



RI Department of Environmental Management
Land Conservation and Acquisition Program
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2011

State of Rhode Island *Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor*
Department of Environmental Management *Janet L. Coit, Director*
Division of Planning and Development *Joseph G. Dias, Chief*



State of RI Land Conservation Commissions/Committees

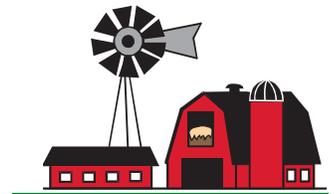
DEM Land Acquisition Committee

Janet L. Coit, Director
Lisa Primiano, Chair, Deputy Chief of Planning and Development
Kenneth Ayars, Chief, Division of Agriculture
Joseph Dias, Chief, Division of Planning and Development
Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director of Natural Resources
Robert Paquette, Chief, Division of Parks and Recreation
Catherine Sparks, Chief, Division of Forest Environment,
Fish and Wildlife-Freshwater Fisheries and Wildlife



Agricultural Land Preservation Commission

George Mason, Chair
Kenneth Ayars, DEM Director's Designee, Chief of Division of Agriculture
Kevin J. Nelson, Supervising Planner, Statewide Planning Program
Everett Stuart, Public Member
David Wallace, Public Member
William Wright, Public Member
Martha Neale, Public Member



Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Board

Representative from the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Governor's Office
Jared Rhodes, Chief, Division of Statewide Planning, Department of Admin.
Janet L. Coit, Director, Department of Environmental Management



State Land Conservation

The State of Rhode Island is extremely rich in natural resources. The beauty of its beaches, bays, forests, farms, and rivers helps to sustain its economy and provides residents with a high quality of life. Despite its small size and its high housing densities, still nearly 60% of its land remains forested. Nearly all of the development and infrastructure in the state is contained in a forty mile urban/suburban corridor running along the Narragansett Bay. And so despite its high population and rapid growth, Rhode Island still has made great strides in preserving its rural character, water resources, open space and forests, and farm land.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Land Conservation Program works to preserve the state's natural areas to guarantee the permanent protection and proper management of land having high intrinsic resource value. With an emphasis on the following critical elements: working farms, forests, drinking water protection, recreation, and natural heritage/biodiversity, DEM works to ensure these resources remain available for future generations. The Program prioritizes the preservation of parcels of land whose resource value, size, location, and relationship to existing conservation land and the greenway system recommended in the State Guide Plan are significant to the state's welfare.

DEM's Division of Planning and Development manages and supports statewide land conservation programs. The division operates to assess and develop plans and to acquire land consistent with the DEM's responsibility to provide recreation land, save the state's natural areas for future generations, and preserve working agricultural land. This office also coordinates land conservation activities with other state, federal, local, and non-profit programs. It works to preserve land consistent with state plans and state regulations and to develop funding sources for these projects. As the pressure on undeveloped land subsides during the current economic downturn, the Department faces new opportunities for purchasing previously unaffordable property as well as new challenges of working under significant budget constraints and with reluctant sellers.

The three programs that accommodate Rhode Island's public land acquisitions, the *State Land Conservation Program*, the *Local Open Space Grant Program*, and the *Agricultural Land Preservation Program* are detailed on the following page.



Wick's Nursery Property - Photo Credit: Aquidneck Land Trust

State Land Conservation Program

This program is administered by the DEM Land Acquisition Committee, which makes recommendations to the Director regarding real estate transactions. It makes decisions about land acquisitions for parks and recreation, for fish and wildlife use, and for forest lands.

Funding for the program is provided by State Open Space bonds, from municipalities and land trusts, from local partners such as The Nature Conservancy and The Champlin Foundations, and from various federal programs including the U.S. Forest Services' Forest Legacy program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, and the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund. In addition, this program combines its funding with the Local Open Space Grants Program and the Agricultural Land Preservation Program to complement its conservation projects.

Local Open Space Grant Program

Rhode Island Local Open Space Grants support cities and towns, land trusts, and non-profit organizations in their protection and acquisition of natural areas that are deemed priorities on the municipal level. This critical partnership works to leverage funds from municipal, non-profit, and federal agencies for the protection of Rhode Island's resources. The DEM provides up to 50% funding to successful applicants and adds a layer of protection to the conserved parcels to ensure they remain undeveloped in perpetuity.

All grant applications are reviewed and scored by the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Committee according to the following criteria: habitat protection, greenway or regional linkage, planning consistency, resource protection, water resource protection, and multi-community application. Final awards are determined by the Natural Heritage Preservation Commission. The State's share of funding is provided by State Open Space Bonds.

Agricultural Land Preservation Program

This program, run by the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission (ALPC) and staffed by the DEM, preserves agricultural lands through the purchase of farmland development rights. Purchasing development rights from farmers enables them to retain ownership of their property while protecting their lands for agricultural use. At the same time, it provides farmers with a financially competitive alternative to development. The State's farming industry, valued at \$100 million, is dependent on access to productive land. This program helps to ensure that farming remains viable in the state.

All program applications are reviewed and scored by the ALPC according to parcel size; soil quality; agricultural operation and viability; protection of water supplies and quality; open space, cultural and scenic features; flood protection; relative development pressure; and consistency with state and local plans.

Funding for this program is obtained through the Open Space Bond; The Nature Conservancy, through grants from the Champlin Foundations; the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program; and through the leveraging of land trust and municipal funds.



Ferolbink FarmProperty - Photo Credit: Michelle Sheehan

Partnerships



The DEM works with many partners as a way to both stretch state dollars and ensure that as much land is being preserved as possible. The State Open Space Bond plays a major role in acquiring land. But the department has also been very successful in using the bond money to leverage private landowner donations and funds from other sources. Most properties were acquired through the collaboration of several different groups. Many major fiscal partners were active this year. They include

The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Federal Highway Administration and the RI Department of Transportation, and local land trusts.

We would like to thank our FY 2011 conservation partners:

The Nature Conservancy
The Champlin Foundations
US Fish & Wildlife Service
RI Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Aquidneck Land Trust
Richmond Rural Land Conserv. Trust
Foster Land Trust
Tiverton Land Trust
Town of Bristol
Little Compton Ag. Conservancy Trust

FY 2011 Accomplishments

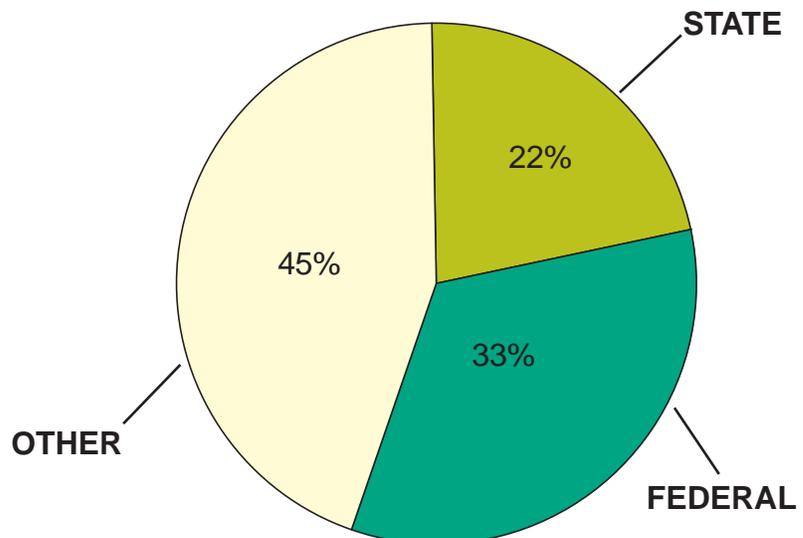
Achieving land conservation goals

In 1994 the State Greenways Plan (State Guide Plan, Element 155) set a goal to preserve 17,850 acres of land through State programs over the next 25 years. Since 1994 the State has managed to preserve 22,908 acres, exceeding the goal by 5,058. To date, more than 20% of the state has been preserved as open space, for recreation, or for agricultural use. Over the past 5 years, the Land Acquisition Program has been able to leverage significant federal funding - and averaged only 25% state contribution to its land acquisition projects. As the DEM looks forward to yet another year of tight state budget constraints, it has continued to strategize land acquisition to further maximize federal dollars.

Leveraging Funds

As the state open space bond account dwindles in size, DEM increasingly relies on partner funding to help fund its acquisition projects. **This fiscal year, DEM preserved nearly \$14 million in land value, with the contribution of \$2.9 million in state funds..** Of this amount, the state was able to leverage 78% funding from federal and local partners. This helps to ensure that there is sufficient bond funding left to cover the cost of important ongoing acquisitions.

Funding Sources for Land Conservation projects in FY 2011



The following projects were completed by the Land Conservation Program in Fiscal Year 2011 (July 1st 2010 - June 30th 2011) for a grand total of 905 acres.

| PROPERTY | CITY/TOWN | PURPOSE | ACRES |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-------|
| Girl Scouts Camp Nokewa | North Kingstown | Habitat | 82 |
| Cook | Charlestown | Public Access, Portage | 0.245 |
| Bates II | West Greenwich | Habitat | 77 |
| Capwell | West Greenwich | Habitat, Open Space | 42 |
| Green Valley | Portsmouth | Public Access, Open Space | 108 |
| Kenyon | Richmond | Recreation, Open Space | 61 |
| Delvecchio | Foster | Habitat, Recreation | 99 |
| Wicks Nursery | Portsmouth | Agriculture | 37.59 |
| Pascoag Rail Trail | Burrillville | Recreation | 22.84 |
| Durfee | Tiverton | Habitat | 63.48 |
| Whale Rock | Narragansett | Public Shore Access, Habitat | 48 |
| Greene Plastics | Hopkinton | Habitat, Open Space | 41 |
| Ferolbink Farm | Tiverton | Agriculture | 126 |
| Teft II | Hopkinton | Fishing Access | 10.7 |
| Blanchard | Bristol | Habitat, Open Space | 1 |
| Grass/Foster Land Trust | Foster | Habitat, Recreation | 84.9 |

TOTAL ACRES: 905





The Year in Review: Featured Properties

Agricultural Lands

Ferolbink Farm - Tiverton

Wicks Nursery - Portsmouth

Trails and Greenways

Delvecchio & Grass - Foster

Recreation

Cook - Charlestown

Teft II - Hopkinton

Habitat and Biodiversity

Camp Nokewa - North Kingstown

Agricultural Lands

Rhode Island's agricultural resources are in threat of being lost forever. The DEM and the ALPC work with farmers and conservation interests to preserve farmland both for agricultural production and for the open space and habitat resources it provides.

Ferolbink Farm - 212 Acres in Tiverton

The 212-acre Ferolbink Farm in Tiverton and Little Compton represents a strong combination of agricultural resources, a stunning open landscape, and important habitat protection. It has been farmed since 1870 and currently produces potatoes, squash, grain and Christmas trees. From the road one finds sweeping panoramic views across the farm, and down to the abutting marsh, the Sakonnet River, and Narragansett Bay. Fogland Marsh abuts the farm and is the last unprotected portion of a 90-acre coastal wetland. These salt marsh wetlands, identified as nationally declining, provide feeding and breeding grounds for numerous migratory bird and fish species. Ferolbink Farm also borders a tidal creek that runs to the Sakonnet River and which supports a productive fish run and provides an important waterfowl habitat.

This farm was protected with a combination of funding from the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, DEM's Open Space Bond, the NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, The Nature Conservancy, The Champlin Foundations, the Tiverton Land Trust, and the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust.



Ferolbink Farm Fields
Photo Credit: Michelle Sheehan



Tractor on the Wicks Nursery property
Photo Credit: Aquidneck Land Trust

Wicks Nursery - 38 Acres in Portsmouth

The Department of Environmental Management, in cooperation with Aquidneck Land Trust, the NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, the Town of Portsmouth, and the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, contributed funding toward the purchase of a Deed to Development Rights and Conservation Easement over a property located in one of the last remaining areas of highly concentrated farmland in the state. The 38 acre parcel, located on Moitosa Lane, is now protected in perpetuity.

Wicks Nursery has been actively farmed for generations. It is currently a plant nursery as well as an organic fruit and vegetable operation. The nursery abuts 200 acres of existing protected farmland, and is in close proximity to another 650 acres. The Town of Portsmouth has few remaining conservation opportunities and Wicks Nursery was the last major undeveloped and unprotected property within the Sisson Pond Watershed. The protection of this productive farm helps to maintain the value of Rhode Island's farming industry.



Trails and Greenways

The network of bikepaths and hiking trails that traverse Rhode Island provide the public with access to the state's open space and recreation land. They also form an important part of the strategic targeting of conservation lands in their own right.

Delvecchio and Grass - 184 Acres in Foster

The Department of Environmental Management received a conservation easement over a 99 acre parcel of land on Tom Wood Road, as well as an 85 acre parcel located on Shippee Schoolhouse Road in exchange for two Local Open Space Grants awarded to The Nature Conservancy and the Foster Land Trust for assistance with their purchases.

Both properties contribute to the expansion of Foster's North Greenway. The Delvecchio property increases the amount of contiguous protected land to about 424 acres, and is located within a 3,000 acre forested block that does not contain any vehicular roads. Additionally, the property contains headwater wetland draining to the Mossup River, and an oak/hickory/ash forest. The Grass property serves as a critical link in the Greenway, connecting the land located on Shippee Schoolhouse Road with that on Tom Wood Road. The property consists of mature forests, wetlands, and open fields.

The forested properties contain frontage along the North/South Trail, which is a 77 mile hiking trail that runs the length of Rhode Island. The trail also links to the Massachusetts Mid-state Trail, and the New Hampshire Wapack Trail, for a total 191 miles. It features rural and scenic vistas ranging from beaches, farmland, rock outcrops, and dense woodland. Both properties will be open for immediate public access and use through existing trails, and will eventually link to the Quanduck Brook Natural Greenway in Killingly, CT.



North/South Trail on the Delvecchio Property.
Photo credit: Jenny Flanagan



Stream on Delvecchio Property
Photo Credit: Cheryl Witala



The Grass Property
Photo Credit: Michelle Sheehan

Recreation

Providing public access to state lands and actively managing these properties for recreational opportunities continues to be a priority of the land acquisition program. Properties that abut existing management areas or that present opportunities for recreational use are actively pursued.

Cook - 5,227 sq.ft. in Charlestown

The Pawcatuck River, which runs 34 miles through Rhode Island and Connecticut, is an extremely popular river for paddlers and for fishing. For this reason, DEM manages several parcels of land along the Pawcatuck in attempts to increase the public's access to the river. The state's most recently acquired portage site, a 5,227 sq. foot parcel of land on Burdickville Road, proves to be a unique and significant resource to recreational boaters.

Previously owned by Lloyd and Catherine Cook, this property provides the only means of portage around the Burdickville Dam. Because DEM manages boating access points both upstream and downstream from this site, its acquisition will serve to permanently connect these points, enabling paddlers to navigate a significant stretch of river.

The property, which was funded by the DEM's Open Space Bond, also contributes to a much larger accumulation of land along the river front, protected by organizations such as DEM and the Nature Conservancy, as well as the Town of Richmond.



Millrace at the Cook property.
Photo Credit: Allison Logan



Flowers on Cook Property.
Photo Credit: Sara Moore



Stream on Teft II Property.
Photo Credit: Allison Logan

Teft II - 10 Acres in Hopkinton

The Wood River is considered one of Rhode Island's most pristine rivers, flowing over approximately 25 miles. It is a major tributary of the Pawcatuck River, and contains habitat for native brook trout. The 10-acre Teft II property contains direct frontage on the Wood River and serves as a vital link to existing protected properties along the riverfront.

Additionally, the property abuts DEM's Black Farm Management Area to the south as well as a public recreational boating area to the north, resulting in over 300 contiguous acres of protected land. It also contributes to more than 3 miles of protected river frontage.

This property acquisition, which totaled \$80,000, was funded by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fishing License Fees, and DEM Open Space bond Funds, and has been a great opportunity to enhance the recreational potential, including fishing access, of the Wood River.

Habitat and Biodiversity

Rhode Island's animal and plant communities face continued threats to their habitat. In such a small state, fragmentation of forests and wetlands is leaving small patches of green space often not large enough to support healthy populations. The DEM recognizes the need to protect sizable swaths of land capable of providing the necessary shelter and open space.

Camp Nokewa - 82 Acres in North Kingstown

The Camp Nokewa property, operated by the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island for many years, sits on Carr Pond. This pond is the site of an extremely productive herring run that has been maintained by the DEM since the 1960s. Carr Pond and its associated fresh water marsh are known to be productive for sport fish as well as native species. The Narrow River Watershed hosts numerous important water resources, including the main river and its associated tidal marshes. The pond empties into the Narrow River system, which hosts an important estuary home to hundreds of wildlife species. Protecting the Camp Nokewa property will prevent degradation of this important water resource and will enable public fishing access. The upland portions of the property consist of an oak and hickory forest which will provide hunting opportunities for the public.

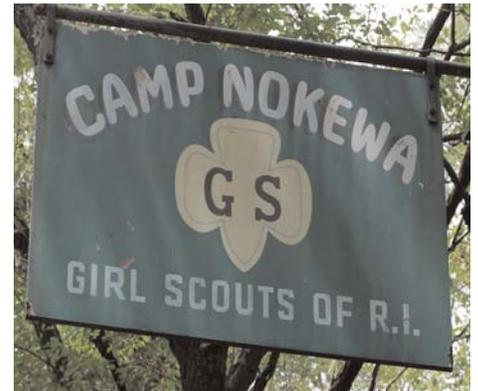
The acquisition was funded through a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant of \$1,300,000 and by The Nature Conservancy with a contribution of \$500,000 through The Champlin Foundations. In addition, The Girl Scouts generously donated \$160,000 in land value through a reduction in purchase price.



Wooded entry road on Girl Scout property.
Photo credit: Allison Logan



Sailboat on Carr Pond.
Photo Credit: Sara Moore



Girl Scouts sign.
Photo credit: Allison Logan

The Future of Conservation

The land conservation community is facing a unique situation - a combination of record low real estate prices for farmland and open space, but significantly reduced state budgets. Compared to recent years, finding great deals on important open space is much easier, but finding the money to buy the land is much more difficult.

The Land Acquisition Program will need to continue to creatively strategize the leveraging of federal dollars and work with non-profits, municipalities, and local land trusts to take advantage of the favorable market.



Trees on the Girl Scouts property. Photo credit: Allison Logan

For more information about DEM's Land Conservation Program
Please call (401) 222-2776 or visit the Division of Planning and Development's website at
<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bpoladm/plandev/index.htm>