

Senator Anne Gobi, Chairman
Representative William Pignatelli, Chairman
Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture
State House
Boston, MA 02133

October 10, 2017

RE: In support of HB.2932 An Act Establishing the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership

Dear Chairman Gobi and Chairman Pignatelli,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture in support of HB.2932, An Act Establishing the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership.

This bill as filed by Representative Stephen Kulik (Worthington) would bring recognition and resources to the Commonwealth's most rural and heavily forested region. This innovative model of collaborating with the 21 municipalities in western Franklin County and northern Berkshire County, the Commonwealth's economic development and environmental agencies, several non-profit organizations, and the U.S. Forest Service would boost both land conservation and economic development in this region.

We support this bill because:

- The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) will help keep the region's forests as forests, and bring new sources of funding and assistance to landowners and communities. It will focus the expertise of the U.S. Forest Service, the Commonwealth, and local conservation, forestry and economic development non-profits to work alongside town representatives.
- The MTWP would increase the permanent conservation of at least 2,100 acres of forestland, which will remain in private ownership. These lands will continue to provide the many benefits forests provide for future generations.
- In addition, resources will be available to help stimulate forest-based economic development, including the creation of a multi-use Forestry Center to attract and educate visitors to the region, provide information and assistance to landowners managing their woods, help municipalities manage and take advantage of increased tourism, and support forest-based businesses.
- The MTWP will enhance the sustainable forest management underway in the region. Sustainable forest management is an important strategy for landowners to maintain ownership, recoup some income from their land, diversify wildlife habitat, create recreational trails, and address invasive plants and pests. Massachusetts currently imports 94% of the wood products we use every year. Using locally grown wood products can benefit the local economy and help landowners maintain their forests instead of selling land for development.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact Steve Long of The Nature Conservancy at 617-532-8367 or slong@tnc.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Heather Clish, Director of Conservation & Recreation Policy, Appalachian Mountain Club
Karen Heymann, Legislative Director, Mass Audubon
Steve Long, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy
Jennifer Ryan, Director of Policy, The Trustees of Reservations