



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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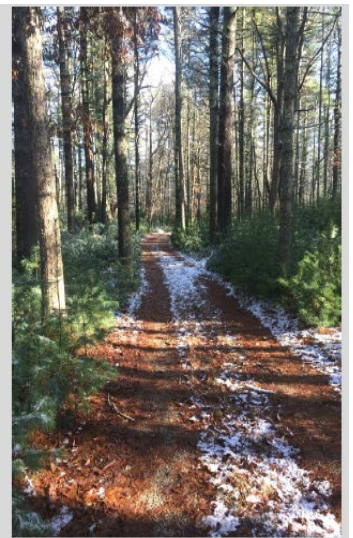
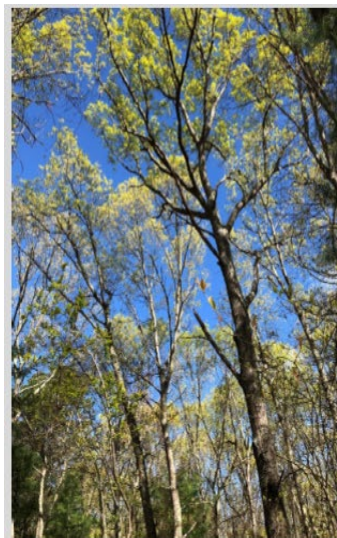
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, Dec. 23, 2022

RI PERMANENTLY PROTECTS 575 ACRES OF LAND – WORTH \$9.59M – BY LEVERAGING OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND BONDS IN 2022

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announce that the State of Rhode Island has helped permanently protect 575 acres of land by leveraging \$3.58 million of voter-approved state bond funds for open space and agricultural land preservation worth \$9.59 million in 2022. The now-



protected lands, scattered along the state, are protected through the State Land Conservation Program, Agricultural Land Preservation Commission (ALPC), and Open Space Grant Program. The programs, funded by voter-approved bond funds, are leveraged with grants from various federal programs, non-profit groups, and local partners.

“Investments in open space and working farmland protect historic and locally significant lands, enhance our communities, and strengthen the state’s climate resilience,” said DEM Director Terry Gray. “Today more than ever, we must continue to preserve our state’s valuable open spaces to forge a stronger, greener, healthier Rhode Island for generations to come. Passage of the 2022 green bond ensures that \$5 million more will be put aside to protect green spaces and help ensure that Rhode Island remains a wonderful place to live, work, visit, and raise a family. These projects wouldn’t be possible without our dedicated federal and local partners. We are fortunate to have dozens of deeply engaged and motivated land trusts and other active conservation groups across the state to amplify this important work.”

The [State Land Conservation Program](#) purchases ecologically valuable land to enhance DEM’s management areas, parks, and forest lands. Funding for these acquisitions is made possible by State Open Space Bonds, with contributions from municipalities, land trusts, and from various federal programs. More than 100 acres were purchased by DEM to expand existing wildlife management areas and provide outdoor recreational

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opportunities. The program works to acquire land to add to DEM's conservation holdings; it protects the state's forests and open spaces for public recreational use and habitat conservation. Since 1985, over 20,000 acres of land have been protected.

The [Farmland Preservation Program](#) preserves prime agricultural lands through the purchase of development rights using state farmland bond funds. ALPC leveraged \$600,000 from federal and private sources to purchase development rights on four farms at roughly a dollar-for-dollar match. Since 1985, the program has protected 128 farms spanning 8,240 acres. Protecting Rhode Island's farmland ensures farms remain vibrant participants in the economy.

The [Open Space Grant Program](#) administered by the state's Natural Heritage Preservation Commission provides funding assistance to local communities for the protection of important open space and public recreation lands. Three hundred and seventy-five acres of land were conserved through this program, which has provided funding for the preservation of nearly 13,000 acres of land across the state since its inception in 1985. DEM has worked with partners in every municipality to complete 197 easement transactions with land trusts and local communities to date, furthering the mission of preserving Rhode Island's precious resources and increasing the public's access and enjoyment of our natural lands.

[The 2022 green bond, which was Question No. 3](#) on the referendum ballot, passed in November. Proceeds from the \$50 million proposal will be allocated to significant improvements in municipal resiliency, provide loans to small businesses for renewable energy projects, improve water quality in Narragansett Bay and the state's watersheds, improve the health of forests on state properties, remediate contaminated brownfield sites, protect open space, support local recreation projects, and build new educational and outreach facilities at Roger Williams Park Zoo.

The programs under the State's Land Conservation Program have collectively protected over 117,000 acres of open space and farmland since 1985. Working with its many partners, DEM and the ALPC have conserved land in all 39 municipalities, making these projects a part of every Rhode Islander's community. These natural assets play a big role in the state's tourism industry by providing opportunities for the public to camp, fish, hunt, hike, and enjoy the great outdoors, and at the same time bring revenue to the local economy. Rhode Island's wealth of historic parks, bikeways, and green spaces provide for public enjoyment – along with improving the health of the environment, strengthening the state's climate resilience, and supporting the economy.

To read the State Land Conservation Program 2022 Annual report, please visit our [website](#).

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow [DEM on Facebook](#), Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates.

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