



October 29, 2015

Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Conservation Land and Natural Gas Pipeline Development

Dear Governor Baker;

As the two largest land conservation organizations in Massachusetts, and founding members of the national conservation movement, we are writing to share with you our deep concern regarding impacts to protected open space from the natural gas pipelines proposed by Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, LLC. The Trustees is the nation's first conservation and preservation trust, founded in 1891 by an Act of the Massachusetts Legislature, and Mass Audubon, established in 1896, was the genesis of the nation's Audubon conservation movement for wildlife protection. With our 210,000+ members, Mass Audubon and The Trustees collectively protect over 60,000 acres across the Commonwealth and we have facilitated the protection of many thousands more. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue and land conservation more broadly, and we thank you for your stated commitment to land conservation.

As the third most densely populated state in the nation, Massachusetts has undertaken decades of careful planning and conservation in order to protect and preserve our state's valuable landscape. Land conservation is supported by public trust and public policy, including *Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution*, for clean drinking water, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, farms and the food they bring, and that intangible and infinite capacity to inspire and connect us to something greater than ourselves. These efforts are built on significant public and private investments, including \$360 million of state dollars between 2007 and 2014 alone. We are concerned that a private, out of state company now views these areas as convenient for the construction of energy infrastructure at an unprecedented scale, which would fragment and devalue the network of public and private conservation land that we, along with private partners and the public sector have worked for decades to protect.

Energy needs are changing, but there are alternatives. We can continue moving forward with smart and cost-effective energy policy, without undoing decades of conservation efforts. Energy efficiency can be expanded, leaky pipes can be fixed, renewable energy can be deployed, existing infrastructure can be upgraded and lower impact alternatives can be chosen.

The Northeast Energy Direct (NED) project is unprecedented in scale for our state and would entail 102 miles of new pipeline, including laterals, plus three new compressor stations and ten new meter stations. Impacts would be significant, yet public benefit and need have not been adequately demonstrated and route alternatives with lesser environmental impact have not been explored. More than one hundred parcels of “permanently protected” lands conserved by public and private entities would be impacted by this project. These lands are protected by Article 97 and/or are held in public trust by charitable land trusts.

We are also directly affected landowners with the responsibility of protecting, in perpetuity, conservation lands under our care. This project crosses Mass Audubon’s 2,200 acre West Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in Plainfield and The Trustees 3,500 acre Notchview Reservation in Windsor, where a 41,000 horsepower compressor station is proposed near to the Reservation. These two sites are important from a conservation standpoint and also as drivers of the local economy. Notchview draws over 12,000 visitors a year to enjoy Nordic skiing and hiking on over 25 miles of trails, and employs four people year round and four additional people during the winter season. This is just one example of how protecting open space is critical to sustaining a healthy Commonwealth; our conserved land provides a 400 percent return on investment¹ and drives our \$30 billion tourism economy. We also note that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court recognizes that lands held in conservation use support a wide range of public benefits.²

The Connecticut Expansion Project (CEP) would undermine substantial taxpayer investment in land acquired in 2007 by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, with assistance from Mass Audubon, as part of one of the most significant land protection acquisitions in the state. The proposed pipeline would permanently degrade a section of what amounts to more than 8,500 acres of interconnected protected open space which in addition to its high conservation value, offers significant recreational opportunities including hiking, canoeing, kayaking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, fishing, and hunting. We believe there is no land of similar natural or cultural characteristics available for mitigation thereby making it difficult, if not impossible, to meet the state’s established goal of no-net loss of conservation land. As you know, legislation has been filed for CEP (**H. 3690**) to override Article 97. Our organizations will monitor and oppose **H.3690** and any other legislation related to conveyances of conservation land for pipeline construction if significant environmental conflicts or uncertainties exist within the scope of the proposed project. We hope that you would veto any such legislation.

We also note that CEP would not increase natural gas supply or address reliability concerns for Massachusetts residents as utilities in Connecticut have already signed long term agreements for the CEP additional capacity.

Massachusetts has been a leader in state efforts to address greenhouse gas emissions, including the *Global Warming Solutions Act*, participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, leading the nation on energy efficiency³. In addition to direct natural resource impact, a significant expansion of natural gas/fossil fuel infrastructure and its contribution to new greenhouse gas emissions is not in the best interests or public benefit of the Commonwealth.

Finally, land protection is built on trust of the public and of private donors, that their investments and wishes will be honored. As the Governor of the Commonwealth, with our long history of land conservation, we respectfully ask that you give full consideration to the significant investment made in land conservation and in

¹ The Trust for Public Land, “The Return on Investment in Parks and Open Spaces in Massachusetts” September 2013, <https://www.tpl.org/return-investment-parks-and-open-space-massachusetts>

² New England Forestry Foundation, Inc. vs. Board of Assessors of Hawley 468 Mass. 138, <http://masscases.com/cases/sjc/468/468mass138.html>

³ <http://aceee.org/state-policy/scorecard>

the public trust that upholds protected upon space, and that you do all that you can to sustain these commitments to current and future generations.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss land conservation in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



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