

The House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

March 29, 2026

Subject: Support for the Natural Forest Protection Act, H-7914

Dear Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

As a long time Rhode Island resident and member of my local land trust, I am writing to strongly urge you to support the Natural Forest Protection Act H-7914. This beneficial Act would create state law which would provide guidance to better protect and preserve Rhode Island's public forests. The fact that Rhode Island is the only New England state without protection for natural old growth forested areas, which harbor greater biodiversity, is of significant and timely environmental concern.

Rhode Island's very limited remaining mature forests, including old growth areas, offer benefits that are not present in younger forested regions. These established older forests with their heavier canopies create a cooler moist habitat which is more resistant to wildfires. The heavier shaded tree canopy also provides conditions that make it difficult for invasive plants to become established, as compared to disturbed open areas that are created following a clearcutting event. The older forests support a very rich biodiversity in terms of wildlife, birds, insects, amphibians and have lush organic soils that serve to store large amounts of nutrients and carbon. Without improved management, the state stands to lose these last remaining environmentally key areas.

The Natural Forest Protection Act would enable Rhode Island to more carefully manage our public lands by enacting some oversight on forest logging operations. Without this legislation, we stand to lose what remains of these environmentally valuable older forested areas due to indiscriminate logging practices. This much needed legislation would reinstate the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program to help identify and monitor these critical areas before they are lost along with all the notable environmental qualities they possess.

Please pass the Natural Forest Protection Act H-7914 to enhance the management of these valuable and vital older state forest lands.

Thank you for your serious consideration of the issue.

Sincerely,

Carol A. Ayala
110 Log Road
North Smithfield, RI 02830
carol.ayala44@gmail.com
401-766-1604