

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 894**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Lindsay N. Sabadosa and Aaron L. Saunders*

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to forest management and practices guidelines.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/20/2023</i>
<i>Aaron L. Saunders</i>	<i>7th Hampden</i>	<i>1/23/2023</i>
<i>Margaret R. Scarsdale</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>2/10/2023</i>
<i>David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>	<i>2/23/2023</i>
<i>Michelle L. Ciccolo</i>	<i>15th Middlesex</i>	<i>3/2/2023</i>
<i>Michael P. Kushmerek</i>	<i>3rd Worcester</i>	<i>3/8/2023</i>

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By Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton and Saunders of Belchertown, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 894) of Lindsay N. Sabadosa, Aaron L. Saunders and others relative to forest management and practices guidelines. Environment and Natural Resources.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act relative to forest management and practices guidelines.

*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  
15 chapter 21 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, and the operations of  
16 16 the division of forest and parks, as described in chapter 132 of the general laws, as so  
17 appearing. The department will conduct the same review of the watershed lands under its care.  
18 The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife shall conduct the same review for lands and waters under  
19 the administration of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

20 (b) The Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture shall appoint a  
21 “Public Land Management Advisory Council” (hereinafter referred to as “Council”). The  
22 Council shall consist of nine members, including: the commissioner of the Department of  
23 Conservation and Recreation or a designee, the director of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
24 or a designee, one expert in the field of plant ecology, one expert in the field of nongame wildlife  
25 and endangered species, one member from the Native Plant Trust or the Native Tree Society; one  
26 member from the Woodwell Climate Research Center; one member who has technical training  
27 and experience in the field of soil or watershed science; and two members of the public with  
28 experience in natural area conservation. The Council will coordinate and oversee the ongoing  
29 review process of both agencies.

30 (c) Said reviews shall occur every five years to (i) assess the efficacy of the department’s  
31 and division’s existing forest management practices to protect and preserve the commonwealth’s  
32 natural resources; (ii) review the department’s landscape designation process and make  
33 recommendations for operational improvements, increased transparency, and improved  
34 opportunities for public participation; (iii) conduct an equivalent review for the divisions’

35 properties; (iv) make recommendations for any statutory changes needed to improve the  
36 department's and division's management of public and private forest land; (v) assess  
37 opportunities to increase acreage of forest reserves, with particular consideration for old growth  
38 forests with the goals of designating a minimum of 30% of the department's watershed lands and  
39 30% of the division's publicly owned wildlife management areas as reserves by December 31,  
40 2030; (vi) make recommendations for transparency and accountability improvements for the  
41 department and the division, including, but not limited to, proposed statutory changes to codify  
42 advisory committees and administrative bodies overseeing forest management; (vii) identify  
43 opportunities for nature-based solutions to maximize the utilization of forest land to meet the  
44 commonwealth's emissions reduction goals; (viii) assess the department's and division's  
45 preparedness to manage and mitigate climate change impacts on public and private forest land;  
46 (ix) assess the commonwealth's capacity for carbon sequestration on public forest land as a  
47 method to mitigate climate change; (x) conduct an ongoing science-based review and evaluation  
48 of the impacts of land management policies and practices on biodiversity, with a goal of  
49 protecting and restoring native species to their long-term historic ranges and population levels.

50 (d) The forests and parks of the commonwealth now under the care, custody and control  
51 of the commissioners and subject to the formal review shall not be leased, sold, or exchanged, or  
52 be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or  
53 destroyed, except as a response to a known forest management emergency, and no commercial  
54 activities except those essential to the quiet enjoyment of the facilities by the people shall be  
55 permitted on such lands until the department and the division have submitted their findings to the  
56 clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on ways and means and

57 the joint committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture, pursuant to Section 4 of  
58 this act.

59 SECTION 3. The department and the division shall identify all existing reserve areas  
60 designated as of January 1, 2023 on lands under their authority, expand the reserves where  
61 appropriate going forward.

62 SECTION 4. The department and the division shall solicit public input on their forest  
63 management practices as part of the review process. Not later than March 1, 2025, the  
64 department and the division shall (i) hold no fewer than 4 public hearings in geographically-  
65 diverse regions to receive public testimony on forest management in the commonwealth and  
66 shall provide for remote participation; and (ii) solicit and accept written and electronic testimony  
67 submissions from the public. Not later than May 1, 2025, the department and the division shall  
68 release a draft report of their findings and solicit public comment for at least 30 days.

69 SECTION 5. The department and division shall submit their findings, along with any  
70 updated guidelines, draft regulations, recommendations for statutory changes, and written  
71 comments and summaries of oral testimony submitted during public comment periods to the  
72 clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on ways and means and  
73 the joint committee on environment, natural resources and agriculture not later than June 30,  
74 2025.