

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

BY His Excellency

EDWARD J. KING

Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER #193

Preamble

Agricultural land in Massachusetts is a finite natural resource that is threatened by competing land use pressure.

The natural resource qualities associated with agricultural land make state-owned agricultural land an irreplaceable economic and environmental asset when utilized for food production. This land is part of the "common wealth" of Massachusetts citizens, and the wise use and conservation of state-owned agricultural land is of broad public value. As the loss of private agricultural land in the Commonwealth continues, the state-owned land will play an increasingly important role for the state's remaining farmers and young people who wish to enter farming. As the state-owned agricultural land decline in productivity and efficient utilization, so does the maximum return of benefit to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, the loss of agricultural land has had a detrimental affect upon environmental quality. Agricultural land reduces flooding by effectively absorbing precipitation, while replenishing critical ground water supplies. The open characteristic and natural vegetation of agricultural land helps purify the air; enhances wildlife habitat; provides for recreation; and maintains the landscape's aesthetic and historic quality. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the Commonwealth's agricultural land remains available for present and future generations.

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth seeks to preserve the productive agricultural land base on which the Massachusetts agricultural industry and the people of the Commonwealth depend; and

WHEREAS, state acquisition programs administered by the Department of Environmental Affairs, pursuant to G.L.c. 132A, §§11A-11E and G.L.c. 184 §§31-33, promote the preservation of private agricultural land; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the Executive Department of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to protect, through the administration of current programs and laws, the Commonwealth's agricultural land base from irreversible conversion to uses which result in its loss as an essential food production and environmental resource;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Edward J. King, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth, do hereby order and direct all relevant state agencies to seek to mitigate against the conversion of state-owned agricultural land and adopt the policies herewith:

1. State funds and federal grants administered by the state shall not be used to encourage the conversion of agricultural land to other uses when feasible

alternatives are available.

2. State Agency actions shall encourage the protection of state-owned agricultural land by mitigating against the conversion of state-owned land to non-agricultural uses, and by promoting soil and water conservation practices.

3. The Secretary of Environmental Affairs shall identify state-owned land suitable for agricultural use according to the following criteria:

- a. the presence of soil types capable of supporting or contributing to present or potential commercial agriculture
- b. current and historic use for agriculture, and
- c. absence of non-farm development.

4. State Agencies controlling state-owned land suitable for agricultural use shall coordinate agricultural land management policy with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. In managing said land, State Agencies shall be encouraged to allow for use on a multiple year basis for forage and food crops.

5. Surplus state-owned land; identified as suitable for agriculture by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, shall remain available for agriculture when compatible with state agency objectives.

6. For purposes of this Executive Order, "agricultural land" shall be defined as land classified Prime, Unique, or of State and Local Importance by the USDA Soil Conservation Service, as well as land characterized by active agricultural use.

7. For the purposes of this Executive Order, "state-owned land" shall be defined as :

- a. all land under the custody or control of a state agency,
- b. all lands purchased in whole or in part with state funds or federal funds administered by the state.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston  
this 19th day of March  
in the year of our Lord one thousand nine  
hundred and eighty one and of the  
Independence of the United States of  
America two-hundred and five.

EDWARD J. KING  
GOVERNOR  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY  
Secretary of the Commonwealth

GOD SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS