



ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF RHODE ISLAND

October 11, 2012

Via email governor@governor.ri.gov

The Honorable Lincoln Chafee
Governor, State of Rhode Island
State House, Room 224
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Chafee:

The Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) stands against the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council's proposal to include the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) as a subsidiary to an Executive Office of Commerce. Improving efficiency and the state's economy are laudable goals for the government to have, but protecting our air, water, and open spaces is also the government's responsibility. Improving the record on enforcing our environmental standards should also be a primary goal of government.

ECRI is a coalition of over 60 Rhode Island environmental organizations with a combined membership of over 45,000. ECRI's mission is to serve as an effective and united voice for developing and advocating policies and laws that protect and enhance the environment. ECRI's members are alarmed that in this day and age we are still talking about strengthening the economy without talking about the role of a healthy environment in sustaining that economy. Allowing economic considerations to trump environmental regulation and permitting would hurt both the economy and the environment, and frankly, playing that trump card is not the role of government.

A healthy environment and sustainable policies are major factors in a strong economy. One of Rhode Island's greatest assets is its tourism industry, which relies on the bay, open spaces, and natural landscapes as valuable attractions. Protecting these spaces supports a thriving tourism industry.

Robust environmental protection also saves money in terms of health care costs, costs of living, and environmental clean-ups. We are proud of Rhode Island's heritage as a leader in America's industrial past, but we are now spending millions of dollars for the clean-up of our bay, rivers and streams. For example, just yesterday the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced its cleanup plan for the Woonasquatucket River, where current generations still pay the price for our industrial past. Many sites are still

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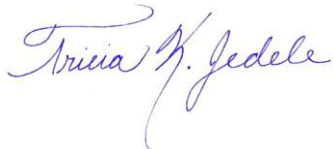
contaminated and unable to be utilized because the money for cleaning up sites is running out.

Environmental protection is the lynchpin to any robust and sustainable economy. Too often it is perceived as an impediment to economic growth, but this perception is not fact. We call on you, Governor Chafee, to diminish this misconception of inherent conflict between a strong economy and a healthy environment by leading the state in a conversation about the role a well-protected environment plays in the State's economy.

The Department of Environmental Management, our state's environmental regulatory authority, does not belong under the control of a Secretary of Commerce. DEM, environmental regulation, and thoughtful planning must be separate and equal contributors to a healthy economy.

We encourage you to stand strong on your family's ideal and Rhode Island's tradition of conservation. While there is much work to be done, it is critical to recognize the diverse interests that will play a role in our state's economic recovery.

Respectfully,



Tricia K. Jedele, President
On behalf of the Environment Council of Rhode Island.