



## Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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## GLOBAL RARE FOREST HABITAT TO BE PROTECTED FOR TRIBAL REMATRIATION

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the [Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust](#) in partnership with [Bally's Corporation](#) today announced the permanent conservation of 38.27 acres of Atlantic White Cedar forests in Tiverton. The forest is part of the Pocasset Cedar Swamp off Bears Den Road in North Tiverton. This land is a portion of a large Atlantic White Cedar swamp, which is a globally imperiled forest species, particularly under threat from sea level rise in the mid-Atlantic Region of the United States.



*The Pocasset Cedar Swamp is a vast expanse of forested swamp containing remnant stands of Atlantic White Cedar. Photo Credit: Daryl Black Eagle Jamieson, Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust.*

Atlantic White Cedar forests have an extensive history of commercial harvesting and today make up only a small percentage of forest cover in the region. Over the past century alone, Atlantic White Cedar forests across the Atlantic seaboard have been considerably degraded and reduced. Coupled with its important natural resource value, the Pocasset Cedar Swamp has inherent cultural and sacred value to the [Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe](#) of the Pokanoket Nation who are the ancestral peoples of the greater Tiverton and Fall River area. During King Phillip's War, this land was the site of *The Battle of Pocasset Swamp* in which both Sachem Weetamoo and King Phillip (Chief Metacomet) fought.

“This land is significant as the ancestral heartbeat of the Pocasset Pokanoket people,” said Chief George Spring Buffalo, Chairman of the Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe of the Pokanoket Nation. “This is the site of King Phillip’s War, one of the most devastating conflicts to native people in American history. We will create trails, explore the lands, and discover what our ancestors left us there. DEM was an honest partner through this process, and we’re looking forward to more collaborations with them.”

“We are excited to be working in partnership with the Pocasset Pokanoket Tribe and believe firmly in this project and the public benefit of protecting the Pocasset Cedar Swamp,” said DEM Director Terry Gray. “Rhode Islanders are proud to be a diverse people, with diverse cultures and we celebrate our tribal communities.”

The purchase price for the almost 40-acre property was \$60,000. A \$40,000 grant committed in 2022 through DEM’s competitive [Local Open Space Grant Program](#) was integral in financing the project. Funds for the Local Open Space Grant Program are made possible by [voter-approved Green Economy Bonds](#).

Nearly 1,700 acres have been protected statewide through DEM’s Local Open Space Grant Program over the past five years alone, and nearly every town in the state has received funding through the program over through over 200 grants administered since 1990, thanks to voter-approved bond measures.

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov). Follow [DEM on Facebook](#), Twitter/X (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates. [Sign up here](#) to receive the latest press releases, news, and events from DEM's Public Affairs Office to your inbox.



*This is the first portion of the Pocasset Cedar Swamp to be conserved in Rhode Island. The land in green, labeled Bears Den, is now owned by the Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust who are a tribal land trust established to protect ancestral tribal lands. Map Credit: Paul Jordan, DEM.*

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