

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

Anne M. Gobi
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
5th Worcester District

Tel. (617) 722-2210
Fax (617) 722-2239
E-Mail: Anne.Gobi@mahouse.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Brian Ferrarese

Monday, November 25, 2013

PHONE: 617-722-2210

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE RELEASES WATER INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

BOSTON—State Representative Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, is pleased to announce a \$500 million water infrastructure and drinking water bill was released favorably from committee.

The comprehensive committee bill was released during an Executive Session after the committee heard testimony in October on water infrastructure and drinking water legislation. The bill proposes reforms and commitments to assist small communities and enhance state partnerships with cities and towns, to incentivize best management practices, to deal with water and wastewater infrastructure challenges, and to promote innovative water management pilot projects as well as green infrastructure projects.

“I appreciate the input of the committee and staff in putting forward a bill that will assist our communities. This bill will assist in giving relief from the high financial burdens incurred to maintain safe and reliable public and private water and sewer systems. This legislation makes improvements to our existing water infrastructure, while it opens up opportunities for innovative water management projects and green infrastructure to come.”

Relative to the newly-named Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, formerly known as the Water Pollution Abatement Trust (WPAT), the bill bonds \$250 million to provide capital for maintenance and improvements to municipal drinking water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure.

The bill expands the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust capacity by increasing statutory caps on spending from \$88 million to \$138 million and imposing a floor on spending of 80 percent of the statutory cap. It allows the trust to improve flexibility, incentivize best management practices, and to establish a principal forgiveness program based on more demanding criteria for qualifying projects.

The legislation requires 25 percent of any amount transferred to the Commonwealth Stabilization Fund, not to exceed \$200 million, to be transferred to various funds relative to water pollution, drinking water and water infrastructure, including:

- 10 percent, not to exceed \$80 million, to be transferred to the Water Pollution Abatement Revolving Fund.
- 5 percent, not to exceed \$40 million, to be transferred to the Drinking Water Revolving Fund.
- 10 percent, not to exceed \$80 million, to be transferred to the Water Infrastructure for Small Communities grant fund.

Small communities would receive assistance through a variety of measures, as the bill:

- Provides \$1.5 million for a technical assistance program that allows communities to develop asset management plans and to identify green infrastructure opportunities (at least forty percent of the funds must go to communities with fewer than 20,000 residents).
- Requires the Department of Environmental Protection to streamline the application process for smaller towns applying for Massachusetts Clean Water Trust loans.
- Prioritizes 40 percent of Massachusetts Clean Water Trust loans for communities of fewer than 20,000 residents; the remaining 60 percent is prioritized for communities of more than 20,000 residents.
- Provides \$40 million for a new Water Infrastructure Small Communities Grant Fund.
- Increases septic tank tax credits.

The legislation also proposes funding for innovative water management pilot projects and green infrastructure, water banking, and an infiltration and inflow financial assistance program.

#####