

Environmental Roundtable News



Going Green Gathering Steam

As energy prices continue to skyrocket and the environmental impact of buildings becomes more apparent, **green building** is gaining momentum. Green or sustainable building is the practice of creating healthier and more resource-efficient models of construction, renovation, operation, maintenance, and demolition. An increasing number of studies support the idea that green building is good for business. Initial investments often pay for themselves within a few years. The benefits include costs savings from reduced energy, water and waste and lower operating and maintenance costs.

The design, construction, operation, maintenance, and removal of buildings takes enormous amounts of energy, water, and materials, and generates large quantities of waste, air and water pollution, as well as creating stormwater runoff and heat islands. Where and how they are built can influence our quality of life.

Research and experience increasingly demonstrate that when buildings are designed and operated with their lifecycle impacts in mind, they can provide great environmental, economic, and social benefits. Elements of green building include energy efficiency and renewable energy, water conservation, waste management, environmentally preferable building materials and sustainable site location and design.

Even state government is catching on. In August, Governor Donald Carcieri signed an Executive Order to increase the energy efficiency of state buildings. The Executive Order on Energy and Environmental Performance Standards for New Public Buildings could save Rhode Island taxpayers \$39 million in operating costs over the next 15 years.

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17 Gordon Avenue: This business incubator center in Providence features a solar panel system, green roof, rainwater recovery and reuse, porous asphalt parking lots, and a southern orientation for increased natural light (shown above).

Green Building Spotlight: Save the Bay Center

The 15,042-square foot Save the Bay Center on a 6.07-acre site at Fields Point includes two classrooms, labspace, a large meeting room, administrative offices, and an adjacent boat-house.

Green features include a solar panel system, green roof, waterless toilets, southern orientation, porous gravel parking lots and a system of small ponds to collect and reuse rainwater.

The site, donated to Save The Bay by Johnson & Wales University, is a former municipal dump. While no significant toxins were detected, rotting organic material was generating traces of methane gas so the entire site was capped.

The building cost approximately \$7 million -- a figure that includes the cost of preparing the land (\$2 million) and building the Center itself (\$5 million).



Photo: Richard Benjamin

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The Order requires that any new or renovated public building meet the standards developed by the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design ("LEED"). LEED provides a complete framework for assessing building performance and meeting sustainability goals. Based on well-founded scientific standards, LEED emphasizes state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

For more information on building green, visit the USGBC at <http://www.usgbc.org/> or EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/greenbuilding/>.

Green and Clean State Vehicles

In August, Governor Carcieri signed an Executive Order on Green and Clean State Vehicles. The Order will reduce fuel consumption, improve fuel efficiency above current federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, reduce pollution emissions and will result in the purchase of vehicles that provide the best value on a lifecycle cost basis. The order requires that:

- At least 75% of new state vehicles must be alternative fueled, while the balance must be hybrid electric.
- All new light duty trucks in the state fleet must achieve a minimum of 19 miles per gallon (mpg) and be certified as low emission vehicles or cleaner, while all new passenger vehicles in the state fleet will achieve a minimum of 23 mpg.
- All state agencies shall purchase the most economical, fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles appropriate.

- State vehicles should use low-rolling resistance tires that also have superior tread life.

- All state fleet vehicles shall be maintained according to manufacturer specifications, including maintaining specified tire pressures, in order to reduce pollution emissions.

Members of the Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Process developed this Executive Order along with the Order for green state buildings discussed in the front-page article of this newsletter.



DEM's fleet now includes 40 green vehicles.

Underground Storage Self-Certification Results

Seventy-seven percent of owners and operators of gas stations and other entities with federally regulated USTs have satisfied the requirements of a new, mandatory self-certification compliance program that took effect on June 28. The program, modeled on the autobody self-certification program, allows underground storage tank owners to certify to DEM that they are complying with the environmental requirements that apply to their businesses. DEM will randomly inspect about 100 of the facilities per year.

Of the 667 federally regulated facilities in the state, 514 completed and submitted the required Environmental Results Program's *Compliance Certification Checklist & Forms Booklet* by the June 30th deadline. The remaining 153 facilities have received Notices of Intent to Enforce. They face formal enforcement action and administrative penalties up to \$25,000 per day.

All underground storage tanks subject to registration in Rhode Island must be inspected every two years. Self-certification allows DEM to more effectively manage limited resources and to educate regulated facilities about their environmental impact and obligations. The regulated facilities, mostly gas stations, have over 1,900 underground storage tanks. Data from both self-certification and inspections by DEM staff can be used to strategically target inspections and compliance assistance efforts, track results to show success, and, as appropriate, take enforcement action.

Leaking underground tanks are the most common source of groundwater contamination, and petroleum is the most common contaminant. Two thirds of Rhode Island communities rely in whole or in significant part on groundwater for their drinking water supplies, and 12 of those communities derive all of their drinking water from groundwater.

For more information on the UST Self-Certification Program, including the UST Compliance Workbook and UST Compliance Checklist, see <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/assist/usterp/index.htm> or call 222-6800.

Rhode Island's 2005 Outstanding Dairy Farm



The Rhode Island Green Pastures Committee has named the Ocean Breeze Farm in Westerly, owned by Frank and Linda Panciera (shown at left with family), Rhode Island's 2005 Outstanding Dairy Farm of the Year.

Ocean Breeze Dairy Farm was recognized for its outstanding achievements as an efficient, well-managed farm. The Pancieras have made significant improvements in feeding systems, installed concrete pads to hold silage and haylage to keep them clean, and are adding a storage pit for manure to prevent contaminated stormwater runoff. The farm's development rights have been sold to the Weekapaugh Foundation for Conservation to preserve open space and viable farming for future generations.

Winning dairy farmers from each New England state will be honored on September 16 at the Eastern States Exposition, The Big E, in West Springfield, MA.

At left, the Panciera family - (l-r, standing) Frank & Linda Panciera; (l-r, sitting) Daughters Sylvia, Linda & Patty; (l-r, sitting) Grandchildren Brittany, Lincoln, & Harrison

Nation's First Statewide Plastic Bag Recycling Program Debuts Labor Day Weekend in Rhode Island

Submitted by Anita SanAntonio, Executive Director, RI Food Dealers Assn.

On Labor Day weekend, Rhode Island became the first state in the United States to offer statewide collection and recycling for plastic grocery bags. The program is free for both consumers and the markets that display the collection barrels.

Dubbed "ReStore," the project was developed by the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC), in partnership with area grocery stores. All the markets, from large national chain stores, to multi and single store independents, who are members of the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, endorsed the recycling effort and promoted participation in the program.



The blue ReStore barrels are located inside sixty-two grocery stores around the state. Consumers can recycle all types of plastic film including plastic newspaper sleeves, dry cleaner bags, and produce baggies. The markets can combine pallet plastic wrappings with the consumer bags and save additional disposal costs.

The collected material will be trucked from the markets to the Packaging and More Inc. facility in Central Falls, then on to RIRRC's Materials Recycling Facility in Johnston where they will be baled and sold to a plastic film remanufacturer. It is there that the bags will complete their life cycle and be transformed into new plastic film.

The participating markets are: Shaw's Supermarkets, Stop & Shop Supermarkets, Dave's Marketplace, A & J Seabra, Eastside Marketplace, Belmont Market, Carcieri's Market, Shore's Fresh Food Market, Clements' Marketplace, Tom's Market, Brigido's IGA Marketplace, Dunn's Corners Market and Dino's Park n' Shop, Andreoni's Market and McQuades Market.

Hunters And Fishermen For The Hungry Program - Fish and Game Donations Help People in Need

DEM's new *Hunters and Fishermen for the Hungry* program allows anglers and hunters to donate their surplus fish and game - such as venison, Canada goose, and fish - properly processed, packaged, and refrigerated, to a number of local food kitchens to help Rhode Islanders in need.

DEM supports the Rhode Island Food Bank with donations from its finfish surveys, and with commercially caught donations of fish, such as scup. The *Hunters and Fishermen for the Hungry* program expands the concept to recreational anglers and hunters. "High quality protein is in high demand, yet food kitchens receive very few donations of meat and fish," says Michael Lapisky, Acting Chief of DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife. "This program provides a means for the state's hunters and anglers to help their neighbors."

The Division maintains a list of locations where fish and game may be donated, and has prepared a booklet with guidelines on handling game and fish for donation, as well as a collection of recipes for the food kitchens.

DEM reminds those who hunt in New York that the entire state of New York and all bordering counties are considered a Chronic Wasting Disease-endemic area. Importation of cervids and/or cervid parts is prohibited. Cervids are members of the deer family, including deer, elk, and moose.

Information on the RI Hunters and Fisherman for the Hungry Program or Chronic Wasting Disease is available on DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov, under the Fish and Wildlife Division. An information packet is also available by calling the Division at 789-0281.

2005 Land Acquisitions on Target

The DEM Land Acquisition Program has acquired title, conservation easements, or development rights to 510.28 acres of land so far this year and plans to close on another 834.4 acres by the end of the year for a total of 1344.68 acres valued at \$14 Million. This total, combined the number of acres expected to be acquired by local land trusts and other conservation partners, will accomplish the State's goal of protecting 3,000 acres per year. Achieving the annual goal has increasingly become more difficult due to the steep rise in land values and the competition with other potential buyers for acquisition of the remaining limited large parcels of land. The next five years will be critical for the Department and other conservation partners to work together to identify and preserve the remaining important agricultural lands, watershed properties, recreational lands, forests, and important habitats.



As DEM Director Mike Sullivan looks on, Governor Carcieri awards Paul Roselli of the Burrillville Land Trust one of the first grants from the Governor's \$70 million Open Space, Recreation, Bay and Watershed Bond overwhelmingly passed by Rhode Island voters in November 2004.

DEM Awarded Wetland Grants

EPA awarded \$400,000 to RIDEM in FY2005 in a national competition to develop and implement improved strategies to protect and restore wetlands in Rhode Island. *This doubles the funding available to the state.* EPA has also indicated an additional \$800,000 will be awarded over the next two fiscal years bringing the total to \$1.2 million. Rhode Island was the only state selected for funding in both available categories: regulatory projects and non-regulatory projects. Projects planned with FY2005 funding:

Regulatory Category - \$200,000

- **Improving the Evaluation of Environmental Outcomes in the Freshwater Wetlands Programs:** modifications to CRMC's data management systems to allow electronic tracking of wetland loss and gains to improve data for reporting statewide results.
- **Enhancing Use of Science in Decision-making:** literature review of research applicable to Rhode Island on the impacts of development on wetland wildlife habitat values. Program biologists may identify issues for further policy development in future years.
- **Evaluation of Outcomes in the DEM Wetland Permitting Program: Documenting Unauthorized Losses Associated with Permitted Sites:** DEM will assess the extent of wetland losses on large-scale permitted sites (sub-divisions, commercial projects) after varying periods of time (e.g. 3, 5, 10 years.) Information will be used to develop strategies to prevent losses in following years, including intrusions into buffer areas.

Non-Regulatory Category - \$200,000

- **Implementation of Wetland Monitoring and Assessment:** First year will focus on establishing a baseline by producing wetland profiles for the state's watersheds, refining a rapid assessment method (RAM) and demonstrating the use of RAM at selected wetland sites subject to the influences of water withdrawals.
- **Public Outreach And Training:** Build on DEM's outreach strategy by organizing training for both consultants/designers and local officials, and continue to update and distribute outreach materials, including development of a wetland restoration information kit for homeowners.
- **Prioritizing Protection of Vulnerable Wetlands in the Queen's River Watershed:** URI will apply a model to vernal pools to generate a protection and acquisition plan for this watershed.



Lead Poisoning: One Step at a Time

Submitted by James Celenza

The primary institutional cause of childhood lead poisoning was the unrepentant marketing of leaded products (including cribs and children's toys) by the lead industry.

When the idea of a state class action suit first broke surface in Rhode Island in the mid 90s it was explicitly directed at the obvious limitation of dealing with lead poisoning in a reactive rather than preventive mode. The inability to move into prevention has been based on several dynamics. One is the lack of a public health infrastructure that could actively work on healthy, safe, and affordable housing. And the second, funding. At the time HUD has pegged the *initial* costs of lead abatement, nationwide, at \$500 billion. Here in RI \$1 to 2 billion had been mentioned.

Therefore the notion of a lead housing trust fund to provide for preventive abatement, upkeep and maintenance would be a key element in an overall healthy housing strategy. Such a lead trust can target the most hazardous conditions prior to their impact on kids. It can serve as a key pillar in developing and sustaining affordable and safe housing in high-risk areas. The point of the suit was that the paint industry should be obligated to finance such a fund since they produced and circulated lead products even after substantial evidence as to its toxicity was abundant.

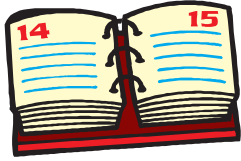
With the announcement that DuPont Corporation will pay nearly \$12 million to settle the RI action a critical first stage has been reached. It is a welcome and atypical bit of news on the general environmental health front. (This approach was crafted at a NE regional Attorney's General conference held at Butler Hospital in the mid 90s. Several deserve mention: they include Rick Rabin from the Massachusetts Department Public Health, Bob Vanderslice from the RI Health Dept , and Terry Tierney from the RIAG's office.)

Other steps await: especially increasing funding from the paint industry and the implementing of a public health infrastructure for healthy and affordable housing.

Pick-Your-Own Apples

Apple picking begins around the end of August and continues into October. Rhode Island is expecting to see an increase in its apple harvest. Many orchards offer family activities, such as hay rides, in conjunction with pick-your-own opportunities and farm stands. Support your local growers and visit one of the many orchards/farms throughout Rhode Island. For a list, please visit the DEM's Division of Agriculture, www.state.ri.us/dem/topics/agricult.htm.





Upcoming Events/Meetings

September 15

Joint Hearing on the Draft 2006 Project Priority List for the State Revolving Fund, 9:30 AM, Clean Water Finance Agency (CWFA) Conference Room, Suite 119, 235 Promenade Street, Providence. For information contact Jay Manning at 222-4700 ext. 7254.

September 17 (raindate 9/18)

URI Greenshare Field Day, 10 AM, URI Botanical Gardens, Upper College Road, URI Campus at Kingston. For information contact Tom Meade at 364-1914.

September 20

DEM Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to Solid Waste Regulations, 1:30 PM, DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street, Providence. For information, call Leo Hellested at 222-2700 ext. 7502. .

September 22

Environmental Roundtable Meeting, DEM, Room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, 3-5 PM.

September 22

Health, Environmental and Pesticide Safety Education Training. First part of two-day core training for pesticide applicators and dealers. From 8 AM, University of Rhode Island's East Farm. For information, call Robin Mooney at 222-2781 ext. 4513.

September 29

Health, Environmental and Pesticide Safety Education Training. Second part of two-day core training for pesticide applicators and dealers. 8 AM, University of Rhode Island's East Farm. For information, call Robin Mooney at 222-2781 ext. 4513.

October 1

A Celebration of Fall - mark the changing of summer to fall, 10 AM, Apeiron Institute for Environmental Living, 451 Hammett Rd., Coventry. For more information call 397-3430.

October 5

Environment Council of Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, 7 PM, Audubon Society of RI Headquarters 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield.

October 6

Meet the Scientists - Climate Change Research, Education & Policy, 10 AM, URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute Auditorium, Narragansett, RI.

October 15

URI Master Gardener's clean -up at Smith's Castle, 8:30 AM, Smith's Castle, North Kingstown. For information, call Tom Meade at 364-1914.

November 2

Environment Council of Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, 7 PM, Audubon Society of RI Headquarters, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield.

November 9

Conference on Global Warming in RI, 1 PM, Save the Bay Conference Room, 100 Bayview Drive, Providence. For more information call 331-6972.

December 1

Business Roundtable Meeting, DEM, Room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, 3:30-5 PM.

December 7

Environment Council of Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, 7 PM, Audubon Society of RI Headquarters 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield.

December 15

Environmental Roundtable Meeting, DEM, Room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, 3-5 PM.