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March 31, 2025

Chair Terri Cortvriend
House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation & Environment
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill 5076- RI Land Trust Council Supports the Department of Environmental Management's Budget

Dear Chair Cortvriend & Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Land Trust Council, I am writing to express strong support for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's (RIDEM) Fiscal Year 2026 budget. As the statewide coalition representing Rhode Island's land trusts, we collaborate closely with RIDEM on conservation projects and land acquisitions, habitat restoration, outdoor recreation, and stewardship initiatives that benefit communities across our state.

The programs and services provided by RIDEM are critical to preserving Rhode Island's natural resources and ensuring residents and visitors alike can enjoy our parks, land trust properties, forests, and open spaces. In particular, we commend RIDEM's continued support for land and water conservation programs, which are essential to maintaining biodiversity, protecting water quality, and enhancing climate resilience. Additionally, the department's work in partnership with the Division of Agriculture, Fish & Wildlife, Statewide Planning, and the Division of Forest Environment fosters responsible land management and supports the acquisition and stewardship of conserved lands.

The overwhelming approval of the 2024 Green Bond by Rhode Island voters highlights the public's commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural resources. RIDEM's draft budget ensures that these critical investments are implemented effectively, with the necessary staffing and resources to carry out conservation, restoration, and recreation projects. While the RI Land Trust Council will always support additional funding for programs and staffing at RIDEM, we understand that this is a time of fiscal challenge. Maintaining funding for DEM's programs and staffing is a strategic investment in Rhode Island's environmental health, economic vitality, and quality of life.

We respectfully urge your full support for RIDEM's FY 2026 budget to sustain the agency's essential work. Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to protecting Rhode Island's natural environment.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Sayles", written in a cursive style.

Kate Sayles, Executive Director