



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands



State Highlights in Conservation: Rhode Island

Profile of State Program(s)

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management: This Department operates to define, assess, develop plans and acquire land consistent with the Department's responsibility to provide recreational lands and conserve environmentally sensitive open space for future generations. This office also coordinates land acquisition with other state, federal and non-profit land acquisition programs. It works to acquire land consistent with these plans and consistent with state regulations for the acquisition of property, and to develop funding sources for these acquisitions. The Department of Environmental Management seeks to leverage bond funding with partnerships from municipalities, land trusts, federal agencies and non-profit organizations. In many instances, multiple Department of Environmental Management programs will be used to fund an acquisition. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management oversees a number of grant programs that are primarily funded by voter-approved funds.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management - State Land Acquisition Program: The State Lands Acquisition Committee makes a recommendation to the Director on which properties to acquire. Properties are used for recreation, hunting, fishing and other outdoor activity. Acquisitions are also made for fish and wildlife, forestland protection and watershed protection purposes.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management - Local Open Space Matching Grant: This program provides up to 50% of funding, up to a maximum of \$400,000, to preserve open space lands that possess

significant natural, ecological, agricultural or scenic values, by direct purchase or conservation easements. It focuses on natural areas that are deemed a priority on the municipal level. The Department of Environmental Management accepts applications from cities, towns, land trusts and non-profit organizations for this program and adds a layer of protection to the conserved parcels.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management - Local Recreation Grant: The local recreation grant program provides up to 50% funding to municipalities to acquire, develop or renovate outdoor recreation facilities. It also provides up to 90% funding to municipalities to restore, renovate or develop historic and/or passive parks.

Rhode Island Agricultural Land Preservation Commission: The ALPC preserves agricultural land through the purchase of farmland development rights and works closely with the Department of Environmental Management. This program helps ensure that farming remains viable in the state - it enables farmers to retain ownership of their property while protecting lands for agriculture.

Rhode Island Water Resources Board: The Public Drinking Water Supply System Protection Program - A water quality protection charge is imposed on the sales of public drinking water suppliers at the rate of two and ninety two hundredth cents (\$.0292) per one hundred gallons of each sale. The local water supplier collects the surcharge. 36.1% of the surcharge is remitted to the Water Resources Board to fund the Public Drinking Water Supply System Protection Program. These funds were then used to purchase bonds for the Public

Drinking Water Protection Program and are known locally as the “penny money” or “penny per hundred” program.

The Water Resources Board grants funds to local water suppliers. Each water supplier participating in this program must spend a minimum of 55% for land acquisition, the primary purpose of the program. Funds may also be used for water quality improvement projects. As of early 2015, three phases of the program have been completed and a fourth phase is being planned.

NOTE: As of April 2015, the Rhode Island Clean Water Finance Agency now handles the 36.1% surcharge funds. The Water Resources Board still manages the program functions. Parcel level data is not yet available for this program and is not included in the Conservation Almanac. According to the Water Resources Board, the Program has expended \$14.75 million to protect 2,554 acres since 1994.

South County Groundwater Protection and Acquisition Program: The Water Resources Board also administers the South County Groundwater Protection/Acquisition Program. Approximately \$7 million in bond funds will be used to purchase property to protect existing or develop new sources in Washington County. As of early 2015, three purchases have been made.

Substantial State Investment

Rhode Island has relied upon 13 voter approved general obligation bonds to fund state land acquisitions since 1985. These bonds generally received overwhelming voter support. The most recent bonds were:

- In 2016, a \$35 million bond that included \$8 million for land acquisition.
- In 2014, a \$53 million bond that included \$10 million for land acquisition.
- In 2012, a \$20 million bond for the protection of local farms, open space and recreational lands.
- In 2008, a \$2.5 million bond for open space and farmland preservation efforts.

State Incentive for Local Conservation Funding

Substantial funds and matching grant money are made available to municipalities and local land trusts. Grants of up to 50 percent of approved project costs are available through the local open space matching grant program, as well as through the local recreation grant program. The Department of Environmental Management seeks to leverage its funding whenever possible, and actively seeks to participate in land conservation projects with local groups.

Public-Private Partnerships

Department of Environmental Management acquisition programs allow grants to be made to non-profit organizations. For instance, the Local Open Space Matching Grant Program regularly makes grants of up to 50 percent to non-profit organizations. The Department also frequently partners with non-profit groups to leverage funds.

Local Financing Enabled

General obligation bonds are the primary mechanism that local governments have used to fund land conservation in Rhode Island. Municipal open space bond measures typically require local legislative approval, followed by approval of the state legislature and subsequent passage by a majority of local voters.

Local Programs Included

Local conservation data in the Conservation Almanac is not yet comprehensive and is gathered from data provided by the Department of Environmental Management. Visit www.landvote.org for more information on local measures approved by voters in Rhode Island.

Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Rhode Island include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- U.S. National Park Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)



THE
TRUST
FOR
PUBLIC
LAND

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2014. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at jessica.welch@tpl.org.

www.tpl.org

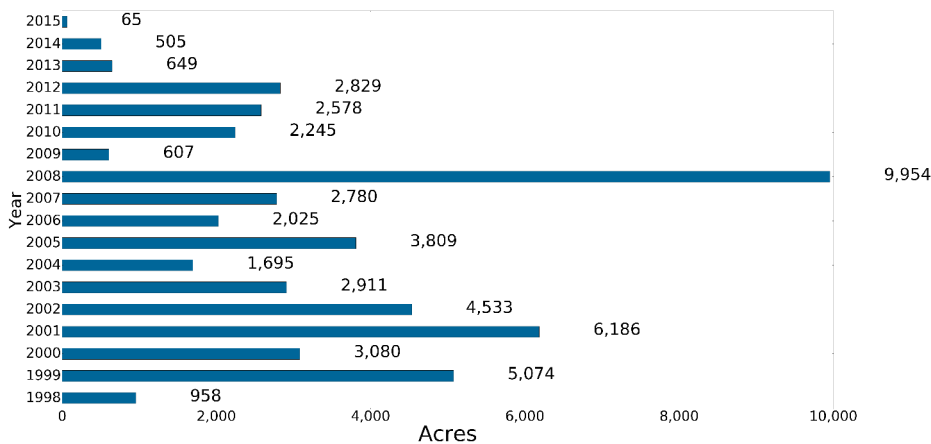
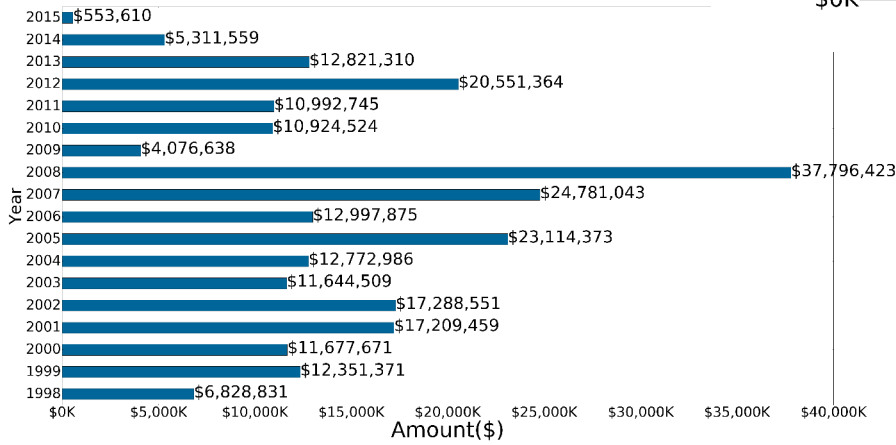
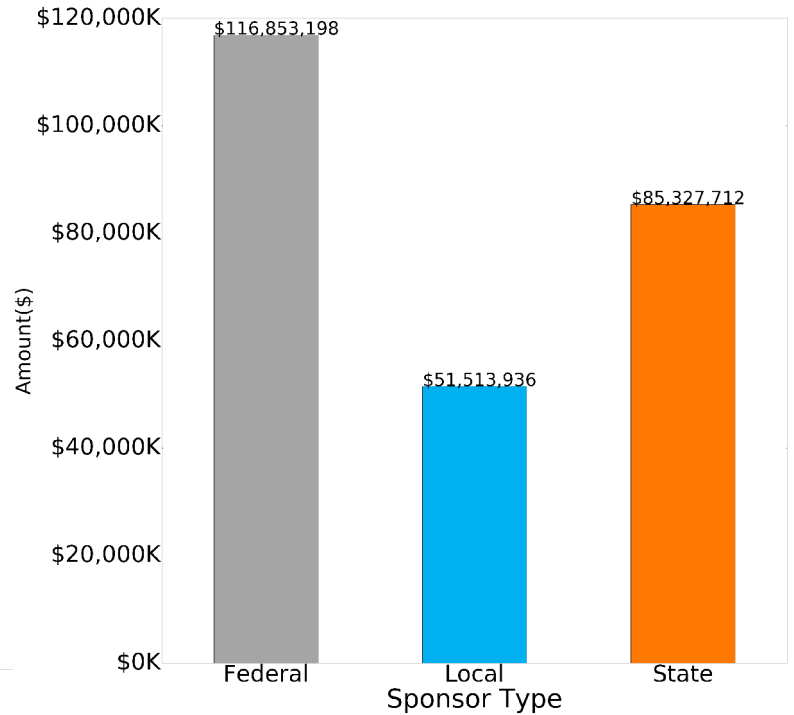
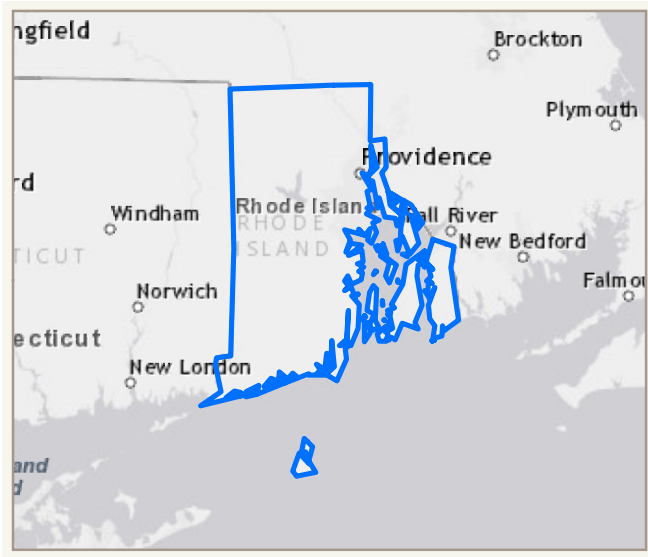
www.conservationalmanac.org

State Conservation Report Rhode Island



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands

November 20, 2020



The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.