



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
**Land Conservation and Acquisition Program**  
**Annual Report**  
Fiscal Year 2008



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

## State of RI Land Conservation Commissions/Committees

### DEM Land Acquisition Committee

Lisa Primiano, *Chair*, Supervisor, Land Conservation Program

W. Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., Director

Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director of Natural Resources

Joe Dias, Chief, Division of Planning and Development

Robert Paquette, Chief, Division of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth Ayars, Chief, Division of Agriculture

Catherine Sparks, Chief, Division of Forest Environment

Najih Lazar, Division of Fish and Wildlife

### Agricultural Land Preservation Commission

Everett Stuart, *Chair*

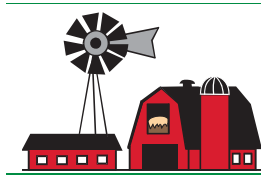
Kevin J. Nelson, Principal Planner, Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program

Kenneth Ayars, Chief, Division of Agriculture

George Mason, Public Member

David Wallace, Public Member

William Wright, Public Member



### Natural Heritage Preservation Commission

Representative from the Director of  
Intergovernmental Relations, Governor's Office

Jared Rhodes, Chief of the Division of Statewide Planning

W. Michael Sullivan, Director, Department of Environmental Management



### Natural Heritage Preservation Commission Advisory Committee

Mark Carruolo, Planning Director, City of Warwick

Kevin Nelson, Principal Planner, Division of Statewide Planning

Lisa Primiano, Supervisor, Land Conservation Program

Karen Saucier, Chair of the Cumberland Land Trust

Lawrence Taft, Executive Director, Audubon Society of RI



# State Land Conservation

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management preserves land to guarantee the permanent protection and proper management of areas having high intrinsic resource value, whose size, scarcity, location, or relationship to a statewide greenspace and greenway system recommended in the State Guide Plan make them significant to the state's welfare and whose vulnerability to permanent loss is real.

DEM's Division of Planning and Development manages and supports the state's land conservation programs. The division operates to define, assess, develop plans and acquire land consistent with the DEM's responsibility to provide recreational lands, save environmentally sensitive open space for



future generations, and preserve working agricultural land. This office also coordinates land acquisition with other state, federal and non-profit land acquisition programs. It works to acquire land consistent with state plans and state regulations and to develop funding sources for these acquisitions.

Rhode Island has a unique urban/rural balance. Its housing densities are among the highest in the country but still nearly 60% of its land remains forested. A forty mile urban/suburban corridor running along the Narragansett Bay contains nearly all of the development and infrastructure in the state. 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 agricultural lands.

The DEM preserves open space with an emphasis on the following critical elements: agriculture, forests, drinking water protection, recreation, natural heritage/biodiversity. Three programs accommodate Rhode Island's public land acquisitions:



*Cows at Treaty Rock Farm - John Berg*

## 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. It receives funding from State Open Space bonds, from municipalities and land trusts, from local partners such as The Nature Conservancy, and from various federal programs including the Forest Legacy program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant programs, 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 valuable open space 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 as green space 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.

## 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 and protects 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 Agricultural Land Preservation Commission 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, 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

### We would like to thank our FY 2008 conservation partners:

Block Island Conservancy  
Block Island Land Trust  
Town of Charlestown  
Conanicut Island Land Trust  
Town of Coventry  
Cumberland Land Trust  
Foster Land Trust  
Hopkinton Land Trust  
Town of Jamestown  
Johnston Historical Society  
Little Compton Agricultural  
Conservancy Trust  
City of Newport  
Private Donors  
The Prudence Conservancy  
Smithfield Land Trust  
South Kingstown Land Trust  
Town of Warwick  
Town of West Greenwich  
West Greenwich Land Trust  
Westerly Land Trust

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

being preserved as possible. The State Open Space Bond plays a major role in acquiring land but the department has been very successful in using the bond money to leverage funds from other sources. Most properties were acquired through the collaboration of several different groups. Major fiscal partners such as the Nature Conservancy, the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, and NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and local land trusts were active this year.

*Land Trusts and Non-profits*

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 open space and agricultural lands, not only in partnership with the state but also with large projects of their own.

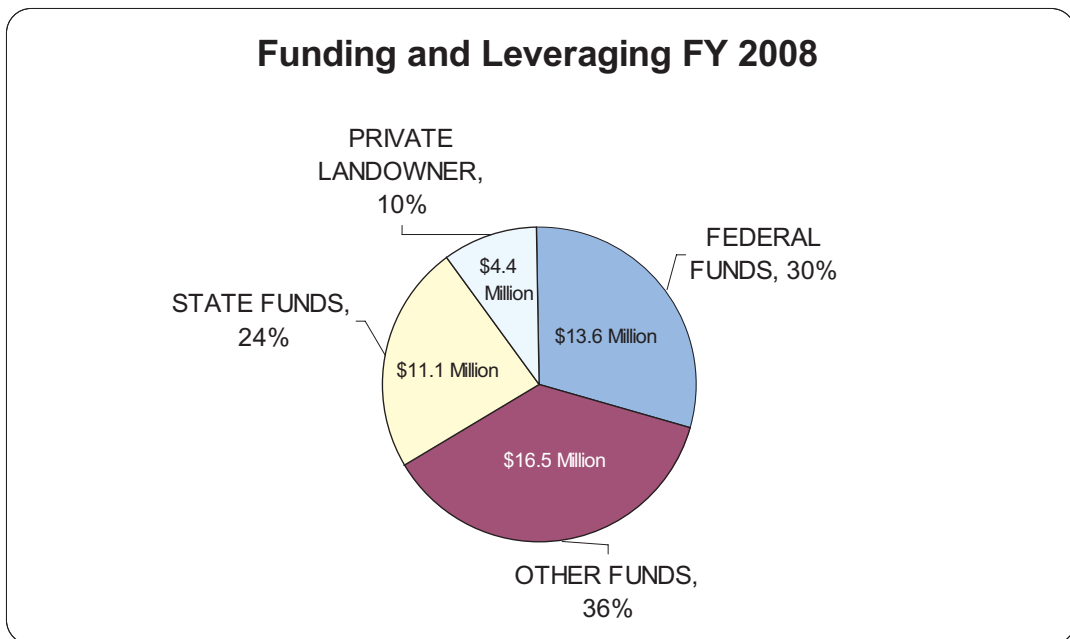
*In FY 2008 alone, the state was able to leverage \$34.5 million from the \$25 million open space bond.*

**FY 2008 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 19,163 acres, exceeding the goal by 1,313 acres. As of this year more than 20% of the state has been permanently preserved as open space, for recreation, or for agricultural use.

**Leveraging Funds**

In Fiscal Year 2008 the DEM preserved \$45.7 million in land value. Of this amount, approximately \$4.4 million was donated land value from private property owners. Of the remaining \$41.3 million only \$11.1 million was from State Bonds for state land acquisition, farmland preservation, or local matching grants. Federal assistance totaled \$13.6 million and the remaining \$16.5 million were contributions from local land trusts and non profits. All totaled, in FY 2008 alone the state was able to leverage \$34.5 million from the overall \$25 million open space bond.





**Land Protection Totals:**

Land Acquisition Program	773.2 acres
Local Grants Program	673.6 acres
Agricultural Land Preservation Commission	867.9 acres
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,315 acres</b>

The following projects were completed by the Land Conservation Program in Fiscal Year 2008 (July 1st 2007 - June 30th 2008) for a grand total of 2,315 acres.

PROPERTY	CITY/TOWN	PURPOSE	ACRES
Peckham	Little Compton	Preserves agricultural field, habitat	27.76
Harris Preserve	Glocester	Wildlife habitat, forest resources	43.4
Kirwin	Tiverton	Preserves rare coastal forest, water supply	56.8
Sainio & LaPolla	Foster	Preserves scenic trail, habitat	178
Bissell	Glocester	Inholding in Durfee Hill Management Area	4.52
Treaty Rock Farm	Little Compton	Preserves historic farm and open space	97.3
Webster	Charlestown	Forestry management/ watershed protection	43
Rocky Point	Warwick	Recreation/ shoreline access/ open space	40.9
Johnston Historical	Johnston	Inholding in Snake Den Park	.09
Neale Farm	Jamestown	Preserves working farm/ scenic vistas	37.12
Dutra (Wanton) Farm	Jamestown	Preserves working farm/ scenic vistas	80
Neylon Property	Coventry	Recreation/ habitat	81.36
Sakonnet Vineyards	Little Compton	Preserves working vineyard	94
Hunt	Westerly	Recreation/ open space	1.3
Anderson	Westerly	Recreation/ open space	6.31
Mitchell Farm	New Shoreham	Preserves farmland/ open space	2.8
Delvecchio Farm	North Kingstown	Preserves working farm	47.05
Gaudette	Exeter	Forest Management	23.21
Bates	West Greenwich	Habitat/ forest resources/ recreation	120
Cioe	West Greenwich	Habitat/ forest resources/ recreation	476
Tuckahoe Turf Farms	Richmond	Preserves working farm	486
Ferrick	South Kingstown	Habitat and open space preservation	22.1
Smith/Harmony Farm	Glocester	Preserves working farm	23.65
Blount	Portsmouth	Habitat/ shoreline access/ open space	178.04
Podgurski	Cumberland	Habitat/ drinking water protection	84.1
Ives Bluff	Warwick	Preserves habitat in densely populated area	4.84
Sunset Hill	Newport	Adds to existing town park and urban trail	5.28
Nevas Greenberg Trail	New Shoreham	Preserves trail system between two reserves	14
Lundgren	Hopkinton	Agricultural , scenic, habitat protection	49.78

# The Year in Review: Featured Projects

## Recreation Lands

*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 about existing management areas or that present opportunities for recreational use are actively pursued.*

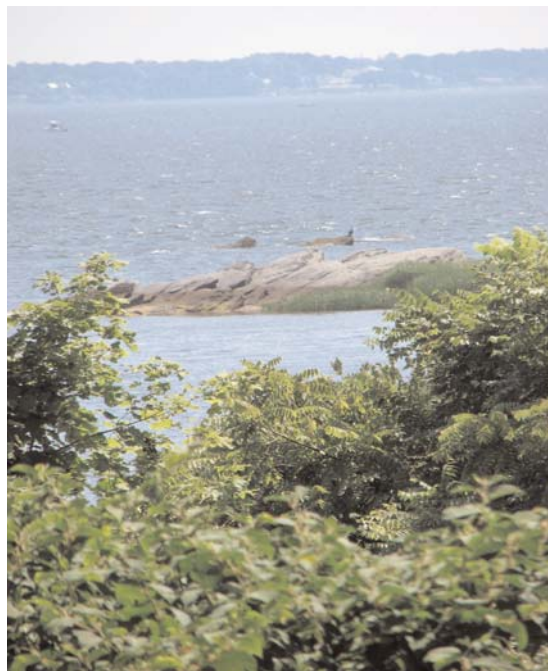
### Rocky Point - Warwick

41 acres

This historic property is fondly remembered by many Rhode Islanders for the waterfront amusement park that stood here from the 1840s until it closed in 1995. Since then, Rocky Point has remained abandoned and fenced off, preventing access to the waterfront for the residents of Warwick. The City of Warwick's fee acquisition and DEM's acquisition of a conservation and public access easement on a 41-acre portion of the original amusement park site will once again connect the surrounding neighborhood to Narragansett Bay. Including one mile of beach frontage, this property will be transformed into a waterfront park with walking trails, two small sandy beaches, marshland, and a picnic area available to the people of Rhode Island for passive recreation. The public will be able to enjoy bird-watching, fishing, walking, swimming and kayaking/canoeing. With sweep-

ing views of Narragansett Bay from its rocky promontories, this property is a valuable resource for the public. The City of Warwick will manage the property consistent with a Management Plan to be developed in partnership with the State.

In addition to providing excellent recreational opportunities, Rocky Point also preserves critical marine and coastal habitat in the form of coastal wetlands, salt marshes, and beach. It will not only provide nesting sites for many species of birds but will provide a further link to the established coastal greenways in the area such as Goddard State Park and City Park. Additionally, it will act as a natural buffer between the abutting residential development and Narragansett Bay filtering sediments and nutrients from stormwater runoff before it reaches the bay.



Rocky Point

This project represents a significant contribution to fulfilling the State Guide Plan, the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Narragansett Bay, the Warwick Comprehensive Plan, and the State of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program. It was purchased through a combination of support from the State Open Space Bond, which contributed \$1.4 million, the city of Warwick, which contributed \$800,000, and a federal matching grant for \$2.2 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

## Hunt and Anderson – Westerly

7.61 acres

The Westerly Land Trust acquired these two properties, which contain pristine frontage along the Pawcatuck River, through a DEM Local Open Space Matching Grant and with additional funding provided by the State Land Acquisition Program. The Pawcatuck and its chief tributaries comprise one of southern New England's most pristine river systems.



*Entrance to Hunt Property*

These properties contain riverine open water, wet meadow, shrub swamps and forested wetlands.

The Hunt parcel will provide a critical portage site for canoes and kayaks traversing the Pawcatuck River and will create pedestrian access from the historic Potter Hill village to the Flora Whitely Preserve, which contains a network of trails along the river. The Flora Whitely Preserve subsequently connects to the 600-acre Westerly Town Forest.

The Anderson parcel contains vernal pools and important wetland habitat along the Pawcatuck. It also provides pedestrian access to a sandy beach at the river's edge.

Both properties are part of the Pawcatuck River Corridor Initiative - a high priority conservation area for waterfowl, shorebirds and a host of

other wetland dependent species. The Hunt and Anderson properties preserve this important habitat, while at the same time providing for public access and enjoyment of the town's natural resources.

## Agricultural Lands

*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.*

**Jamestown Farms:** Dutra (80 acres), Neale (39 acres), Jamestown  
109 acres total

These two farms represent a significant effort to preserve the agricultural heritage of Jamestown, RI. With prime agricultural soils, farming has been a part of the Jamestown community since



*Neale Farm - Carol Lynn Trocki*

the early settlers arrived in the 1600s. The ten farms that remain on the island work together to keep farming viable. They have cooperatively purchased a shared till seeder, incorporated agricultural programs into school curriculums, and organized cooking demonstrations using local produce. Now a partnership of the State Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, the



US Department of Agriculture’s Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, The Nature Conservancy, The Town of Jamestown, and The Conanicut Island Land Trust has protected two of the town’s historic farms through the purchase of development rights. The addition of these two



*Dutra Farm - Carol Lynn Trocki*

farms will bring the total area of contiguous open space and agricultural land abutting Route 138 in Jamestown to more than 750 acres. With a significant portion of the farms located in the South Pond Watershed, these properties also protect the town’s drinking water aquifer. As part of this project, the Town of Jamestown will fund the creation of a series of public trails connecting the Neale and Dutra farms.

*Dutra*

The Dutra Farm is a working farm dating back to the 1700s that immediately abuts Route 138 as it crosses Jamestown. Thus situated on the main thoroughfare of the island, this farm provides an important part of the critical viewshed from the highway. Immediately to the north of the farm lies town conservation land and the farm itself provides habitat and foraging land for wildlife.

The Dutra’s pioneered the way to a resurgence of dairy farming in Rhode Island through their participation in Rhody Fresh, a cooperative of dairy farms in the state who market their milk locally. The Dutra family is now transitioning to

hay and vegetable production.

*Neale*

The owners of the Neale Farm, directly south of the Dutra farm, raise Belted Galloway cattle for organic grass-fed beef. With cattle, horses, a pig, chickens, and an orchard this full-scale operation provides open vistas of the Newport Bridge and Narragansett Bay for residents and visitors to the island. Furthermore, the farm provides excellent breeding ground for local and migratory bird species in the form of grassland habitat. Cattle Egrets and Glossy Ibis both Species of Conservation Concern in RI make their home on Neale Farm.

**Treaty Rock Farm – Little Compton**

116 acres

This historic 116 acre farm in Little Compton has been in the Richmond family since its original purchase from the Sakonnet Indians in 1673. Named for the large glacier boulder that was the site of a treaty between Awashonks, a Sakonnet sachem, and Benjamin Church, a colonist, dur-



*Treaty Rock Farm - John Berg*

ing King Philip’s War, the farm has been in agricultural production continuously since its original purchase.

Treaty Rock Farm contains approximately 1,600 feet of frontage on the Sakonnet River with sweeping views of the bay and is currently farmed for silage corn, beef cattle, sheep, hay, and cut flowers. The Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, the US Department of Agriculture's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, and The Nature Conservancy have partnered to purchase both the development rights and a conservation easement on the farm.

The purchase agreements will protect the farm from development in perpetuity, ensuring that the lands will always be in agricultural production. The agreements also include a conservation management plan to protect the farm's 20 acres of sensitive natural resources. Key resources include a coastal bluff and shrublands which provide both vital habitat for resident and migrating birds and act as an erosion and runoff buffer. Preserving the bluff will further help to protect the rocky intertidal zone habitat between the farm and the water. A coastal woodland and freshwater wetlands are included in the protected areas and will ensure the adequate conservation of bird habitat.

## 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.*

**Neylon** – Coventry  
81.4 acres

The Coventry Land Trust acquired this 81 acre property with the assistance of a DEM Local Open Space Matching Grant. With significant frontage on the Trestle Trail (2,500 feet) and a

connection to the Washington Secondary Bike Path, this property provides an excellent link both to other protected land and to urban areas. With an additional 2,000 feet of frontage on the pristine Stump Pond, this property presents a unique recreational opportunity. A series of trails on the property will loop from Trestle Trail, enhancing public enjoyment of the protected natural resources.



*Stump Pond on the Neylon property*

In addition to providing excellent recreational opportunities, the Neylon property also contains significant water resource protection. The Quidnick Brook, a cold water stream with its surrounding wetland and upland habitat intact, flows through the Neylon property and supports habitat for native brook trout. As a tributary to the Flat River Reservoir and the Pawtuxet River, the protection of this stream is important for the quality of these significant water bodies.

The Neylon property acquisition compliments the previously protected 60-acre Ruzzo property on the east end of Stump pond and abuts the 25-acre James Beaton Memorial Wildlife Refuge owned by the Audubon Society of RI.



**Sainio and LaPolla - Foster**  
193 acres

The Foster Land Trust received a DEM Local Open Space Matching Grant for the acquisition of these two parcels. Together they contain approximately 4,000 feet of frontage along the North-South Trail, a walking trail that extends 75

baths created by the Norwegian immigrants who settled in Foster.

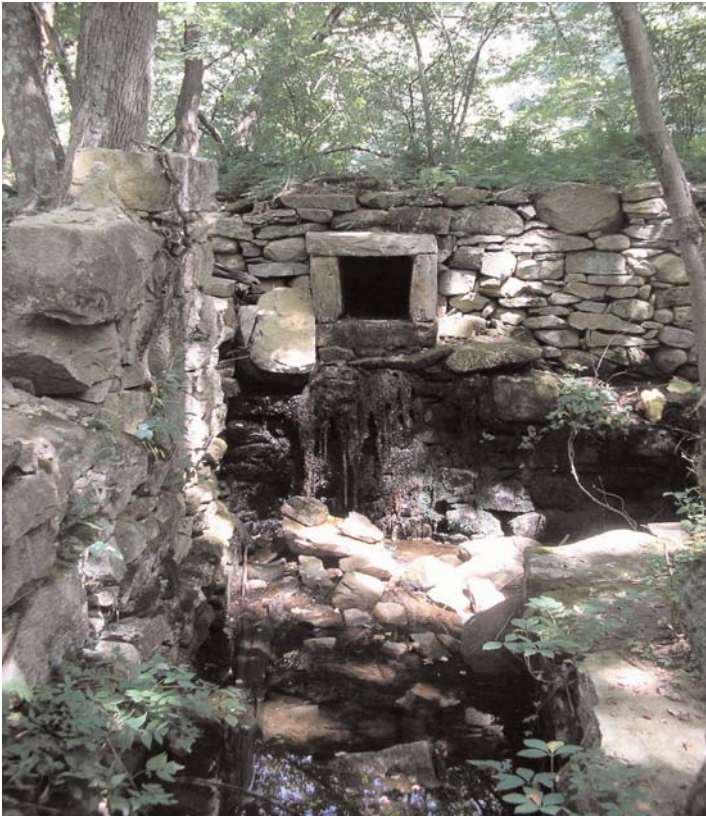
In addition, these parcels contain forested wetlands, scrub swamp and several hundred feet of the Quanduck Brook. These water resources will benefit from the continued protection of the surrounding forest.

## 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 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.*

**Blount – Portsmouth**  
178 acres

All of Prudence Island has been designated as a Critical Habitat for biodiversity and wildlife by the RI Natural Heritage Program. The protection of



*Old Mill, Sainio Property*

miles through the entire length of the state. Existing loop trails from the North-South Trail provide for public recreational opportunities. Sainio and LaPolla abut the recently protected Schneider property – a 158-acre parcel with an additional 2,000 feet of frontage on the North-South Trail – and are in close proximity to protected land in Killingly, Connecticut.

This project also helps to preserve the historic cultural resources of the Town of Foster. The Sainio property contains an historic granite mill structure and mill pond that was used to fabricate chestnut shingles for the saunas and steam



*Blount Property - Prudence Conservancy*



the 178-acre Blount property, via a DEM Local Open Space Grant awarded to the Prudence Conservancy, will protect valuable habitat and feeding grounds for the many species that depend on the island.

This impressive property on Prudence Island abuts the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and provides public access to the series of trails contained on the reserve. It consists mostly of estuarine intertidal communities with salt marshes, cobble beach, and coastal shrubland. Other features include a tidal pool, a freshwater pond, a vernal pool, and a red maple swamp. The Blount property's features provide an important feeding ground for the many species studied by the research reserve and is home to many rare species of birds and plants. The marshes on the Blount property also serve to replenish oysters for the neighboring oyster farm, managed by Roger Williams University. Furthermore, this property provides public access to a sandy beach popular with Prudence residents.

A total of more than 2,600 acres have now been preserved on Prudence Island through a partnership between DEM, the Prudence Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and The Audubon Society.

**Webster** – Charlestown  
43 acres

This 43-acre property was preserved with a Conservation Easement, funded by the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program and the State's Open Space Bond. Stands of varied pine, oak, and hemlock on the property will be selectively managed for timber products.

Abutting the 165-acre Browning property, also managed by a forest plan, and an additional 230 acres protected by the South Kingstown Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy, the addition of the Webster parcel will solidify a 430-acre forest tract south of Worden's Pond. Within the

Worden's watershed are found the largest number of state rare and endangered species, as well as habitats containing the highest level of biodiversity. Managing this property for its forest



*Webster property*

resources, while prioritizing its biodiversity, will protect the rare species that depend on its habitat. Along with its considerable forest resources, the property contains open fields, vernal pools, and a kettle bog hole containing a state rare orchid. Since Charlestown faces extreme development pressures on its shorefront areas, upland parcels have been less of a priority for local land conservation efforts. The Webster property will significantly add to the conserved open space in Charlestown's inland areas.

**Podurski – Cumberland**  
84 acres

The Cumberland Land Trust was awarded an Local Open Space Grant from the DEM in 2006 for the acquisition of this 84-acre parcel. Located



*Podurski property*

in a Critical Habitat area, as delineated by the RI Natural Heritage Program, the property contains numerous rare species of plants within its habitat of mixed deciduous forest made up of Oak, Hickory, Ash, Birch, and Red Maples. The Podurski property is also home to two unnamed streams with associated wetlands that flow to the East Sneece Brook and the Diamond Hill Reservoir. This reservoir is used as public drinking supply for the city of Pawtucket and the forested lands on the Podurski property serve to filter and protect this supply and are integral to the health of ecosystem that keeps the reservoir clean.

In addition, the Podurski property is part of the envisioned extension of the Warner Trail from Diamond State Park to the Blackstone River Bike Trail. The property represents a critical connection that will enable this project to move forward.

Furthermore, this parcel abuts the 63-acre James J. Bland Preserve and the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp to the west and to the east 95 acres owned by the Cumberland Beagle Gun Club and the 15 acre Bessette property. The addition of the Podurski property results in more than 250 acres of contiguous open space.



# 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.

The Local Open Space Grant program has recently announced a new grant round and will be awarding funds to municipalities and local land trusts for the preservation of open space parcels in 2008.

Furthermore, the state has many active Local Open Space Grants, State Conservation projects and Agricultural Land projects. These projects include approximately 3,700 acres that are anticipated to be preserved in FY 2009.



*North/South Trail running through the Sainio/LaPolla property*

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 our remaining land resources.

*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>*