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TO Interested Parties

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FM3 Research

RE: Rhode Island Voter Views of a Conservation Bond Measure

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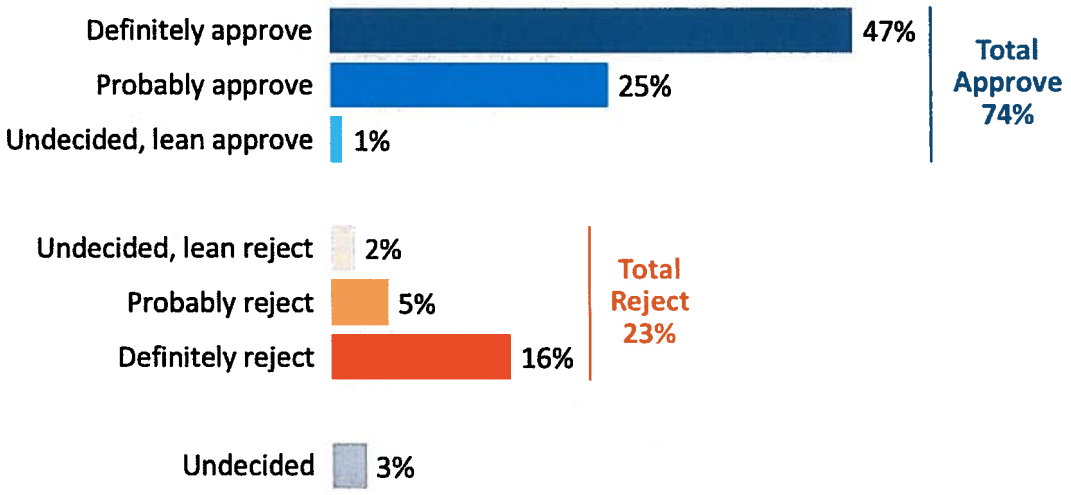
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of 400 Rhode Island voters to assess views of a potential conservation bond measure.[i] **The study found strong support for a bond of $75 million to invest in environmental and recreational purposes** – with no broader backing at lower amounts, and durable support after pro and con messaging. Underlying this support is Rhode Islanders' broadly shared sense that the state has a need for additional funding for land, water and wildlife conservation.

Key findings include:

- **Three-quarters approve of a $75 million environmental bond measure.** As shown in Figure 1 below, when presented only with a draft ballot question (shown on the next page), three in four Rhode Island voters (74%) say they would approve the measure – with nearly half (47%) saying they would "definitely approve" it.

Figure 1: Support for a $75 Million Bond Measure



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This Green Economy Bonds Measure would issue $75 million in general obligation bonds for environmental and recreational purposes including:

- *Matching grants for restoring and improving resiliency of infrastructure, vulnerable coastal habitats, and restoring rivers and stream floodplains; and for brownfield remediation and local public recreational facilities;*
- *Grants for small businesses to remove impediments to clean energy project implementation;*
- *Restoring and protecting the water quality and enhancing the economic viability and environmental sustainability of Narragansett Bay and the state's watersheds;*
- *Maintaining forest and wildlife habitat; and*
- *Acquiring open space, farmland, watershed, urban parklands, and recreation lands.*

This support cuts across all key major demographic and geographic lines within the Rhode Island electorate.

- **Support is no broader at lower overall bond amounts.** In a follow-up question, voters were asked whether they would support a measure at $60 million, $45 million, and $30 million. In every case, seven in ten voters said they would vote to approve – within the margin of error of the 74% result for the highest level tested, $75 million. The results show that Rhode Island voters have no hesitation to back a $75 million investment in conservation, and would potentially support even more – and that reducing the amount of the bond is not likely increase support.

- **Support for the bond is durable throughout an exchange of pros and cons.** After voters hear positive messaging about the measure – and a brief critique – support for the bond remains consistently over a two-to-one margin, well above the threshold needed for passage.

Figure 2: Patterns of Support

Vote Position	Total Approve	Total Reject	Undecided
Initial Vote	74%	73%	65%
After Positives	23%	23%	30%
After Critique	3%	4%	6%

- **Voters' top priorities for funding include water, wildlife and forests.** Figure 3 shows the shares of Rhode Island voters who rate each of a variety of potential spending categories as either "extremely" or "very important" priorities. The items that three-quarters or more rank in the top tier include protections for drinking water sources, river, streams and the Bay; support for local farms; protection of fish and wildlife habitat; and protection of forests. Restoring land to prevent future flooding is valued by more than seven in ten, as is investing in local infrastructure to protect communities from flooding and sea-level rise.

Figure 3: Top Funding Priorities

I am going to read you some types of projects that might be funded by this measure. Recognizing that there may not be enough funding for all such projects, please tell me how important it would be to you that each project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important:

Priority	% Extremely or Very Important
Protecting sources of drinking water	88%
Supporting local farms	80%
Protecting water quality in rivers, streams and the Bay	80%
Protecting fish and wildlife habitat	79%
Improving infrastructure to improve dirking water quality	79%
Protecting water quality in rivers, lakes and streams	78%
Restoring land around rivers to prevent future floods	77%
Protecting forests	74%
Investing in local infrastructure to protect communities from flooding and sea-level rise	73%
Upgrading aging and deteriorating stormwater infrastructure	71%
Protecting working farms	71%
Preventing flooding of homes and businesses	71%

In sum, as they have in prior election cycles, **Rhode Island voters strongly support a state bond measure to invest in conserving land, water and wildlife in the state**. They back a bond of at least $75 million to support protections for drinking water sources, fish and wildlife habitat, and forests, as well as investments in improving flood prevention.

[i] **Methodology:** From Jan. 25-28, 2024, FM3 completed 400 online and telephone (landline and wireless) interviews with likely November 2024 Rhode Island voters. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.