

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

I am writing in opposition to S 2356, to put the Big River Management Area under the administration of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

I support preserving the forestland of the Big River Management Area for generations of Rhode Islanders to enjoy but putting it under the DEM will not accomplish this.

The DEM's forest management practices involve destructive even-aged clearcut logging which destroys biodiversity, causes invasives to spread, pollutes waterways, disturbs the soil, creates tick habitat, contributes to Climate Change from the carbon released from the logged trees, and creates a fire hazard.

As can be seen in this photo of a 2025 DEM logging project conducted in the Big River Management Area, which is currently under DEM stewardship, most of the trees in this part of the forest have been cut down. This clearcut logging was funded through the 2022 Green Bond!

[DEM to Conduct Brush Clearing Project at Big River Management Area to Reduce Wildfire Risk | Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management](#)



The removal of the tree canopy allows for more sunlight to reach the forest floor making the landscape dry. As the Big River Management Area is dominated by pine, the many pine needles on the ground are now exposed to sunlight which makes them dry and therefore more flammable.

The increased sunlight from the lack of tree canopy will also allow for flammable invasive underbrush to thrive.

The wood slash debris left behind on the forest floor after the logging operation is also a major fire hazard and can be seen in the above photo.

[Logging slash flammability](#)

To have DEM administer the Big River Management Area will only lead to the destruction of the forest in this natural area used by so many Rhode Islanders.

Instead of having DEM administer the Big River Management Area, it should be designated as a Natural Area Preserve with the highest legal protections, so it can always be enjoyed by the public in its current natural state.

There is currently a bill in the state legislature, the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, that would do just this, as the Big River Natural Area Preserve is listed as the 31st Natural Area Preserve designated in the bill.

[H7914.pdf](#)

In conclusion, I ask the Committee to support the protection of the Big River Management Area through the Natural Forest Protection Act H 7914, instead of giving it to DEM to administer as outlined in S 2356.

Thank you,

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