

Dear House Municipal Government and Housing Committee Members:

I write in staunch support of Bill H 7060. I live overlooking the Sapowet marsh and regularly use it for bird watching and for the restorative value of its beauty each day during all times of the year.

While paddling on the marsh or walking up to its edges, its incredible value as a natural resource is evident. Its waters and grasses serve as a nursery and protected habitat for fish populations as well as a resting, nesting, and feeding environment for many bird species and other animals. A variety of mammals, including fox, deer, opossum, racoon, skunk, mink, and fisher, pass through or along the edges of the marsh. Some can be observed during daylight, whereas others have been caught on a trail camera after dark. It is a busy place and vital habitat for wildlife both day and night. On occasion, oceanic bird species have been seen bobbing on the water during rough weather at sea. At this time of year, hunters visit the marsh to hunt ducks and geese. Summer months bring anglers, crabbers, kayakers, and paddlers on boards to enjoy this unique natural area.

During high tides and storm events, like those in recent weeks, it is easy to recognize the significance of this conservation area as a buffer for the coastline. The marsh is a gigantic sponge that mitigates the impact of intense winds and storm surges on the shoreline. It is protective and contributes to coastal resilience.

It was with foresight that this area was designated a conservation area decades ago. Sapowet Marsh Wildlife Management Area was established to preserve the area's open spaces and critical habitat for hunting, fishing, scenic, and recreational use. While acres of marshlands along our nation's coastlines have been damaged by commercial development and other development pressures, so far Sapowet has been preserved because of the wise and considered actions of decision-makers historically. By adoption of Bill H 7060, Rhode Island is in a unique position to further safeguard this valuable and vital resource and protect it from activities that would damage or degrade it. H 7060 provides much needed additional protection at a critical time.

I urge you to give this legislation your full support.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gayle Lawrence

108 Long Pasture Way
Tiverton, RI 02878