

**DIVISION OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
Work Plans 2001-2003**

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

DIVISION OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Division of Planning and Development is located organizationally within Planning and Administrative Services and the Chief of that Division reports directly to the Associate Director for Planning and Administrative Services. The Division currently has 14 full time employees. The professional disciplines are: clerical (1), professional registered engineer (5), engineering technicians (2), biologist (1), planners (2), GIS computer technician (1) Public Administrators (2). Our general responsibilities are to provide professional personnel for the purpose of managing the Departments capital development and asset protection programs; to provide professional personnel for the purpose of developing and supervising a Department land protection program; to provide professional personnel to supervise and manage a state bond funded local recreational and open space grant program; to manage the State's Natural Heritage Program; to supervise and manage the Department's Geographic Information System and to provide general service related to these activities to the public and other agencies private and public. Additionally we have an ongoing responsibility to search out and be cooperative with partners in the public and private sector that are tasked with similar responsibilities.

Program Highlights:

See following discussion under Capital Development and Access Protection; Land Acquisition Program; Greenways and Recreational Trails Grant Program; RI Natural Heritage Program; and Geographic Information Systems

Program Name and Description:

Capital Development and Asset Protection

Mission:

To plan, design, construct and improve parks, recreational areas, recreational and commercial fishing infrastructure, dam safety programs and Department owned dam major repair, and all other capital project development throughout the State. To insure that the Department's significant infrastructure and fixed assets are kept safe and that major repairs, improvements and upgrades are planned, designed, constructed and budgeted in a systematic manner within the capital budget provided in a manner that is consistent with our mission to prevent environmental degradation.

Objective:

To systematically, professionally, and efficiently complete those capital projects identified by the Department, the Governor and the Legislature in the State of Rhode Island Five Year Capital Development Plan and to do so, recognizing that the State's natural environment should be protected and enhanced in the design and construction of those capital facilities.

Program Highlights:

The completion of Phase I reconstruction of **World War II Park** and the **Phase II Design** of the balance of that Park and the construction of **Button Hole Golf Course** are two examples of the Division pursuing projects consistent with the Department's strategic goals of enhancing the high quality of life and of restoring urban areas to enhance urban environmental quality. At World War II in Woonsocket we are reconstructing a swimming area to insure safe healthy swimming without destroying the aesthetics of the existing natural pond and sandy beach. This construction is underway and due to be completed by May 2001. Phase II design is scheduled for the late Fall 2001 and should take approximately one year to complete. At Button Hole in Providence we are realizing the urban equity goal and the strategic priority of promoting partnerships by working with the RI Golf Association to build an urban golf training center in Providence that is specifically designed for urban children who would normally not have the opportunity to learn the game of golf. Button Hole is expected to be completely open to the public Spring 2001. Additionally we are working to provide an educational component that identifies within the golf course the natural environmental values that exist on the site. . In initiating the design process for the development of **Snake Den State Park** we are initiating a project that is designed to provide additional park and recreational opportunities to primarily urban residents.

In the **Dam Safety Program** we are working with the Governor's Dam Safety Task Force to administer a statewide dam safety programs consistent with our public health mission and our sustainable environment-sustainable economy, that will improve our dam inspection process and our ability to identify major repairs to both public and privately owned dams and identify the correct state Agency to administer all aspects of the program. A critical element of the Division's responsibility is to administer a \$200,000.00 grant program that develops a program for dam repair through the 39 local governments. Construction repairs to **Bowditch Dam are underway and expected to be completed Summer 2001**. Preliminary design of **Stillwater Dam** has been completed final design consultant selected.

This program is consistent with our Department Mission to protect public health, our strategic goals of Protection & Restoration and our Strategic Priorities for high priority for responding to public health risks. Preliminary design of **Bleachery Pond Dam** should begin in Spring 2002.

The Divisions Program to **Reconstruct and Rehabilitate the Commercial Fishing Fleet Docks and Piers of Galilee and Newport** is a major ongoing capital undertaking of the next five years and will expend in excess of \$9,000,000.00. It involves the planning, design and construction management of a major reconstruction of bulkheads, fixed piers and other commercial fishing infrastructure. in Galilee and Newport. In excess of \$6,000,000 will be spent on rehabilitation of docks, bulkheads and other commercial fishing fleet infrastructure at **Galilee**. At **Pier 9 Fishing Pier in Newport** construction repair is underway with a completion date of Fall 2001 at a cost slightly in excess of \$3,000,000.00 This program is consistent with DEM mission and strategic goal to provide both a sustainable environment and a sustainable economy.

Finally the Division is always open to and actively encourages design and construction solutions that are consistent with the Department's Mission to practice an environmental ethic, and set an example. In our **Misquamicut Beach, Roger Wheeler Beach** and **Westerly Boat Ramp** parking lot designs we constructed drainage basins that injected parking lot drainage back into the ground and we reduced paved surfaces with stabilized grass parking areas. At **Button Hole** we require that the golf course be managed and maintained in an environmentally safe way and not lead to any

degradation of Woonasquatucket River. In all our projects we review the possibility for the use of recycled plastic lumber, composting toilets and fixtures requiring minimal water use. At **Fort Wetherill and the Goddard Horse Stable** we are creating a legitimate Department use of the land and building that utilized only the existing developed section and did not require new buildings or infrastructure on sensitive environmental and recreational valuable open park land. At the **Great Swamp Management Area** we intend to design and construct new office space and research space for the Division of Fish and Wildlife, that will expand their programs and their public outreach. On the **Blackstone Bikeway** we were particularly conscious of the natural heritage value of the Ashton Meadows and the restoration of the **Cumberland Wilderness Area** in locating the Bikeway. In our restoration of the **Lonsdale Drive-In** property we are fulfilling the Department mission to restore abandoned environmentally sensitive areas in concentrated urban areas

Implementation of a Capital Development Plan and Five Year Program:

To continue to improve the process of capital planning and budgeting, identifying and prioritizing the Departments capital planning needs and to develop annually a five year capital plan that allows the Department to systematically and continuously build new public recreational facilities and provide major renovations to existing facilities and infrastructure. To insure that the capital planning process acknowledges proper allowances of time for both planning and construction and the funds necessary in any given year are requested. To work with the Water Quality and Waste Management Divisions relative to long term pollution prevention and environmental capital improvement programs.

Design Process Strategy:

To continue to improve the coordination and communication with the operating divisions, local communities and user groups early in the design process so that the project design is compatible with and responsive to both the Division's needs, the Community's concerns and the public use anticipated. To improve the relationship between Planning and Development and other regulatory authority to insure early notification to the regulatory divisions of potential projects and to incorporate regulatory concerns into the design process. To work with the Department of Administration Purchasing Division on the consultant selection process to insure that the best architect/engineer consultant is selected in the shortest amount of time. To continue to improve our construction design and bid documents to insure high quality work, competitive bidding, and few field change orders.

Construction Project Strategy:

To provide construction management that, to the greatest degree possible keeps the projects on time and on budget. To systematically provide project progress information to the Department, Administration, Legislature and the Community.

Partners: Operating Divisions, Department of Transportation and FHWA, Towns and Cities, Non-Profit Funding Agencies

Program Name and Description: LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM

Mission:

Preserve and protect the State's Farm, Forest and Open lands for purposes of natural habitat preservation, water supply protection, provision of quality outdoor recreational opportunities, and maintaining the viability of forest and farm lands and watersheds consistent with the Department's Land Protection Plan, the State Greenways Plan and local land protection plans.

Program Highlights:

Farmland Protection: Consistent with the Department's Land Acquisition Plan and the Department's Mission to "enhance for this and future generations and protecting, managing and restoring the natural resources of the state" and "guide the utilization of the State's natural resources to provide sustainable economic opportunity..." the Department, working with the Agricultural Land. Preservation Commission, has protected more than 3500 acres of land through the purchase of development rights. In the next five fiscal years the Commission has available \$1,000,000.00 for acquisition of development rights, in each year and over 30 approved applications totaling in excess of 2000 acres. Farms are selected for acquisition primarily on the basis of soil quality however watershed protection and economic viability are important parts of the selection process.

Open Space and Forest Protection: The Department presently protects through public ownership and conservation easements approximately 52,000 acres of land and has been adding to that protection at the rate of approximately 750 to 1500 acres per year. Land protection through ownership of fee title or conservation or recreation easements is consistent with the Department's Plan, all three components of the Department's Mission Statement, and most all of the strategic goals 2000-2001, to insure greater urban equity in the protection of open space, the Department has expanded the size of Lincoln Woods State Park, our most heavily used urban State Park, identified the Woonasquatucket as an urban watershed for major Department concentration and worked closely with the City of East Providence to protect additional shoreline and urban open space on upper Narragansett Bay. Additionally funds are being made available for the protection of urban recreational greenways that connect the urban areas with the protected rural open space and the Open Space 200 Bond program will provide approximately \$1,000,000 each year for the next five years to protect rural and urban open space.

Local Land Protection: The Division of Planning and Development administers a variety of local grant programs which provide funding for the protection of locally significant or environmentally sensitive open space. In these particular programs the Department funds up to 50% of acquisition costs and holds a perpetual easement on the entirety of the property. The Division has completed the development of rules and regulations for the Open Space 2000 Bond Program which will provide 11,800,000 for 50% grants to localities for the acquisition of local open space protection, local parks and recreation areas, over the next five years.

Partnerships: Consistent with the Strategic Priorities for FY 2001 the Division will continue to work closely with land protection partners like The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and local land trusts and individual communities to coordinate acquisitions, share costs and property management and insure a commonality of purpose, and efficiency of action. Additionally both the Department and The Nature Conservancy have identified the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed as a major concentration for land protection efforts.

Objective: To permanently protect between 750 and 1500 acres annually.

Environmental Indicator:

Acres remaining in agriculture, forests: No loss of native species: Increased size in acres of existing management areas. Additionally the Technical appendix of the State Budget Document FY2000 lists the cumulative percentage of land acquisition goal of 17,850 acres actually acquired.

Strategies:

Continue program of acquisition of contiguous tracts of land, with emphasis on the expansion of existing recreational and mgt. areas for purposes consistent with the Department's Land Protection Plan & State Greenways Plan.

Identify large (over 50 acres) vacant, tracts contiguous with other protected lands for preservation opportunities and actively pursue acquisition of appropriate parcels.

Continue implementation of the South Shore Protection Plan, and the South County Watersheds Area under the established Federal NAWCA Program, with emphasis on partnership opportunities.

Develop protection strategy for the East Bay Habitat Protection Area (Tiverton/Little Compton), working with The Nature Conservancy and local conservation reps.

Provide ongoing technical assistance to the Forest Legacy Program, Agricultural Land Preservation Program, RI Water Resources Board Land Acquisition Program, and others programs as needed.

Continue and expand partnerships with local land trusts, municipalities and other land and watershed preservation organizations. Provide guidance and assistance as needed for local land preservation programs. (Active: Aquidneck Island, South Kingstown, East Bay, Pawcatuck Watershed, Narrow River, South Shore). Additionally work with the Heritage River Program and EPA River Navigator, the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor Commission, The Washington County Watersheds Association, and the Woonasquatucket Greenway Program utilizing the Woonasquatucket Watershed Approach.

Performance Measures:

Ongoing review by the Department's Land Acquisition Committee evaluating the specific acquisitions and the number of acres. Because the process of public land protection is a very selective process and because acquisition success is as much a function of the seller as the buyer and because land acquisition is governed by very specific laws and regulations relative to appraised value; it is difficult to be absolute in measuring performance. We have however been generally successful in protecting well in excess of 1000 acres per year when the funding is available. See attached Land Acquisition Project Spread Sheet for 2000-2001

Partners:

DEM, Land Acquisition Committee, Cities and Towns, RI Greenways Council, Land Trusts, Non-Profit Conservation Organizations, User Groups, Statewide Planning, Farmland Preservation Commission

Program Name and Description: LOCAL GRANTS ADMINISTRATION**Mission:**

To encourage and assist, , local communities, environmental agencies and nonprofit organizations to identify and protect locally significant open space, greenways, park lands and environmentally sensitive lands and to develop and improve local recreation facilities, bikeways and other types of recreational trails by providing state grants and loans for that purpose.

To provide a financially accountable program of grant administration that insures the equitable distribution of state grant funds, insures that locally identified open space, farmland, and recreational lands are identified and protected through local initiative and partnerships of funding involving both the state and local funds

To provide a financially accountable program of grant administration that insures the equitable distribution of state grant funds for the purpose of improving, repairing and creating recreational infrastructure in each of the State's 39 Cities and Towns

To provide a financially accountable program of grant administration that insures that the FHWA recreational trail program is conducted consistent with federal regulations and that the communities have equal opportunity to acquire funding for public trail projects

Objectives:

Open Space 2000 Bond, Open Space Greenways and Trails Grants: To award distribute and administer approximately \$2,000,000.00 in 1998 Local Greenways and Open Space bond funds in July 1999 and \$2,100,000.00 in July 2000 and to award, distribute and administer approximately \$600,000.00 of Symms Trail Grant funds also in July 1999 and \$450,000.00 in State Trails Grants, July 2004.

To field review and inspect locally approved and completed projects to insure compliance with program rules and regulations.

Program Highlights:

Local Grants: Projects are submitted to the Department for consideration by individual cities and towns, land trusts and other environmental non-

profits consistent with the Department's Mission to enhance the high quality of life by protecting managing and restoring the state's natural resources and consistent with the Strategic Goals that all Rhode Islanders have the opportunity to enjoy a diverse mix of well maintained scenic and accessible facilities and outdoor recreational opportunities. Consistent with our strategic priority for 2000 to provide grants to communities that promote "smart growth" and channel. The Division will administer a Planning Assistance Grant Program for Municipalities beginning July 2000 and will involve the distribution of State Bond Funds to Municipalities of approximately \$2,000,000.00 for local open space protection. Funding to support future local open space protection initiatives has been approved by the voters and a \$34Million Open Space Bond will be available to the Department over the next five years

Grants Administration 2001: The Division is presently administering thirteen (13) local greenway grant awards that provide 50% of the eligible funds for land acquisition and trail or other greenway infrastructure development. Additionally the Division is administering approximately twenty (20) local trails grants and six (12) state grants from the Federal Trails Program Within the 1998 Open Space awards there remain nine (9) ongoing projects totaling \$2,300,000.00 and twenty-one (21) ongoing local recreational development grants totally \$2,800,000.00. Additionally the Division is prepared to administer the new Open Space 2000 Bond

Environmental Indicators: Acres of locally protected environmentally sensitive land. Increased local opportunity to visit a local park, ball field or trail. Improved and repaired existing local parks

Strategies: Administer **Local Open Space Grants**

Performance Measures:

The deadlines imposed by the Program provide one form of performance measure,. Additionally the Program has periodic oversight by the Natural Heritage Committee, Recreation Resources Review Committee and the Trails Advisory Committee. All grant applications are scored by a committees comprised of private citizens, public officials and representatives of users groups.

Partners:

Cities and Towns, RI Greenways Council, Land Trusts, Non-Profit Conservation Organizations, Trail User Groups, DOT, Statewide Planning RI Trails Advisory Committee

Program Name and Description:

RHODE ISLAND NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

Mission of Program:

Insure that Rhode Island's natural habitats are managed in such a way that the biodiversity of species is maintained and the balance of the State's ecological systems is protected..

Objective:

Insure that the mission of the Natural Heritage Program remains an institutionalized element of the Department and that decisions relative to state and local land protection programs are consistent with the Natural Heritage Program. To provide professional staff advise relative to the protection of environmentally significant open space.

Program Highlights:

Habitat Protection: Consistent with the Department's Mission Statement to restore our natural resources and prevent environmental degradation, and the Strategic Priorities 2000 to protect critical habitat, it is important that the Heritage Program continue to be directly associated with both the Department's land protection program, watershed management programs, and the local open space grant program to insure that land protection decisions to the greatest degree possible are consistent with natural habitat protection. Toward that end the Director of the Heritage Program will be responsible to staff the local open space grant program.

Data Base Management: Continuing to update and enhance the natural heritage database and working with the GIS program to improve statewide coverage's of the natural habitat. Improve accessibility to the database so that other DEM Divisions like Wetlands, Waste Management, Water Resources and the other divisions have immediate and accurate natural heritage information upon which to base their decisions consistent with our Strategic Priority to practice fair and effective regulation and enforcement.

Environmental Indicators: No loss of native species as measured by annual survey

Strategies:

Rhode Island's Living Legacy: Complete the writing and publication of a resource book that will contain a narrative discussion, GIS mapping and graphic art work of the State's natural heritage. This publication will be the first of its kind for Rhode Island but will be similar in form and will compliment publications completed in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Natural Heritage Program: Continue to inventory and monitor the State's diverse plant and animal species to determine their status and population trends. Manage the database of the target species and natural communities for review of potential ecological

impacts, and guide land acquisition, federal, state and local, to insure that critical habitats are protected. To coordinate with governmental and private conservation agencies and organizations. Provide Natural Heritage input in the Local Open Space Protection Bond Programs

Performance Measures:

Review of the publication at its draft form by The Nature Conservancy and other experts in the field
Current natural heritage inventory database.
Site Surveys of potential acquisitions

Partners:

Federal Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island Natural History Survey.