

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** Susan Loomis <maggiemae50@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2026 9:26 AM  
**To:** House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
**Subject:** H7914 -Natural Forest Protection Act

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Dear Members:

My husband and I live on Division Road in East Greenwich. We bought our home in 2018. When we moved in we saw the occasional deer in our yard and many turkeys. Since then, two very large parcels of undisturbed forest land have been clearcut to allow the building of condos and apartment buildings. These properties are within one mile of our home. Since these properties were stripped of all vegetation, the wildlife that was living there was either killed or had to find new homes.

We now have skunks, possums, raccoons and foxes on our patio nightly looking for food. We also have seen coyotes on our security cameras and last year (for the first time) a bear tried to tear apart our beehives. The turkeys have disappeared, but the number of deer has increased dramatically.

The properties I am describing above are privately owned, but stripping land of trees and shrubs and plants and soil has the same effect on wildlife and the environmental damage is the same no matter who owns it.

As you know, 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.

Susan and Michael Loomis  
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