



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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February 7, 2023

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley
Chairman
House Committee on State Government and Elections
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: H 5307 An Act Relating to Parks and Recreational Areas – General Provisions

Dear Chairman Shanley,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 5307, which would legalize the practice of harvesting mushrooms from public lands. DEM wishes to express concerns with this proposal.

In general, DEM is opposed to the practice of collecting or harvesting items on public lands. DEM regulations (250-RICR-100-00-1.35) currently prohibit the removal of “any tree, stone walls, natural element or feature” without written permission. Rhode Island’s public lands are intended to be for the public good rather than personal or commercial purposes. We are concerned that this legislation, though well-intentioned, would set a precedent that our state’s public lands are open for the harvesting of other resources in the future.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. For further information, please contact Ken Ayars, Chief of the DEM Division of Agriculture and Forest Environment, at ken.ayars@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

CC: Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections
The Honorable David Place
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director