



RI Saltwater Anglers Association's annual fishing camp at Rocky Point State Park

DEM's Bureau of Natural Resources and outdoor recreation in Rhode Island

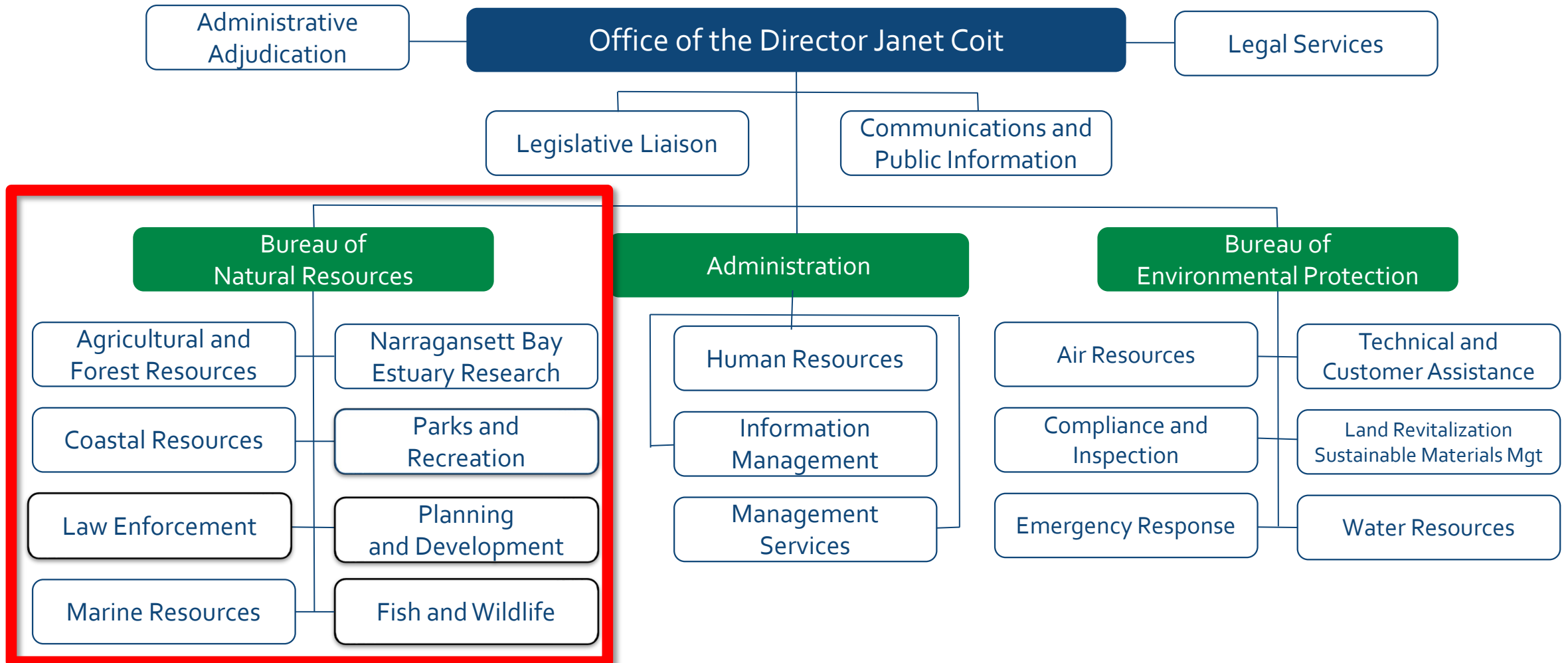
connecting & investing in people, places & play to move Rhode Island forward



Presentation to the
Legislative Oversight Committee,
Subcommittee on Tourism
April 2021

The Bureau of Natural Resources

One of two main bureaus with the Department of Environmental Management, organized into eight divisions



COVID-19 response and lessons

Safe outdoor recreation

- 24% increase in beach attendance in 2020
- Expanded online services for beach parking pass sales and real-time status of parking lots
- Continued wildlife education through virtual programs and online trainings for educators
- Supported the commercial fishing industry through direct sales and increased transparency on weekly landings
- Collected public input as part of study to assess the Divisions of Fish & Wildlife and Forest Environment's strategic priorities
- Oversaw rules and policies for sports



WE WANT YOUR INPUT
TAKE OUR SURVEY



Our role

- Manage State Park System
- Steward fish, wildlife, and habitat resources
- Hold and oversee events
- Build, manage assets
- Deliver programming
- Administer grants
- Develop and enforce regulations



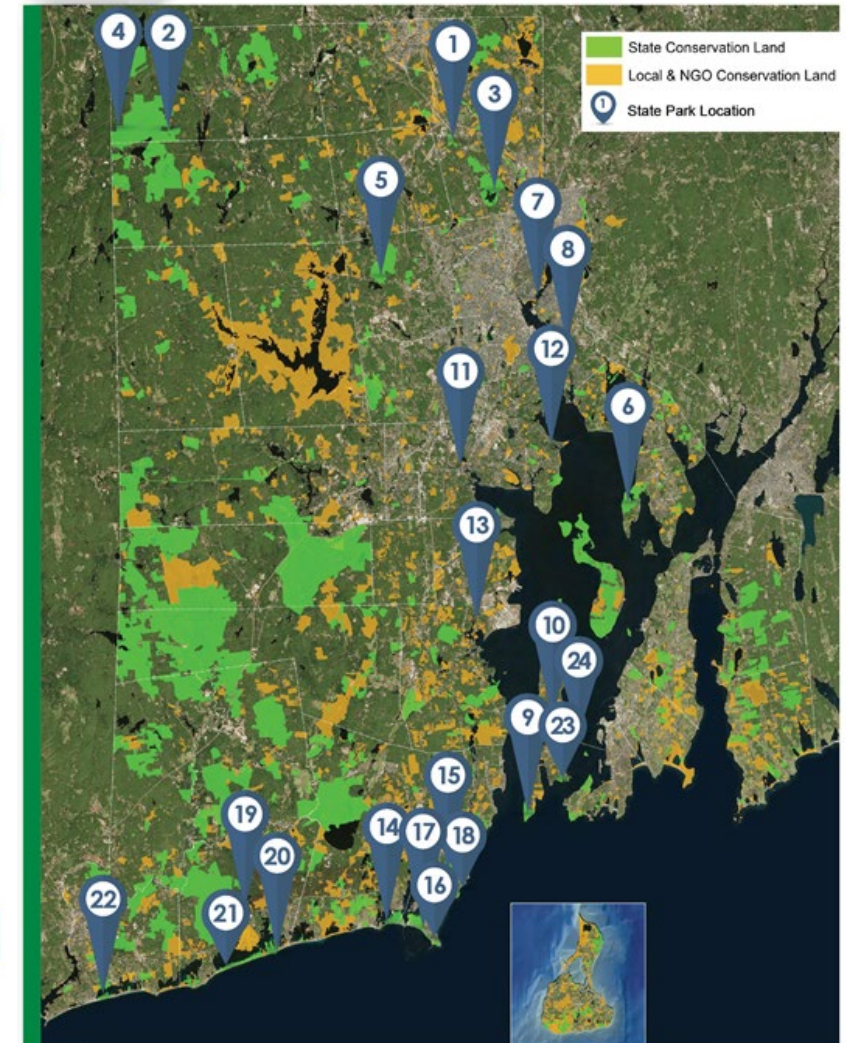
Our budget & staffing

Fiscal Year 2021 – Bureau of Natural Resources

- \$65.5 M
 - \$12.6M capital
 - \$52.9M operations and maintenance
- 192 FTEs in Bureau
- 400+ seasonal employees

49

FTE's for the
Division of Parks
and Recreation

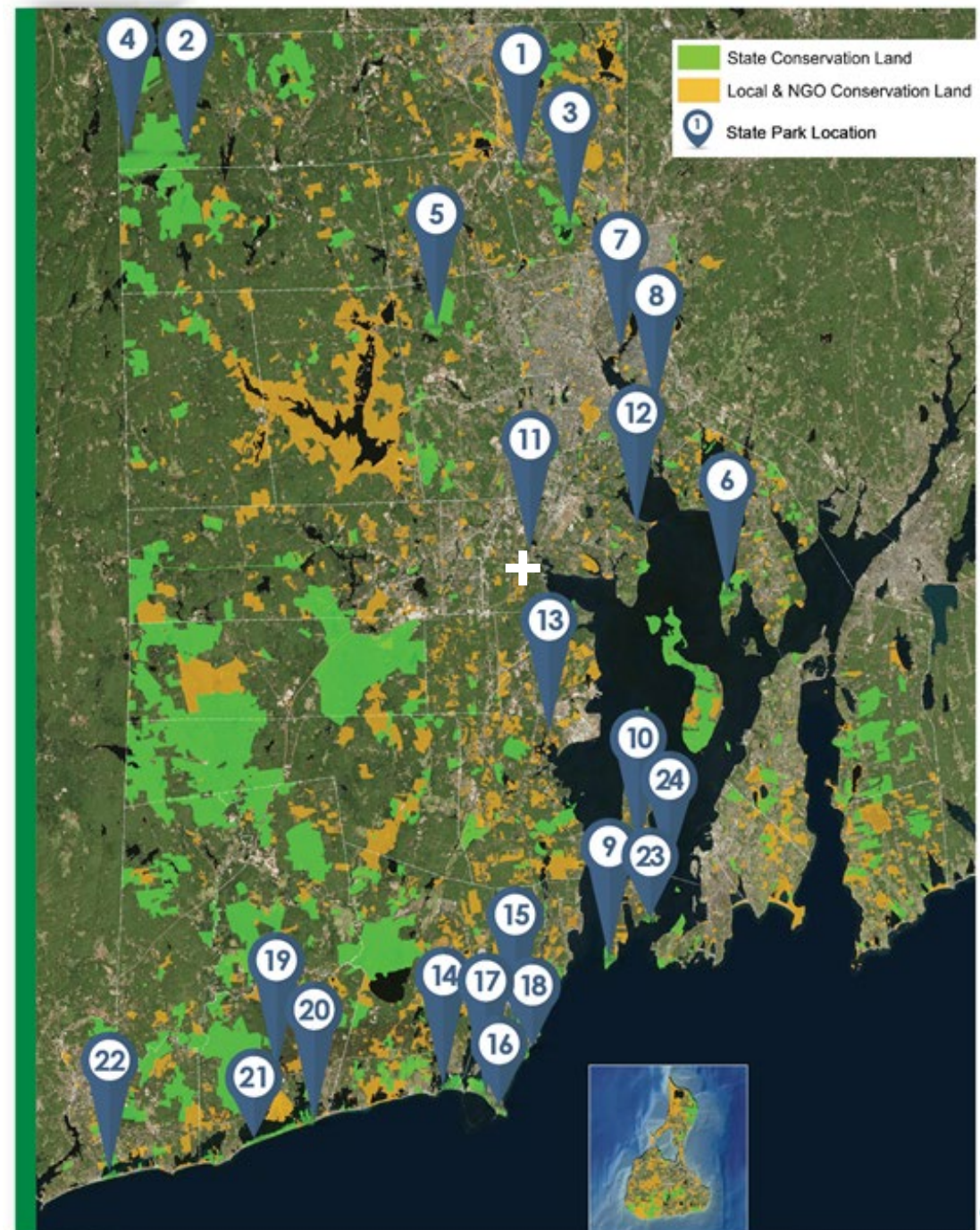


Our assets

Significant State Assets

- >9 million visitors annually (major parks only)
- 8,500+ acres of park land, 69 areas
- 88,000+ acres of conservation land
- 55,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat 24 areas
- 200+ boat ramps, fishing areas

147,000 acres permanently protected



Local recreation

- Matching grants to create new and improve existing community parks and recreation facilities
- Funded through State green bonds
- Popular! Previous grant rounds received requests totaling twice the available funds
- Since 1988, DEM has awarded **519 grants** totaling **\$73M** in investments in all 39 of RI's cities and towns.



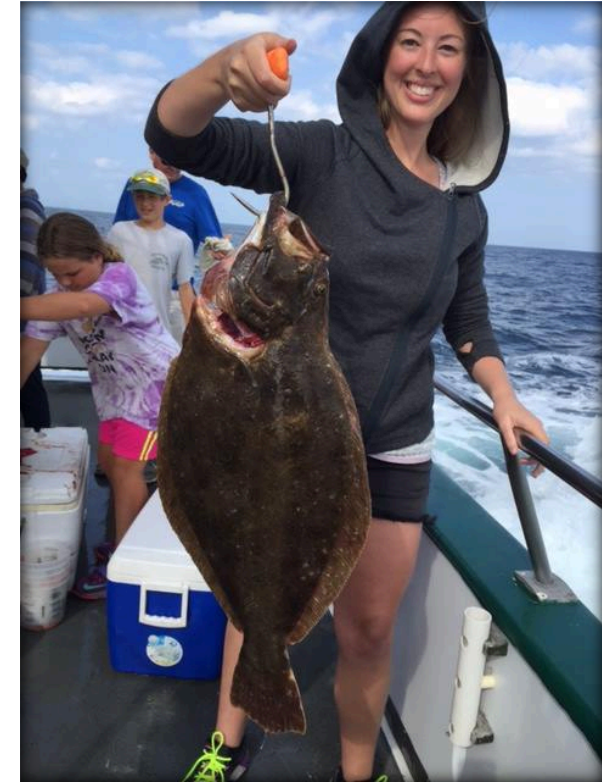
Our strengths

Diversity & Proximity of Facilities

Being the fun-sized state means you can do it all in a day – from bike to hike to kayak to fish in salty or freshwater.

Vast Network

The majority of Rhode Islanders live within minutes of a recreational facility or opportunity.



85%

of residents
live within

¼ mile (city) or

5 miles (non-urban)

of an outdoor public recreation facility

Our impact

Fisheries

Rhode Island's seafood and marine fishing industry supports **4,300 jobs** and provides nearly **\$420M in economic impact**.



State Parks

Rhode Island's parks, beaches, and campgrounds attract over **9 million visits a year**, infusing more than **\$310M** into the economy. They also add ~\$40M in state and local taxes and support close to 4,000 jobs a year.



Our strengths

Strong Partnerships

We have a robust network of dedicated partners: government, business, non-profits & community.

Continued Investment

We've invested available resources wisely, maintaining & improving infrastructure that attracts tourism & economic activity.



Fort Adams State Park has hosted high-profile events like the Volvo Ocean Race, Newport Folk and Jazz Fests



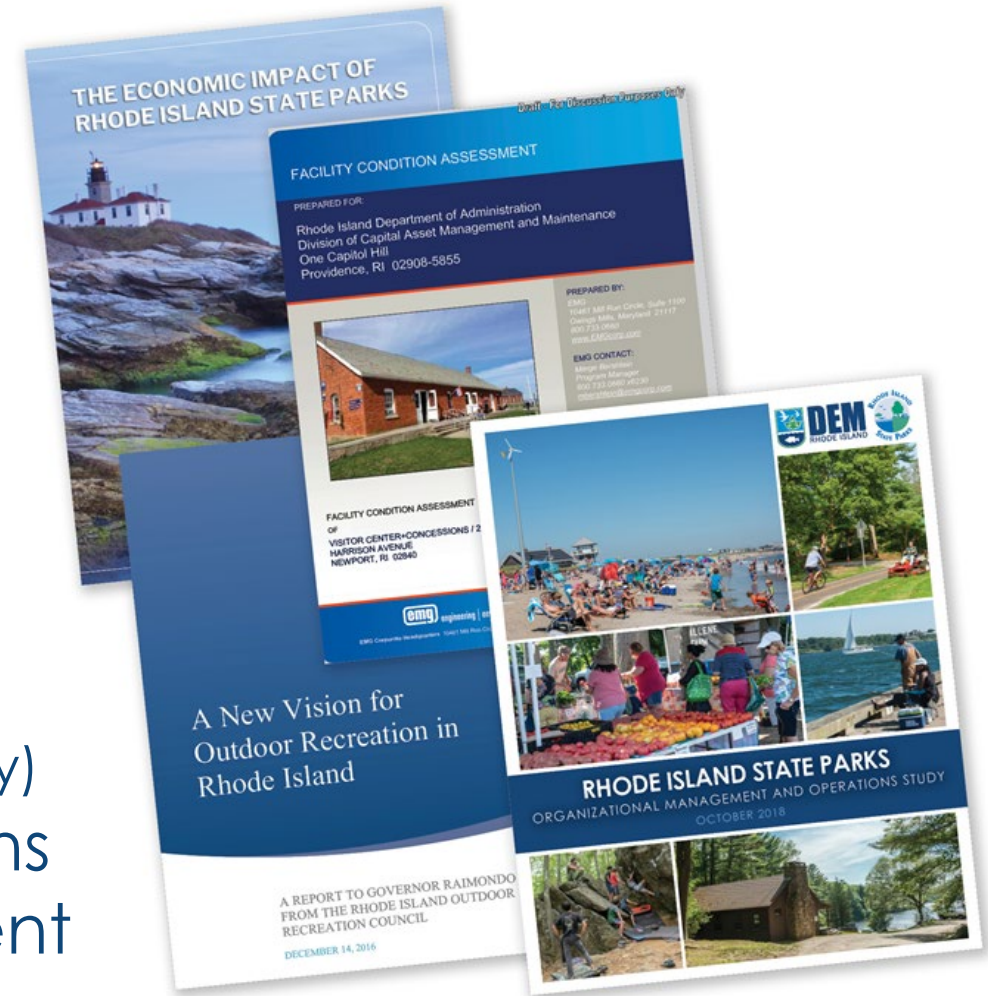
\$47M

contributed to economy

Transforming state parks

Informing strategic actions

- Outdoor Recreation Council recommended study
- Parks Initiative began with a LEAN review in 2015. DEM then obtained data and information in three areas.
 - Evaluate the economic impact of our state parks (URI 2016)
 - Assess major capital needs (DCAMM)
 - Assess operational and staffing needs (2018 study)
- Similar project underway for DEM Divisions of Fish and Wildlife and Forest Environment



Key challenges

Funding & Staffing

Limited resources available to maintain state parks, beaches, management areas, campgrounds, and other facilities



60% ↓

decline in F&W, Parks, Forestry and Enforcement staffing since 1990

Expanded Responsibilities

The number of acres and facilities under DEM management has increased



25% ↑

increase in lands managed over the last 30 years

Key challenges

More Visitors

Visitation has increase significantly resulting in increased demand on operations and visitor services and, in some areas, user conflicts.

Aging Infrastructure

Heavy use and insufficient funding for repairs, combined with aging facilities that are consistently subject to harsh environmental conditions, have led to maintenance backlogs and the inability to modernize facilities and operations.



37.2%  **INCREASE**
IN BEACH VISITATION
ALONE FROM 2010 TO 2017. 9.4 MILLION
VISITORS ANNUALLY TO THE PARK SYSTEM



 **\$50 MILLION**
INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS
IDENTIFIED DUE TO AGING FACILITIES AND
DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Progress made

Invest in staffing and operations

- Gradual increase of staffing, including 4 new FTEs in FY22 budget, and hiring additional seasonal positions
- Improved trash services at Misquamicut

Increase the financial sustainability and economic potential of state parks

- Expanded online services to include beach parking passes, Goddard golf , and lifeguard certification
- Adjusted camping, picnic fees to invest back into Division staffing/operations

Protect state park assets and infrastructure

- Bond funding, once-in-a-lifetime investment, to sustain and improve facilities



Where we are today

Stewardship

Our recreational network must be adequately funded, staffed & maintained.

Lifestyle

Recreation must be more meaningfully integrated into our lifestyles.

Promotion

Marketing must be improved & aligned with broader tourism efforts.

Access

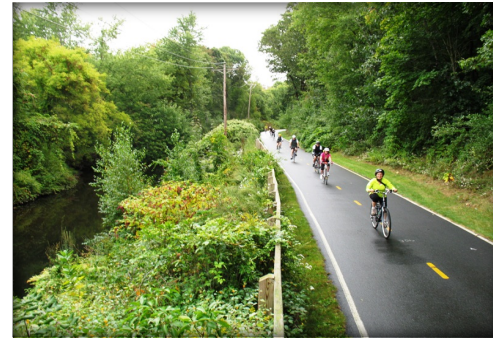
Connectivity between people, places & opportunity must be enhanced.



Where we're headed

All Rhode Islanders regularly use the state's recreational facilities and can easily access information about the array of opportunities available.

Now is the time to transform this network into a modern and dynamic system with the resources, structure, and tools needed to protect its assets to better serve the Rhode Islanders and tourists who visit them.



How we get there

Stewardship

- Continue gap analysis of facilities, staffing to prioritize investment
 - Parks complete
 - Fish & Wildlife & Forest Environment underway
- Identify sustainable funding streams
- Explore opportunities to grow existing and add new partnerships to support assets
- Continue work on outreach and marketing to raise awareness of our assets and how they connect with larger economy



How we get there

Investment

Improving recreational and natural resource infrastructure and increasing greenspaces are key to building healthy communities.

These investments together will create **jobs** and help our state remain a wonderful place to live, visit, and raise a family.



Rhode Island's **vibrant green economy** accounts for more than **15,000 jobs** and adds **\$2.5 billion** to the economy each year.
- 2016 URI study

THANK YOU!

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