



Subject: S-2903 AN ACT RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROGRAM ACT, *FOR*

Submitted by: Molly Allard, District Manager, Northern RI Conservation District

To: Chairman Bissailon, Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee

Representing the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD), I am writing to express our support for S-2903. As extreme weather events caused by climate change make living in frequently flooded areas more difficult for Rhode Islanders, it is essential that the state begins to plan strategies that will allow residents of high-hazard areas to plan for a future beyond the floodplain. NRICD has helped support participants in federal floodplain management programs in East Providence, Johnston, and Cranston, and expects to see participation in these programs increase in future years. Speaking with residents who make the hard choice to leave behind a beloved home due to flooding has given us unique insight as to how this issue rests at the intersection of environmental and human concerns. Managed retreat allows residents to leave homes in high-hazard areas with the compensation needed to obtain a similar residence outside of the floodplain, while also allowing the high-hazard area to be restored to a natural state and used for wildlife habitat, recreation, or similar purposes. Natural areas can allow future floodwaters to be absorbed by the soil, hopefully further minimizing upstream impacts.

Although federal funding streams for managed retreat do exist, federal funding can be unpredictable and often requires state or municipal matching funds. Rhode Island is wise to begin the process of establishing a state program to prioritize and assist with funding managed retreat projects, which can take many years to move from the research to execution stage. As extreme weather events in the state continue and insurance prices in high-hazard areas continue to rise, there is no time like the present to begin the process. We encourage you to move S-2903 out of committee to begin planning for managed retreat in Rhode Island. Thank you for your consideration.