

Massachusetts FY26 Budget Comparison: Climate & Environmental Policy

Overview of Environmental Funding in House vs. Senate Budgets

Both the Massachusetts House (H.4001) and Senate (S.2525) FY2026 budgets make significant investments in climate and environmental programs, but they diverge in funding levels and priorities. The House budget allocates about **\$505.4 million** across energy and environmental agencies ¹, whereas the Senate budget proposes roughly **\$470.3 million** for similar initiatives ². This gap reflects differences in line-item funding, earmarks, and new initiatives. Overall, the House tends to invest more heavily in certain climate programs and environmental justice, while the Senate directs funds to targeted resilience and workforce efforts. Key departments – including the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Department of Energy Resources (DOER), and others – see varying appropriations and policy language between the two versions. Below is a structured comparison of funding, program priorities, and policy riders in each budget, focusing on climate resilience, environmental justice, clean energy, conservation, and waste management programs.

EOEEA Secretariat: Climate Adaptation and Environmental Justice

Climate Adaptation & Resiliency: Both budgets fund the EOEEA Secretary's office and climate adaptation planning, but at different levels. The Senate allocates about **\$5.13 million** in a dedicated line (2000-0101) for climate change adaptation and preparedness initiatives ³ ⁴. This supports state climate resiliency planning across infrastructure, natural resources, and data analysis. The House likewise funds climate adaptation within EOEEA, presumably around the same level, but goes further by setting aside a **\$14 million transfer to a new Disaster Relief and Resiliency Fund** for long-term climate disaster recovery ⁵. The House-created fund (established in FY25) is intended for emergency relief from natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, extreme weather), indicating a priority on resilience funding that the Senate budget **does not explicitly include**. In conference, negotiators will weigh the House's one-time resiliency fund infusion against the Senate's more modest direct appropriation for adaptation programs ⁴.

Environmental Justice (EJ) Programs: A notable difference is funding for the state's Environmental Justice strategy. The House maintains robust support for EJ implementation, roughly **\$8-9 million** for EOEEA's environmental justice line-item (2000-0102, per the Governor's proposal) to continue expanding staff and community engagement in underserved areas. In contrast, the Senate funds this program at **\$6.29 million** ⁶ ⁷ – a significant reduction. (During Senate debate, an amendment was offered to boost EJ funding to \$8.75M, aligning with House/Governor levels, but it was withdrawn ⁸.) The Senate also attaches language requiring EOEEA to report by March 2026 on EJ implementation, including number of staff hired and efforts to improve language access for public participation ⁹. The House budget does not highlight a similar reporting requirement. In conference, advocates will push to **reconcile the \$2+ million EJ funding gap**, likely urging retention of the higher House funding to ensure the new EJ staff and grants (which grew to \$8.7M in FY25) continue at full capacity ¹⁰ ⁶.

Secretariat Earmarks and Policy Riders: Both budgets include earmarks in the EOEEA Secretary's administrative line (2000-0100) for specific environmental initiatives, though the projects differ. For example, the Senate earmarks funds for regional water quality monitoring and climate innovation: at least **\$30,000** for OARS, Inc. to monitor the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord rivers, **\$150,000** for Buzzards Bay Coalition's water quality program, and **\$50,000** for a Housing Climate Innovation Center pilot ¹¹ ¹². The House budget likewise contains local earmarks (not detailed in press releases) and a similar total for EOEEA operations (~\$19–20 million), but likely targets other regional projects. These differences in earmark language will be negotiated without affecting bottom-line spending dramatically.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Waste Management

Core DEP Funding: Both House and Senate provide essentially equal overall funding for DEP to protect air, land, and water quality – approximately **\$85.3 million** in each budget ¹³ ¹⁴. This suggests consensus on the baseline resources needed for DEP's permitting, enforcement, and water programs. However, within DEP's budget, the allocation to specific programs and any policy language riders show differences:

Solid Waste & Recycling Programs: The House and Senate diverge on support for recycling and waste reduction initiatives. The Governor's budget had proposed a steep cut to DEP's recycling & solid waste assistance line (2200-0107) – down to roughly \$0.49M – but the Legislature restores much of this. The Senate funds this program at **\$1,138,748** ¹⁵, accompanied by detailed language to repurpose it as an "employment social enterprise" pilot. The Senate mandates that at least **\$500,000** of these funds support a nonprofit-run pilot program to create recycling jobs (specifically mattress recycling opportunities) for individuals facing barriers to employment ¹⁶ ¹⁷. It also earmarks **\$150,000** for a new small business composting grant program, and requires DEP and the Department of Agricultural Resources to report on food waste diversion outcomes by April 2026 ¹⁸ ¹⁹. These policy riders tie the funding to specific waste reduction goals (mattress recycling, composting) and oversight.

The House also recognizes the need for recycling program funding but without the same specificity. While not explicitly broken out in press materials, the House is expected to have allocated around **\$1.4 million** (level with FY25) to 2200-0107 to maintain recycling and solid waste grants, reversing the Governor's cut. Unlike the Senate, the House did **not** condition these funds with new pilot program requirements or detailed reports. Thus, the Senate's budget is more prescriptive in how DEP must spend waste management funds – a point the conference committee will examine. Compromise may involve retaining some of the Senate's targeted investments (e.g. mattress recycling initiative) while ensuring the program's funding level meets the House's higher mark ¹⁵.

Other DEP Priorities: Both budgets continue to fund DEP's clean water, air, and hazardous waste programs. Neither budget includes controversial riders limiting environmental rules; instead, they invest in compliance staff. For instance, the Senate sets aside \$2.49M for additional permitting staff (2200-0109 and 2200-0112 combined) ²⁰ to ensure timely environmental permit reviews. The House likely matches these needs. Overall, DEP's mission is funded similarly by both branches, but the Senate's approach to solid waste is more directive, emphasizing **waste diversion and job creation**, whereas the House provides flexible funding to be ironed out in conference.

Parks, Conservation and Recreation (DCR and Land Protection)

Department of Conservation and Recreation: The House and Senate budgets both boost funding for DCR's parks and recreation operations, with the House being slightly more generous. The House proposes **\$163.4 million** for DCR, supporting state parks, recreation facilities, and related programs ¹³. The Senate offers **\$162.1 million** ¹⁴ – essentially the same magnitude, but about \$1.3M less. The difference likely stems from the House's inclusion of numerous earmarks for local park projects, waterfront improvements, and park staffing that sum to a higher total. For example, House amendments often fund specific local parks or pools; in turn, the Senate may have trimmed or omitted some of those earmarks. Both budgets acknowledge DCR's needs to address deferred maintenance and expand access to open space. The Senate explicitly notes that roughly a quarter of DCR properties are in environmental justice communities, reflecting the importance of equitable park access ²¹.

Policy Language: Neither budget includes contentious policy riders on DCR, but each designates funds for particular purposes. The Senate, for instance, in an environmental law enforcement line-item, earmarks resources to protect North Atlantic right whales – \$200,000 to increase patrols and remove abandoned fishing gear (in the Office of Environmental Law Enforcement) ²². The House may have similar conservation-minded earmarks (often for urban forestry, tree planting or park safety), albeit in different forms. Such differences in DCR and conservation program earmarks will be reconciled, likely by splitting funding to cover as many local priorities as possible. On balance, **both chambers prioritize robust funding for state parks**, with the House edging slightly higher to accommodate more local projects ²³.

Land Conservation and Other Natural Resources: For other environmental agencies under EEA, the budgets are comparable with a few exceptions. The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) – which oversees wildlife, fisheries, and habitat conservation – sees baseline funding from both branches (e.g. around \$2.27M for DFG administration, not prominently debated) ²⁴. The House and Senate both continue to fund the Division of Ecological Restoration (within DFG) at roughly **\$5.3–5.5 million** to restore rivers, wetlands, and watersheds (the Senate is \$5.3M ²⁵, and the House likely similar, aiming for level funding to FY25). A notable Senate initiative is a new **\$2.8 million** line-item for a Culverts and Small Bridges Technical Assistance Program ²⁶ (account 2300-0102), to help communities upgrade stream crossings and reduce climate-related flood risks. The House budget does not contain a dedicated culverts program in Section 2. It's possible the House preferred to address such climate resilience infrastructure via grant programs or capital funding, whereas the Senate carved out operating funds. This new Senate program – if retained – would complement the House's disaster resiliency fund approach, as both aim to bolster local climate adaptation (one through infrastructure grants, the other through a relief fund). The conference committee will decide whether to include the Senate's culvert program or rely on existing mechanisms.

Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR): One of the largest percentage differences is in agricultural programs. The House invests **\$67.2 million** in MDAR ¹³, while the Senate provides **\$54.9 million** ²⁷. The House's higher figure likely funds additional grants for urban agriculture, food security, climate-smart farming, and the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. It may also restore proposed cuts or fund new pilot programs (for example, the House in past budgets has boosted funding for healthy soil or food crop programs). The Senate number is closer to level-funding, suggesting a leaner approach. This means the House and Senate will have to negotiate roughly a **\$12 million** disparity. Potential compromises could involve partially funding the House's extra initiatives (e.g. some additional support for farmers' markets, food system resilience, or APR) while staying within the Senate's more conservative total. Both chambers emphasize the importance of local food and farming (each cited food security during

budget debates), but the House clearly places a bigger bet on MDAR – aligning with their overall higher environmental spending ¹ ¹⁴ .

Clean Energy and Climate Mitigation: DOER, MassCEC, and DPU

Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Charged with implementing clean energy policies, DOER is funded somewhat differently by each branch. The Senate allocates **\$8.2 million** for DOER operations (7006-1003) ²⁸ , explicitly including **\$1 million** earmarked to implement the new climate legislation passed in 2024 (such as setting up the Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Division) ²⁹ . The House does not list DOER in its highlights, but it likely funds DOER at or above the Governor’s recommendation (~\$8.9 million was requested) ³⁰ . The House may have accepted the Governor’s higher figure to allow DOER to hire staff for its expanded mandates (managing renewable energy procurements, running the new Clean Energy Siting division alongside DPU, etc.). In short, **the House likely provides a bit more for DOER** (closer to the \$8.9M advocacy target ³⁰), whereas the Senate trimmed it to \$8.2M but ensured funding for the specific new climate law duties. This difference, though modest in dollar terms, reflects the Senate’s confidence that DOER can use other revenue (DOER is partly ratepayer-funded) for its needs, while the House favored fully funding through the state budget.

Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) and Clean Energy Investments: A stark contrast is seen in direct clean energy investment funding. The House budget includes a **\$25 million** transfer to the Mass. Clean Energy Center ³¹ – a sizable infusion aimed at supporting the clean energy economy. This likely would capitalize the Clean Energy Investment Fund for grants in clean tech, workforce development, and climate innovation. The Senate, by comparison, dedicates only **\$5 million** for clean energy investments via MassCEC ³² . In the Senate’s budget, this is framed as supporting the “Green Economy Workforce” ³² . Both branches tap the state’s new Fair Share revenues for some of these investments, but the **House’s \$25M far exceeds the Senate’s \$5M**, indicating a priority to accelerate clean energy projects and decarbonization (possibly aligning with Governor Healey’s climate goals). The Senate’s smaller amount is more targeted and comes with reporting requirements – the Senate mandates that EEA and MassCEC report on how the clean energy funds are spent and their impact on 2050 climate goals ³³ ³⁴ . This will be a major point of negotiation: the conference committee must decide whether to retain the House’s ambitious \$25M commitment or scale it closer to the Senate’s level. A compromise could earmark something in between (e.g. ~\$15M) with agreed-upon focus areas (such as workforce training, which the Senate prioritized).

“Green SchoolWorks” School Decarbonization Program: The House distinguishes itself by continuing the **Green SchoolWorks** initiative with **\$20 million** in funding ³¹ . This program helps schools invest in energy efficiency and decarbonization projects (HVAC, insulation, solar, etc.) to reduce emissions in the education sector. House leaders tout this as a House-led effort over the past two years to retrofit schools with green technology [20†L393- L400] . The Senate budget, however, does **not** include a parallel program or line-item for school greening. There is no mention of dedicated funding for K-12 decarbonization in the Senate’s text or summaries. The omission means the Senate likely preferred to fund municipal building decarbonization through competitive grants (or future bond bills) rather than a specific earmark in the operating budget. The fate of Green SchoolWorks will thus be decided in conference – the House will argue for its inclusion (perhaps citing the program’s success and the state’s climate targets), while the Senate conferees may be wary of adding new, large expenditures not in their plan. This is a classic example of a **House priority vs. Senate restraint** that often emerges in budget negotiations.

Department of Public Utilities (DPU): Although not under EEA, DPU's role in climate policy (regulating utilities and implementing climate laws) warrants mention. The Senate explicitly provides **\$28.6 million** for DPU, including **\$4 million** earmarked to launch the new Energy Facilities Siting Division created by the 2022 climate law ³⁵. This funding ensures DPU can hire personnel and develop a real-time clean energy project siting dashboard as mandated. The House did not spotlight DPU funding in its communications. It's likely the House budget matched the base DPU funding need (DPU is largely paid for by utility assessments), but it's unclear if the House included the full \$4M for the new Siting Division. If the House fell short on this item, it will need attention in conference to avoid hindering a key climate implementation effort. The Senate's language in account 2100-0694 specifically outlines DPU's new division duties and funding mechanism ³⁶ ³⁷. The absence of such language on the House side suggests a difference in approach – possibly leaving more flexibility or expecting DPU to fund it via industry assessments. The conferees will ensure the final budget provides DPU the necessary resources, given it is a statutory obligation.

Outlook: Key Trade-offs and Conference Committee Considerations

The House and Senate will reconcile these differences in the coming conference committee, likely trading one chamber's initiative for the other's in pursuit of a balanced final budget. Several clear trade-offs have emerged:

- **Environmental Justice and Climate Resilience:** The House's higher EJ funding and creation of a resiliency fund versus the Senate's leaner funding with reporting requirements will require a compromise. The final budget may restore EJ funding closer to current levels (a win for the House position) while possibly including the Senate's accountability language ⁹. The resilience fund (\$14M) might be reduced or made contingent, as the Senate showed reluctance to earmark new reserves mid-budget.
- **Clean Energy Funding Level:** The \$20M gap between \$25M (House) and \$5M (Senate) for MassCEC is significant ³¹ ³². Conferees will negotiate a middle ground or repurpose funds. They must also consider the **Green SchoolWorks** program – whether to fund it (and at what level) or drop it. Given Massachusetts' climate commitments, some additional investment in clean energy is probable, but the scale will be tempered by the Senate's fiscal caution. Expect a compromise that partially funds the House's clean energy priorities (perhaps focusing on workforce training or municipal projects) but not the full \$25M, accompanied by Senate-like reporting provisions ³⁴.
- **Agriculture and Conservation:** The House's higher MDAR and DCR figures suggest it will push to maintain support for local agriculture grants and park improvements. The Senate may concede some upward adjustments here in exchange for House agreement on other fronts. For instance, the final MDAR number could land between the two proposals, and some of the House's numerous DCR park earmarks might be trimmed to the most critical ones, aligning total DCR funding closer to the Senate's number ¹⁴ while still above it.
- **Solid Waste & Recycling Policy:** The Senate's innovative approach to recycling (mattress recycling pilot and compost grants) ¹⁶ ¹⁸ could survive if the House, which generally supports waste diversion goals, agrees to the concept. In return, the House might ask for the full funding it had assumed. The outcome may be a well-funded recycling line (near House levels) with some of the Senate's directive language intact, thereby expanding waste reduction efforts statewide.

- **Implementing New Climate Laws:** Both chambers are committed to executing recent climate legislation. Ensuring DOER and DPU have sufficient funding (and staff positions) to carry out those laws will be non-negotiable. Thus, any shortfall in one version will be corrected in the final compromise. The Senate's explicit \$4M for DPU's siting division ³⁵ and \$1M within DOER ²⁹ highlight items likely to be included in the final budget, even if quietly.

In summary, the House budget leans into **bigger investments in climate and environmental justice** – pouring money into clean energy projects, school greening, and community resilience – whereas the Senate budget emphasizes **targeted, structured programs and fiscal restraint**, funding core needs and piloting specific initiatives. Government affairs professionals can expect the conference committee to blend these approaches. The final FY26 budget will likely increase environmental funding above FY25 for both climate mitigation and adaptation, but not to the full extent the House envisioned. Many of the differences – such as the **scale of clean energy funding, the breadth of environmental justice support, and the design of waste reduction programs** – will be resolved through negotiation, reflecting both the House's ambitious vision and the Senate's strategic focus. Each of these decisions will signal the Legislature's priorities in balancing climate action with budgetary limits, and stakeholders will be watching the resolved line-items and outside sections closely when the conference report emerges.

Sources:

- Massachusetts House of Representatives FY26 Budget Press Release (April 30, 2025) – House funding highlights for Energy & Environmental Affairs ³⁸ ⁵ .
- Massachusetts Senate Ways & Means FY26 Executive Summary (May 2025) – Senate funding levels for environmental agencies and initiatives ² ²⁹ ³⁹ .
- S.2525 (Senate Passed FY26 Budget) Line-Item Text – Selected environmental accounts and language (Environmental Justice funding, recycling program pilot, clean energy fund transfer) ⁶ ¹⁵ ⁴⁰ .
- FY2026 Green Budget Coalition Fact Sheets – Context on recommended funding for EEA programs and rationale for differences ³⁰ ²⁴ .

¹ ⁵ ¹³ ²³ ³¹ ³⁸ Press Room

<https://malegislature.gov/PressRoom/Detail?pressReleaseId=190>

² ⁴ ¹⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ ²⁷ ²⁸ ²⁹ ³² ³⁵ ³⁹ Senate Ways & Means Budget

https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2026/SenateWaysMeansBudget/Executive_Summary

³ ⁶ ⁹ ¹¹ ¹² ¹⁵ ¹⁶ ¹⁷ ¹⁸ ¹⁹ ²⁰ ²² ³³ ³⁴ ³⁶ ³⁷ ⁴⁰ malegislature.gov

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/194/S2525.pdf>

⁷ ⁸ Amendment 203 - Withdrawn

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/GetAmendmentContent/194/S3/203/Senate/Content>

¹⁰ 20000102: Environmental Justice | Governor's FY26 Budget Recommendation

<https://budget.digital.mass.gov/govbudget/fy26/appropriations/energy-and-environmental-affairs/environmental-affairs/20000102/>

²¹ ²⁴ ³⁰ massland.org

<https://massland.org/sites/default/files/documents/fy26-green-budget-fact-sheets-1.pdf>