



Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

protecting wetlands, open space and biological diversity through education and advocacy

October 11, 2006

Trustees - Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund
c/o Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
30 Park Drive
Topsham, ME 04086

Subject: Berkshire Conservation Agent Program

Dear Trustees,

In Massachusetts, municipal Conservation Commissions are the official local bodies specifically charged with protection of a community's natural resources. The responsibilities of Conservation Commissions are broad. They are responsible for protecting the land, water and biological resources of their communities. Commissions also advise other municipal officials and boards on conservation issues that relate to their areas of responsibility.

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions was formed in 1961 to educate and support Conservation Commissions. In addition, MACC works for strong, workable, science-based laws and regulations regarding wetlands, other water resources, open space, and biological resources.

Over the years, our understanding of the natural environment and the science of conservation and environmental protection has evolved. Environmental laws have become more complex reflecting our increased knowledge. Conservation Commissions are a group of volunteers who work long hours to achieve community conservation goals. Increasingly, Commissioners have found it more and more difficult to keep pace with the scientific and regulatory requirements. Commissioners have sought professional assistance to assist them with their work.

The Berkshires have developed a pragmatic program to provide assistance to Conservation Commission; the Berkshire Conservation Agent Program (BCAP.) BCAP provides affordable, on-demand services of a trained Conservation Agent to the Commissions. This program works especially well in small towns which cannot fiscally support the costs of a full-time agent. MACC has looked at the BCAP program as a model for other areas of Massachusetts.

I realize many worthwhile proposals have been submitted to the Trustees. BCAP would provide long-term benefits to protect the water resources, as well as other natural resources of the Berkshires.

Sincerely,

Ken Pruitt
Executive Director