



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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PRISTINE, 84-ACRE SWATH OF CUMBERLAND WATERSHED IS 200TH LOCAL OPEN SPACE PROPERTY ACQUISITION IN STATE HISTORY

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee, the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the Town of Cumberland, and the Cumberland Land Trust today are announcing the protection of a pristine, 84-acre swath of forested land including tributaries of two reservoirs that are critical drinking water resources for residents of the Blackstone Valley.

The \$830,000 acquisition of the Joseph and Amy Cracco property, nestled along the north side of Tower Hill Road and abutting Diamond Hill Management Area in rural Cumberland, is the 200th property that has been protected through [the DEM Local Open Space Grant Program](#) since its start in 1985. Partners in the transaction include the Pawtucket Water Supply Board, which provided \$180,000 toward the final purchase cost; the Town of Cumberland, which contributed \$175,000; and the Cumberland Land Trust, which contributed \$75,000. The state's \$400,000 share, administered through the Local Open Space Grant Program, originated in financing from the [2016](#) and [2019](#) green bonds, which voters approved by margins exceeding 70%.



The Cumberland Land Trust's newest preserve is the result of this open space acquisition. Credit: Lauren Miller-Donnelly

“Being a lifelong Cumberland resident and knowing this special place as I do, it’s exciting to be a part of preserving it for future generations and to know that the state is doing so much good through the Local Open Space Grant Program,” said Governor McKee. “Preserving Rhode Island’s natural resources and increasing the public’s access to and enjoyment of outdoor spaces benefits our residents and our economy many times over.”

“The acquisition of the Cracco property with its irreplaceable natural habitats and permanent preservation as open space is something that Cumberland residents should be proud of, as is the tremendous amount of collaboration that made it possible,” said Cumberland Mayor Jeffrey J. Mutter. “Since 1989 and with the

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leadership of the Cumberland Land Trust, our town has protected more than 700 acres of land through purchase, donation, and conservation easements. I'm sure hikers, birdwatchers, and other users will love coming to this property."

"DEM's land conservation programs including the Local Open Space Grant Program leverage voter-approved bond funds to support and promote access to outdoor recreational activities, farmland preservation, habitat protection, and open space conservation," said DEM Director Terry Gray. "DEM is thrilled to partner with cities, towns, and organizations throughout Rhode Island that work hard to protect open space in their communities."

"Conserving this land has many important benefits," said Cumberland Land Trust President Randy Tuomisto. "In particular, conserving core forest habitats has proven critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other species of conservation concern. We are grateful for DEM's Local Open Space Grant Program, without which this project would not have been possible."

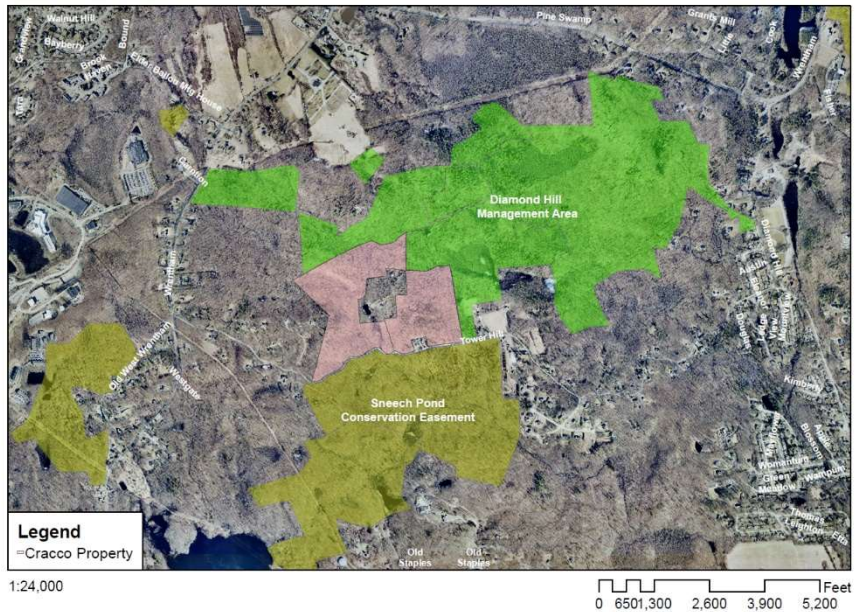
Dominated by steep slopes, stone walls, and wetlands, the Cracco property contains the headwaters of Catamint Brook and Ash Swamp Brook, which are primary tributaries of the Pawtucket and Diamond Hill reservoirs. The protection of this property helps to ensure the quality of these critical public drinking water resources. Also, the Cracco property and surrounding complex of protected open spaces are top priorities for saving habitats where some of Rhode Island's rarest wildlife remain.

Since 1985, the Local Open Space Grant program has protected more than 12,000 acres of land, including nearly 1,700 acres over the past five years. Places used by residents and tourists alike for outdoor recreation, including iconic properties such as Weetamoo Woods and Pardon Gray in Tiverton, Mount Hope Farm in Bristol, Third Beach in Middletown, and Mercy Woods in Cumberland, all have been protected through this program. These natural assets play a big role in the state's tourism economy by providing opportunities for the public to camp, fish, hunt, hike, and enjoy the great outdoors — all while generating revenue for the local economy.

Nearly every town in the state has received funding through the program over the course of the 200 grants administered since 1990. Grants have aided in the protection of 12,360 acres and successfully leveraged \$52,738,584 in state funds towards \$109,646,000 in real estate. Municipalities, land trusts, and nonprofit land conservation organizations are eligible to apply to the Local Open Space Grant program. Applications are reviewed and ranked by the Natural Heritage Preservation Advisory Committee, with final awards made by the State Natural Heritage Preservation Commission. Selected projects preserve lands that offer



Cracco Property Context Tower Hill Road, Cumberland RI



significant natural, ecological, or agricultural value by direct purchase or perpetual restriction via a conservation easement.

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