

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANANGMENT

**DIVISION OF FOREST ENVIRONMENT
WORK PLAN FY 2002 and 2003**

Division of Forest Environment's Mission: Working to ensure healthy sustainable forests for Rhode Island's future

Duties of the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Forest Environment: The Division of Forest Environment manages 45,000 acres of state-owned rural forestland. It coordinates a statewide forest fire protection plan, provides forest fire protection on state lands, assists rural volunteer fire departments and develops forest and wildlife management plans for private landowners who choose to manage their property in ways that will protect these resources on their land. The division promotes public understanding of environment conservation, enforces department rules and regulations on DEM lands and assists the federal government in providing landowner assistance programs

Moreover, the division mandates include: to monitor and recommend controls for forest insects and diseases, to monitor and manage dispersed recreational activities on state forestlands, to manage timber resources and conduct timber harvests on state forests, to ensure use of "best management practices" during timber harvests, to work with communities promoting urban tree health, to license arborists and to certify forestlands under the State's Farm, Forest and Open Space Act.

Program Highlights: The following work program is a comprehensive compilation of strategies that will be employed to meet the Department's strategic priorities for FY 2002 and 2003. Performance measures are also compiled and some environmental indicators have been identified where appropriate. Quarterly reporting will be used by the division's staff to track progress towards meeting the objectives as well as the identified strategic bench marks.

Priority focus areas for the division will be strengthening partnerships, working to enhance watersheds, improving our recreational infrastructure at Pulaski, George Washington Campground, and Bowditch Dam, and promoting the greening of our urban areas through the promotion of the Urban Forestry Guide Plan, Element #156 that was passed by the State Planning Council.

Key issues that frame our strategies include seeking ways to: mitigate forest fragmentation and parcelization, maintain forest health and promote stewardship on public and private land, protect homes and forests from catastrophic wildland fire, educate citizens on the benefits of conservation, and manage state lands to teach conservation by example.

Partnerships: DFE has been a leading force in the creation of partnerships. When appropriate partners did not exist, the division played an active role in creating non-profit organizations to assist with program delivery. Involving citizens in program development and delivery has been a standard set by the division. Prime examples include: The Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. (SNEFCI), The Rhode Island Tree Council (RITC), the Rhode Island Forest Conservators Organization (RIFCO), and the Rhode Island Rural Lands Coalition (RIRLC). Partnering with existing non-profits, such as, the Nature Conservancy, Audubon, the Rhode Island Fire Chief's Association, and the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association, as well as, partnering with other federal and state agencies has been the practice within the division. In FY 2002 and 2003, DFE will continue to seek ways to enhance the capabilities of our partners by assisting with program delivery, seeking funds to assist with projects and jointly sponsoring a number of significant programs. Some examples of this include, continuation of the RI Tree Stewards Program through the RITC, a photo exhibit project on the forests of southern New England by SNEFCI, an urban forestry annual conference so-sponsored by the RITC,

the Neighborwoods Awards Program conducted by SNEFCI, and the development of current use taxation values by a subcommittee of the State Conservation Committee under the leadership of the RIRLC.

Watersheds: A watershed focus will be applied to DFE program activities in FY2002 and 2003. To assist in delivering the watershed approach, the division's federal program section will assist in coordinating Federal grant resources to assist watershed groups expand environmental opportunities. The division played a major role in securing Federal Grants for Greenways Plans for the Wood-Pawcatuck and Woonasquatucket watersheds. To date, over \$250,000 has been secured to work on specific issues within Rhode Island watersheds. The division will continue to cooperate with the U.S. Forest Service to deliver water quality improvement programs and provide coordination with DEM programs and watershed groups.

The division will assist the RI Water Resource Board with continued implementation of the Big River Watershed Management Plan by coordinating cutting plans throughout the watershed.

The Forest Legacy Program has been built largely on a watershed approach and primary areas include the Scituate Watershed and Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed.

In FY 2002 and 2003 the division will seek to partner with the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc. to promote our stewardship program for private landowners and the forest legacy programs.

Forest Health: The health of Rhode Island's forest has been an on-going concern and focus of the division. Rhode Island's forests, although they are under pressure from fragmentation, insects and disease, as well as atmospheric stressors, have been growing at a rapid rate. The division has been cooperating with the US Forest Service on a number of critical programs. DFE collects data on forest health and the Forest Service performs the analysis. Ozone has been identified as causing damage in some Rhode Island forests. Recent field data collected for the 10 year inventory has been made available in FY 2000 and DFE will be reporting the results in 2002. Data indicates that although we have fewer acres in forest cover, Rhode Island has more wood-fiber than at any time during the 20th century. DFE will work to refine the data after analysis by the Forest Service and make the information available to all agencies and organizations.

The division will work with the Forest Service as it develops the Forest Inventory and Monitoring Program which is being built to provide annualized data. Collection of insect and disease information will continue.

Urban Forests: Improving the livability of our urban areas not only benefits urban residents, but it improves our capacity to protect rural lands. Working with Grow Smart Rhode Island, the Rural Lands Coalition and the Rhode Island Tree Council, the division will continue to provide grants to communities and assist cities and town with their tree related problems. Environmental justice requires us to examine our urban areas and focus tree planting in the areas of highest need. The RI Tree Council (RITC) will assist with this task and provide input to the division on recommended planting areas.

Educating community leaders on the importance of community tree programs will be accomplished by providing information and workshops on the new Urban Forestry Guide Plan, Element #156. This document serves as a useful tool for developing community awareness of the importance of trees for making our environment more livable. With the assistance of the RITC, the state's guide plan will be promoted. Additionally, the division will provide financial assistance to the RITC to enhance urban forestry consulting services to communities.

Fire: We have been successful achieving our objectives of losing no homes to wildland fire and maintaining an average fire size of less than two (2) acres. Whenever drought occurs there is cause for concern and our effectiveness will be tested. The division will train additional DEM staff on basic fire fighter training. Also, the division will seek to revitalize the Forest Fire Advisory Committee and will send a newsletter to fire chiefs to foster better communications. The Forestry Hose program will remain our priority suppression tactic. In 2002 and 2003, the division will begin a new program of promoting the installation of dry hydrants within rural communities utilizing funds acquired through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant.

Conservation Education: The division will continue to maintain a Conservation Education Coordinator. In previous years, the Coordinator served as a vital link to the RI Environmental Education Association and will continue to do so. A Fall "Walk in the Woods" program will continue in cooperation with partners, SAF, RIFCO, and the RI Tree Farm Committee. Educational programs will be offered year round as before at appropriate locations.

Educational programs will include activities, such as, an Arbor day Poster Contest (grade 5), conferences, workshops, Neighborwoods Awards Program, Tree Farmer of the Year, and various appearances of Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl.

Program highlights: *The Division continues to participate with many outside groups, such as, the Rural Lands Coalition, Southern New England Forest Consortium, and Rhode Island Tree Council to deliver environmental assistance through citizen involvement. The cultivation of partners and strengthening the ability of focused non-profits to direct conservation initiatives will be a primary focus.*

<p>OBJECTIVE 1: The growth and stewardship of RI's forests (both State and private) results in increased productivity of timber resources, increased biodiversity of forested habitats and the continued protection of our State's water quality and quantity.</p>	<p>Environmental Indicators: Sustainable rural based business enhanced. Membership growth of partner non-profits.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIES</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Performance Measures</p>
<p>Provide technical and financial assistance to landowners by engaging and assisting local non-profits, land trusts, community groups, and private citizens.</p>	<p>Support grant efforts of local non-profits with a shared mission.</p>	<p>Grants to organizations supported. \$ Value of grants to non-profits. Non-profit meetings attended Joint State/non-profit programs</p>
	<p>Announce open grant periods each year to identify priority forest legacy acquisition projects</p>	<p>Acres acquired -- Forest Legacy Acres negotiating -- Forest Legacy # Legacy applications \$ Value of legacy requests Acres permanently protected</p>
	<p>Engage communities to pursue forestry solutions to environmental concerns through technical assistance, workshops and promotion of open space.</p>	<p>Communities assisted -- workshops Acres of community financed open space</p>
	<p>Promote information materials that focus on alternative forest product opportunities for landowners.</p>	<p>Landowners assisted Workshops held (2) per year.</p>

<p>OBJECTIVE 1(cont.): The growth and stewardship of RI's forests (both State and private) results in increased productivity of timber resources, increased biodiversity of forested habitats and the continued protection of our State's water quality and quantity</p>	<p>Environmental Indicators : Acres of Forest habitat improved.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIES</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Performance Measures*</p>
<p>Improve the quality of RI Forests and forested habitats through management planning and technical assistance.</p>	<p>Partner with the RI Water Resources Board to assist with implementing the Big River Management Plan</p>	<p>Timber sales prepared -- Fall 2001-2002 Volume of timber bid -- Fall 2001-2002 Timer income to State Forestry Fund Acres harvested - Acres of Big River at beneficial stocking levels -- 60-80% Acres of habitat improvement</p>
	<p>Continue removal of diseased Red Pine on State lands</p>	<p>Acres harvested Timber sales prepared (2) per year Volume of timer harvested Timber income to State Forestry Fund Acres of habitat improvement Declining acres of diseased stands of Red Pine on State lands (100 acres)</p>
	<p>Continue assistance to private landowners to achieve forest improvement goals</p>	<p>On the ground landowner assists -- 250 Acres in new stewardship plans -- 1000 Landowner referrals to Forestry Consultants – 65 Landowners assisted Acres of private forest under management—15% Percent of forest under management—15% Percent of forest land—58%</p>

<p>OBJECTIVE 1(cont.): The growth and stewardship of RI's forests (both State and private) results in increased productivity of timber resources, increased biodiversity of forested habitats and the continued protection of our State's water quality and quantity.</p>	<p>Environmental Indicators: Increased productivity of RI's timber resources; growth to removal ratio.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIES</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Performance Measures*</p>
<p>Monitor health of RI forests through annual survey programs</p>		<p>Acres of forest surveyed 400,000 Acres FY 2002-2003 Acres of forest at risk</p>
<p>Enhance local forest industries through technical assistance, information sharing and targeted workshops.</p>	<p>Assist forest industry by reviewing logging sites, ensuring use of BMPs</p>	<p>"Intent to Cut" plans filed-- 50 Volume of timber reported – 3.5 MM Board Feet Number of Businesses assisted -- 45 Viable complaints of ecological damage from timber harvesting Ratio of harvested acres reported/RI annual harvest – 40%</p>
	<p>Assist State Conservation Committee with community workshops for Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act.</p>	<p>New acres within farm, ,forest, open space Tax Act community workshops (2) per year.</p>
<p>Sustainable Forestry elements will be incorporated into watershed plans. State forestlands certified through AF&PA's SFI program.</p>	<p>Forestry strategies addressed in watershed plans and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative implemented.</p>	<p>State forestland certified in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative,(45,000 acres) by 2003</p>

Program highlights: *The passage by the State Planning Council of the Urban Forestry Guide Plan, Element #156 in 2001 was a major success that needs to be communicated effectively to all Rhode Island cities and towns.*

Promotion of the State Guide Plan Element will be a major focus in FY 2002-2003.

<p>OBJECTIVE 2: The quality of life within all 39 of Rhode Island's cities and towns is improved through coordinated efforts to enhance urban and community forests and community tree resources.</p>	<p>Environmental Indicators: Communities achieving "Tree City USA" status.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIES</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Performance Measures</p>
<p>Promote and distribute the Urban Forestry Guide Plan through meetings with community officials, groups, and organizations.</p>		<p>Communities assisted Groups assisted Guide Plan workshops (4)</p>
<p>Partner with community tree groups, Tree Council, and communities by promoting tree planting, urban forestry workshops and field tours</p>		<p>Urban trees planted—(600) PMAS performance level of RI communities 85% to project level by FY 2003 Workshops held and field tours (6) per year.</p>
	<p>Promote the Tree Stewards Program by partnering with the Tree Council and conducting awards programs for Arbor Day Poster Contest and Tree City, etc</p>	<p>Tree stewards trained – 40 per year Urban Forestry awards – 6 per year</p>
<p>Conservation education programs are offered to provide citizens with forestry information</p>		<p>Conservation education programs – 25 per year Student hours -- 1500 FY 2002 and 2003</p>
<p>Partner with RI Tree Council to distribute Urban Forestry Grants to communities and groups and to promote Rhode Island tree resources.</p>		<p>Grants to communities and groups \$ Value of Grants -- \$140K each year \$ Value of match to grants-- \$140K each year</p>
	<p>Conduct a tree seedling sales program for reforestation</p>	<p>Trees distributed -- 65,000 each year Landowners assisted -- 100 each year</p>
	<p>Actively support the RI Tree Council and assist with program delivery</p>	<p>Tree Council meetings attended Man hours for Tree Council \$ Value of grants to Tree Council</p>
	<p>License and train arborists</p>	<p>Arborists licensed – 550 each year Arborist workshops held – 2 each year. Seat hours at workshops</p>

Program highlights: *Program coordination between DFE and the fire departments will increase through efforts to revitalize the Forest Fire Advisory Committee and developing a newsletter for departments. DFE will coordinate the development of a State-wide fire hazard analysis with the US Forest Service.*

OBJECTIVE 3: No homes are lost to wildland fire and the average fire is contained to less than two (2) acres	Environmental Indicators: Acres burned.	
STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	Performance Measures*
Continue to aggressively fight fires through coordinated efforts with local departments		Homes lost to wildland fire = 0 Average forest fire size -- < 2 acres Number of fires/acres burned % of fires under 2 acres – 95% Acres burned
	Maintain as a top priority the supply and maintenance of forestry hose for RI Departments	Hose on loan to fire departments Hose serviced and returned
	Monitor fire weather at two locations and transfer information	Daily fire weather reports
	Conduct wildland fire fighting training exercises. Promote the installation of dry hydrants in rural areas by cost sharing of Federal grants.	Fire training workshop 30 firefighters -- 720 classroom hours Dry hydrants installed (10) per year.
Partner with US Forest Service to enable local departments to acquire equipment through GSA and the FEPP Program		Fire Departments solicited -- 71 Fire Departments signing cooperative agreement
	Continue promotion of FEPP Program partnering with Fire Departments	Departments with equipment on loan \$ Value of equipment on loan Number of Departments inventoried -- 35 per year.
	Conduct meetings of the Forest Fire Advisory Committee and increase participation	2 Meetings/year, Fall and Spring Fire Chief attendance
	Develop a newsletter to be distributed to all Fire Departments.	Newsletter mailed to all departments, February each year.
Continue to train and utilize resources for interagency cooperative fire agreements		Resources mobilized; Man hours on loan; Classroom hours
	Coordinate hazard analysis data with federal sources	Data submitted for analysis Fire Reporting
	Support and participate in activities of the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission	Committees assisted; Compact man hours; Compact training exercises
	Conduct 2 prescribed burns annually to enhance wildlife habitat.	Prescribed burns implemented. Acres of habitat improvement.

Program highlights: *Major efforts to improve the Pulaski Park, George Washington Campground, and Bowdish Dam through the Capital Improvement Budget is underway and will be ongoing during FY 2002-2003. Coordination of recreation activities with the Trail Advisory Committee will remain a primary focus of the Recreation Program.*

OBJECTIVE 4: State forest lands are continually managed to provide a variety of recreational uses while minimizing conflict between users	Environmental Indicators: Recreational users utilizing state Management Areas.	
STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	Performance Measures*
Continue to use management councils (Arcadia, Northwest) to coordinate recreational activities and manage state forest resources	Continue to support and partner with user groups through a Trail Advisory Committee	Recreational use permits issued Recreational groups assisted Management Council meetings held
	Grants distributed to trail groups	\$ Value of grants -- \$ Value of match Trail Advisory Committee man hours GIS maps developed
	Proceed with improvements to recreation facilities -- Pulaski, George Washington, Bowdish Dam	On site progress -- construction begun FY 2001 through FY 2003.
	Maintain recreation areas through a comprehensive program of infrastructure maintenance, and volunteer coordination	Miles of trails maintained by class -- vehicle -- hiking -- horseback Number of groups partnering to assist
Enforce recreational use and State management, area regulations on State forest land		Number of arrests Number of written warnings Immediate compliance Reports
	Management council annual reports produced	2002-2003