

# The 2016 Green Economy Bond

## *A prudent investment in Rhode Island's open space, environment, and tourism*

This bond, if approved by the General Assembly will appear on the ballot in November. It asks Rhode Islanders to invest \$35 million in the state's growing "green economy" by continuing 7 programs that have proven to be successful.

Together, these programs improve the state's communities and strengthen Rhode Island's economy.

These investments will build three key sectors of the state's economy: tourism, outdoor recreation and agriculture. The results will be:

- protected open space and farmland;
- world class state and municipal parks and bikeways;
- pollution prevention and brownfield cleanups.

These programs create the conditions that attract innovative businesses. Young job seekers and entrepreneurs gravitate toward communities that support the active, tech-savvy way of life they value. These are places with thriving local food and arts communities, outdoor recreation amenities and pedestrian and bicycle friendly transportation networks.

The programs will bolster the state's tourism industry, an economic engine that already supports nearly 40,000 jobs and generates more than \$3.32 billion annually.

### *Five programs improving state and municipal parks and protecting our special places and farmland*

#### 1. Historic State Park Development Program \$7,000,000

Rhode Island's state parks attract tourists from around the world. This investment improves a key foundation of the state's tourism industry and provides healthy outdoor recreation opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

#### 2. State Land Acquisition Program \$4,000,000

This program enables RIDEM to protect remaining farmland, iconic open space properties and in-holdings that fill in the gaps in our state parks and wildlife management areas. Every state dollar is matched by an average of \$3 dollars from other sources, including federal grants.

#### 3. Local Recreation Development Grant Program \$2,000,000

#### 4. Local Open Space Grant Program \$4,000,000

These two grant programs provide critical seed funding so communities can protect their special places and create parks. They are competitive grants; only the best projects are funded. State monies are matched by

*The Green Economy Bond invests in open space and farmland protection; world class state & municipal parks; bikeways; stormwater pollution prevention and brownfield cleanups.*

*Together, these efforts will attract new businesses and continue successful programs.*

*Tourism supports nearly 40,000 jobs and generates over \$3.32 billion annually for the state.*

*Both the State Land Acquisition and Local Open Space Programs have been very effective for 30 years. They run out of funds in 2016 for the first time since 1985 – the bond is essential for them to continue.*

private and municipal investments. Since 1985, the Local Open Space Grant Program has helped protect 160 properties comprising 10,000 acres. The State's grants attracted more than \$42 million in additional funding. Similarly, the Local Recreation Grant Program awarded \$64 million since 1985 in more than 400 grants to improve parks and recreation facilities in all 39 cities and towns.

5. **State Bikeway Development Program** **\$10,000,000**  
 Rhode Island has 60 miles of off-road bike paths. Completing our network of bikeways that connect workplaces and greenspaces is an important investment so that the state realizes the full economic, health and transportation benefits. Nationally, bike facilities contribute \$133 billion to the economy and support one million jobs.

*Rhode Island's cities and towns are hard pressed to protect their most cherished places. These grant programs fund the best projects, with matching dollars from many partners.*

*Completing the state's bikeway network is equal parts good health, smart economic planning and another transportation alternative. Rhode Island's size means we can be the first state to be "connected".*

***Reclaiming industrial sites and preventing stormwater pollution***

6. **Brownfield Remediation and Economic Development** **\$5,000,000**  
 These funds will continue the state's success redeveloping and reusing polluted industrial sites. Rhode Island celebrates the state's industrial past and revitalizes and redevelops communities, enhancing amenities for residents and tourists alike. Since 1995, more than 770 blighted properties across the state, spanning 5,500 acres, have been transformed and returned to the tax rolls. In 2015, \$3.7 million was awarded in matching grants to 14 projects across the state, leveraging \$417 million in other public and private investment and creating an estimated 2,700 jobs. The available funding was not sufficient to meet the requests for nearly \$9 million in funding that were received.

*Rhode Island has "reclaimed" 5,500 acres of blighted properties over the past 20 years – leveraging hundreds of millions of dollars in investment and thousands of jobs.*

7. **Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program** **\$3,000,000**  
 Investments in stormwater management improve water quality and outdoor recreation. In Bristol, stormwater management initiatives have reduced stormwater pollution with dramatic benefits. The water at the town beach is now cleaner and safer. In past summers, the beach was closed an average of 20 times each year following rainstorms. The last two summers, with new stormwater facilities, there were no beach closures. Municipal beach revenue increased from \$35,000/year when the beach was impacted by polluted stormwater to \$130,000 last year after the stormwater pollution problems were resolved. Bristol businesses also benefit from cleaner water at the town's beach.

*Stormwater pollution damages Rhode Island's rivers, bays, and beaches. Prevention works. In Bristol, stormwater management projects have eliminated beach closures for the past two summers.*

**Rhode Island voters overwhelmingly support Open Space and Recreation Bonds**

71.4% voted 'Yes' for the 2014 Clean Water, Open Space Health Communities bond  
 69.8% voted 'Yes' for the 2012 Farmland & Open Space Conservation, Parks & Bay Restoration bond

**DOZENS OF ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT THE GREEN ECONOMY BOND, INCLUDING:**

- |                                      |                                       |  |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Aquidneck Island Planning Commission | East Coast Greenway Alliance          | Rhode Island Recreation and Parks Assn.  |
| Audubon Society of Rhode Island      | Environmental Council of Rhode Island | Save the Bay                             |
| Bike Newport                         | Grow Smart Rhode Island               | Southside Community Land Trust           |
| Blackstone Valley Tourism Council    | Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce   | South Kingstown Healthy Places by Design |
| Charlestown Bike Committee           | Providence-Warwick CVB                | The Nature Conservancy                   |
| Coggeshall Farm Museum               | Rhode Island Land Trust Council       | Women Bike RI                            |
| Discover Newport                     | Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition        | Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council  |