



Forest Conservation Amidst Competing Land Uses

Workshop Track: Regional Conservation and Land Use Issues

Moderator: Christopher Riely

Speakers: Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Kate Sayles, Northern RI Conservation District; and Judee Burr, environmental communications consultant

November 13, 2019, RCP Gathering, UMass Amherst

1. How do you **express different natural resource values** in your work?
2. What **conservation strategies** have or have not worked?
3. Who are you **collaborating** with across your landscape or region?





The Value of Rhode Island Forests

**A Research Project to Support Forest
Conservation Amidst Competing Land Uses**

Consultant Team: Kate Sayles, Judee Burr & Christopher Riely

Outline

- I. The Project Structure
- II. RI Forest and Competing Land Uses
- III. Valuing RI Forests
- IV. Policy Recommendations
- V. Challenges



The Project Structure

- ❖ The Consultant Team
- ❖ Yale Intern
- ❖ Forest Conservation Advisory Committee



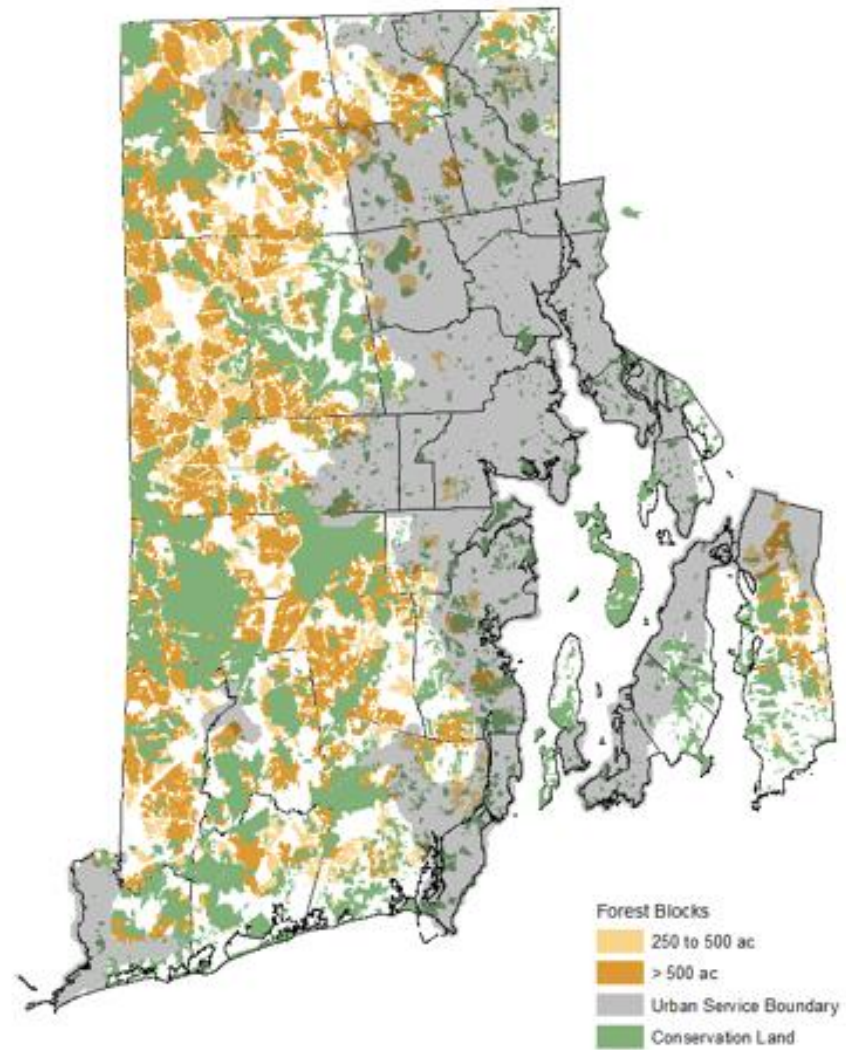


Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

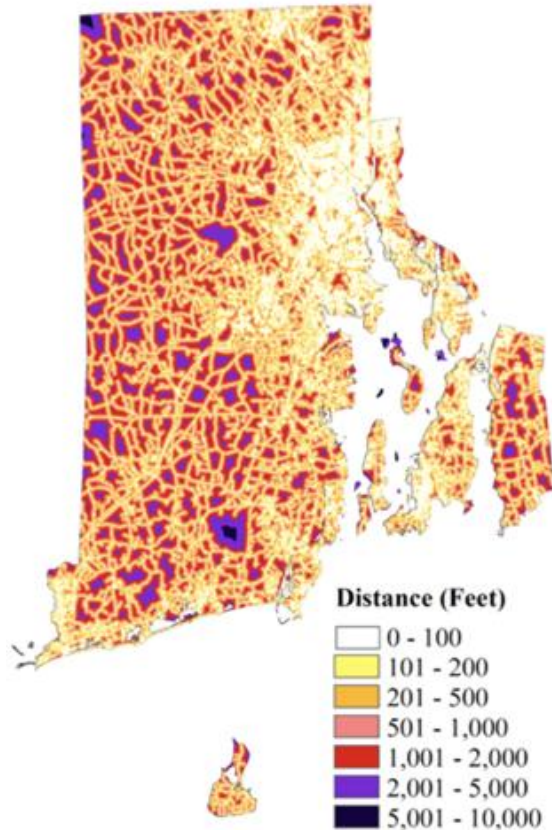
- ❖ Audubon Society of RI
- ❖ Burrillville Land Trust
- ❖ Grow Smart RI
- ❖ Providence Water
- ❖ RIDEM
- ❖ RI Forest Conservators Organization
- ❖ RI Land Trust Council
- ❖ RI Natural History Survey - RI Wildlife Action Plan Liaison
- ❖ RI Resource Conservation & Development
- ❖ Save the Bay
- ❖ The Nature Conservancy
- ❖ University of Rhode Island



Rhode Island Forestland



Distance to Nearest Road



New England and Northern New York Forest Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessment and Synthesis: A Report from the New England Climate Change Response Framework Project



Valuing RI Forests



Including the Voices of Rhode Islanders





**The sum of the
benefits that
Rhode Island's
forests provide is
greater than any
single attribute.**



Rhode Island Forests Provide Values for Us All

Forests clean the AIR and WATER.

80% of Rhode Islanders rely on surface reservoirs surrounded by largely forested watersheds for drinking water.

Forests remove more than 13,800 tons of hazardous air pollutants in Rhode Island every year, providing more than \$30 million annually in pollution removal benefits.

Forests are an ECONOMIC ENGINE.

More than 500 firms in the forestry and wood products sector generated a total economic impact of \$715 million and 4,800 jobs in Rhode Island in 2016.

An estimated 503,000 people participating in wildlife-related recreation each year bring \$348 million to the state's economy through fishing, hunting and wildlife watching.

Forests ABSORB & STORE CARBON to fight climate change.

Rhode Island forests absorb about 500,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide each year. They store an estimated 26.7 million metric tons of carbon.

Forests help Rhode Island communities adapt to a changing climate by protecting us from extreme weather.

Forests support HEALTHY PEOPLE.

Trees support healthy communities by countering the urban heat island effect, mitigating flooding dangers, and reducing energy bills. Access to green space has been shown to improve mental health.

Rhode Island's forests continue to be used by indigenous people as places to gather resources used for food, medicine, and culturally-significant ceremonies. Forests provide a "sense of place" to rural Rhode Island communities.

Forests allow WILDLIFE to thrive.

Core forests larger than 250 acres are considered critical to support more than 450 species of greatest conservation need in Rhode Island. The RI Wildlife Action Plan identified "Conservation Opportunity Areas," which include core forests, that are important to people and wildlife.

*See the accompanying report - "The Value of Rhode Island Forests" -
for source information and a detailed discussion of these findings.*

Policy Recommendations

Example 1:

Farm, Forest, & Open Space

Example 2:
“Forest Conservation Act”
working group meetings



Working Group Discussion Points



- ❖ Revise laws and programs that provide incentives that lead to forest loss
- ❖ Establish a dedicated funding source to purchase forest development rights and care for urban forests
- ❖ Follow the lead of local agriculture and seek to increase demand for RI wood products
- ❖ Establish incentives to decrease forest loss as land is developed

Credit: Meeting Vector Image by Vecteezy

Challenges for our project



Thank you!

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The Value of Rhode Island Forests

A Project of the Rhode Island Forest Conservation Advisory Committee and the Rhode Island Tree Council

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