

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** Eva Treat <evalyntreat@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2026 11:48 AM  
**To:** House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
**Subject:** In support of Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914

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Dear Committee members,

I write in support of the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, which would create the first state law to protect public forests and biodiversity in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island is currently the only state in New England with no protected Wildlands on public land which are forests protected in their natural state from logging.

H 7914 would protect Old Growth Forests and rare habitats on public state land through the creation of the Natural Area Preserves listed in the bill.

Old Growth Forests and old mature forests are exceptionally rare in Rhode Island with only 1% of the state's forests being over 100 years old. Yet, these Old Growth Forests have a higher degree of native biodiversity, very little to any invasives, are more resistant to wildfires, improve water and soil quality, have less ticks, and store more carbon than any other forest.

This bill would also protect our public state forests from deforestation and natural habitat destruction through the provisions prohibiting clearcutting and other destructive logging practices on state-owned land, as well as requiring environmental review before public state logging operations.

Lastly, the bill would bring back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program after 19 years to identify, monitor, and protect native biodiversity including rare and endangered species in Rhode Island.

This would allow for native biodiversity to become a priority for the state.

Please pass the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, so Rhode Islanders can always be able to enjoy nature in an old undisturbed native forest.

This bill is deeply personal to me. I'm on the tail end of completing an associates of biology at CCRI, and plan to transfer to URI to complete a degree in environmental sciences afterwards. I decided to pursue this at 23 while working full time because I'm passionate about Rhode Island and all of its residents, human or otherwise. At the precipice of what's been said to be the sixth mass extinction, it's more imperative than ever to pass this legislation to protect our states residents, land, rare ecosystems and organisms.

Eva Treat

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