



THE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF RHODE ISLAND (ECRI)

2015 Earth Day at the State House

PRIORITIES

Budget article 24 of H5900: Establish the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank.

The environmental community has been excited to work with the Governor and Treasurer's staff on the expansion and re-branding of the Clean Water Finance Agency to the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB). New programs added to the RIIB will leverage existing public funds and private capital for residents, commercial property owners, and public buildings across the state. The RIIB will enable cost-saving energy upgrades, stormwater improvements, and brownfields clean ups, and lays the groundwork to address green infrastructure financing needs for decades to come.

H5668/S0369: Phase out cesspools by requiring removal at point-of-sale.

Cesspools are an outdated wastewater management method--still used by tens of thousands in R.I.--that contaminates groundwater in the Bay's watershed, contributing to beach closings and fish kills that hurt our economy. For years, environmentalists and homebuilders have united to support legislation to gradually phase out cesspools by requiring their removal from property at its point-of-sale, with shortsighted opposition from realtors typically killing the bill. With momentum from 2014, ECRI feels that 2015 will be the year that the General Assembly amends the Rhode Island Cesspool Act of 2007 to phase out cesspools.

Sponsors: Rep. Teresa Tanzi, Rep. Art Handy, Rep. Lauren Carson, Rep. Michael Morin, Rep. Helio Melo, Senator Sue Sosnowski, Sen. William Conley, Senator Gayle Goldin

H5787/S0263: Defend protected land from encroachment.

H5787 and S0263 aim to defend protected land from encroachment (vandalism, theft, and destruction) by increasing penalties for cutting trees, stealing stone walls, and otherwise intentionally damaging protected open space lands. This legislation is based on effective legislation in Connecticut and is supported by the Attorney General's office. In 2014, the legislation passed in the Rhode Island House but was never scheduled for a vote in the Senate.

Sponsors: Rep. Cale Keable, Sen. Sue Sosnowski, Sen. Nicholas Kettle, Sen. James Sheehan, Sen. Stephen Archambault, Sen. Paul Fogarty

H5079/S0089: Expand Rhode Island's Renewable Energy Standard.

Rhode Island's Renewable Energy Standard (RES) (RIGL 39-26) sets requirements for utilities to purchase electricity from eligible renewable energy resources. Starting at 3% in 2007, the statute incrementally increases the percent of renewables, ending at 16% in 2019. Beginning in 2015, renewable energy advocates and the environmental community are working with the General Assembly to expand the obligation beyond 16%. H5079 and S0089 would extend the Renewable Energy Standard Schedule Program beyond 2019 to 2035.

Sponsors: Rep. Deborah Ruggiero, Rep. Art Handy, Rep. Joy Hearn, Rep. Joseph Shekarchi, Rep. Mia Ackerman, Sen. Sue Sosnowski, Sen. William Conley, Sen. William Walaska, Sen. Joshua Miller, Sen. Gayle Goldin

H5904/S733: Extend Rhode Island's Least Cost Procurement mandate beyond 2017.

Rhode Island's Least Cost Procurement mandate ensures that energy procurement decisions maximize the use of the lowest-risk, lowest-cost, and cleanest resource available for supplying the state's energy needs – energy efficiency. Most of the legislative provisions supporting Least Cost Procurement expire in 2017 - these bills extend Rhode Island's Least Cost Procurement policy for energy efficiency until 2029. Rhode Island's investments in energy efficiency have enabled nation-leading levels of energy savings, while also creating jobs and boosting economic activities.

Sponsors: Rep. Art Handy, Rep. Deborah Ruggiero, Rep. Lauren Carson, Rep. Raymond Gallison, Rep. Daniel McKiernan, Sen. Joshua Miller, Sen. Sue Sosnowski, Sen. William Walaska, Senator William Conley, Sen. Louis DiPalma

Oppose H5273: Maintain the ban on incineration.

This act is a recurring attempt to allow the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation to consider the use of incineration as a method to dispose of solid waste. Incineration is an expensive option for disposing of waste. Its operation results in toxic fly ash that needs to be disposed as hazardous waste and slag that has little use other than landfilling. ECRI does not expect this bill to gain momentum this year, or advance out of committee.

OTHER ECRI AGENDA ITEMS

- H5478: Create a House commission on economic risk due to flooding and sea level rise.
- H5673: Task force to review EPR programs and establish a uniform process in the areas of protection of natural of natural resources, recycling and product stewardship programs.
- H5151: Establish a plan for a gradual ban on disposable plastic checkout bags by retail establishments.
- H5671/S0608: Mercury reduction and education act, requiring manufacturers of mercury containing lamps to establish and implement a statewide collection program. Also requires DEM to develop thermostat recycling goals.
- H5962/S0737: Implementation of recommendations of the 2014 Wetlands Taskforce.