

Our *Endangered* Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program



Massachusetts harbors 80% of the world's population of Plymouth Gentian. Plymouth Gentian © Joey Mason

Each day in Massachusetts we lose more than 40 acres of open space - or an area the size of the Boston Common - to development¹

While growth is necessary to meet the economic, housing and transportation needs of residents, careful land and water use planning is vital to ensure that we maintain a healthy landscape for all of our residents. This landscape includes clean rivers, working farms, intact and productive forests, scenic vistas, and protected endangered species and wildlife habitat.

At the heart of these conservation and planning efforts is the **Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program** (Heritage). The expert staff at Heritage collect, analyze and disseminate the scientific data that direct land and water conservation efforts across the state.

Government agencies, local communities, nonprofit conservation organizations and others use this information to focus their limited resources on managing and protecting the state's most significant natural areas.

For the Commonwealth to make informed decisions on smart growth and smart conservation, \$1,000,000 from the General Fund is needed to maintain this essential program.

¹ Losing Ground, Mass Audubon (2003)

HERITAGE AT A GLANCE

| | |
|------------|---|
| 193 | Communities that rely on Heritage data for planning |
| 442 | Rare species at risk |
| 5,154 | Rare species sites documented |
| 2,382 | Projects reviewed per year under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act |
| \$0 | General Fund support |

ABOUT HERITAGE

Biological Data

Heritage collects, manages and distributes critical information on rare species and their habitats. These data are published in BioMap and Living Waters, nationally recognized planning tools used widely to protect biodiversity here at home.

Species and Habitat Management

Heritage protects and restores populations of rare species, manages invasive plants and animals and advises many state agencies on land protection and restoration projects necessary to preserve our natural resources.

Environmental Impact Review

Heritage analyzes development projects for their potential impact to state-protected rare species, ensuring that short-term gains do not come at the cost of long-term well-being of the Commonwealth.

Why does Massachusetts need the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program?

The biological data collected and analyzed by the Heritage Program detail the abundance, distribution, and needs of the rare native species found in our lands and waters. In addition, staff members at Heritage identify the sites that provide the best opportunities for preserving and restoring these species. This work focuses the efforts of numerous organizations across the state, including:

- **Local communities:** advising and leveraging funds for land protection efforts and advising wetlands protection (e.g. Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grants and Conservation Commissions).
- **MassHighway:** designing roads and culverts to minimize impacts on wildlife.
- **Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs:** providing review for land acquisition and protection programs.
- **Department of Conservation and Recreation:** providing expertise for management of state lands.



Common Tern chick © Bill Byrne

Protection and management efforts by Heritage have helped double the population of Common Terns since 1985.



Schenob Brook © Vanessa Salvucci

The Heritage Program is vital in helping the Commonwealth direct its conservation resources.

How is Heritage currently funded?

After receiving strong and consistent operating funds each year, the Heritage Program was removed from the state's operating budget in 2004. Since then, the Program has pieced together funding through state bonds, federal grants, voluntary contributions from state income tax forms and partnerships with nonprofits.

In short, all partners except for the Commonwealth, including the United States Congress, private foundations, nonprofit organizations and individual taxpayers, make significant annual commitments to fund endangered species and wildlife habitat protection.

Why act now?

The State Wildlife Action Plan was approved in 2006, making Massachusetts eligible for federal investments. To fully and successfully implement this comprehensive Plan and ensure that our natural resources are managed effectively, the Commonwealth must commit to a dedicated source of funding.

**It's time for the Legislature to do its part:
Restore the Heritage Program to the General Fund.**

The following organizations are actively supporting this initiative to restore Heritage to the budget:

Berkshire Environmental Action Team • Berkshire Natural Resources Council • Environmental League of Massachusetts
Gun Owners Action League • Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions • Mass Audubon
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition • Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters • The Nature Conservancy
New England Wild Flower Society • Teaming With Wildlife • Trust for Public Land • Trustees of Reservations