

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** Pam Thompson <pam@tivertonlandtrust.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2026 11:30 AM  
**To:** House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
**Subject:** 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 New England state with no protected Wildlands on public land. Wildlands are forests protected from logging and left in their natural state.

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. The forests belong to all of us and should be managed by sound ecological guidelines.

Old Growth Forests and 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, fewer invasive plants present, are more resistant to wildfires, improve water and soil quality, have fewer 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.** Implementing smarter, more environmentally sound practices in areas where logging is allowed within public state forests would lessen environmental damage, while Wildlands within these forests would remain untouched.

The proposed bill will re-establish 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 act alone is critical to the welfare of the state and its inhabitants. The RI Natural Heritage Program is the agency needed to monitor and inform us of the rate of degradation to our natural habitats. **Measurement allows us to act according to needs and prioritize actions and funding to prevent ecological disasters.**

Prioritize native biodiversity and pass the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914 so Rhode Islanders can forever enjoy nature in old undisturbed native forests.

Pamela Thompson

Tiverton

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Pamela Thompson

Board President



**Tiverton Land Trust**

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