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PRESS RELEASE

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Environment Committee to Host Quabbin Rattlesnake Oversight Hearing

BOSTON – **State Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** and **Representative Paul Schmid (D-Westport)**, Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Environment Natural Resources and Agriculture, have announced that the Committee will be hosting an Oversight Hearing on the state’s plan to establish a Timber Rattlesnake habitat on Mt. Zion in the Quabbin Reservoir. The hearing will take place on **May 10th at 11:00 am at the Athol Town Hall** (584 Main St, Athol, MA 01331).

The plan to house Timber Rattlesnakes on Mt. Zion has been met with differing opinions from area residents about the safety of putting venomous snakes in an area where many people hike, fish and walk pets. The Division of Marine Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) claims that the snakes will remain on the island; however, many argue that Timber Rattlesnakes are strong swimmers and that Mt. Zion is in fact not an island but a peninsula, with a baffle dam connecting it to the mainland.

“I have great respect for the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and also respect the questions and concerns I have received from many people as a result of the proposal to place rattlesnakes at the Quabbin Reservoir,” said Senator Gobi. “Many of my legislative colleagues also have heard from their constituents around the Commonwealth and we have an obligation to make sure we are doing our due diligence.”

“The Commonwealth has the responsibility to protect the health and interests of our citizens while creating opportunities to maintain our natural landscape and wildlife,” said Representative

Schmid. “The purpose of this oversight hearing will be to ensure that the right balance between these two tasks is being met and our residents are getting the right information.”

Senator Gobi, along with Senator Eric Lesser, Rep. Thomas Petrolati and Rep. Todd Smola, submitted a letter to Environment Secretary Matthew Beaton requesting any action be frozen until the oversight hearing could be held.

In order to give experts from both sides of the issue ample time to present, testimony at the hearing will be by invite only. The public are encouraged to attend the hearing and to submit questions, concerns and comments to the committee any time via e-mail (henry.kahn@masenate.gov).

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