

HOUSE No. 4784

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, May 16, 2022.

The committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 557) of Adam G. Hinds for legislation to establish old growth forest reserves in the Commonwealth, the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 558) of Adam G. Hinds and Joseph A. Boncore for legislation to protect public and private woodlands and woodlots in the Commonwealth, the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 561) of Adam G. Hinds for legislation to promote and protect Massachusetts forests, the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 562) of Adam G. Hinds for legislation to reduce unnecessary destruction of forests, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 856) of Natalie M. Blais and others for legislation to establish old growth forest reserves in the Commonwealth, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 912) of Michael J. Finn and others for legislation to establish coordinated management guidelines for public forest lands, and the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1002) of Lindsay N. Sabadosa and others relative to wildlife management areas, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4784) ought to pass.

For the committee,

MINDY DOMB.

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act relative to forest protection.

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 51 of Chapter 132, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking
2 out subsection 2 and inserting in place thereof the following section-:

3 (2) promoting the development and increased use and affordability of renewable energy
4 resources demonstrating the role of renewable energy sources and carbon sequestration in
5 addressing the current concerns of air quality, greenhouse emissions, and forest management
6 practices, establishing applied research and development activities that examine and promote
7 best available control technology serving as a depository of information regarding renewable
8 energy resources, providing consulting and technology transfer assistance to the public sector in
9 an effort to help public institutions replicate best available practices in incorporating renewable
10 energy strategies into existing and future construction and providing a forum for public
11 education and training regarding renewable energy and related application;

12 SECTION 2. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the
13 department of conservation and recreation shall conduct a formal review of its coordinated

14 management guidelines for sustainable forestry practices created pursuant to section 2F of
15 chapter 21 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, and the operations of
16 the division of forest and parks, as described in chapter 132 of the general laws, as so appearing.

17 (b) Said review shall occur every five years and i) assess the efficacy of the department's
18 existing forest management practices to protect and preserve the commonwealth's natural
19 resources; (ii) review the department's landscape designation process and make
20 recommendations for operational improvements, increased transparency, and improved
21 opportunities for public participation ; (iii) make recommendations for any statutory changes
22 needed to improve the department's management of public and private forest land; (iv) assess
23 opportunities to increase acreage of forest reserves, with particular consideration for old growth
24 forests; (v) assess the feasibility, advantages and disadvantages of making permanent
25 designations for existing nature preserves, with particular consideration for old growth forests;
26 (vi) make recommendations for transparency and accountability improvements for the division,
27 including, but not limited to, proposed statutory changes to codify advisory committees and
28 administrative bodies overseeing forest management; (vii) identify opportunities for nature-based
29 solutions to maximize the utilization of forest land to meet the commonwealth's emissions
30 reduction goals; (viii) assess the department's preparedness to manage and mitigate climate
31 change impacts on public and private forest land; and (ix) assess the commonwealth's capacity
32 for carbon sequestration on public forest land as a method to mitigate climate change.

33 (c) The forests and parks of the commonwealth now under the care, custody and control
34 of the commissioner and subject to the formal review shall not be leased, sold, or exchanged, or
35 be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or
36 destroyed, except as a response to a known forest management emergency, and no commercial

37 activities except those essential to the quiet enjoyment of the facilities by the people shall be
38 permitted on such lands until the department has submitted its findings to the clerks of the house
39 of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on ways and means and the joint
40 committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture, pursuant to Section 3 of this act.

41 SECTION 3. The department shall solicit public input on its forest management practices
42 as part of the review process. Not later than March 1, 2023, the department shall (i) hold no
43 fewer than 4 public hearings in geographically-diverse regions to receive public testimony on
44 forest management in the commonwealth and shall provide for remote participation; and (ii)
45 solicit and accept written and electronic testimony submissions from the public. Not later than
46 May 1, 2023, the department shall release a draft report of its findings and solicit public
47 comment for at least 30 days.

48 SECTION 4. The department shall submit its findings, along with any updated
49 guidelines, draft regulations, recommendations for statutory changes, and written comments and
50 summaries of oral testimony submitted during public comment periods to the clerks of the house
51 of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on ways and means and the joint
52 committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture not later than June 30, 2023.