



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

January 22, 2025

To Chairman Bennett and members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

Re: BHA Support for RI - 2026 – H7071 – Rhode Island Invasive Plant Management Act

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. Our members believe that North America's fish and wildlife, and the habitats that they depend upon, should be managed following the best available science and we work to enact policies that empower the biologists and experts who are most familiar with our public lands, waters and wildlife.

With these things in mind, **the New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) urges the Committee to support H7071**, which seeks to prohibit the importation, sale, and introduction of invasive plants into Rhode Island in accordance with a regulatory framework to be established by the director of RI's Department of Environmental Management.

In many cases non-native vegetation exhibits qualities that make it highly desirable for residential landscaping, such as rapid growth and propagation rates, tolerance of a wide range of environmental conditions, resistance to wildlife browsing, and the ability to out-compete native weeds. These very qualities make non-native vegetation a serious threat to Rhode Island's ecosystem when it spreads beyond its desired location and subsequently invades the natural landscape. Desirable native vegetation, and subsequently the wildlife that depend upon it, are displaced when invasive vegetation is allowed to take over. In many cases public and private land managers expend considerable resources remediating and restoring invaded landscapes where possible. In other cases, failing to quickly address the spread of invasive vegetation before it establishes on the landscape results in once-productive landscapes being irreversibly degraded, sometimes to the point that they no longer support native vegetation and/or wildlife at all.

Given that hunting and fishing, both in present-day Rhode Island and in the future, requires healthy wild places capable of supporting abundant fish and game populations, BHA is concerned with the negative effect that the introduction of invasive vegetation has. While we acknowledge that passage of H7071 *will not* address the significant challenges currently facing land managers that are grappling with the spread of existing invasive vegetation on public and private property within Rhode Island, it *would* establish a process to reduce new introductions. Many of the non-native species that pose an invasive threat to Rhode Island's ecosystem have been known for years yet they continue to be imported, sold and planted in the absence of an enforceable prohibition, so we agree that the regulatory structure and penalties proposed in H7071 are appropriate and necessary.

To summarize BHA's position – the importation, distribution and utilization of non-native vegetation poses a significant threat to Rhode Island's native ecosystem, and as a result **the New England Chapter of BHA respectfully urges the Committee, and ultimately the entire RI General Assembly, to support H7071.**

Thank you for your consideration,

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