



# Land Conservation and Acquisition Program

## Annual Report Fiscal Year 2009



Department of Environmental Management

**State of Rhode Island** Donald L. Carcieri, Governor  
**Department of Environmental Management** W. Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., Director  
**Division of Planning and Development** Joseph G. Dias, Chief

# State of RI Land Conservation Staff

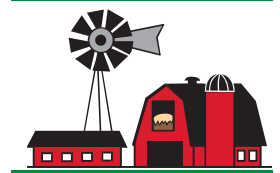
## RI Department of Environmental Management Land Acquisition Committee

W. Michael Sullivan, Director  
Lisa Primiano, Chair, Deputy Chief of Planning and Development  
Kenneth Ayars, Chief, Division of Agriculture  
Joseph Dias, Chief, Division of Planning and Development  
Najih Lazar, Federal Assistance Coordinator, Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director of Natural Resources  
Robert Paquette, Chief, Division of Parks and Recreation  
Catherine Sparks, Chief, Division of Forest Environment



## Agricultural Land Preservation Commission

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

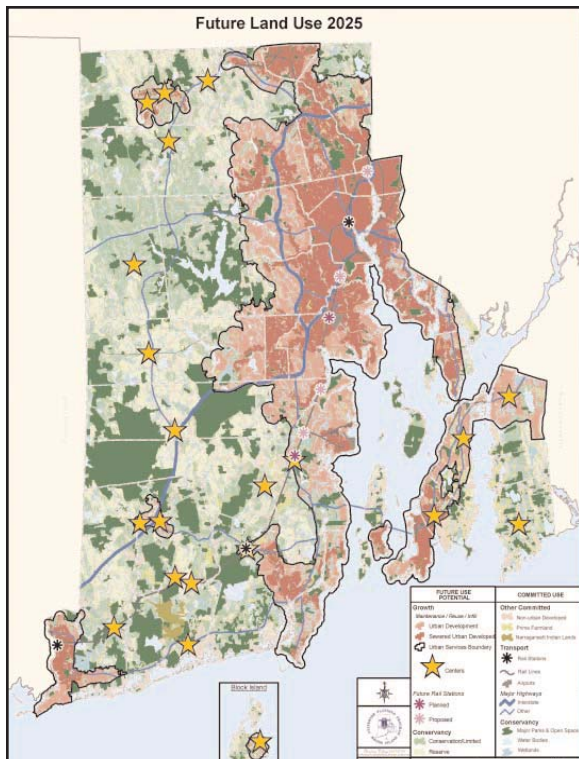


## Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Board

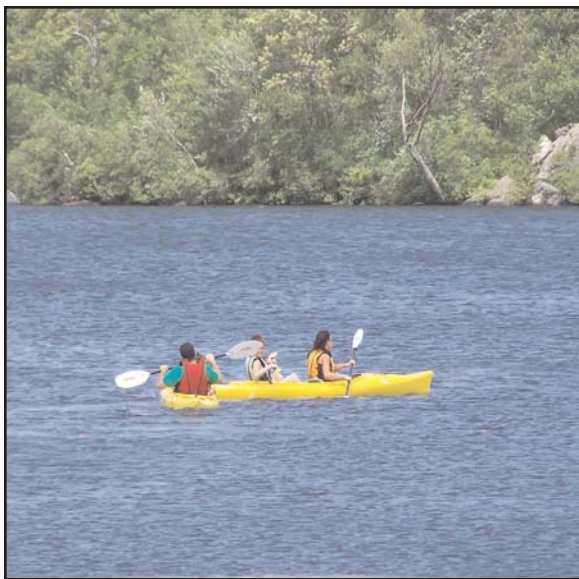
Representative from the Governor's Office  
Jared Rhodes, Chief, Div. of Statewide Planning, RI Department of Administration  
W. Michael Sullivan, Director, RI Department of Environmental Management



# 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 the potential to preserve its rural character, water resources, open space and forests, and farm land.



The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management 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 parcels of land whose resource value, size, location, and relationship to existing conservation land and the greenway system recommended in the State Guide Plan make them 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 acquisition with other state, federal and non-profit programs. It works to acquire land consistent with state plans and state regulations and to develop funding sources for these acquisitions. 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.

Three programs accommodate Rhode Island's public land acquisitions:

## State Land Conservation Program

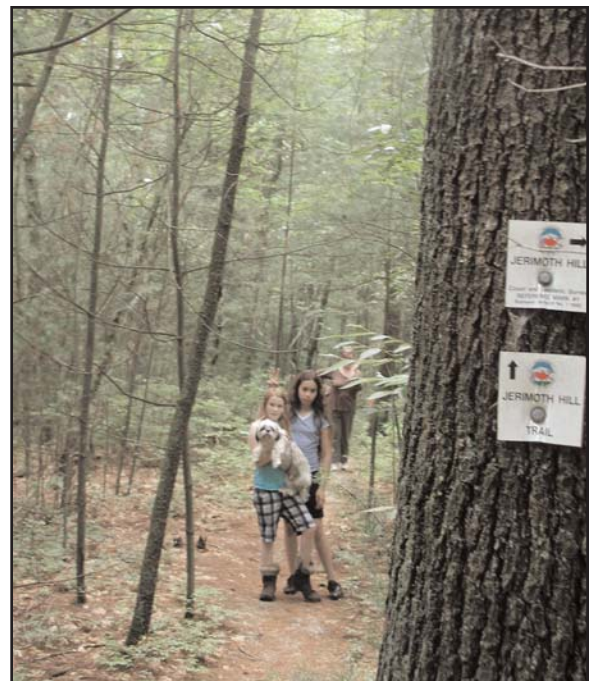
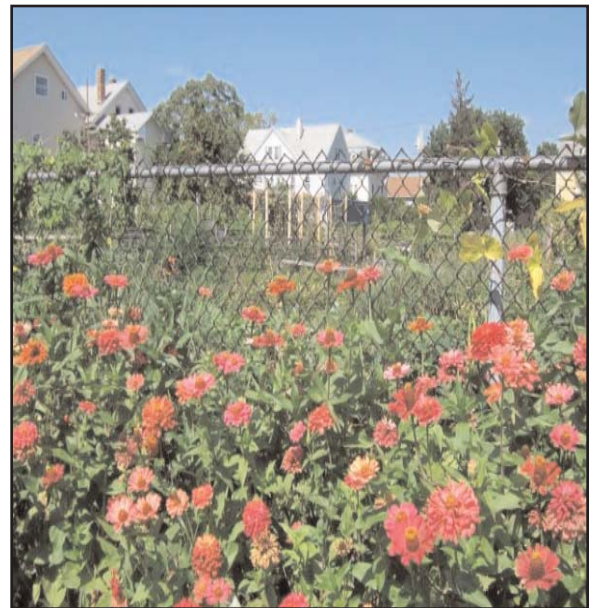
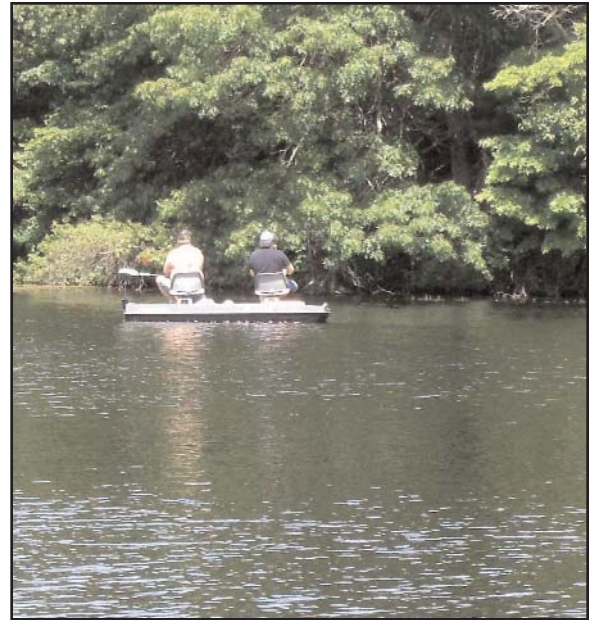
This program is administered by the DEM Land Acquisition Committee, which makes recommendations to the Director regarding real estate transactions. It makes decisions about land acquisitions for parks and recreation, for fish and wildlife use, and for forest lands.

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 Foundation, and from various federal programs including the U.S. Forest Services' Forest Legacy program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, 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 Open Space Grants support cities and towns, land trusts, and non-profit organizations in their protection and acquisition of important natural areas in the state. 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 Commission. 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 Foundation; the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program; and through the leveraging of land trust and municipal funds.



## Partnerships

In addition to state programs, other conservation interests work hard to protect our natural resources

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 U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, the Federal Highway Administration and the RI Department of Transportation, NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, and local land trusts.

Local land trusts and non-profits, most notably The Nature Conservancy and The Audubon Society of Rhode Island, have played a vital role in preserving Rhode Island's natural areas and agricultural lands, not only in partnership with the state but also with large projects of their own.

We would like to thank our FY 2009 conservation partners:

The Burrillville Land Trust  
The Champlin Foundation  
Town of Exeter  
Foster Land Trust  
Glocester Land Trust  
City of Newport  
Town of North Kingstown  
Private Donors  
The City of Providence  
The Prudence Conservancy  
Southside Community Land Trust  
Town of West Greenwich  
West Greenwich Land Trust

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Champlin Foundation  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin.  
Federal Highway Administration  
RI Department of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Forest Service



# FY 2009 Accomplishments

## Achieving Land Conservation Goals

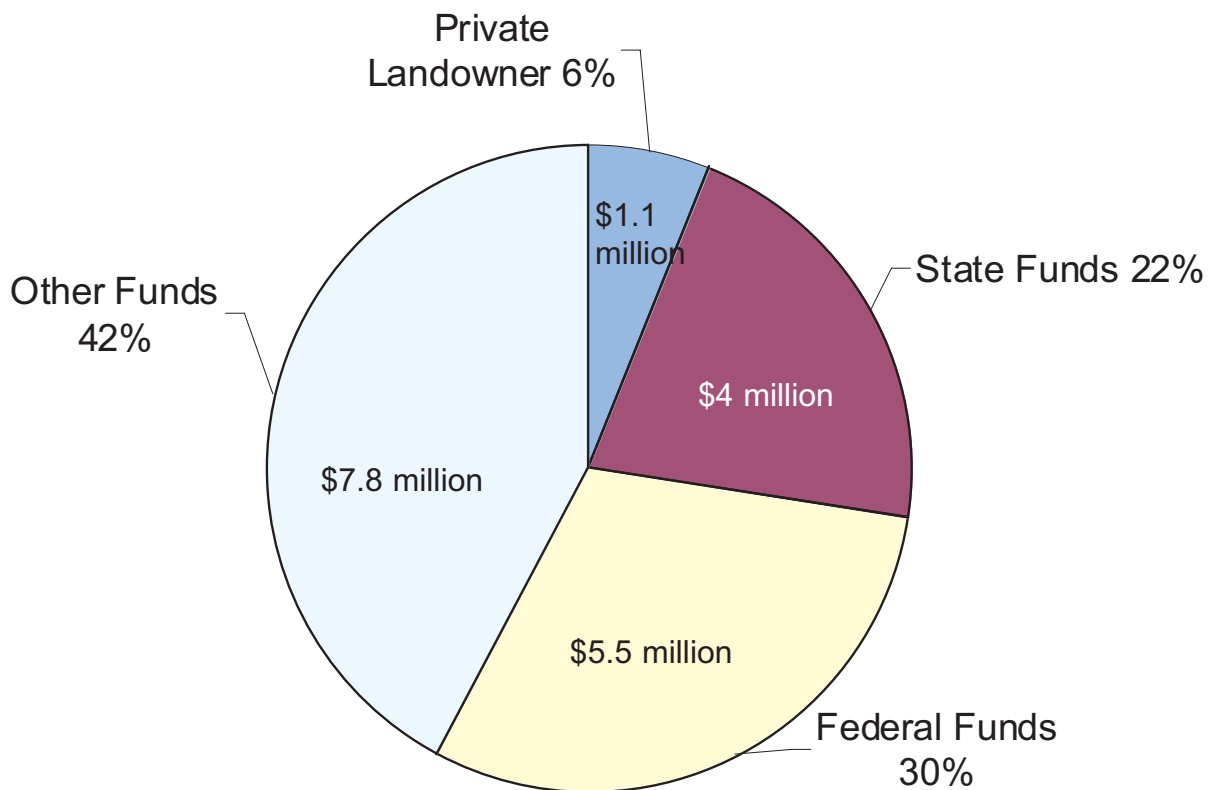
In 1994 the State Greenways Plan (State Guide Plan, Element 155) set a goal to preserve 17,850 acres of land through State programs over the next 25 years. Since 1994 the State has managed to preserve 20,172 acres, exceeding the goal by 2,322 acres. As of this year more than 20% of the state has been preserved as open space, for recreation, or for agricultural use. With these accomplishments the DEM has begun to envision the next 25 years of conservation in Rhode Island. With an eye to clearly prioritizing the remaining natural areas, the program is developing a plan to guide property acquisition that will enable the department to effectively and efficiently preserve the state's natural resources while at the same time enhancing the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders.

**Total Leveraging of Open Space Bonds in FY 2009 = \$14.4 million**

## Leveraging Funds

In Fiscal Year 2009 the DEM preserved \$18.4 million in land value. Of this amount, approximately \$1.1 million was donated land value from private property owners. Of the remaining \$17.3 million only \$4 million was from State Bonds for state land acquisition, farmland preservation, or local matching grants. Federal assistance totaled \$5.5 million and the remaining \$7.8 million were contributions from local land trusts and non profits. All totaled, in FY 2009 alone the state was able to leverage \$14.4 million from the overall \$25 million open space bond.

## Funding Sources for Land Conservation Projects in FY 2009



The following projects were completed by the Land Conservation Program in Fiscal Year 2009 (July 1st 2008 - June 30th 2009) for a grand total of 1,726.6 acres.

PROPERTY	CITY/TOWN	PURPOSE	ACRES
Bugnet	West Greenwich	Forest Management	68.8
Foster Little League	Foster	Active Recreation	7.1
Joslin	Exeter	Habitat/Watershed Protection	73.6
Bradley Hospital	Lincoln	Recreation/Open Space	3.77
Hammond	Glocester	Forest Management	52
Schofield/Gillis	Burrillville	Habitat/Forest Management	86
Shepard/Glen Avon	West Greenwich/ Coventry	Recreation/ habitat/ forest management	1,033.5
Mathewson Farm	Johnston	Preserves historic working farm	15.3
Purvis	Glocester	Habitat/ Forest Management	127
Hopkins	Foster	Forest Management	25
Schartner	Exeter/ North Kingstown	Preserves working farm/ scenic vistas	112
Hawksley	Glocester	Forest Management	49
Jerimoth Hill	Foster	Recreation	4.6
Camp Pastore	Charlestown	Recreation	48
Southside Community Land Trust	Providence	Community Garden/ Agriculture	.010
Melissa Street	Providence	Recreation	2.75
DOT/Rt. 3	Exeter	Fishing Access	.32
Meadowbrook Pond	Hopkinton	Fishing Access/ Recreation	15.9
Carpenter	Glocester	Access to State Management Area	2.5
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1,727.15</b>

## Land Protection Totals

<b>Land Acquisition Program:</b>	<b>1,356.39 acres</b>
<b>Local Grants Program:</b>	<b>243.45 acres</b>
<b>Agricultural Land Preservation Commission:</b>	<b>127.31 acres</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1,727.15 acres</b>



# The Year in Review: Protected Properties

## Recreation Land

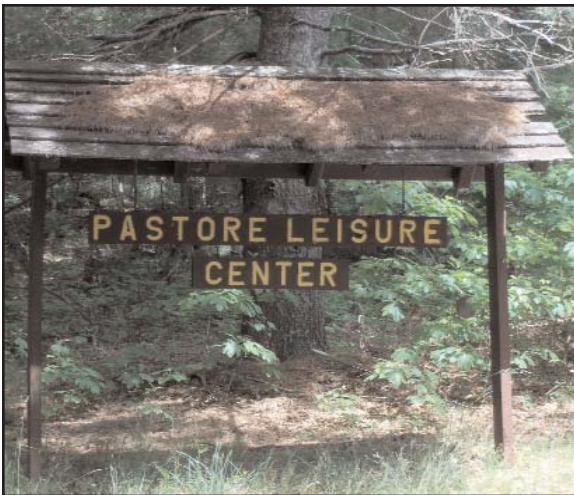
Providing public access to state land and actively managing these properties for recreational use continues to be a priority of the land acquisition program. Properties that abut existing management areas or that present opportunities for recreational use are actively pursued.

### **Camp Pastore – Charlestown**

48 acres



*Watchaug Pond, Camp Pastore, Charlestown*



*Entrance to Camp Pastore*

This forested parcel on Watchaug Pond was previously held by the Department of Mental Health, Retardation, and Hospitals (MHRH) and functioned as a summer camp for disabled youth. Originally transferred to MHRH for this purpose, the property was transferred back to DEM this year to protect its valuable natural and recreational resources. It contains a rare New England Coastal Plain Pondshore community that supports several rare plant species as well as several species of salamanders and rare damselfly. The hardwood deciduous forest, part of the larger forest tract that covers the abutting Burlingame Management Area, contains oaks, birch, red maples, and some white pines.

In addition, the property presents a significant recreational resource with a dock, camp facilities, and a paved access road. DEM is committed to opening this property for public recreational use.

### **Meadow Brook Pond – Richmond**

15.91 acres



*Meadow Brook Pond, Richmond*

This important property, sold by Tuckahoe Turf Farms, sits along Meadow Brook Pond and has been managed as a fishing access site by DEM since 1987. Meadow Brook Pond is a Designated Trout Water and is stocked biannually by the DEM. Securing this property enables the state to gain permanent control of this very popular fishing area

and to gain additional frontage on the pond that connects the fishing access site to the adjacent Carolina Management Area.

The total contiguous acreage of protected land in this area is now over 3,100 acres, including the 486-acre Tuckahoe Turf Farm, whose development rights were purchased by the DEM in 2008. The Meadow Brook Pond parcel is also adjacent to another 850 acres of protected property owned by The Nature Conservancy.

The property acquisition was funded with State Bonds and DEM Fishing License Fees.

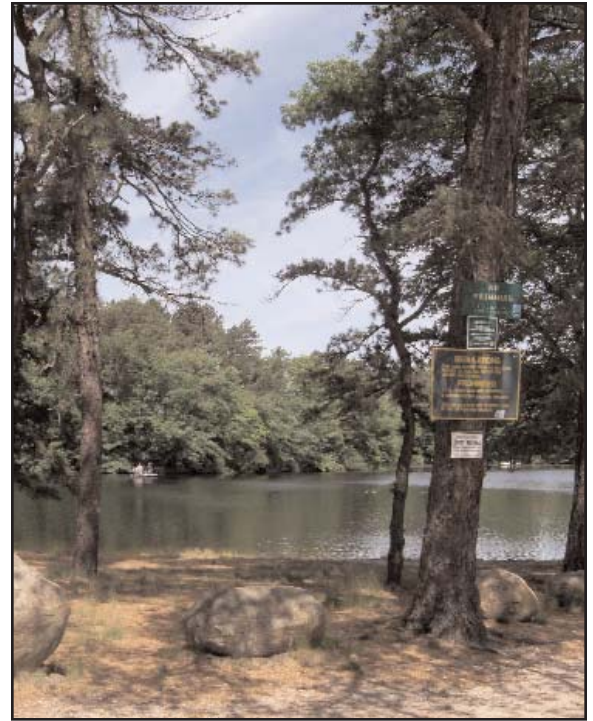
## Agricultural Land

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

### **Schartner Farms – North Kingstown and Exeter** 112 Acres

This visually prominent farm at the corner of Rt 102 and Rt 2 in the towns of North Kingstown and Exeter has operated as a nursery for many years and has functioned as the entry to the North Kingstown-Exeter agriculture belt. The property was recently sold to the Schartner Family to be incorporated into their adjacent farm operation. In a collaborative project to purchase the development rights to this parcel that included funding from DEM/ALPC, the Towns of North Kingstown and Exeter, and a private donor, 100 acres of the Bald Hill Nursery property are now permanently preserved as a working farm.

The Schartners currently operate a successful diversified farm operation that includes pick your own blueberries, strawberries, pumpkins, and Christmas trees, corn maze, hay rides, farm tours, as well as a full line of diversified vegetables, bedding plants, and value-added products (jam, pies, wreaths, etc) sold at their stand as well as several farmers markets. The addition of this new property will enable them to expand their offerings and retain the agricultural character of the area.



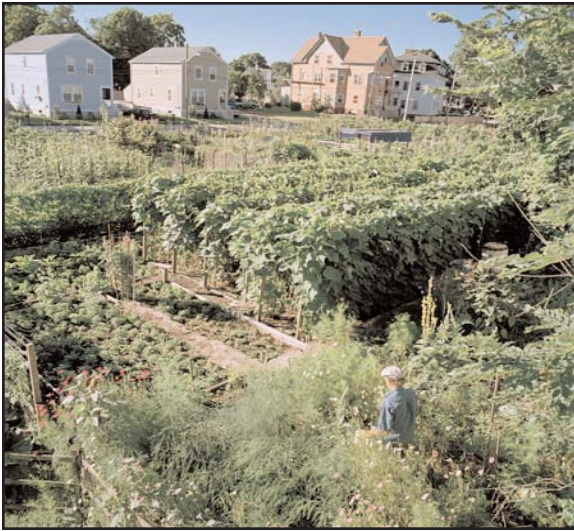
*Meadow Brook Pond, Richmond*



*Gateway to Schartner Farms*



*Schartner Farms, North Kingstown/Exeter*



*Southside Community Land Trust, Providence*

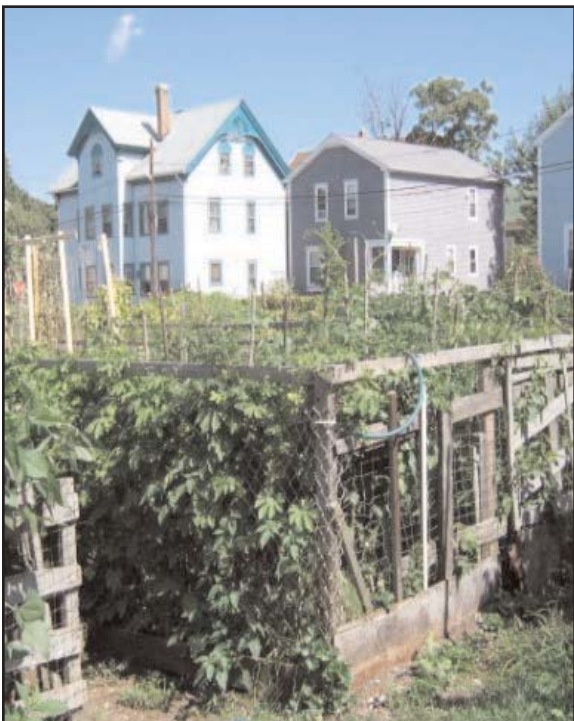
### **Southside Community Land Trust – Providence**

4,225 square feet

Southside Community Land Trust runs a series of community gardens in South Providence used by families to grow their own produce. These gardens provide green and healthy urban space, transform blighted vacant lots, and offer recreation to individuals and to families. They are also an important source of food for the hundreds of residents who till them each year.

This important green space in the inner city offers many benefits both to nearby neighbors and to the greater city. Habitat, stormwater, cooling, visual relief from the ubiquitous asphalt, a community space where cross cultural interactions can take place all help make the city a better place to live.

With the DEM’s assistance, Southside was able to secure an additional two lots within their largest garden – the Somerset Garden. If these lots were built on most of the garden would either be destroyed or shaded out. The project was funded by the Open Space Bond.



*Somerset Garden, Providence*

### **Greenways and Trails**

The network of bikepaths and hiking trails that traverse Rhode Island provide 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.

### **Mosley – Foster**

4.6 acres

Walkers must pass through this property on their way to Jerimoth Hill, Rhode Island’s highest point (812 feet). Though perhaps not as impressive as Alaska’s tallest mountain, Jerimoth Hill is a popular destination for members of the high pointers club, who attempt to summit each state’s highest point. Previously in the hands of a series of private owners with varying degrees of tolerance for the public walking through their property, DEM’s acquisition of the property secures public access in perpetuity, enabling residents and out-of-staters to view this important geographical landmark.



*Jerimoth Hill Welcome Sign, Foster*

## Purvis – Gloucester

127 acres

In local lore, The Dark Swamp, located on the Purvis property, was a place to steer clear of. With its dense forest cover and saturated soils, this dark and mucky site seemed foreboding. But with the development pressures of the past decade, the important habitat surrounding the swamp has come under threat. Now the property will be permanently protected, thanks to a partnership between the DEM and the Gloucester Land Trust. These forested lands provide excellent habitat for neo-tropical songbirds and for a wide range of game and non-game species, including white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and ruffed grouse. In addition, the North/South trail runs through the middle of the property with 3,450 feet of frontage and connects the property to existing state property.

The parcels will be incorporated into and managed as part of Durfee Hill Management Area. It will add to the 5,066 contiguous acres of protected land in the area and will provide key linkages to other protected property on the edge of Durfee Hill.

## Habitat and Diversity

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 adequate to support healthy populations. The DEM recognizes the need to protect sizable swaths of land capable of providing the necessary shelter and open space.

## Bugnet – West Greenwich

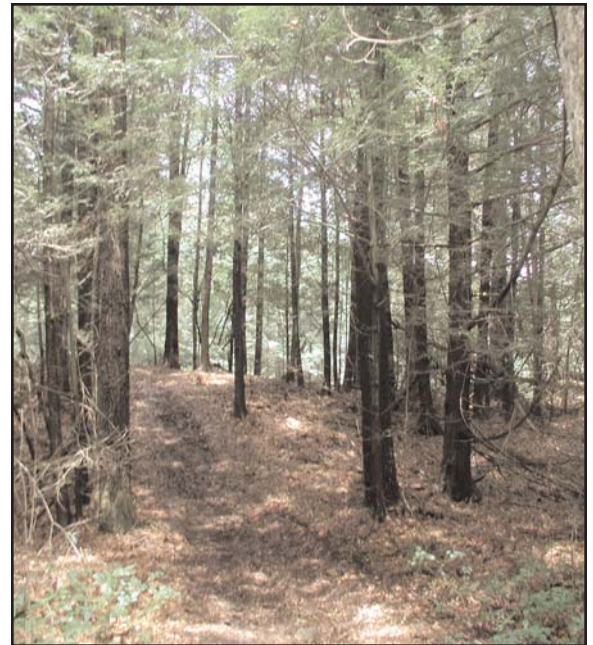
66 acres

This active tree farm was conserved through the purchase of a Conservation Easement over the property with the assistance of USDA's Forest Legacy Program. The property abuts Big River Management Area and its timber is used to operate a custom wood milling business.

A small man-made pond, a stream, and a well maintained trail and path system are contained within a diverse forest



*Purvis property, Gloucester*



*Purvis property, Gloucester*



*Bugnet property, West Greenwich*



*Schofield/Gillis property, Burrillville*



*Schofield/Gillis property, Burrillville*



consisting of White Pine, Red Oak, Black Oak, Red Maple, White Ash, Pitch Pine, and Tupelo. The forest has been well-managed and logged primarily for its white pine. The management plan calls for selective harvesting and for maintaining the habitat value of the property. The property will be open to the public for educational and demonstration purposes.

### **Schofield/Gillis - Burrillville**

86 acres

The Burrillville Land Trust acquired this property, which contains valuable water resources abutting George Washington Management Area, through a DEM Open Space Grant. It contains significant wetlands, a native trout stream, and is surrounded by a deciduous and coniferous forest, rocky outcroppings, and a 2 acre pond. Abutting George Washington Management Area to the west and an open space parcel held by Brown University to the east, this project provides a key linkage between protected lands. Furthermore, the property contains over 2,400 feet of frontage on Jackson Schoolhouse Road.

A series of hiking trails and a canoe launch site will provide excellent public access to the property.

## **The Future of Conservation**

The hard work and dedicated efforts of our conservation partners is a critical element in preserving our state's natural resources. This program will continue to work with non-profits, municipalities, and local land trusts to ensure that the valuable land resources throughout the state are protected. As the real estate market continues to taper it is integral that we take full advantage of this favorable climate and pool our resources to protect Rhode Island's remaining natural areas.

The Land Acquisition Program anticipates closing on several large projects in the next 6 months totaling approximately 2,500 acres. These important land conservation projects will significantly enhance the state's natural resources – and they will be closing as the open space bond reserves dwindle. Fortunately, we are seeing an increase in federal appropriations for land conserva-

tion. But in order to take advantage of these federal dollars, state and local match is required. A future open space bond will be needed to meet these demands.

**For more information about the 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>**

