

March 5, 2026

Representative Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: The Nature Conservancy Supports House Bill 7127, Article 6 Question 5 Green Bond & House Bill 8144

Dear Chairman Abney,

The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 7127, including Article 6 Question 5 on the Green Economy Bond. We are further including our support for House Bill 8144, sponsored by Representative Cotter and are grateful for her leadership on this issue.

Thank you for this committee's and the General Assembly's leadership in funding environmental bonds over the years. The Nature Conservancy appreciates this opportunity to share support for the Green Economy Bond in the Governor's proposed budget to continue the important work past bonds have supported.

The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Here in Rhode Island, we steward more than 15,000 acres land and protect an additional 35,000 acres with partners. We do much of our work to protect and restore our natural environment in partnership with the Department of Environmental Management, the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, our federal agencies, and local partner organizations.

Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund: \$20 million

Since 2019, The Nature Conservancy has partnered with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank to implement the Municipal Resilience Program (MRP). The program empowers municipalities to identify their specific challenges and opportunities in becoming more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Municipal leaders and community members actively participate in a collaborative workshop that builds consensus on climate planning efforts, leading to eligibility for grants to directly implement projects that will benefit the municipality.

To date, all 39 of Rhode Island’s municipalities have participated in the MRP and have a large need for funding to implement projects, as demonstrated by RIIB receiving \$90 million in applications since 2020 (with the ability to award only \$24 million to communities).

The \$20 million in this Bond will provide much needed funding for both the Municipal Resilience Action Grants as well as the newly established Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund. This hybrid approach to grants and loans allows for a more sustainable stream for municipalities to access climate resilience funding.

Energy Efficiency: \$10 million

The Nature Conservancy is supportive of the \$10 million for Energy Efficiency Infrastructure in the proposed “Green Economy and Clean Energy Bond”. It is imperative that the state invest in clean energy and efficiency for both our environment and economy. However, we recognize that the state has **a much larger need** to invest in climate mitigation given 2025 Climate Action Strategy adopted by the RI EC4, and are supportive of a dedicated Climate Bond.

Proposed Amendments to the Bond:

While we support the \$50 million Bond as proposed, we also offer the following amendments to fully support open space preservation and access in Rhode Island and to ensure that the bond has full support of Rhode Island voters. TNC strongly supports House Bill 8144 introduced by Representative Cotter to add several items to the Bond.

The Nature Conservancy respectfully requests additional funding be included for state and local open space, farmland conservation, and outdoor recreation, including state park upgrades at Fort Adams. As the state’s largest land trust, we are committed to land preservation and management and recognize that these items cannot be sufficiently done without funding from bonds as historically has been done. Much of this funding was originally requested by RIDEM, and H8144 simply reinstates what RIDEM needs to successfully continue important conservation and recreation work.

The Nature Conservancy also worked with a polling firm to understand the interests and values of likely RI voters. Please see attached summary memo from FM3, which outlines the high level of support the RI voters have for green bonds – but in particular, investments in open space, water quality protection, and farmland – the exact items included in House Bill 8144. To highlight a few items from the poll:

Percentages of RI voters who ranked funding for these items extremely or very important:

- Protecting working farms – 88%
- Protecting forests – 75%
- Enhancing public access to outdoor recreation – 65%
- Protecting water quality in streams, rivers, and the Bay – 80%
- Supporting local forestry – 72%

67% of Rhode Islanders support a \$98 million “Green Bond”, with support unchanging at lower bond amounts.

85% saw no conflict with the desire and necessity to build more housing and the need to preserve open space – both of these can be done together with foresight and planning.

The overwhelming majority of Rhode Islanders care about and are willing to invest in these initiatives. We have conducted similar polls of likely voters over the course of the last several bond cycles and consistently find similar levels of support.

The Nature Conservancy has seen the positive effects that funding to support conservation can have across the state. We have been honored to have been a part of projects funded by past bonds to protect our working farms, restore our watersheds, and conserve forest land. There are significant and urgent opportunities to continue this work throughout Rhode Island. We urge the Finance Committee to support the Green Economy and Clean Energy bond package and the additional funding proposed by Rep. Cotter in H8144, and continue your critical leadership in protecting our irreplaceable natural assets which contribute every day to our quality of life and our economic strength.

Sincerely,



Angela Tuoni
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The Nature Conservancy – Rhode Island
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TO Interested Parties

FROM Miranda Everitt and Denny Han
FM3 Research

RE: Rhode Island Voter Views of a Conservation Bond Measure

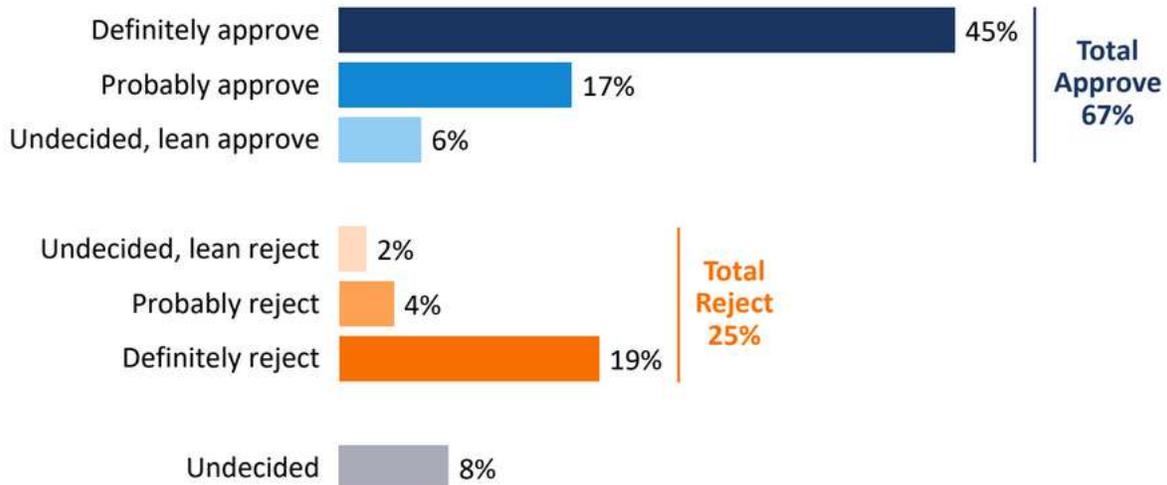
DATE December 3, 2025

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of 426 Rhode Island voters to assess views of a potential conservation bond measure. **The study found strong support for a bond of \$98 million to invest in environmental and recreational purposes** – with no broader backing at lower overall bond amounts. Rhode Islanders especially prioritize clean water, farms and forests as uses of funding for the measure.

Key findings include:

- **Two-thirds approve of a \$98 million environmental bond measure.** When presented only with a draft ballot question (shown on the next page, and based on prior “Green Economy Bonds” in the state), two in three Rhode Island voters (67%) say they would approve the measure – with nearly half (45%) saying they would vote to “definitely approve” it.

Figure 1: Support for a \$98 Million Bond Measure



This Green Economy Bonds Measure would issue \$98 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 nearly all key major demographic and geographic lines within the Rhode Island electorate, including:

- ✓ 86% of Democrats and 65% of independents;
 - ✓ 74% of women and 61% of men;
 - ✓ 71% of voters under 50, 60% of voters ages 50-64, and 69% of voters ages 65 and older;
 - ✓ 68% of voters of color and 66% of white voters; and
 - ✓ 62% or more in each county.
- **Support is no broader at lower overall bond amounts.** In a follow-up question, voters were asked whether they would support a measure at \$74 million, \$65 million, and \$50 million. In each case, 68% of voters said they would vote to approve – within the margin of error of the 67% result for the highest level tested, \$98 million. The results show that reducing the amount of the bond is not likely increase support.
 - **Voters’ top priorities for funding include drinking water and supporting farms.** Figure 3 on the next page 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 and water quality in Narragansett Bay, as well as upgrading stormwater infrastructure, protecting working farms, and protecting forests.

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	93%
Protecting working farms	88%
Improving infrastructure to improve drinking water quality	84%
Supporting local farms	83%
Protecting water quality in Narragansett Bay	83%
Supporting local agriculture	83%
Investments to protect and improve the state’s drinking water supplies	81%
Protecting water quality in rivers, streams, and the Bay	80%
Protecting water quality in rivers, lakes, and streams	78%
Preventing polluted stormwater runoff from entering streams, rivers, and the Bay	78%
Protecting forests	75%
Upgrading aging infrastructure and deteriorating stormwater infrastructure	75%
Supporting local forestry	72%

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.** Broad shares support a bond of \$98 million, and especially value investments in farms, forests, and water quality.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From Nov. 16-20, 2025, FM3 completed 426 online and telephone (landline and wireless) interviews with likely November 2026 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%.