

March 25, 2026

Representative David A. Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports H 7991 on Expedited Permitting for Nature-Based Solutions

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. We have chapters in all fifty U.S. states and in over 80 countries around the globe. Here in Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy protects more than 15,000 acres of land and has partnered on the permanent conservation of more than 35,000 acres of land. We do much of our work to protect and restore our natural environment in partnership – including with State agencies such as the Department of Environmental Management and CRMC.

We recognize that we cannot be in service of our mission to protect land and water without both addressing the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. TNC has prioritized nature-based coastal and inland restoration of habitat and natural resources – including projects like marsh restoration, living shorelines, dam removal, and more. These types of projects not only provide critical habitat for wildlife but create conditions that protect ecosystems and communities from the impacts of climate change. The state is already seeing rising sea levels, increased storm intensity and frequency, and significant shoreline erosion. These projects provide creative solutions to work *with* nature to protect places we care about.

However, permitting poses a major barrier to making meaningful progress on nature-based solutions. The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island estimates that **permitting adds approximately 40% to construction costs, and on average adds 1 year to project timelines.**

TNC recognizes the need for environmental review of construction projects and supports robust review for projects that would have negative ecological impact. House Bill 7991 makes an important distinction that expedites projects that provide ecological benefit to natural areas, which would substantially improve both cost and timeline barriers.

We simply cannot achieve the scale at the pace required to keep up with the impacts of climate change in Rhode Island under current regulatory processes. An expedited permitting process for nature-based solutions will enable more dollars to flow to real beneficial projects, rather than tying up limited funds in administrative costs.

The Nature
Conservancy



Rhode Island

159 Waterman Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02906

Tel (401) 331-7110

nature.org

Fax (401) 273-4902

We are in full support of this bill, and would respectfully request that if passed, there be robust stakeholder engagement to ensure updated permitting processes are in line with what is needed to address the issues Rhode Island faces. The Nature Conservancy appreciates the opportunity to provide this testimony, and we are available to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela Tuoni".

Angela Tuoni

Director of Climate & Government Relations

The Nature Conservancy - Rhode Island Chapter

angela.tuoni@tnc.org