HOUSE DOCKET, NO. FILED ON: 1/13/2009

**HOUSE . . . . . . . . . . . . . . No.**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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PRESENTED BY:

**Michael J. Rodrigues**

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*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General
 Court assembled:*

 The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to protect the eastern box turtle.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

PETITION OF:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: | District/Address: |
| Michael J. Rodrigues | 8th Bristol |

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the Year Two Thousand and Nine**

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An Act to protect the eastern box turtle.

 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

 SECTION 1. There is hereby established a special commission to study the development, implementation and financing of a conservation management plan for the protection of the eastern box turtle in the Massachusetts. The commission shall consist of 7 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of the department of environmental protection, or her designee, who shall serve as the chair of the commission; 1 of whom shall be the director of the department of fish and game, or her designee; 1 of whom shall be the executive director of the Lloyd Center for Environmental Studies, or his designee; and 6 members to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a member of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, 1 of whom shall be a member of the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation; 1 of whom shall be a member of the Nature Conservancy of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall be a member of the Home Builders Association of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall be a member of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties of Massachusetts and 1 of whom shall be a member of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau.

The study shall include but shall not be limited to: an assessment and prioritization of the habitat needs of the eastern box turtle based upon the extent, quality and juxtaposition of habitats and their predicted ability to support a self-sustaining population, including the size and lack of fragmentation of habitat and proximity and connectivity to other relatively uninterrupted habitats, especially within existing protected open space; and the consideration of various strategies to reduce the need to include certain properties in the Natural Heritage Atlas published by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, including, but not limited to, the purchase of conservation land by the commonwealth and the creation of incentives to encourage the use of conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions by private property owners

The commission shall file a report of its study together with its recommendations for legislation, if any, with the clerks of the house and senate no later than December 31, 2009.