



Mass Audubon hails passage of ARPA bill today as it moves to Gov. Baker's desk for final approval

Major investments in nature-based climate solutions expected

BOSTON, MASS. (Dec. 3, 2021) – As the major \$4 billion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending bill advances to Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's desk for approval, Mass Audubon leaders, who have been lobbying vigorously for investments in climate change mitigation and nature, praised the House and Senate for passing the bill today.

"This is a significant moment for Massachusetts to ensure that nature-based climate solutions are put into place in every corner of our state, across rural and suburban settings, and especially in urban communities where residents have been disproportionately impacted by COVID," said Mass Audubon President David O'Neill. "Not only will these funds reduce the risks of climate impacts and greenhouse gas emissions and restore critical water infrastructure, they also expand greenspaces in communities that lack trees, parks, trails, and access to nature. This is a critical, once-in-a-generation opportunity to make progress, and we are so pleased to see state lawmakers leading us there."

The House and Senate moved the final bill to spend more than \$3.82 billion in ARPA federal pandemic relief funds and state surplus money onto Gov. Baker's desk Friday. Just shy of \$2.5 billion of ARPA funds remain for the state legislature to debate next year.

"We are especially grateful to the members of the conference committee for their hard work over the last two weeks, and for the leadership shown by members in both branches who made a point of prioritizing nature and climate," O'Neill said. "This is a down payment on our future. We will continue to need to commit sustained funding over time. This is an essential first step."

"I'm deeply grateful as well for State Rep. Daniel M. Donahue (D-Worcester); State Rep. Smitty Pignatelli (D-Pittsfield); State Rep. Thomas A. Golden, Jr. (D-Lowell); and State Sen. Adam Hinds (D-Berkshire County)," O'Neill continued. "They championed specific earmarks for Mass Audubon projects that are both shovel-ready and shovel-worthy." Those projects include repairs to storm-damaged trails and forests at the Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Lenox; wetland restoration at Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center & Wildlife Sanctuary in Worcester; and an open space and parks initiative in Lowell, future site of a nature center at Rollie's Farm.

Mass Audubon Director of Legislative and Government Affairs Sam Anderson said the final law contains about \$377.6 million in investments in climate and nature, including \$15 million in parks and open space; \$100 million for environmental infrastructure, including local resiliency measures; \$100 million for clean drinking water and sewer infrastructure; \$25 million for tree planting, particularly in Gateway cities; and \$7.5 million for green job workforce development.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Diana Brown McCloy, diana@teakmedia.com; 978-697-9414

Michael P. O'Connor, mpoconnor@massaudubon.org; 617-872-5324