Will Gov. Patrick protect the Quabbin again?

At risk: forest that cleans water for 2 million

In 2010, Gov. Deval Patrick declared a moratorium on new logging contracts on the 58,000 acres of Department of Conservation and Recreation-managed forests around the Quabbin Reservoir, which provides the drinking water for 2.2 million Massachusetts residents. But now, that moratorium is up for review. Environment Massachusetts is working to make sure logging near the Quabbin does not resume, and pushing for a permanent ban on logging around all our sources of drinking water.

For decades, the Quabbin has been kept clean by state-protected forestland surrounding the reservoir, which acts as a buffer and traps pollutants before they reach the water. The Environmental Protection Agency even granted Massachusetts an exemption from building an expensive artificial water filtration system for the Quabbin, because the forest proved such an effective natural filter.

But over the last few years, logging on Quabbin lands was allowed to increase, until Environment Massachusetts and other groups called attention to the problem. We demonstrated that logging companies were using invasive logging methods like clear-cutting mere feet from the water’s edge—even on the Prescott Peninsula, which is home to brown bears, deer and bald eagles. As a result of the public pressure we helped generate, the governor decided to place a temporary ban on new logging contracts around the Quabbin.

Logging moratorium up for review

The moratorium only applied to new logging projects, while preexisting contracts were allowed to proceed. Most of these are now winding down. But with the moratorium up for review, the gates could soon be flung open to renewed logging. Because the forests surrounding the reservoir are so critical to our drinking water’s protection, this winter we are redoubling our efforts to permanently protect the Quabbin.

Unless we stop permanently logging, the Quabbin Reservoir will be threatened by clearcuts.

We have already begun to reach out to citizens and members across the commonwealth who were instrumental in enacting the original moratorium. But this time, we know we will need to do more. Our staff will be engaging municipal officials in towns that get their drinking water from the Quabbin. We are building a coalition of local governments and citizens to convince the governor that logging around the reservoir is simply not worth the risk.

take action

Call Gov. Patrick today and tell him you support a permanent ban on logging around the Quabbin watershed:
(617) 725-4005

Sign up for updates and alerts at www.EnvironmentMassachusetts.org.
To our members

This fall, my staff and I traveled all over the commonwealth, building support to defend the Clean Air Act, protect the Quabbin Reservoir, and make sure that more of our electricity is generated by the sun.

Our citizen outreach team headed to Roslindale and Ipswich in October, to begin talking with people across the state about the importance of permanently protecting the Quabbin Reservoir.

In November, Clean Energy Associate Audrey Richardson hosted public forums on home solar installation in Sandwich and Pittsfield with representatives from the Patrick administration and local solar businesses.

We’re going to continue to stand up for clean air and water, and move Massachusetts closer to a green energy future. None of this would be possible without your support—thanks for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Ben Wright, Advocate

Recent action

Lawmakers might consider plastic bag ban

In Massachusetts, we use more than 3 million disposable plastic bags every day. These bags make their way into the ocean, contributing to a floating garbage soup in the Atlantic that is bigger than Texas. By reducing the use of plastic bags, we can make a huge difference for the ocean’s health.

This fall, we continued to make progress toward banning plastic bags in Massachusetts. After securing editorials in the Salem Evening News and The Enterprise of Brockton, we received word that the Massachusetts Legislature was seriously considering action on a bill to ban plastic bags from large grocery stores.

But there is still plenty of work to be done. As we’ve learned from our colleagues in California and Oregon, the plastics industry will mount a fierce campaign to protect the status quo.

Mass. moms urge Sen. Brown to support clean air

In October, Environment Massachusetts staff members Ben Wright and Lauren Randall brought mothers from Needham, Belchertown, Brookline and Boston to meet face to face with Sen. Scott Brown and urge him to oppose attacks on the Clean Air Act that are supported by polluters and their allies in congress.

During the meeting, the mothers asked Sen. Brown to oppose Sen. Rand Paul’s legislation, which would have allowed out-of-state polluters to continue to shirk their responsibility for the pollution they cause—pollution that leads to thousands of childhood asthma attacks in Massachusetts alone.

Questions for State Senator Jamie Eldridge

Over 90 percent of the energy we use in Massachusetts comes from dirty and dangerous fossil fuels. However, we have the technology and the know-how to ensure that much more of our energy is generated by clean and renewable sources, like solar.

Environment Massachusetts is working to make solar energy more affordable and accessible to homeowners and businesses across the commonwealth. We are pushing legislation to expand programs that already have a proven track record of bringing solar panels to rooftops in Massachusetts.

Net-metering is one such program. It allows consumers to use the excess electricity that their solar panels produce in a given pay period to offset future electric bills. This reduces the time it takes to recoup the cost of installing solar panels, making investing in solar much more affordable.

A way to expand access to solar
Unfortunately, net-metering in Massachusetts is currently limited in scope, with caps on the total amount of solar power that the program will cover.

As more and more homeowners and businesses decide to go solar, we are quickly approaching the cap on net-metering. Once we reach it, new solar projects will not be eligible to participate in net-metering—removing one of the biggest incentives for investing in solar.

In order to keep encouraging solar development, Environment Massachusetts and state Sen. Jamie Eldridge (Acton) drafted legislation that will raise the net-metering cap. This will restore financial certainty to businesses and residents who are considering new solar installations, giving them the support they need to move forward. The bill is now moving through the Legislature.

Solar jobs on the rise
This fall, we teamed up with The Solar Foundation to release a new report, “National Solar Jobs Census 2011.” The report stresses the promise of solar power and green jobs for our economy.

It found that 2,400 people in Massachusetts are currently employed in the solar industry. That number should only get bigger—last year, the solar job market grew 10 times faster than the rest of the economy.

Massachusetts’ solar programs are good for the environment, our health and the economy—putting people back to work and repowering the commonwealth with clean energy. And by raising Massachusetts’ net-metering cap, more people will be able to bring solar to their communities.

This winter, we will continue to build support for our net-metering bill until it becomes law, and we’ll work toward bringing new solar installations online across the state.

Why is expanding solar development in Mass. a priority for you?

Promoting and expanding solar development—and clean energy in general—is a win-win for our environment and our economy. By providing the right incentives and encouraging the use of solar through net-metering programs, the state can create quality jobs in research and development, manufacturing, sales and, in particular, installation, right here in our state. At the same time, we’re reducing our carbon footprint and protecting the quality of our air.

What other clean energy or environmental issues are you focusing on this legislative session?

I have a number of great environmental bills I’ve filed this year, many in partnership with Environment Massachusetts. In addition to the Net-Metering Bill, I’ve filed a bill to create an Office of Clean Technology (S152), to help the Commonwealth promote and expand new and emerging clean technologies, and a Zero-Net Energy Bill (S1665), which would improve building codes in Massachusetts to reduce energy consumption from new buildings and significant retrofits.

I’ve also re-filed S352, the E-Waste Bill, which would require producers of electronic waste—such as computers, televisions and printers—to be financially responsible for the proper disposal of their end-of-life products.
Over the past several months, we have seen unprecedented attacks in Congress on the laws that make our air safe to breathe, but we’ve blocked the worst of the attacks so far. In November alone, the Senate narrowly rejected four bills that would have gutted the Clean Air Act and prevented the EPA from enforcing standards on dangerous mercury, smog and carbon pollution. In this year’s legislative session, the attacks only continue.

In order to hold the line against these attacks in Congress, Environment Massachusetts is reaching out to citizens and elected officials and asking them to make the Clean Air Promise, a pledge to support clean air policies. Mayors, city councillors, conservation commissions, boards of health, and environmental groups across the state have signed on to pledge their support for strong clean air standards.

As part of our work to promote clean air, Environment Massachusetts also recently released a report on smog pollution to widespread media coverage across the state.