




DEM RHODE ISLAND Strategic Plan FY2024–2027

GOAL ONE
Take action to counter climate change and its effects, both locally and regionally

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from human activities through programs that include open and transparent communication, outreach and planning with local and regional partners.
- Preserve, protect, and restore the health of the natural environment to promote resilience, safety, and economic wellbeing of Rhode Island communities.
- Demonstrate leadership by integrating climate change considerations into all levels of decision- making including policies, permitting, plans, regulations, and projects by utilizing best available science and research.
- Advance adaptation measures in the built environment by addressing current and future threats resulting from our changing climate.
- Promote sustainable and equitable siting of land-based and marine renewable energy projects in ways that balance the state's clean energy priorities with established natural resource conservation goals.

GOAL TWO
Prioritize diversity, inclusion, and environmental justice in all programs

- Develop a diverse DEM workforce that reflects the make-up of the people we serve and includes individuals with a variety of life experiences.
- Build strong relationships with residents in overburdened and underserved communities and improve communication to ensure that residents are aware of DEM activities in these communities.
- Incorporate environmental justice considerations when making decisions regarding permitting, inspections, grant funding, and completing regulatory reviews.
- Ensure that all Rhode Islanders have access to the state's natural resources, including management areas, fishing access sites, ponds, lakes, and state parks and beaches, programs that teach safe recreation, hunting and fishing opportunities, and green space.
- Provide DEM staff with training opportunities to learn about environmental justice; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and customer service.

GOAL THREE
Protect and restore our environment to create greener, healthier communities

- Promote fair and effective environmental compliance across communities and enforce the law and the rules to meet these standards.
- Promote clean air locally and regionally by supporting strong public policies and regional efforts.
- Ensure healthy communities through waste mitigation, brownfields reuse and sustainability initiatives.
- Protect and restore public, ecosystem and animal health, including coordinating our efforts with our partners to support public health policies and outreach.

GOAL FOUR
Protect and improve water quality

- Improve management of stormwater to promote green infrastructure, build state and local capacity for effective stormwater control, and achieve better permit compliance.
- Adapt freshwater and marine water quality monitoring strategies and analysis capacity to identify areas with high potential for improvement in water quality to support designated uses.
- Integrate issues such as changing climate, sea level rise, and emerging contaminants (pollutants of emerging concern) into water protection decisions.
- Strengthen watershed management through policy, regulation, and partnerships to promote water resource protection, including focus on freshwater lakes and ponds.
- Direct and leverage increased infrastructure funding to improve water quality, address resiliency, and/or provide ecological benefits.

REV. 7.7.2023







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

GOAL FIVE

Conserve, promote, and steward our natural resources

- Protect and expand farms, forests, and open spaces to permanently safeguard the value of those lands.
- Support healthy and sustainable fish, wildlife, and forests using sound science and management plans to ensure long term viability of these resources in the face of emerging issues.
- Protect and restore fresh, estuarine, marine, and terrestrial habitats to ensure the long-term sustainability of these habitats and ecosystems.
- Strengthen education, outreach and training programs and tools on Rhode Island natural resources stewardship for enhanced stakeholder understanding and appreciation.
- Seek and secure new and long-standing funding opportunities that preserve the State's natural resources, habitats and the services they provide.

GOAL SIX

Promote and sustain outdoor recreation in Rhode Island

- Improve access to our outdoor spaces by installing universally accessible trails where appropriate.
- Improve our capital project planning process by implementing a project scoring system that ensures outdoor recreation opportunities for all persons are represented equally.
- Invest in property modifications or new sites which will ensure continued access for all Rhode Islanders to a wide, resilient array of outdoor recreation activities, both coastal and inland.
- Begin to develop management plans for DEM properties outlining site specific maintenance and upkeep needs, as well as planning for uses within those properties in a way that protects the human uses in conjunction with important habitats within those properties.
- Bolster partnerships and internal processes to provide recreational opportunities and events to all Rhode Islanders.
- Expand outreach and education regarding availability and accessibility of parks and recreation areas to increase public awareness, usage, appreciation, and shared stewardship of these iconic properties.

GOAL SEVEN

Expand and promote local agricultural and seafood industries

- Evaluate barriers for fishers and farmers and provide long term solutions to overcome those barriers and foster a more inclusive, profitable, and food secure Rhode Island.
- Provide business, educational, and marketing support for fishing and farming businesses and create opportunities for the next generation of fishers and farmers to learn, grow their business, and increase market access for their supplies.
- Provide climate resilient infrastructure and promote climate adaptive management strategies tailored to the needs of the state's fishers and farmers that are sustainable for shifting populations.
- Create coordinated branding for the state's food systems that can be marketed to residents, visitors, and nearby states, and be incorporated in the RI State Food Strategy, local food development initiatives, programs to eliminate food insecurity and reduce food waste.
- Support a sustainable aquaculture industry by promoting growers and businesses, involving stakeholders in planning initiatives, and working with industry partners to foster restoration efforts.

GOAL EIGHT

Demonstrate statewide leadership in organizational excellence and customer service

- Develop a robust professional development program with a focus on customer service, opportunities for advanced training and education, succession planning, and leadership development.
- Expand community engagement across the Department and identify opportunities to provide services and communications in multiple languages.
- Deliver modern information technology solutions to improve processes and increase information access.
- Build understanding and support for divisions in following management and budgeting best practices.
- Deepen staff's connection to DEM's overarching mission through increased employee engagement, communication, and coordination across the department.