

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

# PUBLIC SHORELINE ACCESS IN RHODE ISLAND

An overview of public access points and DEM's efforts to ensure safe, reliable access for outdoor recreation





**DEM**  
RHODE ISLAND

## Our mission:

To protect, restore, manage and promote Rhode Island's environment and natural resources to preserve and improve our quality of life. The **strategic plan** is designed to outline a clear direction for us to achieve our mission as we continue to grow, innovate, and improve as a department.



1. Take actions to **counter climate change** and its effects, both locally and regionally.
2. Protect and restore our environment to create **greener, healthier communities**.
3. Protect and improve **water quality**
4. Conserve, promote, and **steward our natural resources**
5. Promote and increase **outdoor recreation** in Rhode Island
6. Promote and expand **local food** and agricultural industries
7. Demonstrate statewide leadership in **customer service** and continuous improvement

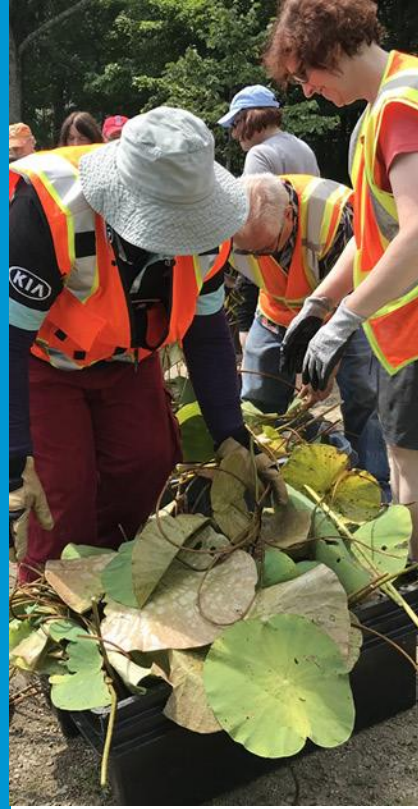


**DEM**  
RHODE ISLAND

## Who we are

DEM's Bureau of Environmental Protection is responsible for preventing and minimizing pollution to, and monitoring the quality and overseeing the restoration of, water, air, and land.

Invasive aquatic plant removal; Electric bus funded by the Volkswagen Diesel Settlement; tour of a wastewater treatment facility; emergency response training exercise



DEM's Environmental Protection Bureau includes six regulatory offices:

1. Air Resources
2. Water Resources
3. Land Revitalization and Sustainable Materials Management
4. Customer and Technical Assistance
5. Compliance and Inspection
6. Emergency Response



# DEM

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## Who we are

DEM's Bureau of Natural Resources protects, manages, and restores the state's wide array of historic parks, beaches, recreational facilities, and green spaces.

Wildlife biologist conduct a goose banding survey; a fishermen at the Port of Galilee; farmers market vendor at Goddard Memorial Farmers Market; a controlled burn to create new forest growth at Nicholas Farm



DEM's Natural Resources Bureau includes nine divisions:

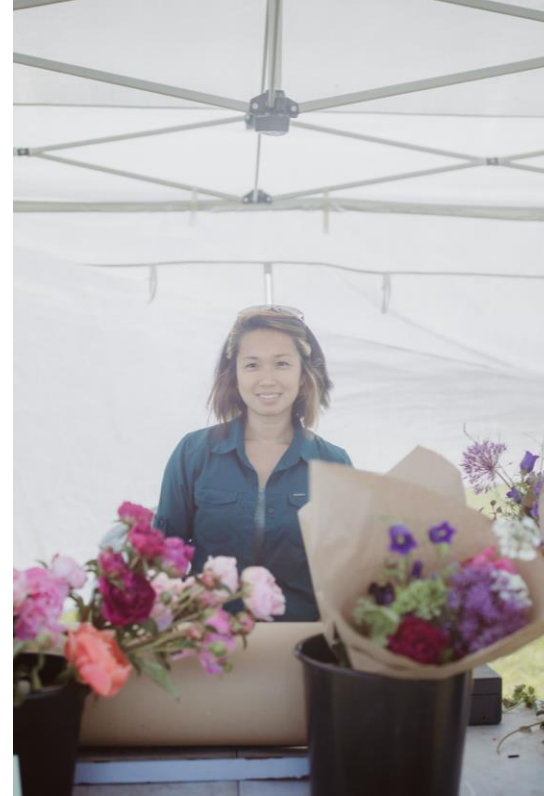
1. Agriculture
2. Coastal Resources
3. Law Enforcement
4. Forestry
5. Fish & Wildlife
6. Parks and Recreation,
7. Planning & Development
8. Marine Resources
9. Narragansett Bay Estuarine Research Reserve

# Our strengths

# 85%

of residents live within  
1/4 mile (city) or 5 miles  
(non-urban) of an  
outdoor public  
recreation facility

Golf course at Goddard Memorial State Park in  
Warwick; Farmers Market vendor at the  
Fishermen's Memorial State Park; Anglers at  
Fort Wetherill in Jamestown



- Being the **fun-sized state** means you can do it all in a day – from bike to hike to kayak to fish in salty or freshwater
- We have a robust network of dedicated partners: government, business, non-profits & community
- We serve a wide and diverse segment of the public from outdoor recreationists, such as hunters, anglers, boaters, hikers, mountain bikers, and birders



## Ocean State

Rhode Island's 400 miles of coastline features many public bathing beaches, boat launches, rights-of-ways, and fishing access points.

Scuba divers at Fort Wetherill State Park in Jamestown



- Rhode Island's Constitution protects citizens' rights to fish from the shore, to gather seaweed, to leave the shore to swim in the sea and walk along the shoreline
- This right extends from the mean high-water line and three miles out to sea
- This access is afforded to Rhode Islanders and visitors alike

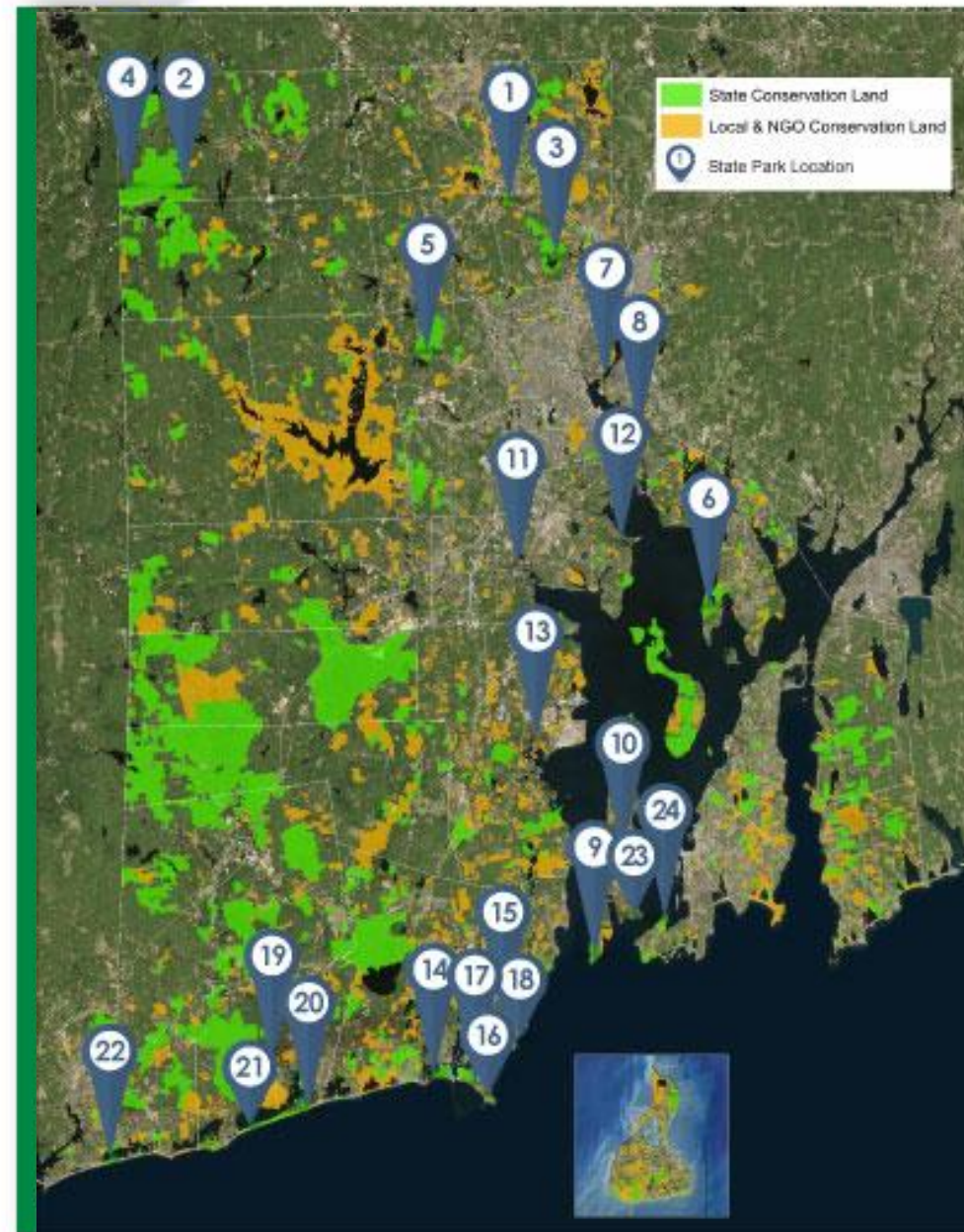
**9+**  
**MILLION**  
ANNUAL VISITORS  
(major parks only)

**8,500+**  
ACRES OF PARK LAND  
ACROSS **69** AREAS

**1,000+**  
CAMPSITES

**200+**  
FISHING AREAS  
INCLUDING BOAT RAMPS

**400+**  
MILES OF TRAILS  
FOR BIKING, HIKING & WALKING





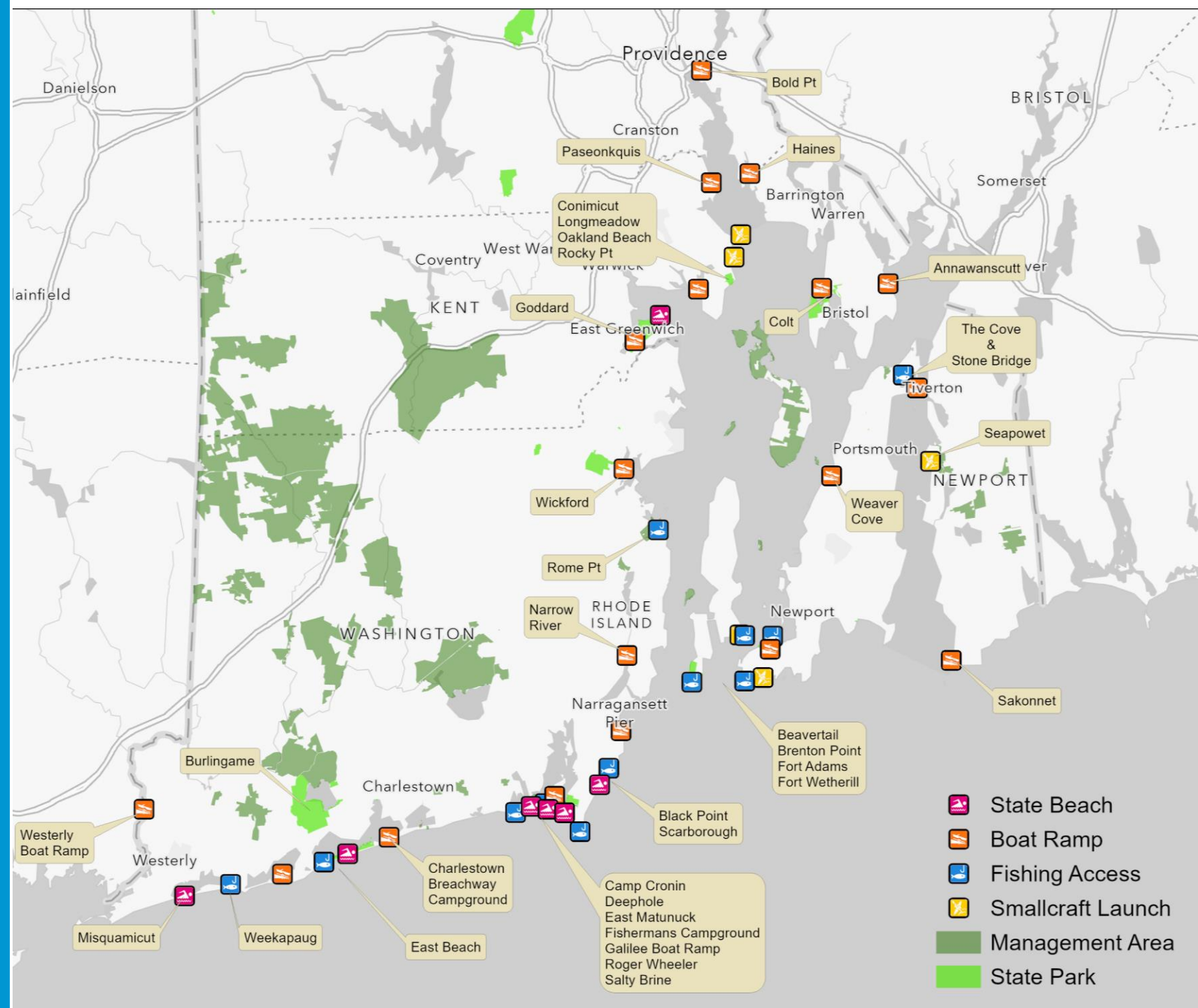
# DEM

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## Shoreline access

DEM responsibilities:

- Maintain and manage state parks, beaches, and campgrounds
- Maintain boat ramp and fishing pier infrastructure, and in most cases, parking access
- Manage Conservation Management Areas







## RI State Parks

Since DEM launched the parks initiative in 2019, DEM has improved traffic flow, reduced trash, launched online beach parking passes, added new beach concessions, refreshed all bathrooms, offered free sunscreen, and increased children's programming



- **Supported activities:**

- Swimming, paddling, fishing, boating,
- Sightseeing
- Scuba diving (at Ft Wetherill)

- **Prohibited activities:**

- Camping/campfires outside designated areas
- ATVs/dirt biking (snowmobiles allowed in designated areas)
- Paintball games and target shooting
- Removing trees, shrubs, vegetation, stone walls
- Dumping solid waste and littering



# Swimming

The public can access designated fresh and saltwater swimming areas across the state.

Season beach parking passes (\$30 for residents) allow entry into parking lots at all eight of Rhode Island's state beaches.



- **Eight state surf beaches:** Charlestown Breachway, East Beach in Charlestown, East Matunuck in South Kingstown, Misquamicut in Westerly, Roger Wheeler, Scarborough North and South, and Salty Brine in Narragansett
- RI state beaches are important recreational resources that **welcome over 1 million visitors annually** during the summer season
- Fees are charged for **parking only** during the summer season. All state surf beaches offer free sunscreen, restroom facilities and are staffed with beach managers, lifeguards, rangers, and facility attendants. Five state beaches also offer expansive parking areas, modern beach pavilions with cold and hot water showers, restrooms, food concessions, and first aid stations



# Swimming

The public can access designated fresh and saltwater swimming areas across the state.

There is no fee for parking at non-surf swimming areas located at state parks



- **Five state non-surf beaches:** Burlingame Picnic Area in Charlestown, Fort Adams in Newport, Goddard Memorial in Warwick, Lincoln Woods in Lincoln, and Pulaski in Chepachet
- **Five state campgrounds:** Burlingame in Charlestown, Charlestown Breachway and East Beach in Charlestown, Fishermen's Memorial in Narragansett, and George Washington in Chepachet
- **Individuals actively fishing are allowed 24-hour access** to Rhode Island state parks. Some park facilities may be gated with no vehicle access, but anglers are allowed to walk-in. Overnight camping is not allowed.

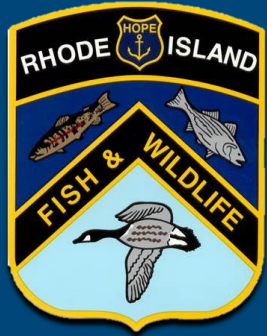


## Access for all

It is our aim to make each state park and beach location as barrier-free as possible for the convenience of those with limited mobility and to provide access to outdoor amenities for different stages of life.



- **Accessible fishing piers**, boat ramps, and shoreline access points are available at many state parks
- **ADA-accessible boat ramps** are located at Burlingame, Colt, Lincoln Woods, and Goddard Memorial State Parks, as well as the Port of Galilee, Worden's Pond, Echo Lake and Indian Lake
- All state beaches with pavilions are equipped with **ramps** that allow access from the parking area up to the pavilion and down to the beach
- **Beach wheelchairs, beach-accessible walkers, and access mats** are available at some state facilities with non-surf beaches



# Fishing/Boating

DEM manages close to

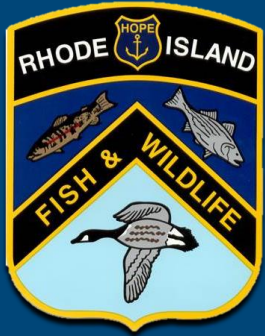
# 133

**shoreline fishing**  
locations and **boating & access ramps**

\*combined saltwater and freshwater



- DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife's mission is to ensure RI's freshwater and wildlife resources will be conserved and managed for equitable and sustainable use
- Responsible for operation and maintenance of public access facilities for **fishing and boating, or hunting**.
  - Includes shoreline **fishing access, docks, roads, boat ramps, and parking lots**
  - Access for these activities **allowed 24-hours** a day for active fishing (with a fishing license) and boating
  - For all other activities, facilities are closed half an hour after sunset to half an hour before sunrise



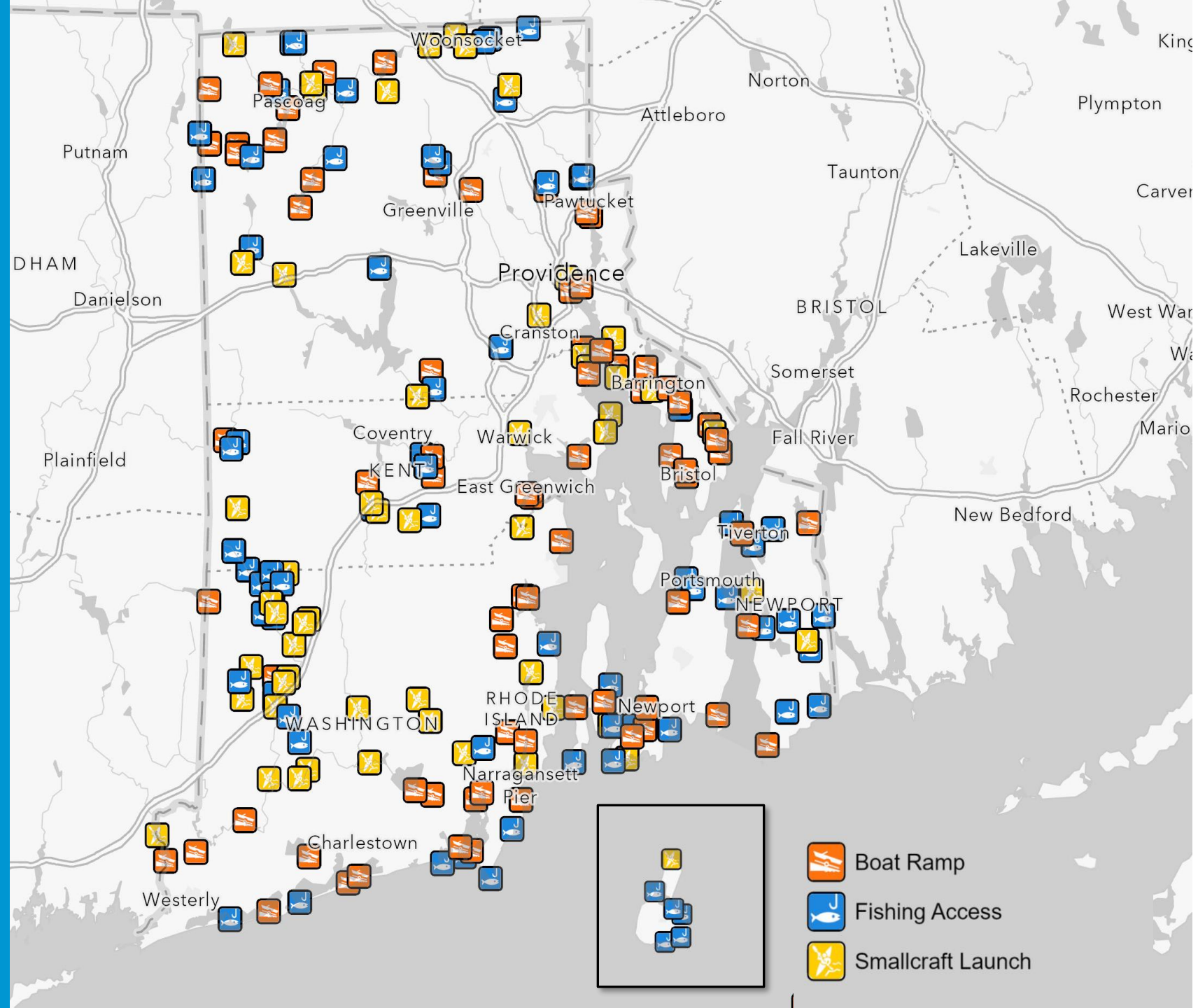
# Fishing/Boating

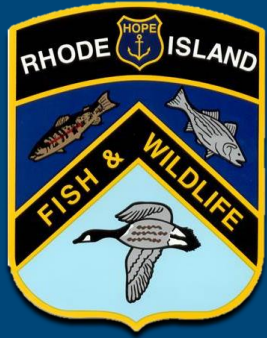
## Saltwater:

- 12 shoreline sites
- 20 boat ramps with 5 small craft only launches

## Freshwater:

- Approx. 49 shoreline sites
- Approx. 50 boat access/ramps



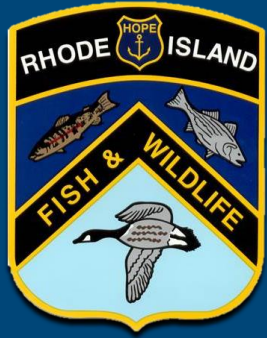


# Boating/Fishing Access Areas

Getting people to and on the water is a core part of our mission at DEM. There is an amazing selection of fishing access areas throughout the state that allow the public to pursue fishing, boating, and wildlife observation



- **Supported activities:**
  - Shoreline and fly-fishing fishing and boating
  - Parking (for fishing and boating access ONLY)
- **Prohibited activities**
  - Swimming, washing or bathing
  - Camping, ATVs and dirt biking
  - Paintball games and target shooting
  - Soliciting
  - Removing trees, shrubs, vegetation, stone walls
  - Dumping solid waste and littering



# Funding

The Division supports a long tradition of fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation and is primarily funded through fishing and hunting license fees matched by federal dollars.

Kids fishing camp hosted by the RI Saltwater Anglers Association at Rocky Point State Park



- General Revenues
- USFW Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman Robertson Act)
  - Formula grant based on land area to paid license holders
  - Requires 25% state match
  - Used for wildlife restoration projects
- Restricted Receipts from user-pay user-benefit program derived from taxes on:
  - Fishing and hunting licenses and permits
  - Fishing equipment excise taxes
  - Motorboat fuels receipts; purchase of some boats



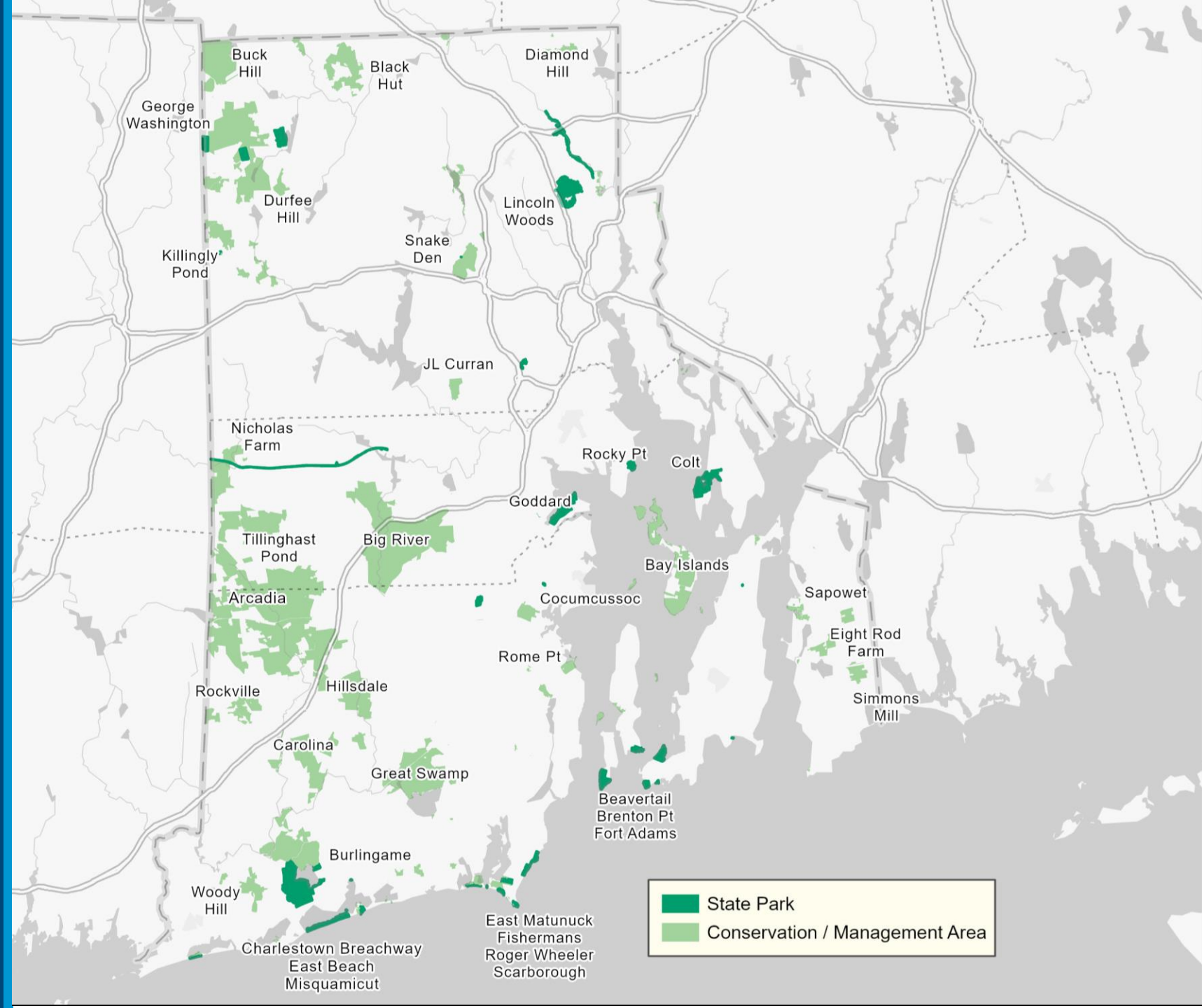


# DEM

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## Public lands

DEM manages more than 65,000 acres of state land, including 25 state management areas.





# Public lands

DEM's Division of Forest Environment mission is to protect and manage Rhode Island's forest resources to meet demands for water supply, wildlife habitat, recreation, forest products, and a high-quality environment.



- **Supported activities:**

- Fishing, hunting, hiking, horseback riding, camping in designated areas, snowmobiling on designated trails
- Mountain, fat tire, and motorized biking (with permit)
- Military Training (with permit)
- Environmental Studies (with permit)

- **Prohibited activities**

- Swimming, washing or bathing in streams or ponds
- ATVs and dirt biking; Paintball games and target shooting
- Removing trees, shrubs, vegetation, stone walls
- Dumping solid waste and littering



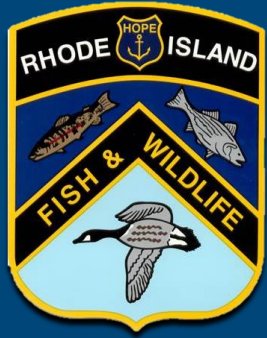
# Funding

Since the 1970's, land use and populations have been expanding and Rhode Island's forests are experiencing development and fragmentation pressures, as well as the effects of a changing climate.

Angler fishing the Wood River



- Funding consists of
  - General revenues and restricted receipts
  - Mostly supports staff salary
    - 4 FTE and portion of a 2 FTE in the Wildfire Program
- Public land duties:
  - Maintain management areas
  - Conduct research
  - Maintain fire access roads

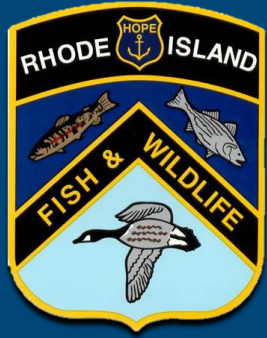


# “Quonnie” Boat Ramp

DEM and The Nature Conservancy have partnered to create and improve public access sites to help the public get outdoors for fishing, boating, and hunting throughout the Ocean State.



- On the south shore of Charlestown, a newly constructed boat ramp and floating dock at Quonochontaug Pond provides better boating access to the 700-acre salt pond. "Quonnie", as Rhode Islanders refer to it, is popular with paddlers and small fishing boats and provides oceanfront boat access to inshore fishing and a direct route to offshore excursions.
- Due to the congestion and crowding issues occurring during the 2020 summer season, DEM worked with local municipalities to institute and enforce parking capacity limits at and leading into the boat ramp to support public safety and deter illegal parking on neighboring side roads.

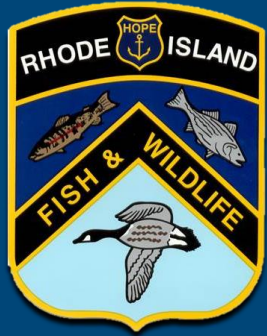


# Weekapaug Breachway

Located in Westerly, this state-managed fishing area offers parking on both sides of the breachway. There are concrete stairways built into the rocks at three different that serve as ideal areas to sit and fish.



- In 2020, the public was having difficulty accessing what had been an historically used path from the DEM fishing lot down to the beach
- DEM/CRMC constructed a walking path on the eastern side of the breachway to guide the public from the DEM parking lot to the shore
- Parking area often used to access nearby businesses and private beaches, rather than intended use for fishing or wildlife viewing along the breachway



# Camp Cronin Fishing Area

DEM recently made some modifications at the Camp Cronin Fishing Area and parking lot in Narragansett to ensure the safety and enjoyment of visitors to this popular fishing access site.



- In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused extensive damage to the area surrounding Camp Cronin and washed out a portion of the access road. A breakwater repair project to stabilize the shoreline and restore safe public access to the fishing area was completed in 2017
- Recent changes (pic to right) to the parking area included removing temporary plastic Jersey barriers that have been in place since 2020 and replacing them with natural boulders
- The new traffic flow was made to maximize accessibility to the fishing site and allow for a safe traffic flow for emergency vehicles and equipment at a site

# Resources

There are lots of fun activities you can do on public lands or right from your home, backyard, or neighborhood. Try some of these activities on your own or with your family or friends!



- RI State Parks info/events: [www.riparks.com](http://www.riparks.com)
- Fishing and Hunting: [www.dem.ri.gov/fishwildlife](http://www.dem.ri.gov/fishwildlife)
- Public Access for RI Coast: [www.shoreline-ri.com](http://www.shoreline-ri.com)
- Info on places to go paddle or walk: [www.exploreri.org](http://www.exploreri.org)
- Bike paths: <http://www.dot.ri.gov/travel/BikeRI/>
- DEM events calendar: [www.dem.ri.gov/events](http://www.dem.ri.gov/events)
- 50 Nature-Based Activities: [www.riparks.com/getoutside](http://www.riparks.com/getoutside)