



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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DEM ANNOUNCES \$2.6 MILLION IN GREEN BOND AWARDS TO HELP COMMUNITIES PROTECT OPEN SPACE

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announced today the award of \$2.6 million in grants to help communities and local conservation organizations protect valuable green space throughout the state. Eleven projects will receive matching grants through DEM’s competitive [Local Open Space Grant Program](#) to protect 383 acres across Rhode Island. The funding is made possible by the [2022 Green Bond](#), which was passed by almost 70 percent Rhode Island voters, and invests in preserving open space, improving recreational facilities, and cleaning up lands and waters.



A \$54,500 grant will help the Town of Burrillville conserve 6.5-acres north of Duck Pond along the Pascoag Rail Trail. Photo Credit: B. Buckless, DEM.

“There is much important land conservation work being done at the local level throughout Rhode Island” said DEM Director Terry Gray. “DEM is pleased to support communities and conservation groups who work to make Rhode Island a greener place by improving access to the outdoors, protecting water quality, and helping make our state more resilient.”

Municipalities, land trusts, and nonprofit land conservation organizations pursuing land protection projects were eligible to apply to the fiscal year 2024 Local Open Space Grant Program in October 2023. Applications were reviewed and ranked by the Governor’s [Natural Heritage Preservation Advisory Committee](#), with final awards made by the [State Natural Heritage Preservation Commission](#) earlier this month.

Grants of up to \$400,000 – which may be used to cover up to half of the applicants’ project cost – are awarded to projects which preserve lands offering significant natural, ecological or agricultural value and those projects that connect or expand existing protected lands.

The eleven open space grants being awarded today to protect 383 acres of open space include:

Town of Burrillville – Barnes: \$54,500 grant to acquire 6.5 acres of forestland along the Pascoag Rail Trail. The property contains an important wetland complex and a tributary to the Clear River. The land is located within a community wellhead protection area.

Aquidneck Land Trust: \$400,000 grant to acquire a scenic tract of farmland in Portsmouth. The land includes prime farmland soils and will be maintained in agricultural use with designated habitat areas.

Audubon Society of Rhode Island – Long/Smiley: \$20,500 grant to acquire 36 acres of core forestland in Coventry east of Fairbanks Corner. The property abuts Audubon’s 75-acre Perched Boulder Woodlands and contains a coniferous wetland complex supporting stands of middle-aged eastern hemlock.

City of Pawtucket – Riverside Burial Society: \$250,000 grant to acquire 4-acres of land along the Seekonk River south of Tidewater Landing. The property is an undeveloped portion of the Victorian-era Riverside Cemetery which is nearly 150 years-old and just north of Providence’s Swan Point Cemetery.

South Kingstown Land Trust – Kinney Azalea Gardens: \$300,000 to acquire a Conservation Easement over 10 acres of the historic Kinney Azalea Gardens in Kingston. Since 1955 this public garden has welcomed visitors to admire more than 500 varieties of azaleas. The gardens were designed by Lorenzo Kinney, Sr. who was the University of Rhode Island’s first professor of botany.



A view of the Seekonk River from lands belonging to the Riverside Burial Society of Pawtucket. Photo Credit: B. Buckless, DEM.

Westerly Land Trust – Champlin: \$400,000 for the Westerly Land Trust to acquire 90-acres of farmland and forestland containing more than 1,000 feet of frontage on the federally designated Wild and Scenic Pawcatuck River.

The Nature Conservancy – Cayer: \$185,000 grant for the Rhode Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to acquire 25-acres of core forestland in Hopkinton contiguous with Rockville Management Area and Canonchet Brook Preserve.

Town of Smithfield – Conti: \$117,500 grant to the Town of Smithfield for acquisition of 3-acres across from Whipple Ave south of Georgiaville Pond. The acquisition will expand trailhead access to Smithfield Land Trust’s Olivia’s Woods Preserve and protect riparian land along Whipple Brook east of its confluence with the Woonasquatucket River.



The Champlin property’s prime and important farmland soils have been in agricultural production for over a century. Photo Credit: B. Buckless, DEM.

Town of Bristol – Mt. Hope Community Forest: \$400,000 grant for the Town of Bristol to acquire 120-acres of forestland and farmland off of Tower Street. This property is slated to become the Mt. Hope Community Forest and will protect an important historic and cultural site with particular significance for Native American history.

Westerly Land Trust – Boy Scouts: \$87,500 for the Westerly Land Trust to acquire 4.6 acres along the Wild and Scenic Pawcatuck River abutting the Land Trust’s 150-acre Riverwood Preserve. The property contains a paddle craft launch on the Pawcatuck that will be maintained by Westerly Land Trust.

South Kingstown Land Trust – Faella: \$400,000 for South Kingstown Land Trust to acquire 34-acres along the South County Bike Path contiguous with DEM’s Great Swamp Management Area. The property contains more than 500-feet of frontage on White Horn Brook upstream of its confluence with the federally designated Wild and Scenic Chipuxet River.

Since 1985, over 13,000 acres of land have been protected through the Local Open Space Grant 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. Rhode Island’s historic parks, bikeways and green spaces provide opportunity for public enjoyment – in addition to improving the health of the environment, strengthening the state’s climate resilience, and supporting the economy. [According to the Outdoor Industry Association](#), outdoor recreation in Rhode Island generates \$1.7 billion in consumer spending and supports over 18,000 local jobs.

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