

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

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

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

[Wildlands-in-New-England-Rhode-Island-Summary.pdf](#)

While exploring Rhode Island's public state forests for Old Growth Forests, I have been alarmed by the deforestation happening on our public lands from clearcutting and other destructive logging practices that remove most of the trees from a forest which destroys the tree canopy.

This destructive logging harms native biodiversity, causes invasives to spread, increases the risk of wildfire, disturbs the soil and pollutes waterways, causes erosion, creates tick habitat, and contributes to Climate Change from the carbon lost when the trees in a forest are logged.

Right now, a rare 100-year-old native forest in the Great Swamp Management Area is being logged through clearcutting!

The Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914 would preserve our state's forests by:

- **Creating 46 natural area preserves** in Rhode Island to protect rare state-owned forests including Old Growth Forests, intact Core Forests, and Natural Heritage Areas where rare and endangered species live.
- **Prohibit clearcut logging** on all state-owned land including logging practices that involve removing a majority of the trees from a forest. Selective logging management where some trees can be cut, but not too many in order to retain the tree canopy, would still be permitted in forests that are not Natural Area Preserves.
- **Require environmental review** by Natural Heritage Program scientists before public state logging operations. Currently foresters 'loggers,' conduct the 'environmental' review.
- **Bring back the Rhode Island Natural Heritage Program** after 19 years to once again protect rare and endangered species. Currently, no state agency is doing this important work since supporting gaming species is a higher priority to the state DEM than protecting native biodiversity because of the money DEM gets from hunting licenses.

Here are some examples of deforestation taking place on public state-owned land.

DEM Logging Clearcut in the state-owned Arcadia Management Area from 2024



Aerial photo of 195-acre DEM Logging Clearcut in the state-owned Arcadia Management Area from 2020



Logging bulldozer (skidder) used in 2025 state logging operation in the Arcadia Management Area. These bulldozers disturb the soil and crush native plants and young trees.



Logging Clearcut in the state-owned Hillsdale Preserve from 2018 that never grew back as a forest. It is a field now.



Without this legislation, there is nothing protecting this 150+ year old tree in an Old Growth Forest in the Great Swamp Management Area from being logged.



Please pass the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, so Rhode Islanders can always have these incredible old natural forests and be able to enjoy their ecological benefits.

Thank you,

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