

Lou Mansolillo

From: Joan Maloof <joan@oldgrowthforest.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2026 11:08 AM
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: H 7914 Old-Growth Forest Network is in favor
Attachments: img-0d3ccf75-1334-420b-8e01-17331d185827

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March 31, 2026

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: In support of H7914, the Natural Forest Protection Act

Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

Please know that the thousands of supporters of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) strongly **support the passage of H7914**, the Natural Forest Protection Act. 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.

This legislation would make older forests and rare forest ecosystems a priority in Rhode Island, as less than 1% of the state's forests exceed 100 years old.

The Old-Growth Forest Network is the first national organization working specifically to preserve and create old-growth forests for the enjoyment of present and future generations. In counties capable of supporting forest growth we identify at least one forest that will be forever protected from logging and open to the public. Then we help families connect with these forests. The result will be a national network of treasured forests where all generations can experience native biodiversity and the beauty of nature. We are called to do this work because so few old forests remain.

Yet old forests are so important because:

- **The older a forest is, the better it can improve air and water quality.**

- The older a forest is, the more different species will be found there, from birds to snails to ferns. There is much biodiversity than can *only* live in old-growth forests.
- The older a forest is, the more attractive it is for ecotourism.
- The older a forest is, the more carbon it stores and the more critical its protection in the age of the climate crisis.

We need to save examples of older forests to understand and appreciate and safeguard our native ecosystem. Public lands need to lead the example for protecting these rare ecosystems for the benefit of all citizens of Rhode Island.

The 2026 Natural Forest Protection Act would accomplish the critically important goals necessary to preserve and restore the dwindling natural forest areas throughout Rhode Island. **We ask the Committee to vote in favor of this important legislation** which if passed could put Rhode Island ahead of the nation in the preservation of old-growth forests.

Thank you for making the right choice for our forests and for the future generations.

For the forests,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Maloof". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joan Maloof, PhD

Founder of the Old-Growth Forest Network

Professor Emeritus, Salisbury University