



April 18, 2014

His Excellency Deval Patrick  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Re: **Natural Gas Energy and Infrastructure**

Dear Governor Patrick:

Mass Audubon commends you and your administration for your leadership in addressing pressing environmental matters in the Commonwealth. However, we respectfully object to the manner in which the Commonwealth is proceeding, in cooperation with energy companies, to undertake new long-term natural gas import commitments to the state and region along with related infrastructure, especially in the form of the proposed *Kinder-Morgan Tennessee Gas Company Northeast Expansion Pipeline* project (Kinder-Morgan.) Instead, we request that you instruct your Departments of Public Utilities (DPU) and Energy Resources (DOER) to undertake open and transparent processes to publicly examine energy supply needs and pursue options that will meet those needs with the least damaging environmental impact while advancing Massachusetts clean energy policy.

The proposed Kinder-Morgan project is a major long-term infrastructure investment that would commit the Commonwealth and its ratepayers to decades of rising expenditures and extend our over-dependency on fossil fuels. It is also contrary to the state's commitment to meet the green house gas (GHG) emission reduction targets of the *Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) (Chapter 298 of the Act of 2008)*. As the pipeline would likely be in place for 20-25 years (i.e., extending out to 2040, when the Commonwealth will be approaching the 2050 GWSA requirement to reduce emissions 80% below 1990 levels), it is particularly troublesome.

As a Secretarial (Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs) appointee to the GWSA Implementation Advisory Committee, I am deeply concerned about the incompatibility of new natural gas, along with the related pipeline project, to the GWSA. As proposed, the Kinder-Morgan project would have direct and significant environmental impacts including fragmentation and degradation of extensive tracts of public and private conservation lands, including properties that your Administration has invested considerable resources in protecting. For these reasons, we ask you to withdraw your expressed support for this commitment and this project.

### **Climate Change and Energy Policy**

Mass Audubon's position on the import to the state and region of new natural gas supplies and our review of the proposed Kinder-Morgan project is performed within the context of the experience of

rapid climate change and the direct and indirect environmental impacts of fossil fuel exploration, development, production, and use. Hydraulic fractured (fracked) gas is especially damaging.

As you know, the combustion of fossil fuels releases GHGs including carbon dioxide and methane that accumulate in the lower atmosphere and rapidly heat the earth. As documented by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), rapid climate change presents serious threats to people, economies, and the natural environment. As one example, rising sea levels caused by global warming flood Massachusetts' low-lying barrier beaches and islands that serve as critical habitat for coastal birds, including the federally-listed endangered Roseate Tern and threatened Piping Plover, while also threatening human communities. Last month's IPCC report indicated that aggressive action on both mitigation and adaptation is needed, and failure to do so will have grave consequences.

To combat the threat of climate change, increases in energy conservation and efficiency remain a priority as the results are beneficial both environmentally and economically. For three consecutive years, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy has recognized the Commonwealth as the number-one state in the nation for its leadership in energy-efficiency policies and programs in the residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation sectors. We congratulate you on achieving that honor. We should also accelerate that progress, however, and not reverse course by pursuing major new fossil fuel imports to the state and region along with related infrastructure that is contrary to the Commonwealth's recognized national leadership.

### **Opportunity to Build a Clean Energy Future for Massachusetts**

New England's electric system is at a tipping point, with economic and environmental factors forcing the retirement of old coal-fired power plants at Salem and Somerset, along with the closing of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Station. We therefore have an opportunity to design and build a new clean, largely home-grown energy infrastructure to serve the region's needs for the coming decades.

We agree that, in the short term, natural gas can assist the Commonwealth as a "bridge" in moving beyond our half-century reliance on coal and oil. If managed correctly, the short-term use of new natural gas supplies can hasten that transition to a clean, renewable energy future. But a long-term reliance on natural gas versus other options, such as further acceleration of energy efficiency and renewables as noted, will impede progress toward meeting the GWSA targets. It will merely shift the Commonwealth to a new fossil fuel dominated system that is environmentally and economically unsustainable.

As illustrated in an April 8, 2014 presentation on "Energy Markets Overview" to the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council by DOER Deputy Commissioner Birud Jhaveri, Massachusetts already has extensive gas delivery systems in place. Furthermore, the New England Gas-Electric Focus Group convened by the New England States Committee on Electricity released a report last month concluding that even among gas and electricity utility experts, *there is still not complete consensus around which all stakeholders and the New England states can coalesce*. Your Administration's support for new major gas supplies and related infrastructure was expressed prior to a full publicly reviewed alternatives analysis, and must be reconsidered.

## **Impacts of Major New Gas Infrastructure**

The exploration, development, production and long-term use of natural gas, along with its related infrastructure, can have serious environmental consequences. In fact, unlike what its proponents would have us believe, natural gas is not “clean.” Among other drawbacks, its production and use release significant amounts of the heat-trapping gases that accelerate climate change. Methane, which leaks from natural gas pipelines and wells, is a far more potent GHG than previously thought. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, *pound for pound, the comparative impact of CH<sub>4</sub> on climate change is over 20 times greater than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 100-year period.*

New major infrastructure like the Kinder-Morgan project is likely to have significant direct environmental impacts on land and water resources. If some improvements are needed to gas pipeline infrastructure in order to meet near-term energy needs as the state continues its transition toward reliance on clean energy, then smaller-scale improvements to existing pipeline networks and the mechanisms for sale and management of available gas supplies should be considered. Careful routing and construction of any essential new smaller-scale infrastructure can help avoid and minimize impacts to the natural green infrastructure (e.g. forests and wetlands) that helps sequester carbon and buffer our natural and built communities from the unavoidable climate change impacts already underway.

As a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, we further urge you to defend conservation lands against the Kinder-Morgan pipeline and uphold the legacy your Administration has established through the protection of more than 110,000 acres of land. Many of these properties were targeted for protection because they contain valuable or sensitive natural resources, or because they form critical components of a resilient matrix of interconnected landscapes.

## **Open, Deliberative, Public Process Needed**

We believe, as you do, that natural gas has a useful role to play in our transition from coal and oil to a clean energy future. However, the Commonwealth must carefully manage that role so that natural gas contributes to rather than overwhelms Massachusetts’ efforts to reduce GHG emissions. To effectively leverage natural gas as a bridge to a clean-energy future, any new proposed gas infrastructure must be:

1. Subject to thorough analysis that accounts for its long-term climate impacts and is conducted in an open and transparent process;
2. Scaled in size to meet the needs identified by the Commonwealth’s energy regulators;
3. Subject to conditions that ensure consistency with climate change goals and targets; and
4. Located, constructed, and maintained in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts.

## **Conclusion**

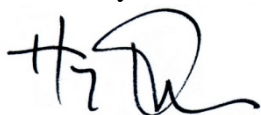
If we rush to build large-scale and long-lived natural gas infrastructure, such as the Kinder-Morgan pipeline, we risk locking-in the Commonwealth’s dependence on fossil fuels and undermining the climate benefits of clean, renewable options like solar and offshore wind. This dependence undermines the commitments we have made through *The Green Communities Act (Chapter 169 of the Acts of 2008)*, especially as we look to continue to grow the renewable energy sector and ensure that the Renewable Portfolio Standard targets are met.

Mass Audubon believes that we can responsibly use natural gas as a tool to improve, and not burden, the health, welfare, and safety of Massachusetts residents. We must use it sparingly in a manner that replaces other fossil fuel sources, and as a means to foster, rather than constrain, the ongoing transformation and long-term decarbonization of our energy systems.

In conclusion, we request that you reconsider your support of any new major natural gas imports to the state and region, along with the proposed interstate pipeline. Instead, please instruct DPU and DOER to initiate a public planning process that considers all possible options, including smaller-scale improvements to the existing gas distribution system and modifications to the mechanisms for gas purchase and sale to optimize use of available supply sources. The energy decisions we make today will establish a precedent for how we work together to meet the targets of GWSA and foster a new and sustainable clean energy future for Massachusetts.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Questions should be directed to Gary Clayton, Vice President for Conservation Programs, 781-259-2160 / [gclayton@massaudubon.org](mailto:gclayton@massaudubon.org) or Jack Clarke, Director of Public Policy and Government Relations, 617-962-5187 / [jclarke@massaudubon.org](mailto:jclarke@massaudubon.org).

Sincerely,



Henry Tepper  
President

ehr:jjc:HGT

cc: Richard Sullivan, Secretary Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Ann Berwick, Chair, DPU  
Mark Sylvia, Commissioner, Department of Energy Resources  
David Cash, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection  
Jack Murray, Commissioner, Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Mary Griffin, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game  
Senator Benjamin Downing, Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
Representative John Keenan, Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
Senator Marc Pacheco, Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change  
Representative Frank Smizik, House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change  
Susan Reid, Director Conservation Law Foundation Massachusetts  
Charles Knox, Executive Director, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition  
Eugene Benson, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

*Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 35,000 acres of conservation land, provide school, camp, and other educational programs for 225,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Founded in 1896 by two inspirational women who were committed to the protection of birds, Mass Audubon has grown to become a powerful force for conservation in New England. Today we are respected for our science, successful advocacy, and innovative approaches to connecting people and nature. Each year, our statewide network of wildlife sanctuaries welcomes nearly half a million visitors of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and serves as the base for our work. To support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (283-8266) or visit [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org).*