



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME

Conserving Nature for People & Wildlife

ACEC/MA Energy, Environment, and Utilities Market Conference

Presented by DFG Commissioner Tom O'Shea

AGENDA



OVERVIEW – Introduction to DFG



BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION GOALS – Protect, Restore, Sustain, Connect



DFG STRATEGIC PLAN – 2025-2030



RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS – 2025 + 2026



UPCOMING PRIORITIES - Looking Ahead



CLOSING - Wrap up + questions



**CONSERVE FISH &
WILDLIFE**



**PROTECT LANDS &
WATERS**



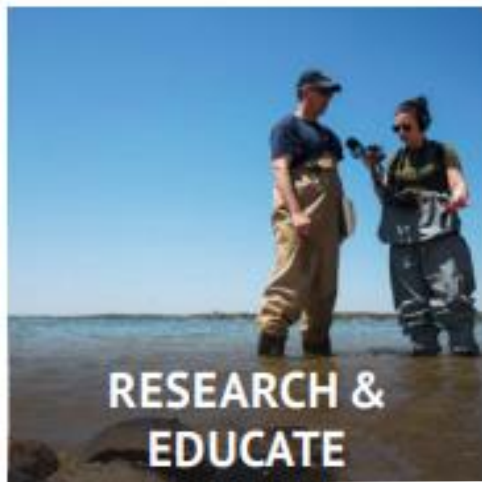
**RESTORE
ECOSYSTEMS**



**SUSTAIN
FISHERIES**



**PROTECT
ENDANGERED
SPECIES**



**RESEARCH &
EDUCATE**



**PROVIDE PUBLIC
ACCESS**



**PROMOTE
OUTDOOR
RECREATION**



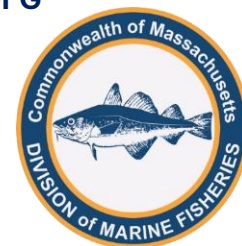
EEA



DFG



MassWildlife



**Division of Marine
Fisheries (DMF)**



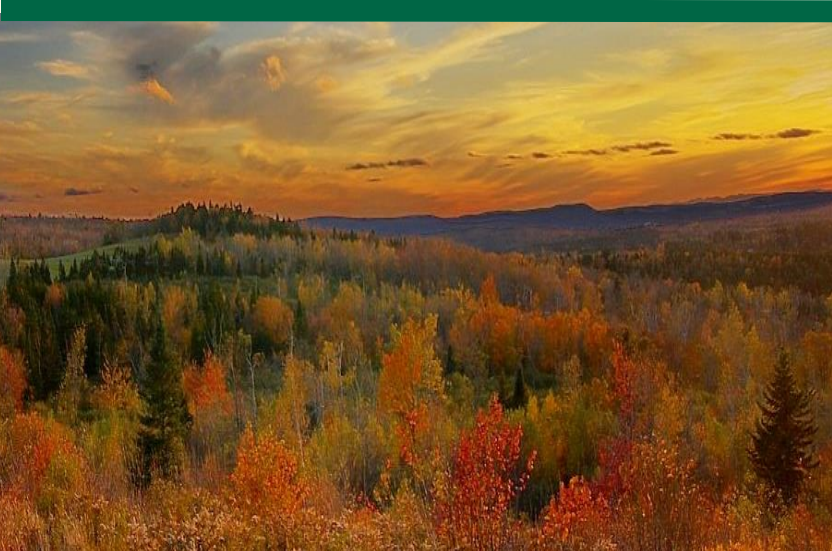
**Division of
Ecological
Restoration (DER)**



**Office of Fishing
& Boating
Access (OFBA)**

About Department of Fish & Game

Our mission is to conserve the Commonwealth's abundant marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife, plants, and natural communities, as well as the habitats that support them, for the benefit and enjoyment of all people.



*Credit: Ari Friedlaender/NOAA Research Permit
#14245*

Executive Order No. 618: **A WHOLE-OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**

In 2023, Governor Healey **made history** by calling for Massachusetts to set biodiversity conservation goals for 2030, 2040, and 2050. In 2025, Massachusetts announced the ambitious, 25-year, whole-of-government plan.

**A GLOBAL MOVEMENT, AT A
MASSACHUSETTS SCALE**

**BIODIVERSITY IS A KEY
CLIMATE SOLUTION**



BIODIVERSITY IN MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts is home to an **extraordinary variety and abundance of life**. This is biodiversity—all the species, habitats, and complex interactions that have inherent, intrinsic value, anchor our history + culture, and sustain our health, food security, + economy.

BIODIVERSITY SUSTAINS US:

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



URBAN FORESTS REMOVE
1.75 MILLION
POUNDS OF AIR POLLUTION
ANNUALLY IN BOSTON

CLIMATE RESILIENCE & CARBON SEQUESTRATION



COASTAL WETLANDS
SAVED COMMUNITIES
\$625 MILLION
IN DAMAGES DURING
HURRICANE SANDY IN 2012.

SALT MARSHES CAN STORE
OVER 10x
THE CARBON OF FORESTS
ON A PER-ACRE BASIS.

OUTDOOR RECREATION & TOURISM



Massachusetts has the fastest-growing outdoor recreation economy in the nation.

IN 2023 ALONE, OUTDOOR
RECREATION GENERATED
\$13.2 BILLION
AND CREATED 103,000 JOBS.

FARMS & FOOD SECURITY



POLLINATORS CONTRIBUTE
\$24 BILLION
TO THE U.S. ECONOMY ANNUALLY.

50,000 MEALS
PROVIDED BY HUNTERS SHARE THE HARVEST TO
FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FOOD INSECURITY SINCE 2021.

BIODIVERSITY GOALS FOR 2050



PROTECT

MOST IMPORTANT
HABITATS FOR SPECIES
& CLIMATE RESILIENCE



RESTORE

MOST IMPORTANT
HABITATS FOR SPECIES
& CLIMATE RESILIENCE



SUSTAIN

HUMAN HEALTH,
FOOD SECURITY,
ECONOMY



CONNECT

EVERYONE
WITH NATURE

A NATURE-POSITIVE FUTURE – WHERE ALL LIFE CAN THRIVE.

GOAL #1: PROTECT



**DOUBLE THE PACE OF
LAND PROTECTION TO
ACHIEVE 40% BY 2050**



**PROTECT 1.5M ACRES OF KEY
HABITAT & WILDLIFE
MIGRATION CORRIDORS**



**CONSIDERATION OF CASHES
LEDGE NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARY**

GOAL #2: RESTORE



**RESTORE 75% OF
MOST IMPORTANT
HABITATS BY 2050**



**REMOVE OVER 10% OF
DAMS & REPLACE 10%
OF CULVERTS**



**RESTORE MOST IMPORTANT
MARINE HABITATS & FISH
PASSAGE IN RIVERS**

GOAL #3: SUSTAIN



**SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY
ON FARMS & LOCAL
FOOD SYSTEMS**



**SUSTAIN OUR BLUE
ECONOMY &
SEAFOOD INDUSTRY**



**INCREASE FOOD
SECURITY WITH ACCESS
TO WILD FOODS**

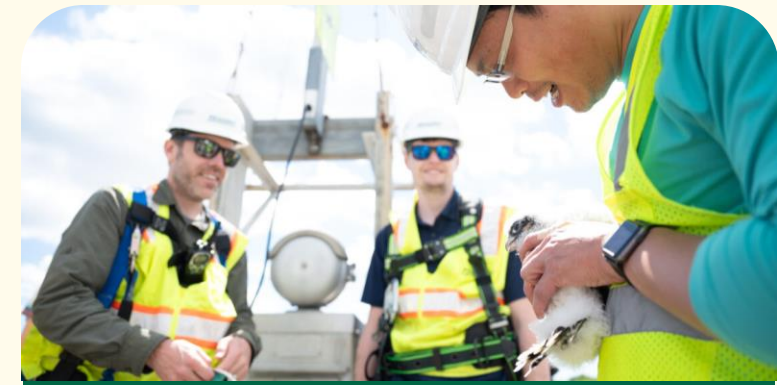
GOAL #4: CONNECT



**NATURE IN THE
NEIGHBORHOODS**



**NATURE IN THE
SCHOOLS**



**NATURE AT WORK:
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

2025–2030 | FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

CONNECTIONS

WORKING TOGETHER FOR NATURE

CONNECTIONS

In 2024, Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game released a five-year strategic plan **Connections: Working Together for Nature** to focus our efforts on solutions at the intersection of biodiversity, climate, and environmental justice.

- Create a **unifying vision** for the Department
- **Align our work closely** with priorities of Healey-Driscoll Admin & EEA
- **Drive funding and resources**, collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and outcomes

EXPLORE THE PLAN >

[mass.gov/DFG-strategic plan](https://mass.gov/DFG-strategic-plan)

STRATEGIC PLAN THEMES



BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE

Sustain **abundance and variety of species + habitats**, harness the power of nature to **build climate resilience** and **store and sequester carbon**.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Meaningfully connect with Environmental Justice and Indigenous communities and **provide equitable access** to nature and its benefits.



RELEVANCE, VISIBILITY, CAPACITY

Build our capacity, visibility, and impact through investment, strategic partnership, outreach, and education and **connect more deeply with the people we serve**.

CONSERVE KEY LANDSCAPES & DOUBLE THE PACE OF LAND PROTECTION

KEY OUTCOMES

- **Complete five landscape-scale conservation projects** in key landscapes for biodiversity
- Protect **6,000 acres/year**, up from an average of 3,000 acres/year today

RESTORE HABITATS & CONNECTIVITY

KEY OUTCOMES

- Protect, restore, and/or reconnect **3,000 acres of floodplain habitat**
- Complete **8 culvert or small bridge replacement** projects
- Advance up to **45 DER Restoration Partnerships Program** projects



DECARBONIZATION & CARBON SEQUESTRATION

KEY OUTCOMES

- Complete **decarbonization plans for all facilities** and at least 5 are decarbonized
- A **Blue Carbon Incentives Program** is established, and **4,000-6,500 acres of salt marsh** enrolled
- **10-15%** of DFG upland forests are **designated as forest reserve**
- Align agency forest management practices with **FACS management guidelines**
- **70% or more** of the acreage protected by DFG each year is forested

INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE

KEY OUTCOMES

- Provide **new public recreation opportunities near underserved & EJ communities**
- **Improve language access** for facilities signage & postings
- Develop a pilot program to increase accessibility and use of Dept. WMAs, public access sites, and restoration projects by EJ communities

INCREASE FOOD SECURITY

KEY OUTCOMES

- Increase venison donated & distributed by MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest Program **increases by 1,500/year**
- Identify opportunities to **connect Environmental Justice communities with seafood dealers and commercial fishermen** to market undervalued species

Strategic Plan Achievements

2025 & 2026 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Set nation-leading **Biodiversity Conservation Goals**
- Joined the **International Union for Conservation of Nature**
- In 2025, Massachusetts **led the country in dam removal**, with state agencies and partners removing 15 dams
- DFG conserved **6,500 acres of land** in FY25 and FY26
- In 2025, DFG launched **Blue Carbon Program** for salt marsh restoration
- MassWildlife's **Hunters Share the Harvest Program achieved 100,000 meals** distributed to families in need
- Capital Investments in **Decarbonization & Climate Resilience at Facilities:**
 - DMF Cat Cove Marine Habitat Restoration Center in Salem
 - MassWildlife McLaughlin Fish Hatchery in Belchertown
- **New public fishing and boating access** in 6 communities, resilience upgrades in 3

DER's Restoration Impact

- In 2025, DER had its biggest restoration impact yet, with **\$6.9M** awarded to support ecological restoration in **45 cities and towns** through the following programs:
 - Cranberry Bog Restoration Program
 - Dam Removal Program
 - Regional Restoration Partnerships Program
 - Stream Continuity Program
 - Wetland Restoration Program
- This resulted in 21 projects under construction, five dams removed, six culverts replaced, and over 620 river miles reconnected!



DFG Blue Carbon Program Feasibility Study

- Massachusetts has 47,000 acres of salt marshes—they are one of the most productive and carbon-rich ecosystems on Earth.
- In May 2025, DFG brought together experts at the forefront of salt marsh restoration and blue carbon research to **explore feasibility of financial incentives** to drive protection and restoration of these critical ecosystems.
- In December 2025, DFG completed the feasibility study and is in the process of setting up the structure to enroll 4,000—6,500 acres in the program by 2030.



DFG Community Biodiversity Grants Program

- In FY26, DFG awarded \$1.1M to 12 locally-led projects to protect and restore biodiversity.
 - Boston Public Schools Schoolyard Pollinator Gardens
 - DCR Dark Skies/Artificial Light Research
 - UMass Amherst Bird Safe Windows
 - City of Lowell Mini Forest and Pollinator Meadow
 - Town of Dedham Sawmill Park Pollinator Pathway
 - UMass Lowell Oyster Biodiversity Research
 - Native Land Conservancy Wampanoag Common Lands Habitat Restoration
 - Regional Environmental Council/Worcester Public Schools Pollinator Gardens



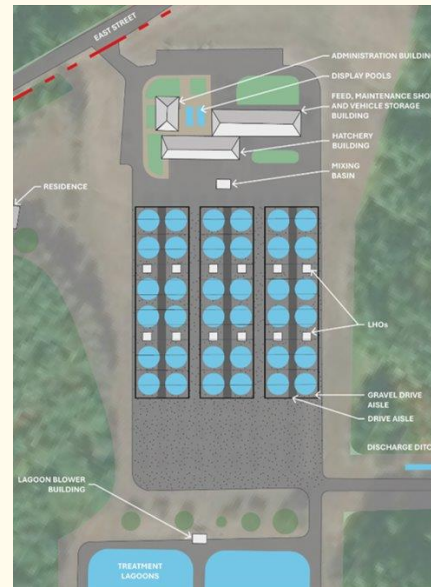
DMF Cat Cove Marine Habitat Restoration Center

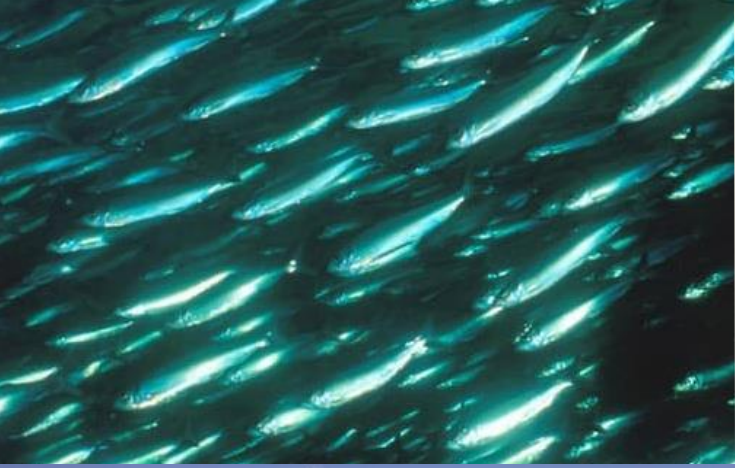
- Marine habitats like eelgrass, kelp, oyster reef, and shellfish habitat are essential for biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and climate resilience.
- Yet, Massachusetts has lost significant marine habitat due to pollution, development, and warming waters:
 - 50% decline in eelgrass since 1990
 - 80% decline in kelp forests
 - 85-99% loss of oyster reef
- DMF is working to expand capacity by developing a **Marine Habitat Restoration Center at DMF's Cat Cove Marine Laboratory** in Salem, MA.
- This will help the state scale up restoration of eelgrass, shellfish and oyster reefs, and kelp forests across the coast.



MassWildlife McLaughlin Fish Hatchery

- Trout stocking increases access to outdoor recreation and connection to nature for communities.
- Each year, MassWildlife stocks over **450,000 brook, brown, rainbow, and tiger trout** in over 450 lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams in 264 municipalities. MassWildlife has **five fish hatcheries** that raise trout to release across the state.
- MassWildlife is working to modernize **McLaughlin Fish Hatchery** in Belchertown, MA. This includes increasing sustainability, resilience, and decarbonization of the facility, as well as enhancing the experience for visitors.





STAY IN TOUCH!

Visit our website to learn more
and sign up for the latest news,
updates, and announcements!

mass.gov/biodiversity

