

RHODE ISLAND 2020 FOREST ACTION PLAN 2019 Public Survey & Responses

Department of Environmental Management
Division of Forest Environment

June 2020



2019 SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLIC SURVEY

Forest Action Plan Public Survey & Comments

Rhode Island 2020 Forest Action Plan Survey

Thank you for taking the Rhode Island Forest Action Plan Survey. The results of this survey will be considered in the development of priorities within the DEM Division of Forest Environment for policy, management and resource allocation decisions over the next 10 years.

Thank you again for your input!

Some context about you, so we can assess and compare responses.

Do you live in Rhode Island? *

- YES
- NO

Do you own one or more acres of forestland in Rhode Island? *

- YES
- NO

Do you belong to any of the following types of organizations? Please select all that apply. *

- Conservation Organization
- Fish & Game Club
- Land Trust
- Woodland Owners Association
- Outdoor Recreation Club
- None of the above

Does your work/employment involve natural resource management and/or conservation? *

- YES
- NO

Rhode Island's Forests

Why do you care about Rhode Island's forests? Please select all that apply. *

- General Interest/Enjoyment
- Lifestyle/Rural Character
- Hunting/Fishing
- Employed in/earn income from the forest products industry Hunting/Fishing
- Resource management (timber, non-timber forest products)
- Conservation
- Wildlife
- Recreation
- Ecosystem Services
- Value of urban trees
- Other

There are many challenges to address in Rhode Island’s forests. Please select your priority for each of the following 10 challenges over the next ten years.

The challenges listed are in no particular order. *

	HIGH priority	MEDIUM Priority	LOW Priority	Not Sure
1. Forest ecosystem health and biodiversity issues: e.g. invasive species, deer browse, species and age diversity, threatened and endangered species, natural disturbance/ extreme weather.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
2. Loss of forestland and increasing forest fragmentation.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
3. Public values provided by forests: e.g. water, climate, carbon storage, forest products, recreation, education, culture.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
4. Public land management challenges: e.g. staffing and funding for planning, maintenance, etc.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
5. Challenges and opportunities facing private forest landowners.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
6. Climate change.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
7. Public awareness and support for funding for management of state forests and assistance to landowners and communities.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
8. Funding for effective forest planning and policy (e.g. land use planning, use of open space lands, regulations).	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
9. Land use conversion pressures on public and private forests.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
10. Urban forestry management capabilities in RI’s communities.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

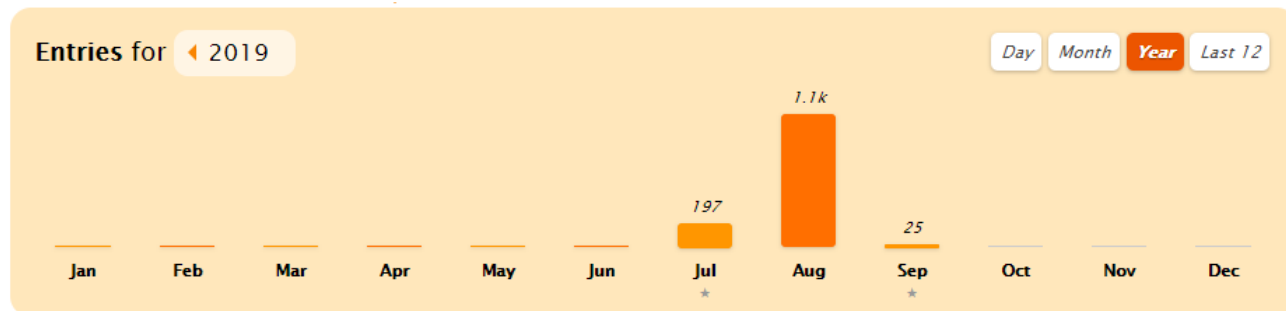
There many actions and activities in Rhode Island that impact its forests, from many sources. Indicate the importance of the 10 outcomes to the future of Rhode Island's forests.

The outcomes listed are in no particular order. *

	VERY Important	MODERATELY Important	NOT Important	Not Sure
1. Businesses, public decision makers, the forestry community, and the public have the information they need to make informed decisions about the ecological integrity and sustainability of the resource.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
2. Contiguous blocks of forest and working lands remain intact to provide environmental benefits and ecosystem services.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
3. Landowners, resource professionals and the public understand that forestlands contribute to the protection, availability and sustainability of high quality, cost-effective drinking water.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
4. Healthy and sustainable urban & community forests support livable, desirable, and ecologically healthy communities.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
5. Residents and visitors support and understand the value of Rhode Island's forests: the benefits they receive from the forest; and the relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy, vibrant forest-based and tourism economy.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

<p>6. Privately owned forest lands are supported to remain working lands for landowner, community and state benefits.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 1</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 2</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 3</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 4</p>
<p>7. Rhode Island forests contribute to mitigation of global climate change, managed for resiliency to climate change with minimal adverse environmental and economic impacts.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 1</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 2</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 3</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 4</p>
<p>8. Rhode Island's forests are able to support healthy and sustainable populations of native plants and animals.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 1</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 2</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 3</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 4</p>
<p>9. Residents and local fire departments are prepared for wildfires through planning, implementation and response, reducing risks to people and structures; and protecting Rhode Island's forests and natural communities.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 1</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 2</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 3</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 4</p>
<p>10. Rhode Island citizens and professionals are well prepared to respond to threats from invasive species; supporting adequate monitoring, response plans and suppression programs to minimize the impact of invasive plants, insects and diseases.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 1</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 2</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 3</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> 4</p>

RESPONSE METRICS



Top Cities

Providence	14.46%	187
Wakefield	5.10%	66
Warwick	4.02%	52
Westerly	3.94%	51
Cranston	3.17%	41
North Kingstown	2.86%	37
Charlestown	2.71%	35
Newport	2.55%	33
Pawtucket	2.47%	32
Bristol	2.40%	31

Referrers

ridem.wufoo.com	20.73%	268
m.facebook.com	17.01%	220
turnto10.com	6.19%	80
www.facebook.com	3.94%	51
www.ri.gov	3.17%	41
com.google.android.gm	1.16%	15
charlestowncitizens.org	1.31%	17



As previously noted, 67% (863) of the respondents expressed one or more concerns, in 1,940 comments ranging from a single word to lengthy statements. As shown in the word cloud on solar was the most repeated word, after forest(s) and tree(s) were removed.

Solar: Discussed first simply due to the myriad comments (296) with 22% of the respondents expressing concern about solar fields. In fact, 15% of the total comments were related to solar fields, with some respondents specifically expressing support for green energy but dismay at the lack of state and local regulation or guidance.

Although renewable energy is important, I feel there is a quick push to clear lands (or use farmland) to install large solar field installations. Instead of losing green space, efforts should be made to integrate solar into newly built and already existing hard surface, industrial sites.

Clear-cutting for solar sites is very wrong. It permanently destroys the forest carbon sink and animal habitats migration paths. It creates heat islands, and water runoff conditions similar to parking lots. Solar power capture belongs on rooftops, brownfields, and other accessible locations.

Clear-cutting trees for solar farms. There should be a program similar to Massachusetts which promotes solar development on already developed land such as landfills and unused parking lots.

Concerned about loss of forested land to solar installations. I applaud the use of solar but feel that rooftops, urban settings, brown-fields, etc., are better choices than destroying existing wildlife habitat.

I am concerned about the cutting down of forest land for temporary solar wind sites. We are hurting the environment more by allowing these solar farm companies to clear cut forest and degrade wetlands for renewable energy. Removing the trees that capture CO₂ out of the air for a solar site that will last 25-50 years and then have a degraded site that will never be as it once was does not make any sense and is a very nearsighted economic take on overall climate change.

While I support the expansion of solar energy, I feel that the current incentive policy that encourages the establishment of solar arrays on clear-cut forests rather than on already developed sites will expand the loss of our forests.

We need stronger leadership on a state level on this issue and more tools and professional development for the folks who run the communities where the rampant deforestation is happening. The slick companies are coming in and writing ordinances to allow for all of this to happen.

No solar or wind project sprawl should be allowed without first addressing the reuse of properties within each community that are abandoned, contaminated, underused, or other. Siting these projects should be based on a two prong goal – reducing the carbon footprint and protecting green spaces in RI.

Clearing acres of mature forest habitat for solar arrays. We are losing valuable habitat to solar farms. Better zoning restrictions needed for this type of development.

This survey is to check Rhode Islanders input for solar panels.

Recent solar projects seem to involve them being built on forested areas, or farms and other areas that can easily be conserved instead. While I like the idea of alternative energy and ending our reliance on fossil fuels, solar panels ought to be built on less desirable land, like abandoned industrial zones, closed landfills, even brownfield sites if they no longer pose a threat to any workers involved in the area.

State policies (such as energy independence via solar) have been adopted without consideration for the actual effects, nor with the incentives to place commercial scale solar on brown fields or rooftops. This is DIRECTLY creating a flood of applications for solar installations on pristine lands, and within designated wetland borders as well. The result is acres of deforestation which is not a good trade-off for even something as positive as Clean Energy.

Though I wholeheartedly support the growth of the wind and solar industries, I am very concerned about the clearing of forest for these purposes and hope that state and local governments will pass legislation to protect forest from such development and guide this business to use of brownfields and rooftops for this. Let's have weaning off fossil fuels that is harmless to the environment.

I am concerned that the state legislature has incentivized solar exploitation of our borderlands forest while failing to incentivize solar on brownfields, defunct shopping centers, etc. etc.---- areas away from our western forest. Forest loss for solar, promoted by state subsidies rather than incentives for rooftop solar.

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Actions, Policy & Legislation: Comments regarding perceived legislative needs and actions by DEM. Respondents are looking to the State to act decisively, to DEM to act to protect the natural resources, and also see DEM as responsible to protect forested land.

My concerns are health and sustainability and the State's role in promoting the conservation and management of our forest resources to maintain and improve our quality of life.

I am concerned our state is not doing enough to protect and conserve our forests and woodlands.

I have been told by Audubon of RI that there needs to be more assessment of various forested lands to rank them as to which are most critical for ecosystem services and wildlife. which are most critical to preserve?

I'm concerned that there is no overarching plan in place to prioritize contiguous forest land in RI, especially Western RI, over other uses. In particular, I am concerned about the incentives for large-scale solar developers to use forested lands instead of already developed areas.

I am very concerned about the steady loss of our state's forests due to the lack of open space and a lack of a comprehensive policy to protect and promote forests. The lack of ecological diversity and older growth also puts RI at risk of a dramatic loss from an epidemic. It seems that real estate interests win over forests every time. Relying on philanthropy is not a policy.

There are no DEM laws that protect the inland forests... the only DEM regulations that protect forests are those related to wetlands.

Unlike Rhode Island wetlands, forests have no standing in the language of RI law.

No clear vision from state agencies. Conflicting regulations. Courts don't uphold state agency recommendations.

Anything the voters approve to bring in resources for the State of RI's forests will go into the general fund and not towards the forests.

Need to protect forest and other open space through fee title purchase or development rights.

The lack of funding for most general conservation activities due to the high tax rates, low wage scale in this state high welfare budgets and the fact that it ranks 50th in attracting good paying jobs and businesses will prevent any real changes in RI.

Focus on funding when money is already grossly misappropriated in the state is a misdirection of effort.

Level of competent administrators in our elected representatives to take any real action that in any way will affect their re-election.

The state does not actively protect - State guide plan not upheld

State funding going to support Land Trust purchasing of forested land, yet little to no, enforcement of development and adherence to the associated forest management plans (e.g. Coventry).

RI's forest areas of high conservation concern should be mapped and protected from development. Forests are a resource actively providing value to our communities but are not acknowledged as such across many levels of planning. Currently, there are not enough incentives and regulations in place to conserve core forest areas and other forest areas of high value to wildlife, water quality, air quality, and other provisions of ecosystem services.

A tax system is needed to create additional incentives to keep woodlands intact. Private owners of undeveloped lands should not be taxed at all. However, owners who destroy natural ecosystems need to be charged a large fee to do this.

Forest protection regulations need more emphasis when considering future commercial residential development. Money and Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, should not be the deciding factor in land use policy.

Farmland abandonment should involve mandatory set-aside for reversion to forest or lowland. House lots over ½ acre should include non-lawn requirements.

The lack of leadership by the State legislature is resulting in the continued loss of forest land through fragmentation, parcelization and conversion to other more intensive uses which threatens clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, conservation biodiversity, our economy and public health.

RI has no enforceable policies or programs to conserve forests, other than a small forest acquisition program, despite goals and policies in State Guide Plans that say RI should maintain forests.

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DFE and DEM capacity and funding: Some respondents recognize that both staffing and funding are needed to address their management concerns, and planning or information needs. To meet the many valid needs identified here, and in other themes, requires a commitment from the State to maintain sufficient staffing capacity. Otherwise, valid resource management needs remain unmet, planning capabilities are inadequate, and the not-entirely-unreasonable public expectations remain unaddressed.

Lack of financial support to sustain forest habitat.

I don't know how well the responsible departments, officials, employees are funded to do an adequate job.

Lack of DEM staff to achieve the mission.

Lack of DEM support for forest lands (staff reductions).

Staff for environmental programs so small they can only react to problem.

Our forested areas in RI need to be taken care of. SO MANY dead trees and brush on the forest floor. Terrible wildfire hazard. The State needs to hire many more DEM employees to address these issues.

DEM needs more resources to maintain the forests.

Seems to be no plan in RI as to how to manage forests.

Preservation of existing forest lands for recreational and wildlife purposes. As development claims remaining private woodlands and lots, the state preserves become even more important

Building of an Office Building by DEM on wetlands and a beautiful valued area of Arcadia -Browning Mill Pond. DEM should follow what would only be allowed by an individual. They are completely ignoring that both towns do not want it there. There are plenty of other better places.

I notice that the management of the state forest is very well done, and I want it to continue for the benefit of myself, my family and the community at large.

The lack of proper management by the State of our Woodlands.

Maintenance of state-owned lands could be improved. Little resources dedicated to preserving what we have.

Lack of state resources for managing forests and trees.

RI's forest managers (including DEM) need more funding for active forest management.

I hope the State DEM and local land trusts can continue to acquire open space, including forests.

No resources available for the management of state-owned forests.

I think much of my concerns would be rectified by adequate staffing of personnel to protect and oversee our forests.

Lack of forest stewardship on state lands and many land trusts.

Lack of funding and resources to adequately manage public forests (both urban and rural), assist private landowners, and increase the pace and scale of forest conservation efforts

Lack of management in state management areas.

There needs to be more funding in the state budget for environmental purposes. RIDEM has been neglected for far too long, especially by the current administration. We need to start protecting what is left that is not developed in this state.

Need to increase management of existing forests.

Lack of climate change leadership in DEM Forest Environment (not enough trained staff).

On a brighter note, I do think RIDEM does a great job trying to preserve as much land as possible.

Lack of program support to sustain forest habitat.

DEM does not have enough staff to do what they know how to do best. I am very sorry about that. What can I do to help?

###

Fragmentation & Development: Fragmentation (42 mentions), development (294) and solar were closely connected in the comments by many respondents. Concerns about the impact of development were tied directly to fragmentation and wildlife habitat. Numerous comments identified the need for planning, to manage development and prioritize areas of high environmental value, and for enforcing existing planning requirements.

Forest conservation should be embedded and enforced in local and state planning processes to minimize the amount of forest fragmentation caused by human development.

Concerned about the continuing loss and fragmentation of forest land that has negative impacts to the multiple benefits of RI's forests

Concerned about not enough forest acreage being preserved and protected from development.

Concerned about continued urbanization that reduces forested lands

Continued forest loss and fragmentation for short-term interests at a much greater long-term cost.

Encroachment by unregulated development that fragments species habitats.

Forest corridors are important for wildlife and quality of life. Fragmenting and or loss of forest land will be devastating for many species, animal and plant.

Fragmentation will limit the woodland's ability to adapt to changing climate, recover from insect damage and resist invasive. Protected parcels should be as large and connected as possible.

Fragmentation. The smaller our blocks of forest become, the less area-sensitive plants and animals they can accommodate. Additionally, the less large, intact forest we have, the greater the impact of numerous other threats to forest ecosystems (e.g. the proliferation of invasive and opportunistic native species that directly threaten or compete with at-risk species; overuse overharvesting, trampling or harassment of species, the introduction of diseases and novel pests because nowhere is inaccessible or remote enough to have little or no foot traffic; and on and on...).

Encroachment disturbances (physical, chemical, noise, light)

Need to not only protect forests but also build more contiguous protected areas for ecosystem flourish and wildlife corridors.

Maintaining natural, connected super-blocks that are unimpeded by roads for habitat and reforestation, as well as allowing solitude without sounds of cars, etc.

Highest possible use (economic) is often development. This threatens forest preservation.

I am concerned forest conservation is not considered a priority relative to generally unplanned development and short-term economic gain

I am concerned about the lack of policies and political priority to protect trees in urban and rural areas that are being threatened due to rapid development.

I'm concerned that poorly considered and unplanned development, in concert with our practice of zoning and land use planning done on a town by town basis (rather than statewide) is resulting in fragmentation of our forests and small, isolated pockets of forest land rather than large continuous tracts of forest land.

Loss of habitat including the pine forest extending from western RI into CT, the loss of meadows with native flora, and of marshland, and the associated losses of natural protections against flooding and erosion embodied by the interlocking roots systems of the forests, the loss of oxygen, and the unnecessary contribution to global warming as result of the release of carbon as by-product of deforestation.

Loss of habitat protection and benefits for the entire earth (including carbon sequestration, oxygen production, storm abatement, earth cooling temperature mediation).

Main concern: our natural landscapes including forests continue to diminish at the detriment of RI residents.

Loss of forests to residential, commercial, industrial development, including renewable energy development

Protection of forests from habitat loss and fragmentation so they may continue to provide ecosystem services, and simply for their Existence Value.

Loss of contiguous woodland for animal migration.

Contiguous lands should be preserved for habitat plus as migratory routes.

Can we conserve enough forested property to allow for connectivity for wildlife or are we only conserving small areas that are unconnected?

Maintaining open space.

Not enough corridors. Land is fragmented and where the animals can cross there are no speed bumps or warning signs to allow people to slow down. Maybe even incentivizing people to slow down with signs of the animals that are present and need to cross.

Forests provide critical habitat for wildlife. Less preserved space makes for more frequent encounters with wildlife in populated areas.

Fragmentation of forests and loss of wildlife habitat, especially large complexes of upland and wetland areas.

Development and the lack of funds to preserve intact forests.

Loss of forest will further degrade the habitat, carbon capture, cooling, airquality and ability to mitigate climatechange.

RI does not have a strategy for ensuring protected habitat corridors. We take for granted forest land that is in private ownership.

RI's forests are becoming increasingly fragmented and therefore less able to support wildlife and provide other ecosystem services.

RI lacks strength in legislation and in administrative procedures to partner with local communities to PROTECT, by mutual agreement, appropriate swaths of forested acreage. For example: it is pointless to have a Natural Heritage designation, or a Heritage Corridor named if that is meaningless to both the Towns and lacks review when development proposals arise.

I am concerned that the DEM Wildlife Action Plan, which should be the decisive reference in all local and statewide solar siting regulation is ignored. Too many town planners and town planning boards, and even conservation commissions, are totally unaware, ignorant of, the WAP and its accompanying Conservation Opportunity Areas mapping.

Fragmentation of habitat - a need for a comprehensive prioritization of sites for protection that will provide corridors connectivity for wildlife and also migration pathways for entire ecosystems as climatechange influences the distribution of certain species.

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Forest Health, Invasive Plants, Pests & Disease: Invasives, whether plants or pests were a common concern. The recent Gypsy moth infestation is still fresh in some people's minds. For some, the impact on ecosystem health was the main issue. For others, "caterpillars" or "invasives" said it all.

The invasive vegetation across Rhode Island is becoming more and more prevalent each year... I think the State needs to partner more with the private sector and get a handle on this.

Alteration of forest ecosystems by invasive plants pathogens.

Beetle infestations seem to be a problem in RI.

Concerned with too many dead trees from Invasive species- Gypsy moth.

Destruction through invasive species: emerald ash borer, woolly adelgid, bittersweet, knotweed.

Gypsy moths have killed many of our oaks. Other invasive pests such as the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian Long-Horned beetle seemed to be poised to make an appearance any day!

Invasive management around the state seems to be lacking a great deal.

Infestation of pests and invasive plants that contribute to creating stress on trees and plants that ultimately contribute to deforestation.

Oak mortality causing invasive succession.

RI needs to make an official invasive species list and a law that nurseries are not allowed to sell invasive plants.

Nurseries in RI are still selling noxious invasive plants. Other New England states have enacted legislation to prohibit the sale or transfer of *Euonymus alatus* (burning bush), various *Berberis* (barberry), *Ligustrum* (privet) etc. RI needs to follow suit.

Invasive species encroachment, especially around the edges of woodlands, both private and state-owned. With increased development comes an increase in the edges threatened by invasive plant species, and with time, these invasive species, at least some of them, will move into the interior of our woodlands. I wish there were the money to manage the Japanese Barberry I frequently see deep in the woods!

Monitor and control disease and invasive insect damage.

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Urban Forestry: Trees in urban areas need to be managed and planned; and preservation of trees and green space are valued.

Each town in RI should offer the same type of protection for its trees, via ordinance, from development.

It seems like a social norm that people cut down trees on their properties for the view, for safety reasons, etc. I live in a city and just in the 3 years I've been there trees have been cut down on adjacent properties with no replacement. There's less shade, and the greenery was nice to look at. I know this is true outside the city as well. How can we change this behavior?

Less, and less green spaces within urban settings. Houses with yards turned into multi family or commercial properties with paved lots.

Many of RI's cities and towns do not have any regulations about the removal of urban trees. Homeowners in my neighborhood have removed many old trees not because they were diseased but because the homeowner didn't like to deal with the leaves in the fall...

Need small suburban tree parks.

Need to plant more urban trees to ease air pollution and enhance living in urban areas.

New housing developments clear cut trees then replant small ones. How about planning the houses better and leaving lots of mature trees for enjoyment.

Providing natural shade to cool urban areas.

There are not enough urban greenspaces - trees, parks, forests etc.

Towns do not have enough acres set aside for wildlife. Small sections of greenspace when developing is not enough for the ecosystem.

Urban forests are poorly managed. Most cities and towns lack forestry programs while private sector tree planting and care is haphazardly and improperly applied.

Urban forests in places like North Kingstown are neglected. Roadside trees die and don't get replaced.

More funding and resources is needed for urban forestry programs to increase quality of life for our urban residents.

Lack of forcible legal protections on forests and trees specifically against various types of development.

Lack of a master plan for protection and growth.

Need more urban street trees - should be prioritized when considering projects for repaving renovation rather than being included as an afterthought.

Replacing large urban trees with small trees that will take many years to grow to provide the same ecosystem services as the trees they replace. Would like to see additional planting of trees in urban areas.

I feel the state and local city town governments do not preserve the forests well. Cranston in particular seems driven to develop every square inch of forested land.

Allowing forested areas to be developed for commercial and industrial uses rather than prioritizing development in urban areas that are already zoned for these uses and currently unused.

I am extremely concerned about the lack of funding for urban forests. Even those towns aware enough to want more trees have no support. Given the high density population of many towns, it is disconcerting to see long stretches of road without any trees at all. An easy solution would be to let the highway grass regions grow back naturally -- we shouldn't be spending precious budget funds on planting and cutting grass along highways. In towns, the state should provide steady support for tree planting, not grants given only to a few each year -- as if planting trees were a privilege as opposed to a civic duty.

How hard it is to get a street tree planted in Providence (our business has two ugly, dead trees now in tree wells). For all the talk about how valuable they are the city is very slow to commit any time money

Lack of forest and tree canopy in urban and suburban areas in RI

People cutting down trees on their property, particularly in urban areas.

Urban sprawl and poor land management (Lack of comprehensive plan or enforcement of comprehensive plan). For example - Citizen bank campus in Johnston involved clearing of forest and BJ's off of Atwood Avenue. Strive to find alternative sites where less clearing is needed. Reckless (short-term) behavior of RI planners and elected officials in regard to forests.

We need more trees in urban environments to lower temperatures and increase visual appeal.

More resources need to be put into the urban forest so we can restore the tree canopy and make a more healthy environment for all.

Development regulations in rural communities are poorly thought out, disorganized, or not enforced by the municipalities. Rules are too subjective to change ... to create any real, long term protections for forests.

We need to focus on investment in RI's urban areas to keep them healthy, attractive places to live.

Currently, RI municipalities discourage volunteer participation in urban forest support activities such as those RI Tree Council provides. Apparently volunteers are viewed as threats to public employees. There is more than enough work to go around. Some persuasion is needed to overcome this short-sighted resistance.

Depletion of healthy urban forestation to reduce the impact of heat island and aesthetic of nature.

I've never heard the term urban forestry before, but if it means having green spaces in cities I am absolutely for it. Blackstone boulevard was the only green space I had access to as a child in Woodlawn Pawtucket. That and the areas by the Blackstone river that had been abandoned due to the polluted water. Now that the bay and the river are cleaner, the land is being built on. Why wasn't this land made into actual parks?

lack of comprehensive plans to plant replant forests urban leading to forest fragmentation

Lack of permeable surfaces (streets, sidewalks, parking lots) limits urban forestry.

Stricter policies are needed to minimize impervious surface to free up space for tree planting sites.

Too few Urban trees in the less well to do neighborhoods in Providence.

Town planners and natural resource managers should have more education and awareness of the effects of invasive species on our trees and forests. It should be a priority to stop the spread of invasive vine species which are overwhelming our trees by climbing, shading, weighing down, girdling, strangling and killing them.

We need more trees in our urban areas to help cool our cities and provide natural areas for all RI citizens.

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Water: Water quality, both for drinking and for environmental and wildlife health, were noted concerns.

Clearing that results in erosion and impacted waters.

I have heard a rumor that buffers along streams are under consideration for shrinking. Terrible idea as our watersheds are being destroyed by climate change. Cold water ecologies are shrinking from the top down.

Keep invasive plants weeds out of our ponds and lakes.

Need to protect forests to protect ground water.

Protecting wetlands.

That we don't take care of our ponds and rivers. Some need some dredging that would have a positive impact on fish and wildlife.

The native freshwater fisheries need serious help. Surrounding areas have substantially healthier fisheries.

Woodlands need better protections against Urban and Solar sprawl. Upcoming amendments to freshwater wetlands act should have better ties to upland resources.

Contamination of rivers and streams due septic systems, industrial waste, over use of fertilizers and chemicals on lawns and gardens.

Not enough oversight on development too close to our drinking water supply.

Protection of vernal pool amphibians only focus on breeding ponds, need to protect 400 m wide buffer in upland forests.

That the fish ladder at Breakheart Pond is in total disrepair and needs to be rebuilt or replaced.

Waterquality as RI loses more forested habitat that provides buffers to our swamps and other wetlands.

Most of RI gets drinking water from the Scituate Reservoir. Adjacent forest land buffers pollution and helps preserve the quality of drinking water.

Areas along stream rivers, ponds lakes and wetlands should have a minimum of 20 to 40 feet of woods left adjacent to these bodies of water to help reduce unwanted sediments into these areas. Also having adequate trees near streams, rivers and wetlands help reduce over heating of these environments and to the invertebrates that live in these environments...

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Fire & Risk: Many respondents noted the amount of oak mortality and the increase in the risk of wildfire and tree failure or breakage.

I believe you need to get in there and clear-cut the dead standing trees in the Arcadia area from gypsy moths before a lot of those trees fall on cars as they rot over the years.

Current management of dead or dying trees connected to insect destruction. To create growing space for new tree growth and reduce risk of wildfire brush fires.

Dead trees and over accumulation of ground and ladder fuels. Oversupply of dead timber stands. I'll take care of it. Call me.

Manage older vulnerable trees for thinning prior to disaster or high wind events.

Die off of oaks, spruce. The forests are being decimated by pathogens and are losing biodiversity and resiliency. This seemed to catch the state by surprise and there was seemingly no effort to deal with them. I'm concerned in this regard about forest fires and downed trees on wires and roads.

I am concerned that there has been little to no action to remove gypsy moth kill trees especially in south county, Burlingame hunting area is loaded with them for example. Many dead rotting branches (widowmakers). I imagine they are becoming a fire hazard. Additionally they make great poles for poison ivy to climb.

... the fire roads such as Bald Hill Rd are not being maintained. In the event of a forest fire, there is no way to get fire trucks to the fire.

I hike daily in the Black Hut area in Burrillville. The last several years, between Gypsy moth caterpillars, droughts and the insects has caused a lot of trees to die. Definitely a safety concern on windy days for falling trees and limbs. With the right weather conditions I feel that the threat of fire is much greater than in years past with such a layer of a fuel source of dead timber on the ground.

I'm concerned about the number of trees that have been affected by gypsy moths and the invasive beetle. With a high acreage of tree mortality, it puts the state at an increased risk of wildfire and an increased risk of critical infrastructure failure if trees fall on power lines or along emergency evacuation routes.

The amount of dead trees and downed trees and their associated fire load.

We need to do more habitat enhancement. Let it be clear-cut or control burns. We need new growth.

Invasive species and loss of habitat and fragmentation, potential for forest fires due to increased fuel from damaged timber.

Potential for fire due to build up on forest floor.

My main concern has to do with the death of 1000s of oak trees from the caterpillar deforestation. I worry about trees falling on people and property, the lack of acorns for the deer, and just how terrible it looks.

Need to increase understanding of historical significance of fire and other disturbance patterns. Is there potential to learn from prescribed burning programs on west coast?

RI is doing nothing to clear the forest floor of dead trees and is potentially setting itself up for a major forest fire, the kind we see in California. We had one in the early '50 in Exeter and Coventry. Just drive around the Scituate Reservoir? Why can't we have a CCC program like those of the '30s when city kids were taken out of urban areas to work, learn and appreciate the forests in our state?

Safe removal of dead trees.

The current high level of dead and dying trees coupled with the unchecked growth of brush and small trees leaves the state in significant danger of an uncontrolled wildfire with probable impingement and damage to many rural and suburban homes.

The lack of deadfall cleanup creates potential for there to be a large-scale forest fire in the arcadia management area.

Vulnerability to wildfires.

...I live near Nature Conservancy land, and they manage their property in such a way that it is going to be vulnerable to a BIG forest fire if one starts.

Wildfire potential.

Although RI is not a state that is typically in danger of wildfires, the gypsomoth infestation of the last few years has left huge swaths of dead standing timber and tons of fuel on the ground.

Bring down half of dead trees for fire prevention.

EAB destruction and death of ash trees posing hazardous environments in parks and in urban areas.

Gypsy moths have done terrible damage to trees in many parts of the state. Lots of standing firewood that poses dangerous conditions along highways.

I don't see enough fire breaks in our forests, to prevent the spread of a large fire. When we do put breaks in,

Forest fire management.

Why can't we plant lanes of pollinator flora to help balance the ecosystem?

If there are many, many blown down trees I assume this will add potential fuel for any forest fire.

The number of dead trees along South County roads is a real problem - to the tourist economy, to storm related power outages and to public safety.

Protection of forest from fires.

Some of the bridges in Arcadia will not support the weight of fire trucks. I know some bridges were replaced, so maybe this is not a big a concern.

Standing dead wood. Fire Hazards.

We should implement control burns to keep fields and open spaces free from overgrowth

With so many dead trees, forests can pose a wildfire hazard. Not many Rhode Islanders are fire-savvy. For example, cigarettes go out the car windows and land along the roadside where dry tree needles and leaves gather. Fireworks go off all summer long!

Wondering if deadfall is being cleared. RI had some devastating forest fires in the 1930s.

Will wildfire become more frequent as the urban wildland interface grows, as the climate warms, and organic matter builds up due to fire suppression to protect spreading homes?

As a Firefighter, access to forest land is important. Clear road trails and DEM's forestry program need to be high priorities.

Dead trees standing, with possibilities of brush fires, or trees falling on power lines or people.

Need preventative forestry wildfire breaks.

Safety of community from falling dead trees.

Potential danger of wildfires to homes, wildlife and of course, people.

###

Deer & Wildlife: The importance of wildlife (179) habitat was a common comment, but overgrazing by deer (36) on forest understory plants was a noted concern for forest health.

I am concerned about deer pressure on the under story of forests. Must do something about the high deer population.

I'd like to see more wildlife surveys done in our state managed forests.

Concerned about all native pollinators.

If you need to control some populations (e.g. deer) get predators into these forests.

RIDEM refusal to extend the deer season to help alleviate the browsing that prevents regeneration after a log harvest.

Overabundant deer.

Protection and maintenance of forests so they may continue to support sustainable populations of all native wildlife, both game and non-game.

At a F&W regulations meeting a prominent woodland group complained about the overabundance of deer on their land, but they didn't allow or have a way to qualify and allow hunters to help with the problem and were seeking financial assistance, which seems extremely inefficient when we have willing and able hunters who would pay for the license and tags, and help out too. Can we create a way to connect our hunters to landowners whose forests would benefit from browse reduction, which would benefit both groups?

Alteration of forest ecosystems by overpopulation of deer.

Deer overpopulation affecting forest regeneration.

In addition to preserving existing forest, there needs to be more effort put into reclaiming unused cleared land (e.g. abandoned farms) for early successional forest to encourage the rebound of the New England Cottontail rabbit.

Limited deer hunting, not enough hunting to control the herd

RIDEM refusal to issue deer damage permits to forest owners. Trees are an agricultural product as well as corn and tomatoes. The difference is the length of time between harvests. One year for corn and alfalfa, ten or twelve years forest products

The overpopulation of deer are eating everything in sight. Our forests are being denuded of their understory plants.

Maintain and protect wildlife corridors.

Unregulated outdoor lighting (light pollution) affects wildlife habitats. Care should be taken to use the right amount of proper lighting on properties and communities close to our forest land, and throughout the state. Especially concerning is the proliferation of LED technology, which emits strongly in the shorter wavelengths, known to disrupt biological processes.

Forest age diversity. Some species such as American woodcock and Ruffed Grouse depend on younger forests. I am concerned that there is not enough habitat for these species.

our native wildlife is being pushed further and further out of their natural home habitat and then the uneducated are scared, bothered by or uneducated when these animals show up in their backyard.

Deer - the automobile accidents, tick borne disease, & damage from over browsing are all concerns enough to warrant population management strategies.

Deer and other animals preventing forest regeneration.

Deer browse and invasive species.

Deer overbrowse.

If deer are a threat to forest health, allow more hunting: increase bag limit for either gender, allow sale of venison.

RIDEM foresters are trying to manage forests to keep deer hunters happy, not with the goal of a vibrant, healthy forest. More than 15 deer per square mile does not make for a healthy forest.

The detrimental effect of the excessive deer population on our forested lands. DEM F&W managing deer to the maximum carrying capacity, with no regard to the environmental effects of over browse by high deer numbers.

The overpopulation of deer which is causing deforestation and an eco-imbalance with the wildlife population.

Overpopulation of deer decimating native vegetation

There are many species of wildlife that depend on contiguous stands of forest for their survival. It would be a shame to lose these species in the future.

###

Private Land Management: Comments regarding the Farm, Forest and Open Spaces Act (FFOS) or the need for assistance to maintain working lands, shows the significance of private land management and ownership concerns.

Active management by private and public forest owners is essential to passing down healthy forests to future generations.

... the current strategy is rapidly progressing to be insufficient at best to manage Rhode Island's forests. Education, tax relief and support are all the usual ways of dealing with this problem. But they pale in comparison to large-scale solar farm companies or housing developments dangling bucketloads of money in front of an aging landowner population tired of managing their lands. The younger generation's care and connection of their parent's woodlot is not as strong as the older generation. Time and time again, I've personally seen the carving up of agricultural land, forest land for housing and solar fields. The money is just too great to ignore. However ... I believe partnerships are key to changing the eventual trajectory of our forests. And I believe that more has to be done.

Farm, Forest, Open Space program is a good start, but promoting forest management through outreach at the state level should be a priority.

I found the legislation that was introduced by the Audubon Society in the past legislative session very troubling. As a land owner I maintain and pay taxes on my forestry property in compliance with existing state DEM regulations. I feel any more impingement on control of my property is an overstep by the government. So as I respect rules to protect forest open space, it is my property. If the state is interested in keeping more land undeveloped, it is their responsibility to purchase the land, not impose restrictions on land that is privately owned.

I own 10 acres of undeveloped forested land and I never know where to go to find out what resources would be available to help maintain it. Are there best practices that landowners can follow?

I am concerned that the majority of open forest land that is not owned by the state will be slowly chipped away at. It is a RI landmark and is what makes RI special

Land owners selling off part of their property to developers because they need the money.

Forested areas are getting smaller and smaller.

Provide homeowners of smaller forested land resources and management help.

I have found there is assistance for large property owners, but none for homeowners who wish to clear invasive & plant appropriate, beneficial, native species. A program offering small grants would be a huge help.

Lack of careful integration of forestry and farm programs for management of land.

Large family tracts need to be supported in any way that allows private ownership of intact parcels. Income production and tax support. The next generation of Rhode Islanders can have trouble when grandparents die.

We're losing forested land. I pay big taxes on my land and I understand why people subdivide.

Many forest land owners own small parcels, and are not eligible for FFOS, therefore do not receive incentives to manage their forest. This should be especially emphasized on parcels that are contiguous with well-managed forest land.

I'm keeping my land as native and untouched as possible for the benefit of wildlife (lots of development around me). Are there any resources for that as well?

Lack of info about the FFOS.

Lack of outreach forest management programs for landowners. There seems to be no coordinated outreach efforts to work with local forest. Also, outreach to public about the values of forests.

Landowners are being told they can't cut trees or clear land if they want to. The reason should be irrelevant.

I have a forest plan and I am trying to follow it and DEM is working against the stated aims of my forest plan by putting up obstacles to its activities. Primarily by not allowing implementation of path creation by denying the harvesting of trees. Making land ownership cost effective, productive, and affordable

Need tax breaks for forest preservation.

Source of income for farm program should be broadened to be more inclusive of non-consumptive uses.

Funds and incentives for property owners to maintain raw land.

Lack of stewardship by landowners.

###

Climate change: Respondants had questions and concerns about the impact of climate change (92) and the need to maintain forests to help mitigate the impacts.

In 50 years, the climate here will be similar to the present climate in the Carolinas. How will climate change damage and alter our forests?

Adaptability and vulnerability to climate change! We need to think of forests as a climate strategy.

Between pests, pathogens, and climate change, many of the component tree species are in steep decline. What trees will be left to form the forests of the future? Those forests will certainly be very different.

Climate change puts all forests at risk, but I am particularly concerned about the northwestern pine forest being fragmented by landowner development, it's so vulnerable already.

Climate change, especially increasing air and water temperatures, aiding in the spread of invasive, pests, and diseases.

Climate emergency impacts - sea level, wind, degradation of soil, temperature conditions for growth

Devastating impact of climate change on health of our forests.

I'm concerned that this entire state might be underwater in 50 years and nobody of prominence and authority seems to share my concern. Cities and towns are still building along the waterfront with no mention of climate crisis.

I'm passionate about climate change and think the state needs to much more aggressively expand renewable energy AND protect forests.

Climate change will inevitably negatively impact forest land, which will, in turn, speed up the worsening of climate change.

I'm concerned about loss of forested lands and the impact that may have on carbon sequestration and climate change issues generally.

Manmade climate change is a hoax.

With impending climate change, what are we doing to reforest areas of RI? Further, what can be done by civilians to help, and is there public outreach available?

Climate change - we need forests to partially offset rising temperatures, help to preserve precious groundwater resources and wildlife.

###

Education/Knowledge: Education, or the lack thereof, received some attention as a way to develop support and improvement for forests.

I feel that homeowners need much more education and support regarding the importance of growing and maintaining the urban forest for purposes of mitigating climate change.

Perhaps environmental organizations could do even more to provide educational opportunities to the public and help them see the benefits of prioritizing greenspace and forested lands in particular.

There is a critical need for educating ourselves on why we need our forests and specific practical things we can do to protect them.

Education to our youth on the importance of forestry land and how to protect it.

Lack of knowledge and involvement by citizens.

People do not value forests and the conservation of them; there needs to be more environmental education in schools and for the general public.

Public misinformation about what are best forestry practices.

What are we teaching our kids in schools about biodiversity issues? This should be part of the curriculum in each grade so that children will be stewards of the Earth, not destroyers of the ecosystem.

Educating land trusts & local organizations to best forestry practices, how to maintain successional growth, and practical ways to deal with overwhelming invasives that now help support some species

I'm concerned that most Rhode Islanders are poorly informed about the value of forest ecosystems.

Invasive plant species. How to control and bring awareness to the public so good decisions are made when planting.

Kids (and adults) spend more and more time indoors or, if outdoors, in highly managed activities that take place in highly managed zones (playgrounds and athletic fields, campgrounds, or developed trails). Who will be the conservation advocates in the next generation if we don't think of ways to get people out into forests?

Lack of public knowledge of the benefits (including psychological) of green spaces.

###

Messaging gaps and opportunities: Some comments indicate messaging or educational opportunities.

Logging state forests and what I believe is a lack of minimal cleanup of forest floor after the logging contractor is finished harvesting the timber. This is a small state and the logger's activity is seen by many people trying to enjoy the local forests. More effort should be taken to be more thorough at the end of each logging contract. Also, it would be helpful to the lay person to post more information at each logging site i.e. typical logging practices, length of project, how long before the area affected will look more natural. Most forest users are not well informed on modern logging practices. Many people I know are upset with the appearance of a logged area (Carolina Mgmt. Area) after the contractor left.

Very concerned about the death of so many trees in the past two years. Can't the state do more to control Gypsy moths and the Two-lined Chestnut Borer? The state needs to be more proactive in getting information to property owners on how to protect their forest.

Is there a program to thin out thick forest growth? I see lots of old, sick and broken trees when I travel in western RI, which indicates that our forest resources are poorly managed.

Pressure to sell off state forest land to balance the budget.

We seem to very easily allow people to cut down our forests and ruin our wetlands that are supposed to be protected. Even if you try to call attention to it there is so much red tape that half a forest is destroyed before it gets stopped.

Where does the wood and funds go from management of Providence water supply lands as well as management areas?

People in Chepachet area seem to be allowed to clear cut many acres at a time without permits, repercussions

I am concerned that the results of this survey will be used to support a preservationist agenda (i.e. woodland protection bill). We need to promote a sustainable local forest product economy so that RI's privately owned forests can be economically viable enough so that they are not lost to residential development.

I think we should be sprayed when needed, caterpillars really do a # on trees of with a non-toxic spray.

I am concerned the Arcadia State Forest is not being maintained properly. In Exeter, RI, many trees were clear-cut on Summit Road and left on the ground.

Fires anywhere else in the country are legal outside fire bans when dry, even in the deserts. Why can you not have a fire? Do you truly understand how hard it is to start, never mind spread, a fire here in Rhode Island when compared to other parts of the country? I'm not ignorant or unknowing either. I'm an eagle scout and have traveled the country and some parts of the globe. I have back country camped in many places. I've made fire in a rain storm, as a test in scouts. Nowhere I have been is it as hard to make fire as it is here. Allow fire as back country sites. I'm not talking about a beach fire at beach pond. DEM just needs to be capable of making judgment calls. Educate them.ound a fuel for wildfires.

I was concerned when the DEM didn't put up a bigger fight when the state tried to dump a power plant next to the George Washington management area.

I am quite concerned about the recent defoliation of the thousands of trees due to the recent caterpillars. How will DEM address the many blow downs to come?

I never heard publicly why Carolina Management Area South was deforested to the extent that it was. Hopefully there was solid husbandry practice behind the cutting.

The oaks are dying at an alarming rate. Sudden Oak Death is to blame, I am told. Is there a solution? Is anyone trying to find one?

Despite what URI says, old man's beard is also killing trees. They say it only attacks already sick trees. If you live in the woods, you'll note the exact opposite. Perfectly healthy trees get the beard and then they die. The so-called experts should get the heads out of the sand and find a solution instead of denying the truth.

Should dead trees be cut down and burnt to stop the spread of the Chestnut Borer, or other destructive organisms?

I am disturbed by the lack of nontoxic options for pest control. If invasions such as gypsy moths etc. represent an imbalance, fix the balance.

###

Other valid comments: Comments and observations for consideration.

Concerned that people see trees areas and think they are protected open space. They may not be. Someone owns the land we need to make sure we protect it from over development.

We own a forest and are happy to be good stewards. I'd like to see the state increase funding to buy properties as open space (some towns can't afford to do this, and land ends up as solar usage.) Forests need protection but we can't expect individual property owners to bear the burden for all.

Forests are an invaluable complex resource and asset essential as wildlife and human habitat, as watershed, global warming moderating variable, and repository for science and environmental health that is under threat from development.

Forests are a valuable asset to the state and the landowner. The landowner's rights over the agricultural silvicultural use of private property should take precedence over the communities wishes and desires.

Forests cannot be replaced once gone and I feel we need to preserve those we have for our recreational enjoyment, their benefit to the environment in releasing oxygen and absorbing CO₂, and also since they are home to so many wonderful wild species who share our state

Trading forest land for commercial-sized renewable energy facilities (e.g. solar arrays). We need BOTH to fight climate change so major green energy projects should instead be sited on old quarries, brownfields, etc.

Considering the air quality and water quality issues we're already experiencing in our state, we need to protect forest and native landscape from development. Forests help purify our air and water. Plants release oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide, absorb dust particles and reduce air pollution.

Deforestation and tree cutting for urban suburban development generally follows economic patterns and the building and housing markets. I want to know more about how we're dialing up conservation efforts in these key times.

I am concerned that forest land is significantly undervalued; it is not accorded sufficient value for its contribution to climate, to recreation, to tourist business, to wildlife, to habitat diversity, to quality of life.

Small parcels of forested land not qualified for funding for purchase, cumulative importance.

I have heard quite often lately that one of the best ways we can fight climate change is to plant and preserve trees. Existing forests should be treated as special to RI as Narragansett Bay.

Development pressure on forests has always made finding economic uses of standing forests a priority. For a while, development pressure was irresistible. Just as we were getting out the message that rural residential subdivisions are bad for towns and young people were choosing to live in urban communities and the pressure from large lot residential development was abating, along comes solar. Now with solar, there seems to be no way we can possibly come up with uses for standing forests that could possibly compete. What are we going to do to encourage people to save forests?

Farmers and other large land owners falling for the idea that using or clearing their land and placing solar panels on the property is good for the environment. People need to be aware of the great importance of trees to the environment (and their role in sequestering carbon!).

NON-FORESTED areas are creating water run-off problems, soil erosion, and loss of natural ground cover that wildlife welcomes. Need more conservation spaces around the state that are off limits to development.

Rural forest land quality is deteriorating as fragmentation, invasive, pests and the effects of warming climate go largely unchecked. As forest resources continue to decline it will have a domino effect on water, soil and wildlife resources.

Do good husbandry of existing conservation and open spaces to welcome the visitors to areas, perhaps promote features in schools. Start young, to promote wetlands, conservation lands, and forests free from developers.

Forest ecosystems should be given the same degree of priority and financial resources as that of commercial.

Forest carbon sequestration, oxygen generation and flood mitigation benefits need to be highlighted when considering forest loss.

Forests are a carbon sink, and RI will have trouble meeting air quality goals if forests are lost.

Our forested areas contribute to the appeal of our state adding to its desirability attracting visitors and contributing to our tourism industry.

The beauty of our state depends on the beautiful forests in our state. With tourism an important industry for the state, the depletion of forests will hurt this vital industry.

Intact and managed woodlands are good for tourism alongside multiple other uses.

With tick borne illness on the rise, people are afraid to go in the woods. We need to advance our public health system re: tick borne illness so that people have a positive relationship with the woods, and not a fear-based one. The more that people love the forest the more they will care about what happens to it. There is not a shared sense of stewardship among Rhode Islanders about the need to protect and preserve our forest land (public and private) and with a lack of care, developers are welcomed to do what they want.

Is there ANYWHERE we can go where we can get away from sound pollution light pollution? I don't believe there's anywhere left in RI or even on the east coast where you're not within the earshot of an airplane corridor or a train or a highway. In the same vein, the east coast is so light polluted, we can't see the Milky Way. Why isn't this of value?

We are losing all the ecosystem services that come from large tracks of preserved forest. Number 1 service is sufficient and clean water. No 2 loss of biodiversity that starts with native plants on forested land.

Without education and awareness, the public will not vote for measures where dollars are needed to provide effective planning, implementing policies and proper management of our forests as well as the wildlife, birds, bugs, plants that we are so quick to poison, kill, etc.

Forest health, primarily as a result of the loss of diversity and the imbalance caused by the introduction of numerous non-native plants and animals to the system and compounded by the stresses of a changing climate. Climate change is an enormous issue with few clear actions that managers can take, so reducing the compounding threats is paramount.

###

The relatively high number of recreation-related comments were provided by fewer respondents than, for example, solar or fragmentation. The majority of comments are included here due to their variety and conflicting concerns, and the fact that multiple DEM divisions are responsible for various management areas, access and enforcement (making addressing issues in a comprehensive manner state-wide, with economic efficacy, significantly more challenging).

Recreation: Comments about recreation were the most varied of any theme, from increased access/management, signage/maps, off-road use, enforcement, dogs, and trash.

I'm concerned the DEM does not have the resources (read: money) to adequately manage the fine state-owned woodlands we are fortunate to have. Hunting-related funds help a lot but increasing recreational use will require increasing recreational funds.

The lack of DEM officers to respond to calls when something is going on.

The use of state forests being used as a dump site for garbage

Access to RI forests does not seem like a high priority. Arcadia and other areas are run down and seem neglected. We have some beautiful areas that need to be managed better so the public can enjoy them better. (Hiking Camping, Hunting)

Allow off-road vehicles to ride in Big River and other areas, not everywhere but motocross is a great sport for kids and needs to be made legal.

Biggest concern is the lack of resources going toward enforcement. People can, and do whatever they please in state management areas - including driving their motor vehicles, fires, littering etc.

Conservation by all user groups and have limited access for off-road motorcycles like most other states have. By acquiring funding that is available and currently being misused.

Control of anti-hunters during legal hunting season.

Goddard Park has massive erosion along the banks.

I don't like hunting and ATVs. They disturb me when hiking and they are detrimental to wildlife.

I am concerned that trail heads do not have trash barrels for hikes and hunters to use when finishing a day in the woods. Often, we find a lot of trash and debris and it could definitely be improved on.

Continue to promote use of natural areas by the public. If the public enjoys, uses and appreciates these areas they will want to protect them from development.

I am concerned about garbage left behind at recreation spots.

Continued access by the public. I'm concerned that specific groups frustrated by different types of recreation could cause trail closures. E.g. I lived in CA for years and much of the single track ridden by mountain bikers is now closed, much of which is due to some bikers taking advantage but mostly because very wealthy people with influence worked to get those trails closed.

Continued access for non-motorized use for recreational purposes of Rhode Islanders. It seems RI is far behind other states in managing its land to encourage recreational use while at the same time educating use in a sustainable manner. Many states have trail maps and trail names at the entrance of the trails to orient its new users.

Degraded parks.

DEM requests mostly deflected or, from my perspective, not much consideration given before the answer no to nearly every request for land access or use.

Easy access to forest areas.

I am concerned about the trash and dumping of waste that I see at trail heads and access points into RI forest lands.

Lack of awareness of general RI resident of nearby parks and forests. Snake Den in particular. There are no maps, scant signage.

I don't feel as if people who litter and are disrespectful to the environment or the creatures in it, are held accountable for their actions. Tough fines, community service restoring cleaning up our forest areas would be appropriate.

Access for motorsports.

I'm concerned the tourist or people not from here will ruin it via trash and misuse. Patrol is needed at heavy traffic locations.

I have seen some areas become dumping grounds for people which is really sad, especially in the Big River area. I am grateful to the organizations that try to clean it up.

Many recreational areas are full of illegal dumping grounds for trash and other items. These need to be cleaned up. Like the one about a quarter mile in the woods from Zeles bridge in Coventry and the Big River areas.

I am very much in favor of continued and potentially greater access for use by off-road motorcycles. Particularly by organized clubs like the Rhody Rovers MC and the RI Trials Club. I have been riding my motorcycles in RI forests since 1973 and would like to be able to continue doing so and for future generations to also have the opportunity to ride single track in the Rhode Island woods.

I enjoy mountain biking and do so mostly at Big River & Arcadia Management Areas. Many people enjoy the trails, whether it be biking, hiking or just walking the dog. Also, the many bodies of water provide enjoyment by canoe, kayaks & fishing. These areas need to be protected from commercial development.

Having actual, official marked trails would help draw more visitors and boost the economy in the surrounding area. Visitors spending money on supplies for their activity, places for multi-night day stays, dining out, etc. would all help build a recreational ecosystem.

I enjoy trail riding in Big River and Arcadia as well as kayaking the local rivers, ponds and lakes.

I regularly hike in the forest area surrounding Spring Lake in Burrillville. It is a beautiful area. However, there are several large discarded motor vehicle parts there: axles, body work, etc. of particular concern is a vehicle which appears to have been buried there quite some time ago. God only knows what the car is doing there or why it was buried. Only the roof hatchback area is slightly exposed. I think it would be work law enforcement investigating and having it removed for environmental reasons.

Loss of older forest tracts for game management like in the Great Swamp Management area. It seems there are plenty of fields and younger forest compared to older forest.

Poor marketing of available hiking trails. DEM trails and trail maps don't include many of the hiking trails in the forested areas we have available.

We need those parking spots for our personal safety, whether physical or item related.

Keeping trails open and access parking for horseback riders.

I would like to see guided tours of restricted areas; for example, the Scituate reservoir.

I think that we need to increase the visibility and number of the land managers rangers out on trails and in the most publicly used areas, in a year-round type role. Not enough positive presence means that users and user groups make their own rules and ruin the overall experience for everyone. A positive role model is the best fit, but some policing would also help.

I would like to see better communication between user groups and DEM, and between each other.

I would like to see them shared equitably for recreational use by a wide variety of groups including hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians etc. I would also like to see more of the trails blazed properly as other states do. I think this will bring more people comfortably into the woods.

I'm observing an increase in littering in forests on state parks and management areas (Lincoln Woods, Big River) both around parking areas, forest entrances, and on hiking trails.

It is important to maintain access for hunters and fishermen. Much of the land was acquired using Pitman Robinson Funding and the continued use will bring in additional dollars to maintain areas.

I've been taking the kids on nature walks lately. It's helping them get a sense for the importance and beauty of the natural world. I find the trails are pretty narrow in places and I spend way more time trying to keep the kids away from poison ivy than doing anything else.

Lack of parking at state locations. Lots of Big River parking spots have been blocked off to where you must park on the road risking your vehicle in an accident, risking yourself getting hit, exposing to non-hunters, anti-hunters, and other hunters your location which could get your vehicle damaged while in the woods, stands and/or cameras stolen. Those little parking spots I know attract mischief like illegal trash dumping.

Lack of access to state land for hunting and fishing.

I think recreational vehicles should be allowed on paths of different skill levels should be allowed. That is how some people enjoy the outdoors.

No place for off-road riding. I'd recommend an exterior trail around the boundary of a forest and reverse direction every year

Lack of facilities for trash disposal at recreation sites.

Preserving and maintaining current land for open using including hiking, fishing, hunting, and other activities.

Lack of trail maintenance.

Lack of usage allowed on state owned property,

Loss of hiking horse riding trails.

Not enough open area parks in the center of the state.

Main concern right now are all of the dead trees as a result of the gypsy moth caterpillars. I live around the corner from state owned Dawley Park in Richmond where close to 50% of the trees are now dead and losing their bark. I travel Dawley Park Rd twice daily, and many dead trees line the road. I contacted RI DEM state park division a few months ago regarding this matter, as I feel it is a public safety issue. I did not receive a response. I am terrified that someone is going to be killed by a falling tree or branch. A large branch broke off last week that certainly could have hurt someone badly if the timing had been so. I implore you to please have Dawley Park Road looked at. Once you get about a third down the road, there are more dead than live trees.

Maintaining shared of interest access for hiking and mountain biking along with other activities.

Working with hunting and equestrian to make trail systems accessible to all residents.

Motorized vehicles on hiking biking trails. They do incredible damage and are not conducive to the peaceful setting hikers, bikers, fishing, hunters are looking for. That being said, I hope you can find areas for them to enjoy, that they can claim as their own.

The limiting of access to certain user groups that do no harm and actually perform trails maintenance to help limit impact to the environment. Mountain biking.

My number one concern is the general impression that the state of RI, through its policies and implementation by the DEM have little interest in people using the forests for recreation outside of a few parks where activity is contained. In the larger, more remote areas activity policies discourage building or maintaining access. Why not allow signage on trails?

Hunters are easily frustrated with people who walk dogs and mountain bike during hunting seasons. They are very close to the main trails and often feel that making threatening comments are the answer.

Bicycling is a healthier activity than horseback riding. Because horseback riding is a wealthier activity it is given preference over cycling. Cycling is an affordable use of public lands

RI really has a vibrant mountain biking community with some fantastic trail networks. It would be awesome to see RI exploit the bike tourism opportunity by creating maps, signage, and formalizing the trail centers. There are some great examples around the country (Marquette trails in MI, Sedona AZ, Burke VT, etc.

I frequently visit other states that have far more active programs to promote outdoor activity on forested lands. There are active partnerships between the state and various outdoor groups to build and maintain trails for hiking and biking and other uses. From what I have seen in RI this is virtually non-existent. The only cooperative relationship I have seen is between the AMC and some parks to the exclusion of other groups and activities. As AMC membership continues to decrease and the average age of their members continues to increase, the trails fall into greater and greater disrepair. Trails that were in decent shape five years ago are in poor shape now. Trails that were in poor shape five years ago barely exist today. Through its policies, the State of RI gives the appearance that they are happy with this situation.

Not enough access to public for recreational use.

Poor marketing of available hiking trails. DEM trails and trail maps don't include many of the hiking trails in the forested areas we have available.

Should be more flexible for ALL user groups to share the land.

That management is a regular occurrence to protect from invasive species, wildfires, litter, and trails mapped and maintained with signs.

That the Big River Area remain open and undeveloped.

That the roadways to and through the forests are not adequately maintained.

My biggest concern is access, I ride a mountain bike and want to know that I can use the existing trails that are in place.

I'm afraid that Ri's corrupt government is going to take away great hiking fishing spots, and that my kid isn't going to be able to enjoy these activities like I was able to.

Would love to see RI embrace outdoor recreation in the State Forests robustly and in wooded State Parks as well (Lincoln Woods etc.).

A leave no trace policy. Heavy fines for dumping and polluting.

Why doesn't RI allow off-road vehicle use?

Concerned overpromotion of forests will encourage more mass population to visit leading to damage to the forest and the experience it provides.

The mountain bikes are destroying the ground floor, causing washed out paths, killing native trout in streams that had them for many years, silt washing into our rivers and streams. They are cutting down small trees, illegally building new paths and pushing wildlife into roads and out of their habitat. Also bike paths are being built on and around our beautiful rocks and overlooks killing off the protected Lady Slippers. **THEY HAVE TO STOP ACTING LIKE ITS OK BECAUSE ITS HEALTHY TO RIDE BIKES IN OUR PARKS! ALSO STOP SELLING OUT OUR PARKS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO ALLOW IT TO HAPPEN!**

Trail maintenance for hiking and mountain biking (bridges over marsh areas, etc.).

Access to saltwater right of ways.

Acquire funding available to maintain and manage forestry for ALL user groups to share and enjoy, to include motorcycles.

Adequate space for all to enjoy.

All User groups should be held accountable for regular maintenance,

ATV damage and trespassing are damaging to open space.

ATVs and jeeps and trucks tearing up the forest, when hiking or mountain biking. I want to hear and see animals, not dirt bikes and people in jeeps partying.

I would like to see more woods open for outdoor activities like hiking and running.

Hunting, fishing access and education for the next generation.

I am concerned about the level of trash found along hiking trails and in public parklands.

Lack of hunting access - Organizations like the Aquidneck Land Trust do a great job protecting land but allow no access for hunting.

Our forests provide great recreational purposes that do not harm the environment with hiking and biking.

Forest bathing is a new form of outdoor recreation that should be promoted by DEM. You could set up stations in the woods with Adirondack chairs made from local lumber (you would probably have to bolt or chain them down). Forest bathing should be part of the great outdoor pursuit.

Create more backcountry camp sites in the state. There are some great public sites, but they are often overcrowded. I would love to see more remote, hike in, leave-no-trace sites in the area. Ideally even create a reservation system so I know my group can have privacy and enjoy the remote areas.

I'm concerned about access for mountain biking, hiking, and recreation.

Increasing amount of garbage left behind, especially broken bottles.

DEM recently allowed a motorcycle event in Carrs Pond Big River, on trails that mountain bikers and hikers maintain and care for. In one day, they did unfixable damage to those trails. Again, not against moto, just need to give them their own space and keep it limited to there.

Effects of overuse esp. off-road vehicles.

For the funding questions with the public. We need more hunters investing in licenses tags and stamps. If the general public gets involved, they create a non-hunting animal sanctuary for the mountain bikers and city hikers. We need less of that.

Forestry use is aimed towards hunters, not hikers. I have called the DEM to make sure I'm not taking my children hiking during hunting season. Very hard to read that guide document schedule for the negative hunt season. The guide is very pretty, though, now.

I am concerned about disputes over access. I believe that hikers, hunters, cyclists, etc. could all share the forests together and enjoy them.

Open the forests to 4x4 Overlanding groups. They are self-governed and take it upon themselves to organize clean-up runs and often maintain the trails for free. This is particularly good if DEM resources are low.

RI needs to follow the example of other states and develop a trail marking system to encourage use by the public and to aid emergency services in their search for persons in need of help.

Not enough recreation opportunities in existing forests. Would like to see recreation expanded to off-road vehicles.

Public access. We should have more access to state owned lands for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and limited motorized vehicle use. Public access creates more interest.

I think some user groups activities are damaging to our forests and not properly monitored or controlled.

I'm not familiar with many forested recreational trails nearby to me. Maybe that's because not many exist, or because they are not well-advertised. Seems like the areas I know are quite small and fragmented.

It is quite unbelievable that RI has not allotted an area for recreational vehicles to be utilized. RI has thousands and thousands of acres of land that could be used, and it would take very little land and resources to make a place. They could post signs to alleviate liability and the public would be responsible for their access, self-enforcement and sanitation. We're going on 40 years of unnecessary and unfair restrictions.

Lack of access to areas for recreation.

Lack of maintenance and upkeep in general at recreation sites and on trails

Lack of publicly accessible land for ATV use

Making trails or areas that are available to hunters more clearly marked. We have been hiking and found hunters involved in a hunt and there was no clear sign stating they were actively hunting. I propose a sign that can be flipped or placed on the trail head sign to make other aware that the area is not only a hunting ground, but hunters are actively hunting at this time. It would have to be required that the hunters place sign up as part of their responsibility to safety.

Maintaining trails, but also making sure people are respecting spaces, especially public spaces. The amount of dog poop one can find along many trails is disheartening (and gross)

Motorcycle use creates significant damage to the trails in the woods for both hikers and mountain bikers. Motorcycles should have a dedicated area and should be kept out of the other areas.

Need to maintain forest for rural recreation such as hiking paths.

No RV trails for off road vehicles

That our management areas not be overrun by the myriad of activities allowed in them.

A complete listing of saltwater access points

Preserved for recreation, including motorized such off-road motorcycles.

Overly strict fur trapping regulations look to be based on mis-disinformation making it extremely difficult for recreational trappers to aid in wildlife conservation and management.

The use of fireworks in heavily wooded forested areas.

Pedal-assist ebikes should also be allowed in the areas. These types of ebikes do no more wear on trails than normal bikes and both are less than the equestrians. By allowing pedal-assist bikes, it opens up the opportunity for those which may otherwise not be able to ride (disabilities, older people, etc.) access to them.

People with dogs off their leash.

Trash. I believe in carry in, carryout. But most of the time it is teenagers (under aged drinking) leaving beer cans and trash in the woods. Hikers, campers, hunters, and fishers are responsible.

Pollution by humans that do not take out what they carry in. Many times, this summer I have found trash on the hiking trails. Lazy people that do not respect the forest. Charlestown has a large influx of non-residents during the summer and that is when this all happens.

Preserve the North South Trail at all costs. Maybe even expand upon it. More woods walking, less road walking.

Reduction of interest in hunting and fishing leading to one of the State's largest sources of income for wildlife and conservation to deplete rapidly.

We need more public open space such as wildlife management areas. Only 2% of all of RI is designated as such. Please use Robertson Pittman act funds to fund this.

Use in some by off-leash dogs, perhaps not a concern except in city forests.

Damage caused by recreational vehicles because of the absence of State maintained recreational vehicle trails.

Allowing all users to participate in activities and to have general meetings between recreational groups to decide what decision carries a mutual benefit for all parties.

Concerns and assistance by local groups like cyclist or hiking organizations seemingly are not taken seriously and allowed to help with issues the DEM might be able to take advantage, mitigating some of the workload.

I'm concerned that there is abuse to existing rules for bikers & hikers e.g. I bike ride and run in Ryan Park often and keep seeing motorcycle dirt bikes on the trail hauling ass and jumping hills. I respect the sport of dirt biking but there are designated trails for that, and I've never had an issue pulling my mountain bike over or allowing someone to pass. I've literally needed to jump in the woods to be avoided as they can't see or hear shit on dirt bikes.

Signage and trail mapping are needed in RI desperately, if for nothing else to expedite the extraction rescue of injured forest users. Trail maintenance is also crucial.

Trails meant for walking and hiking are being ruined by ATVs and motorized trail bikes.

The growth of some sports into new segments that include motorized use is concerning. The state has historically had the problem of motorcycles in some areas, but now there are user groups bringing in motorized bicycles, being called pedal assist, and the popularity of these could bring about new user conflicts and this needs some active management from the state (in the field) to properly address and correct where users are abusing their trail privileges.

Illegal dumping in our forests.

There is no enforcement of leash laws and curbing. More accessible parks have become overrun with dog feces and random dogs run over and jump on strangers. I love dogs but this is a dangerous situation that could get worse.

Trails not well kept.

It's less of a concern than preserving the ecological benefits of RI's forests, but I also believe that RI does not encourage recreational use of its forest lands as well as it could. The North-South Trail is underutilized, and the trails in Arcadia S.P. are not well signed, mapped or publicized.

Outdated or non-existent trail maps. Black hut management area is one I can think of. The area that runs the old herring pond drive and up through the quarries - the sign board is worn out. The part on black hut road, with the hunters parking area (near white rock). The old trails I grew up with are no longer there. The new trails aren't marked. No maps of the new trails.

Lack of access to public forests.

Trash. I have traveled By Car to EVERY STATE in the USA and spent at the least a day traveling around each state. From Boston to DC the country and roads are just filled with trash. Sticking with RI, where is the DEM? In other states you see them everywhere!?! In RI you only see them bothering some kid trail riding an ATV or sitting in a truck eating somewhere. What does this have to do with forests? The same goes for out (very few) trails and woodlands left. They are gross in many parts. I love those \$500-\$1000 fine signs. What a joke. I know of one in Greene, RI that has a pile of Dunkin Donuts coffee cups under it.

Why don't we plant and manage lands for hunting? Why don't we plant corn or clover in management areas for hunting?

Hold ALL user groups accountable for helping to maintain the forests.

Maintaining and improving recreation areas to help encourage people to enjoy and learn more about our forests and how to keep them healthy.

Between AMC, NEMBA, and the equestrian groups, the State should be leveraging our resources and manpower to assist in making our parks and forest recreation on par with our neighbors.

DEM moving their position of limiting off-road motorcycle events to certain trails and fire roads has been expanded to include trails that may be OK for a few dirt bikes to go through but not 50-100; should have stayed with the restrictions that were put in place.

Unlike states including Vermont and many out west we do not allow people to use the woodlands. We make so many rules and don't allow people to back country camp and bother people with so many permits and bullcrap that it turns people off but it also makes people more likely to sneak around and do it anyways, leaving their trash behind so they aren't caught carrying it out. Why are we so against education in our state? The Acadia area in Rhode Island is great with so much land, but who wants to hike so deep out and have to hike back because you can't camp 200' off a trail and leave no trace like you can in tons and tons of other places in the country.? If you educate and have actual rangers around, PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO USE SOMETHING WANT TO KEEP IT CLEAN! So maybe our forests would be better cared about and for if we allowed more people to feel a connection with the forests.

Four wheelers are a problem in many forests causing damage.

I'd love to see Dutch island open for exploration.

Illegal activity like drug dealing.

Lack of remote shelters for backpackers to enjoy.

Litter and trash in the forests.

Litter. Lack of knowledge of ordinary citizens of the access they have to many forests, trails, outdoor access. Living in RI everything is a drive away. We also need more awareness of positive impact forests, plants have in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Misuse- dirt bikes, etc. that can damage wildlife.

Noise and damage by snowmobiles.

More people picking up overflowing trash cans. I don't know exactly who's responsible for emptying trash cans. In other words....reducing human footprint in the forest.

My husband & I go hiking around RI a lot & have been pleased to see how many cool parks of all sizes there are & how well maintained the trails often are. I hope the state continues to purchase properties to add to these forested lands, so that more wildlife has places to live & Rhode Islanders have more places to enjoy!

Not enough state level integration and openly working with user groups that want to help with park upkeep, giving back etc.

Not enough trail systems

Off-roading destruction of forested areas. Damaged trails and forests aren't repaired.

Open access for all citizens to RI's forests

Pond at Arcadia needs to be reopened for swimmers.

Public access to state management areas. Take Big River for example. While public access is legal, it is not encouraged. Trails exist but there is no comprehensive trail system, trail markings, trail management.

Overuse of trail systems and degradation of the natural experience - too much emphasis on recreation and not enough on preservation, conservation and connection to nature.

User abuse like fires, trash, unauthorized use (ATVs).

Pollution (motorbikes, hiking)

Pollution. Would like more of an effort and campaign against littering, heavy fines, accountability.

Preserve unbroken forests for natural habitats and hiking.

Protection of existing conserved forest land from destruction and degradation due to: mountain bikes, horses, motorcycles dirt bikes, running events, military operations, off-road vehicles, and all other forms of non-passive recreation.

Putting forests in hands of special interest groups to manage forests for their own benefit, negating the interest of the rightful wildlife population.

Recreational use should be managed to keep forests pristine, including keeping cars and other motor vehicles including motorized boats out of public parks and waterways.

Restrictions enforced on vehicles both motorized and non-motorized that tear up the forest floor and or disturb the peace and tranquility of the area.

Safety. Trail sabotage is a real thing. On a positive note, I'm very thankful to live and work in a state that has so much land available to everyone. I fish, run, mountain bike and camp in this state and feel strongly that everyone needs to be respectful of all activities that are allowed in the state, including hunting.

Too many Massachusetts hunters particularly at Durfee hill. Frequently see Massachusetts hunting parties of 5+ doing deer drives

RI should have signs at trail heads explaining proper use of the trails. Like who can and can't, and general trail rules. I am an expert mountain biker who has ridden in our woods for 20+ years. As this sport is picking back up in popularity, and especially with the coming of e-mountain bikes, more people will be tempted to use trails inappropriately, like widening trails around rocks (known as dumbing down trails), or using trails after significant rainfall, etc...

Why is stealth camping illegal? Anywhere else in the country, for the most part, back country camping is legal as long as it is done responsibly. It's absurd a responsible adult cannot camp in the woods in Rhode Island.