

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Planning and Development
Annual Report - FY 2014



State of Rhode Island *Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor*
Department of Environmental Management *Janet L. Coit, Director*

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND LAND CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

DEM Land Acquisition Committee

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Lisa Primiano, Chair, Deputy Chief, Planning and Development

Kenneth Ayars, Chief, Division of Agriculture

Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director of Natural Resources

Robert Paquette, Chief, Parks and Recreation

Catherine Sparks, Assistant Director, Forest Environment, Fish and Wildlife- Freshwater Fisheries and Wildlife

Agricultural Land Preservation Commission

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Kenneth Ayars, DEM Director's Designee, Chief, Division of Agriculture

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Everett Stuart, Public Member

David Wallace, Public Member

William Wright, Public Member

Martha Neale, Public Member

Fay Strongin, Public Member

Jon Reiner, Public Member

Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Board

Jonathan Stevens, Governor's Office

Jared Rhodes, Chief, Division of Statewide Planning, RI Department of Administration

Janet L. Coit, Director, RI Department of Environmental Management

Planning & Development Staff

Aveledo, Andres - Conservation Engineer

Robert D. Bailey - Principal Civil Engineer

John Callan - Eng. Tech. IV

Gregg Cassidy - Senior Environmental Planner

Lauren Farley - Real Estate / Engineer Assistant

Paul Jordan - Supervising GIS Specialist

Lisa Lee - Principal Civil Engineer

James D. McGinn - Supervising Engineer

Lisa Primiano - Deputy Chief

Michelle Sheehan - Assistant to Land Conservation Program

Report prepared by Lauren Farley and Michelle Sheehan, Division of Planning & Development

Photo Credit: Lauren Farley unless otherwise noted.

DIVISION OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Rhode Island has bountiful opportunities to enjoy the natural environment. Both residents and visitors alike can enjoy all that Rhode Island has to offer including wildlife observation, hiking, swimming, boating, hunting, and fishing. The programs of DEM's Division of Planning and Development ensure these opportunities are protected and enhanced for future generations. The Division is committed to stewarding, expanding and providing public access to state-owned forests, wildlife areas, parks, trails, and its public waterways and infrastructure. It fulfills this commitment through its land and agricultural protection program, capital development and maintenance programs, state bond funded local recreation and open space grant programs, with the support of DEM's Geographic Information Systems. In addition, the Division provides general services related to these activities to the public and other agencies and organizations.

Conserved land and clean water, along with the infrastructure that enable the public to access them, lie at the heart of the abundant, diverse natural resources and exceptional outdoor experiences that Rhode Island provides. As a coastal state, Rhode Island's economy depends on the vitality of its coastal and tidal ecosystems and corresponding inland. Planning and Development's programs have a complementary conservation objective and strategy. Working together they have resulted in the conservation of intermingled farms, forests and wetlands. Shoreline and watershed areas provide habitat and are important for supporting productive shellfish beds and fisheries and the associated recreational and commercial uses infrastructure provides.



A kayaker paddles into the sunset at Worden's Pond



Fisher Property, Hopkinton

STATE LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

This program is administered by the DEM Land Acquisition Committee, which makes recommendations to the Director regarding real estate transactions that will enhance DEM's Management Areas, Parks and Forest Lands. Funding for these real estate acquisitions is provided by State Open Space bonds, with contributions 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

The best way to influence conservation decisions at a local level is to work with the community and local groups. DEM's Local Open Space Grants enable each community to protect the natural resources that are most important to them. This program helps to identify these places now, not when development is imminent, by building relationships with residents, land trusts, non-profit organizations, and municipalities. The Open Space Grant program recognizes local natural resource areas in need of protection and enables the local community to protect the important conservation values of these areas.

Rhode Island 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. 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 and 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, which contributes \$170 million annually to the local economy, is dependent on access to productive land. This program helps to ensure that farming remains viable in the state. Since 1985, close to 6,900 acres of agricultural land has been protected.

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.



ENGINEERING AND CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Well-planned and user friendly public access to Rhode Island's natural resources ensures everyone in the community may enjoy our beautiful landscape, waterways and coastline. Developing and maintaining sound and environmentally sustainable infrastructure achieves this goal. The Engineering and Capital Development Program plans, designs and supervises construction of new State park and beach facilities, commercial fishing pier improvements, boat ramps, fish hatcheries and other DEM managed facilities in its recreational areas. All construction work is planned and executed with an eye towards sustainable design to provide well-functioning facilities that balance the needs of the public while protecting the places where they are built.

The Engineering and Capital Development Program ensures that the protection and enhancement of the natural environment is prioritized in the design and construction of capital projects. They work to communicate and coordinate with local communities, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders in the design process to ensure plans are compatible with the anticipated public use, state and community needs. There is an ongoing emphasis to complete quality projects in a timely, cost-effective manner, using competitive bidding and talented design professionals.

PARTNERSHIPS

Unique opportunities exist for valuable partnerships at the national, state and local level to encourage outdoor recreation and resource conservation goals. As our environment, our society and our economies change, so must our programs. Without partnerships across state agencies, federal and municipal governments and our non-profit partners, the job would not be possible. It is important that DEM maintain and expand these crucial partnerships; most projects come to fruition as the result of collaboration among many groups.

We would like to thank our FY 2014 partners:

The Nature Conservancy

The Champlin Foundations

US Fish & Wildlife Service

The USDA NRCS Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program

RI Department of Transportation

Town of North Kingstown

The Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust

The Block Island Land Trust

The Town of North Smithfield

Tiverton Open Space Commission

The Army Corps of Engineers

Rhode Island Energy Office

Planning & Development receives vital internal support from many other DEM staff members. The Divisions of Management Services, Fish & Wildlife, and Legal Services all provide countless hours of assistance to the program and enable it to function efficiently.

“Through these [Open Space] Grants, we will continue to help preserve and protect precious open space and farmland, as well as support one of our state's economic drivers – tourism. Rhode Island is fortunate to enjoy unparalleled natural beauty. By having funds available for our cities and towns, land trusts and conservation organizations, we can continue to safeguard these assets, which strengthen our economy, future and environment.”

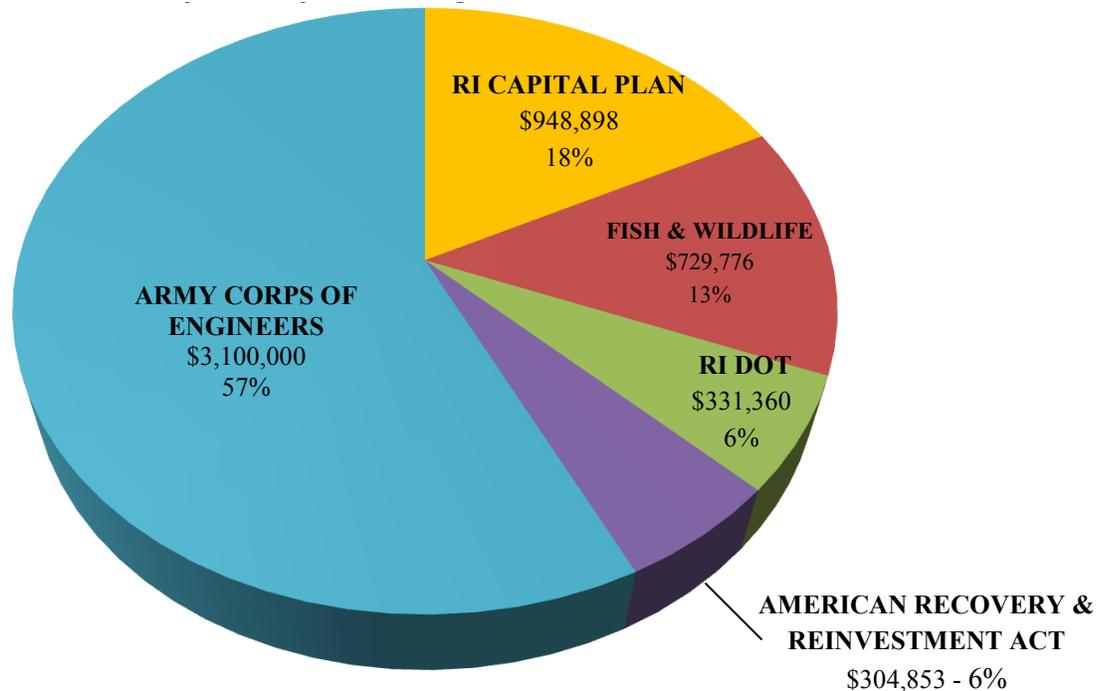
– Governor Lincoln D. Chafee



Photo Credit: Sandra Dayon

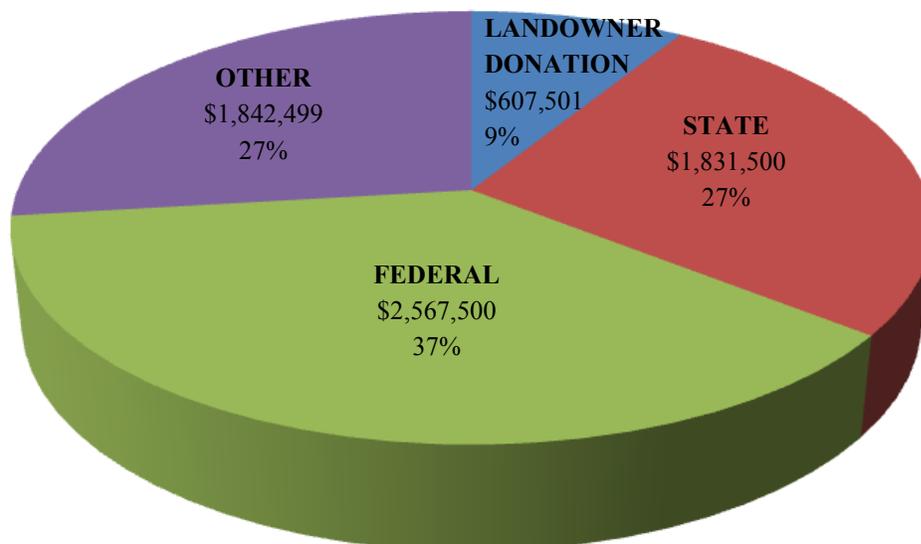
LEVERAGING FUNDS

This Fiscal Year (July 1st 2013 – June 30th 2014), DEM’s **Engineering and Capital Development Program** completed \$5,414,887 worth of projects using only \$948,898 in funding from the RI Capital Plan, leveraging 82% funding from federal partners.



DEM’s **Land Conservation Programs** preserved \$6,849,000 in land value and only used \$1,831,500 in state funds, leveraging 73% funding from federal and local partners.

The efforts that go into leveraging partner funding are more important than ever as the bond account that maintains open space and farmland protection programs is almost depleted. This bond funding is crucial to enabling Rhode Island to bring in federal dollars and work in collaboration with local partners.



FY 2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

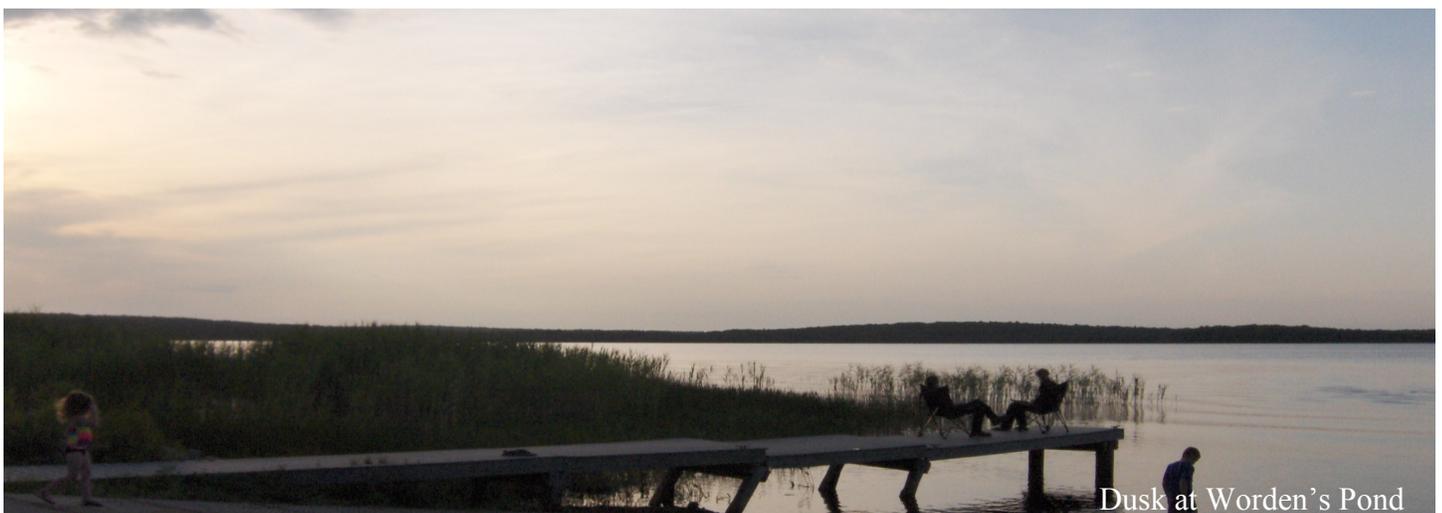
The following projects were completed in the Fiscal Year 2014 (July 1, 2013—June 30, 2014)

LAND CONSERVATION

PROPERTY	TOWN	ACRES	PURPOSE
Menard	Burrillville	23.7	Open Space
Fisher	Hopkinton	31	Open Space / Habitat
Payne Farm	New Shoreham	42	Agriculture
Booth Pond	North Smithfield	40.01	Open Space / Habitat
Purgatory Chasm	Middletown	8.4	Recreation
Seaside Gas Station	Tiverton	0.25	Open Space
Sunset Orchard	Scituate	16.6	Agriculture
Boy Scouts - Wordens Pond	South Kingstown	6.93	Fishing / boating access
Gull Cove Fishing Area	Portsmouth	2	Fishing / boating access
Haynes	Coventry	5.2	Open space
	TOTAL	176.09	

ENGINEERING AND CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

PROPERTY	TOWN	PURPOSE
Fort Adams Marine Side Improvements	Newport	Boating Access
Galilee Boat Ramp	Narragansett	Boating Access
Pier 3 Ferry Dock	Narragansett	Ferry Boat Access
Urban Edge & Lafayette Phase II Solar	North Kingstown & Cranston	Renewable Energy
Misquamicut Beach Nourishment	Westerly	Beach
Sanctuary Road Improvements	Charlestown	Public Access



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

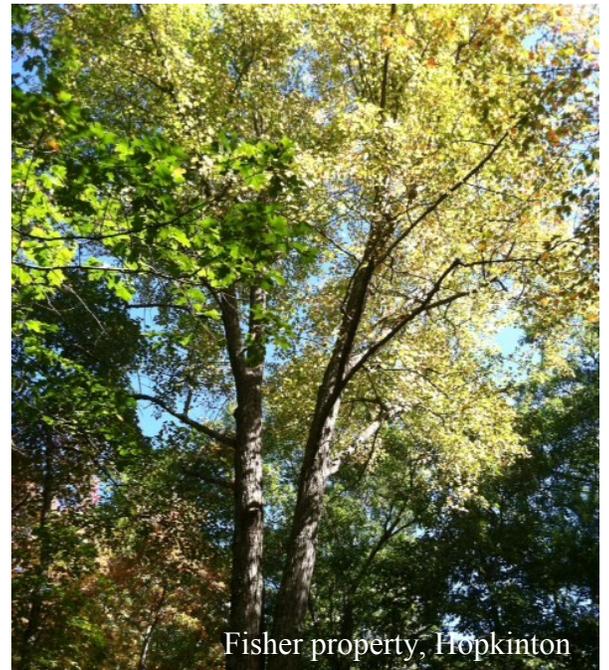
Featured Properties



Payne Farm
Photo Credit: Michelle Sheehan

Farmland

Payne Farm, 42 acres, New Shoreham

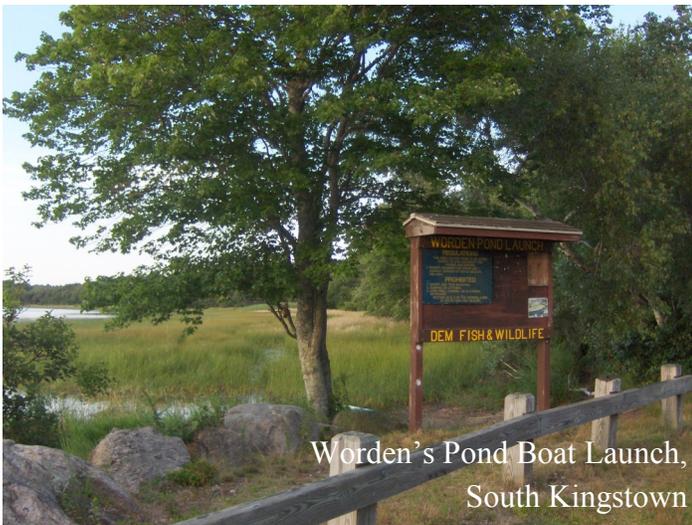


Fisher property, Hopkinton

Biodiversity and Habitat

Fisher, 31 acres, Hopkinton

Booth Pond, 40 acres, North Smithfield



Worden's Pond Boat Launch,
South Kingstown

Public Access

Seaside Gas Station, .25 acres, Tiverton

Boy Scouts—Worden's Pond, 6.9 acres,
South Kingstown

Engineering and Capital Development

Galilee Boat Ramp, Narragansett

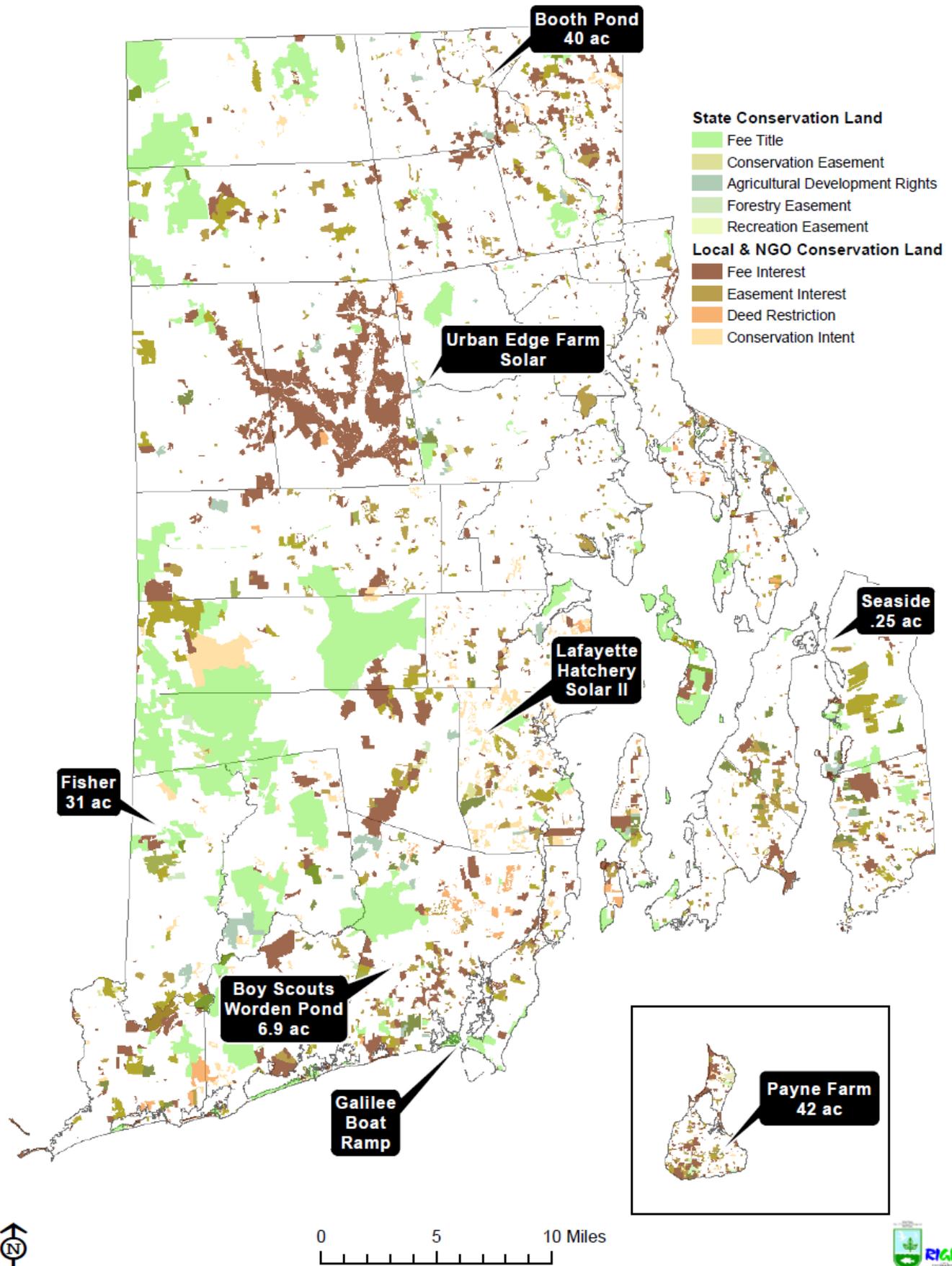
Urban Edge Farm - Phase II Solar, Cranston

Lafayette Fish Hatchery - Phase II Solar, North Kingstown



Pier at Galilee Boat Ramp
Photo: Sandra Dayon

MAP OF FEATURED PROPERTIES



PAYNE FARM
42 acres, New Shoreham

It was a long time in the making, but efforts to conserve Block Island's Payne Farm came to fruition in December, 2013. The development rights to 42 acres of this working farm were acquired by DEM's Agricultural Land Preservation Program. This land, important for both its size and location, joins 115 additional acres of abutting protected land.

This acquisition has important ecological, agricultural and landscape significance. Located in the watershed of the Great Salt Pond, the preservation of this farm was integral in protecting the vitality of the ecosystem and ensuring only clean water enters the pond. In addition to the wetland there are crucial open field and shrub habitats. This land joins more than 40% of the island that is preserved as open space in perpetuity

Locals are familiar with Payne's farm stand on Lakeside Drive near Fresh Pond, which provides fresh produce throughout the season. Payne Farm is one of the largest working farms on the island and there is now great potential to expand agricultural production beyond the seventeen acres currently being used for vegetables, chickens and sheep. The remainder of the farm consists of bayberry brush land and includes about three acres of wetlands. Prime and important farmlands exist on close to 80 percent of the site, as well as two greenhouses and deer fencing.

Robust collaboration made this project possible. Funding for this \$4.1 million acquisition came from various public and private sources, including \$2,282,500 from a USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program grant, \$725,000 from the Block Island Land Trust, \$392,500 from the Nature Conservancy and \$700,000 in state funds from both the Local Open Space Grant and Agricultural Land Preservation Commission.



Grazing on Payne Farm
Photo Credit: Michelle Sheehan



Early Autumn foliage on Fisher Property

FISHER
31 Acres, Hopkinton

The Fisher property connects DEM's 1,069-acre Rockville Management Area land in the area of Ashville Pond, Blue Pond, Ell Pond and Long Pond to 945 acres of conservation land held by The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and the Hopkinton Land Trust. It has 3,000 linear feet of road frontage and provides further recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy while preventing residential encroachment onto existing conservation land. The preservation of the Fisher property creates a 2,045-acre conservation area open to the public for recreational activities including hunting and hiking.

The property consists of many tree and plant species including red maple, red and black oak, and an understory of mountain laurel, rhododendron and blueberry. There is rich vegetation on top of the ledges and boulder fields. A few large white pines and hemlock trees spot the property. The shrubby habitat attracts birds like the hooded warbler. Other species unique to the southwest area of Rhode Island include the black rat snake. The area is also home to wide variety of other wildlife including cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer, fox, coyote, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and woodcock. The agricultural legacy of the parcel is evident by the piles of stone, cairns found all around the land.

DEM purchased the property for \$285,000 from the estate of Dorothy Fisher, with funding provided by a Statewide Land Acquisition grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Biodiversity

Around the world and right here in Rhode Island the damage to important habitats is one of the single largest causes of biodiversity loss. Human conversion of wild areas for development reduces the useful environment for the species that live there. Fragmentation of wetlands and forests create areas that may be too isolated or small to sustain wildlife populations. It creates increased competition in the smaller areas making it difficult for many animals to defend themselves, find food, water and mating partners and also increases tensions between humans and animals venturing into developed areas.

DEM's Land Acquisition Program works to create corridors that link land and habitat zones. This enables animals to move more freely without interference or injury.

BOOTH POND

40 Acres, North Smithfield

A diverse area of woodlands, streams, ponds and wetlands comprise the Booth Pond property located on the border of Woonsocket and North Smithfield. It is an unspoiled refuge for many species in an otherwise urbanized and highly-developed area.

Booth Pond is located in an important drinking water watershed and is connected to the City of Woonsocket water and sewer infrastructure. In 1977 the abutting 92-acre Booth Pond Conservation Area was purchased by the City of Woonsocket. This latest acquisition connects these two parcels. The property contains a mixture of forest and wetlands and boasts significant biodiversity at the site, most notably, it is home to over 50 species of dragonflies and damselflies, a significant number compared to most other sites in the state.

As a result of the town's acquisition of this property, a majority of the area around the pond is now protected and the community can enjoy recreational opportunities, including its existing network of trails. Funding for this \$925,000 acquisition was provided by a \$400,000 DEM Open Space Grant and \$525,000 from the Town of North Smithfield's Open Space Bond.



Booth Pond
Photo Credit: Jenny Flanagan

SEASIDE GAS

.25 acres, Tiverton

It is not the size, but the tremendous potential of this acquisition that makes it special. In March of 2014 the Town of Tiverton bought the Seaside Gas property with the help of DEM Open Space Grant funds. The property boasts a distinct and popular location along Main Road in Tiverton consisting of Grinnell's Beach and the abutment remains of the Old Stone Bridge, which used to connect the towns of Portsmouth and Tiverton across the of the Sakonnet River. The bridge was destroyed in the Hurricane of 1954 but the masonry abutments still remain.

The property is renowned for the excellent fishing conditions along the straight between the Sakonnet River and Mount Hope Bay from the beach shoreline and the large armor stone along the channel.

Plans are currently in the works to redesign this area with the help of Roger Williams University and members of the community. This project is testament to the power of collaboration to convert a decaying area into a place with tremendous public value for fishing and recreation.

Funding for this \$400,000 acquisition was provided by a \$200,000 DEM Open Space Grant and \$200,000 from the Tiverton Open Space Commission.



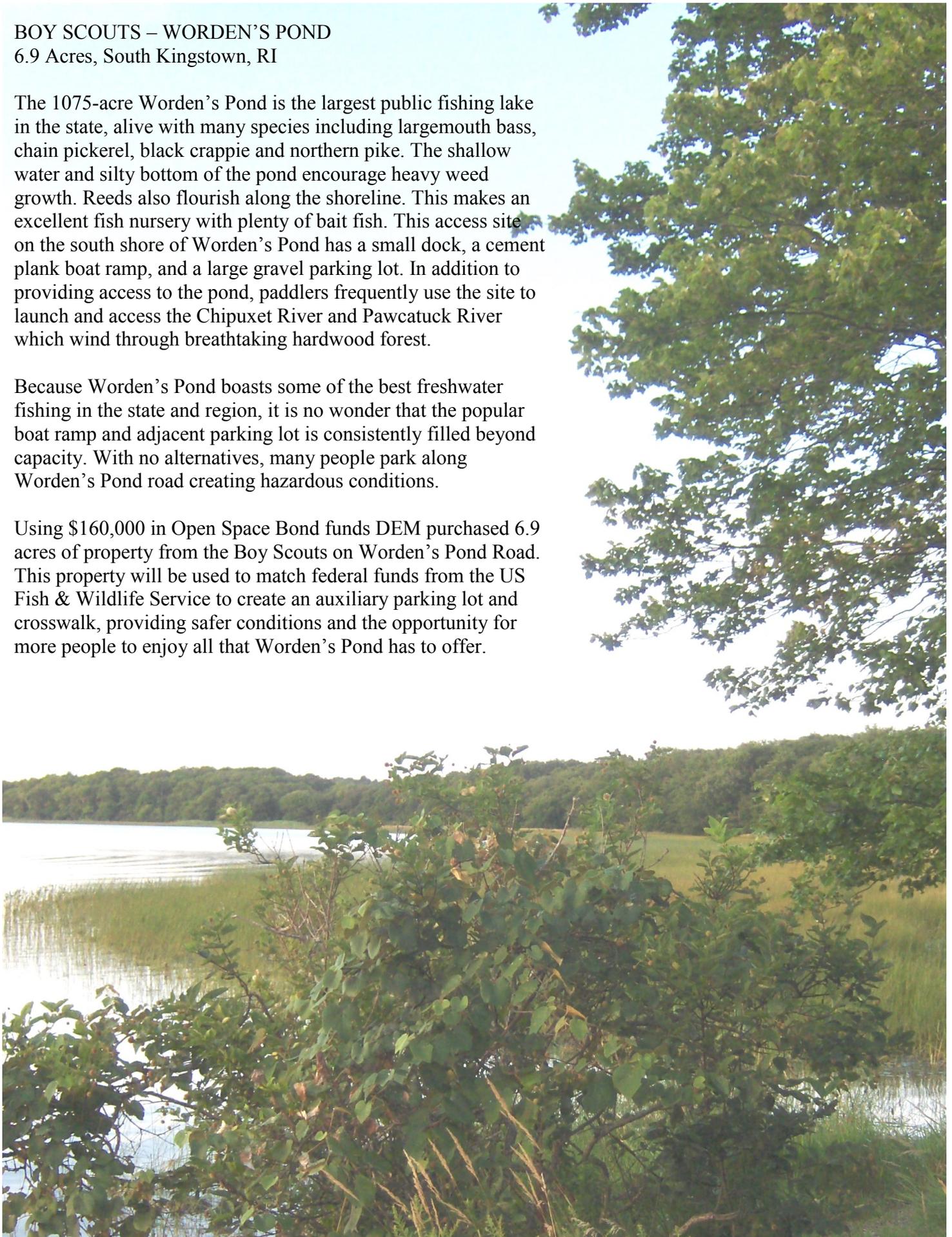
BOY SCOUTS – WORDEN’S POND

6.9 Acres, South Kingstown, RI

The 1075-acre Worden’s Pond is the largest public fishing lake in the state, alive with many species including largemouth bass, chain pickerel, black crappie and northern pike. The shallow water and silty bottom of the pond encourage heavy weed growth. Reeds also flourish along the shoreline. This makes an excellent fish nursery with plenty of bait fish. This access site on the south shore of Worden’s Pond has a small dock, a cement plank boat ramp, and a large gravel parking lot. In addition to providing access to the pond, paddlers frequently use the site to launch and access the Chipuxet River and Pawcatuck River which wind through breathtaking hardwood forest.

Because Worden’s Pond boasts some of the best freshwater fishing in the state and region, it is no wonder that the popular boat ramp and adjacent parking lot is consistently filled beyond capacity. With no alternatives, many people park along Worden’s Pond road creating hazardous conditions.

Using \$160,000 in Open Space Bond funds DEM purchased 6.9 acres of property from the Boy Scouts on Worden’s Pond Road. This property will be used to match federal funds from the US Fish & Wildlife Service to create an auxiliary parking lot and crosswalk, providing safer conditions and the opportunity for more people to enjoy all that Worden’s Pond has to offer.





BEFORE

GALILEE BOAT RAMP Narragansett

In July 2014, DEM opened the reconstructed Galilee Boat Ramp in Narragansett, one of Rhode Island's most popular boat ramp. Its location near the mouth of Point Judith Pond and Rhode Island Sound makes this an ideal spot to launch a boat both recreational and commercial fishing boats.

Improvements made at the Great Island Road facility include a new, double-lane, 60-foot wide pre-cast concrete boat ramp with two adjacent rows of floating docks. The project also included the elevation and expansion of an existing fixed pier walkway to provide access to the pier and floats for boaters with disabilities. The new double-lane system with added floats will greatly increase the efficiency and ease of use of the facility, and is expected to significantly reduce wait times for users.

The original boat ramp at this site was developed as part of the Galilee North Basin Development project in the late 1980s, and a second launching lane was later installed in the early 1990s. Both had reached the end of their useful life and the new and upgraded ramp was a welcome improvement for fishing access in the state.

This is the second project credited to a successful new partnership between DEM and The Nature Conservancy that works to create and improve public access sites for fishing, boating, and hunting throughout Rhode Island.

The accessible boat ramp was designed by DEM Planning and Development staff, and the contractor for the \$723,814 project was Narragansett Dock Works of Narragansett. DEM received 75 percent of funding for the project from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fish Restoration Program, matched by the value of state-owned land.

"I am thrilled to help celebrate the grand opening of the Galilee Boat Ramp Improvement Project, an initiative that will increase public access for fishing, boating and other recreation to the benefit of Rhode Islanders and tourists visiting our beautiful coastline. I am particularly pleased that this project, funded in part through federal grants, improves accessibility of piers and boat ramps for boaters and visitors with disabilities." - RI Congressman Jim Langevin



...AFTER

Photo Credit: Andres Aveledo

URBAN EDGE FARM SOLAR PROJECT Cranston

This year, DEM completed its 3-year partnership with the RI Energy Office to install solar panels at DEM-owned facilities. The successful partnership resulted in projects that provide renewable energy to Scarborough, East Matunuck and Misquamicut State Beaches, Burlingame, Dawley and Fishermen’s State Parks, and the Prudence Island Reserve. Funding for these project was provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a federal program enacted in 2009 to spur economic activity and invest in long-term growth.. A total of 200 kW of solar were installed for \$1,787,136. During this fiscal year, solar installations were completed at both Urban Edge Farm in Cranston and the Lafayette Fish Hatchery in North Kingstown.

Urban Edge Farm is an active agricultural property owned by DEM and managed by Southside Community Land Trust. Six farmers currently run successful agricultural businesses from the property. Thanks to this collaborative effort, all electrical demand on the farm, including a large walk-in refrigerator and irrigation pumps, is now 100% solar powered. This creates long term green infrastructure for the farm and provides significant utility cost savings for Southside Community Land Trust and their farmers.

Rooftop solar panels at Urban Edge Farm



Solar powered irrigation pump at Urban Edge Farm



Photo Credits: Southside Community Land Trust



Children enjoy a day at the fish hatchery

LAFAYETTE FISH HATCHERY SOLAR PROJECT

North Kingstown

The Lafayette Hatchery, where trout are raised for stocking in state waters, is one of four hatcheries managed by DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife. The recent solar installation provides for 25% of its electrical needs. As an auxiliary benefit, the solar array provides much needed shade for the incubating fish.

DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife currently raises up to 200,000 trout at Lafayette every two years. The state's hatcheries are an integral part of the Rhode Island recreational fishing experience. Currently, more than 70,000 two-year old brook, brown, and rainbow trout are stocked in more than 80 ponds and streams every year for opening day of the fishing season. An additional 60,000 to 90,000 trout are stocked in the state's freshwaters throughout the fishing season.



"What we do here matters desperately to Rhode Island and the world and it is heartening and important to celebrate our successes and recognize the important work by people and organizations united in our desire to conserve and safeguard our natural resources, to give nature a chance, and to take on tough challenges so that our children's children will inherit a healthy and vibrant Rhode Island." - Janet L. Coit, DEM Director