



50 Sims Avenue  
Space 209  
Providence, RI 02909

January 20, 2026

Chair David Bennett  
House Environment & Natural Resources  
RI State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Support for House Bill 7071 – Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act**

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island Land Trust Council (the Council), I am writing to express support for House Bill 7071, the Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act. This legislation would task the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) with maintaining a list of terrestrial invasive plant species and adopting rules to prohibit the sale and distribution of invasive plants.

Rhode Island's land trusts conserve more than 61,000 acres of land. These forests, meadows, farms, and wetlands provide habitat for wildlife and support other important conservation values, including clean air, clean water, natural climate solutions, flood prevention, and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

When land trusts conserve these properties, they commit to stewarding them in perpetuity. Today, the single most challenging stewardship issue for Rhode Island's land trust community is managing invasive plants. In fact, in 2025 the Council conducted a statewide census of Rhode Island land trusts, and *invasive plant management emerged as the top stewardship challenge among both staffed land trusts and volunteer-run municipal land trusts in Rhode Island*.

Invasive plants outcompete native plants that are part of Rhode Island's natural ecosystems. They degrade habitat, threaten biodiversity, and undermine the ecological health and resilience of conserved lands. They also create a costly, time-consuming burden for land trusts, private landowners, and municipalities. Once established, invasive plants are widespread and incredibly difficult to control, requiring ongoing labor and long-term financial investment. Land trusts spend thousands of dollars each year managing invasive plants across their properties.

In 2015, almost half (48%) of all invasive species identified in Rhode Island's Wildlife Action Plan were associated with forest edge habitat, evidence that the problem of invasive plants can be exacerbated by habitat fragmentation, and were listed as a top threat to Rhode Island's key habitats. Invasive plants like Japanese knotweed, multiflora rose, barberry, bittersweet, and phragmites are prevalent and easily identifiable across the landscape.

Rhode Island is the only state in New England and one of few states in the country that does not have laws that prohibit the sale and distribution of invasive species. House Bill 7071 is an important step toward addressing this problem at its source. Preventing the sale and distribution of invasive plants will support more effective long-term stewardship, and protect the significant public benefits that conserved lands provide across Rhode Island.

We urge the committee to advance this important legislation to protect Rhode Island's ecosystems and biodiversity. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Sayles", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kate Sayles, Director