



Andrew Gottlieb  
Executive Director

June 6, 2025

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The Honorable Christine P. Barber, House Chair

Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Room 215 & Room 167

State House

Boston, MA 02133

**RE: An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration (H.1052/S.557)**

Dear Chair Rausch and Chair Barber:

The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) submits this written testimony in strong support of An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration (H.1052/S.557) and respectfully urges the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources to report this bill out with a favorable recommendation.

Founded in 1968, APCC is the Cape region's leading nonprofit environmental advocacy and education organization, working for the adoption of laws, policies and programs that protect, preserve and restore Cape Cod's natural resources. APCC focuses our efforts on the protection of groundwater, surface water, and wetland resources, preservation of open space, the promotion of responsible, planned growth and the achievement of an environmental ethic.

For centuries, Massachusetts' coastal and inland wetlands have been adversely impacted by human alterations, including draining, filling, ditching, introduction of non-native vegetation, and the construction of barriers to natural stream and tidal flow. It is estimated that between 35 to 40 percent of that state's salt marshes have been lost due to the above actions. In more recent times, state laws have been enacted that have done a good job in protecting most of our wetland resources, but much needs to be done to reverse the serious harm that has occurred and to restore the natural functions of our remaining wetlands. In recent decades, multiple restoration

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initiatives have been undertaken in our coastal and inland areas to do just that.

Yet despite these positive efforts, the pace of wetland restoration has been painfully slow, with a backlog of restoration projects bogged down by regulatory hurdles that impede timely restoration and pack on restrictive costs—ironically, the same regulations that were originally written to protect wetlands from harmful development. It is clear that meaningful reforms to the regulatory permitting process must be adopted that recognize the desirable benefits of restoration projects. Such reforms are a critical component of future successful strategies for wetlands restoration.

An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration (H.1052/S.557) would address several important permitting issues that have been impediments for undertaking simple—and desirable—restoration remedies. It would streamline the permitting process for restoration tools that include healing historically dug ditches by utilizing salt marsh hay as fill, creating shallow runnels to drain artificially flooded areas, using a thin layer of sediment to counter the impacts of eroding or subsiding salt marshes, or removing invasive vegetation by hand. The legislation would also improve the process of permitting pilot programs to allow the testing of innovative nature-based resiliency projects in wetland areas.

Over the years, APCC has worked with local, state and federal partners on numerous wetland restoration projects in every town on Cape Cod. We are intimately aware of the degradation that has occurred in our salt marshes and other wetland areas from past human activity, and we have witnessed the beneficial ecosystem transformations that have occurred to these wetlands as a result of restoration projects. One negative constant in these restoration efforts is the lengthy permitting process that project managers must contend with, which results in project delays and extremely high project costs.

Weir Creek salt marsh in West Dennis is a good example of a current project where costs for permitting are unnecessarily high due to the complicated pathway that must be followed for project approval by the state. Requirements that result in burdensome extra expense for the Weir Creek project include the costs for engineer-stamped runnel designs as well as the costs of substantial staff time and other expenses necessary for intensive baseline monitoring of salt marsh sediment movement and groundwater tables. These data are required by the state in order to inform the justification of, and adaptive management plan required for, permitting runnel projects.

The impact that the length of time required for permitting has on projects such as the Weir Creek salt marsh is also significant. There are real advantages to a streamlined regulatory



approach in which consultants could reduce cost, time and effort on copies and submittals, but there is also the tangible advantage of avoiding ongoing damage to the ecosystem caused by delayed restoration action. The longer wetland systems continue without restoration intervention, the harder it is to gain an advantage over adverse conditions, such as the increasing impacts of sea level rise on coastal salt marshes.

An improved regulatory process in the form of streamlined permitting for beneficial wetlands restoration projects is long overdue. We ask that the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources act swiftly in moving An Act Accelerating Wetlands Restoration forward by reporting the bill out with a favorable recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Andrew Gottlieb  
Executive Director

cc: Senator Julian Cyr  
Senator Dylan Fernandes  
Representative Hadley Luddy  
Representative Christopher Flanagan  
Representative Kip Diggs  
Representative David Vieira  
Representative Thomas Moakley  
Representative Steven Xiarhos  
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