonwealth for recreational fishing and boating. Said public access
21 facilities may be located on lands owned by or in which a federal, state, regional or municipal
22 entity has a property interest with the consent of said entity or on lands owned by or in which the
23 department has a property interest. For public access facilities located on lands under the
24 ownership or control of a public entity other than the department, the division may enter into a
25 land management agreement with said public entity in which said public entity assumes
26 responsibility for the operation and maintenance of said public access facility and for any other
27 activity agreed to by the division and the public entity. The division may provide safety, rescue,
28 patrol and maintenance equipment to public entities that have responsibilities for law
29 enforcement or management of public lands. The division may promulgate regulations governing
30 the use of said public access facilities and the related land and water resources, violation of
31 which may be punished by a fine of not more than \$100 and which may be enforced by any
32 employee of the commonwealth, or of a city or town, having police powers.

33 In addition to its authority and responsibilities associated with public access facilities, the
34 division may provide engineering, construction, and technical services to the division of fisheries

35 and wildlife, the division of marine fisheries, and the division of ecological restoration within the
36 department of fish and game.

37 SECTION 5. Said chapter 21A is hereby further amended by inserting after section 11B
38 the following section:-

39 Section 11BB. There shall be a division of ecological restoration in the department of fish
40 and game. The division shall be under the administrative supervision of a director who shall be
41 called the director of the division of ecological restoration. Said director shall be appointed and
42 may be removed by the commissioner of the department of fish and game. The division shall
43 work with public and non-public entities, including tribal entities, to protect and restore rivers,
44 wetlands, and watersheds for the benefit of people and the environment, including to foster
45 adaptation to climate change. The division may provide technical assistance and training;
46 manage river and wetland restoration projects, including but not limited to dam removal, culvert
47 upgrades, and wetland and salt marsh restoration; receive grants; award grants to public and
48 nonpublic entities; contract for services; enter into agreements with public and non-public
49 entities; and lead other activities as needed to carry out the purpose of the division.

50 SECTION 6. Section 98 of chapter 130 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2022
51 official edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in the first paragraph, the words “the shellfish
52 wardens training course at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy as certified by said academy”
53 and inserting in place thereof the following words:- a shellfish wardens training course as
54 certified by the division.