

RHODE ISLAND WOODLAND PARTNERSHIP

2023-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

APRIL 2023



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The original 2017-21 strategic plan was produced by a team of dedicated natural resource professionals. Amanda Mahaffey of the Forest Stewards Guild led the writing of the document and co-facilitated the strategic planning meetings. Jennifer West of the Narragansett Bay Research Reserve led the facilitation of the meetings. Christopher Riely of the Providence Water Supply Board coordinated the meetings and communications of the partners. Significant contributions to the strategic planning process and document were made by (in alphabetical order) Tom Abbott, Tee Jay Boudreau, Bill Buffum, Paul Dolan, Bill Fortune, Amanda Freitas, Rupert Friday, David Gregg, Scott Millar, Chris Modisette, Bruce Payton, Amelia Rose, Paul Roselli, Scott Ruhren, Kate Sayles, Tanner Steeves, Doug Still, Marc Tremblay, Will Walker, and Dick Went. All of this was made possible by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation.



Christopher Riely, now with the University of RI, and Kate Sayles, now with the RI Land Trust Council, coordinated the 2023 strategic plan update with contributions from many RIWP partners.

BACKGROUND

MISSION STATEMENT

The Rhode Island Woodland Partnership (RIWP) advances the stewardship and long-term protection of Rhode Island's woodlands to benefit the local economy, ecological values, and community enjoyment and health. RIWP increases the impact of forest conservation measures through education and information sharing.

HISTORY

RIWP began in April 2013 with periodic meetings and email updates focused on issues of importance to Rhode Island's woodlands.

The RIWP is a collaboration among foresters, landowners, conservationists, and professionals who represent public agencies, small businesses, and non-profit organizations. Partnership members share a common goal of advancing the stewardship and long-term protection of Rhode Island's woodlands to benefit the local economy, ecological values, and community enjoyment and health. RIWP has filled a fundamental need of creating a networking space for Rhode Island's conservation community to stay abreast of issues affecting Rhode Island's forests.

Over the time period covered by the original strategic plan, the RIWP held in-person meetings during most months of the year at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Warwick. In addition to its central location, this location worked well because NRCS offers the use of its conference room to partners at no cost. In-person meetings shifted to a virtual platform after the onset of the COVID pandemic in the spring of 2020.

RIWP communications evolved from emails including participants into the establishment of a RIWP Google Group and email list in the summer of 2019. This Google Group is currently maintained by Co-Coordinator Christopher Riely and Kate Sayles. In 2020, the RIWP gained a website in the form of several dedicated pages added to the RI Woods website maintained by URI.

The original strategic plan included three focus areas: (1) Education, (2) Policy and Economics, and (3) Stewardship. Directly and indirectly, many of the Policy & Economics and Stewardship activities and goals outlined were undertaken and accomplished (see highlights below), while sometimes in a manner different from that outlined in the strategic plan.

Policy & Economics:

- Forests and land conservation included in 2016 RI Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan
- RIWP Industry Focus Group discussion convened and report published in 2018.
- Rhode Island Forest Conservation Advisory ad hoc committee established and report on *The Value of Rhode Island's Forest* report published in 2019
- URI study and report on *The Economic Impact of Rhode Island's Forestry and Wood Products Sector* published in 2019
- RI Forest Conservation Act passed in 2021. This effort would not have succeeded without a great deal of coordination and strategizing among RIWP members active in advocacy
- RI Forest Conservation Commission established in 2021 with passage of Forest Conservation Act
- Forest-friendly zoning established in several RI municipalities
- Both at the municipality and state level, extensive efforts to promote “smart” renewable energy siting minimizing loss of high conservation value forests
- RI DEM hired agricultural marketing specialist working on RI forest products in 2021

Stewardship

- 2018-21 “Forestry for Rhode Island’s Birds” NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant was the first project with funding directed specifically to the RIWP following the development of the original strategic plan.
- 2017-23 “Southern New England Heritage Forest” NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Project leveraged extensive USDA funding forest for permanent forestland conservation and improved stewardship in western RI and adjacent areas of CT and MA
- 2019-22 USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant project focused on “Increasing Resiliency in Southern New England Oak Forests” of CT, MA, and RI.

- With southern New England states joining the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative, the FEMC accomplished a significant “Regional Assessment of Browse and its Impacts on Forest Vegetation”
- “Women Owning Woodlands” programming extended to RI

Many RIWP partner organizations were very active in conducting RI forest-related education and outreach programming over 2017-21, but fewer of the specific activities and objectives in the plan’s Education focus area were accomplished as RIWP projects. This was in part due to the RIWP’s value in convening partners to focus on urgent policy and stewardship issues (such as influencing renewable energy policy to minimize forest loss and responding to spongy moth-related oak mortality). Some of the educational aspirations expressed in the 2017-21 plan fell outside the expertise of the most active RIWP partners, and with very limited resources the partnership did not have the capacity to directly work on some objectives. Several RIWP partners, however, continued to independently lead longstanding and impactful educational programs (such as the BioBlitz, Envirothon, and environmentally-oriented summer camps). Some partners also initiated important new efforts to make RI’s natural places more accessible to all the state’s population.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

The RIWP seeks to continue to hold open meetings about once a month, with fewer meetings during the summer and other times of year when the regular meeting schedule must be adjusted.

- Virtual meetings that started during the pandemic enabled a larger number of partners to participate on a regular basis. Most meetings will continue to use a virtual platform.
- Periodic field trip meetings (often hosted by members) allow RIWP partners to connect in person site while visiting rural and urban forest sites of interest. Coordinators will seek to organize field trips about once per quarter.

PARTNERS

Current partners include:

- Audubon Society of Rhode Island (ASRI)
- Blackstone Parks Conservancy
- Burrillville Land Trust
- City of Providence Parks Department (Providence Parks)
- Groundwork Rhode Island
- Grow Smart Rhode Island
- Jerimoth Forestry
- Land Management Services
- Maisey's Tree Farm
- Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR)
- The Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island Chapter
- Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD)
- Providence Water Supply Board (Providence Water)
- Rhode Island Association of Conservation Districts
- RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture and Forest Environment (DEM-DAFE)
- RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife (DEM-DFW)
- Rhode Island Forest Conservators Organization (RIFCO)
- Rhode Island Land Trust Council (RILTC)
- Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS)
- Rhode Island Resource Conservation & Development Area Council (RC&D)
- Rhode Island Tree Council
- Save the Bay
- Society of American Foresters, Rhode Island Chapter (SAF)
- Sweet Birch Consulting, LLC
- University of Rhode Island, Department of Natural Resources Science (URI)
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rhode Island State Office (NRCS)



Potential additional partners might include:

- Additional wood products and forest-related businesses
- Land trusts, conservation organizations, and nonprofits that own or care for forests
- Advocacy groups with forest-related environmental concerns as part of their mission
- Other state agencies
- RI Association of Environmental Educators, watershed organizations, RI Wild Plant Society, arboreta and park organizations (e.g., Roger Williams Park Conservancy)
- Public and private higher education institutions, including additional departments at URI

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR COLLABORATION

This Partnership is an informal network of people representing private and public organizations and agencies that develop and implement a shared forest conservation vision within Rhode Island.

Together, these groups work to achieve conservation on a large scale.

These are the principles by which we agree to work together to achieve our mutual goal of inspiring a culture of forest conservation throughout Rhode Island.

1. **Voluntary.** The Partnership is based on voluntary cooperation.

2. **Facilitate.** The goal of the Partnership is not to dictate, but to facilitate informed decisions.

3. **Mediate.** When disagreements arise, rational dialogue will be employed to work through differences.

4. **Mutually Beneficial.** The Partnership is guided by mutual self-interest – there is something in it for everyone.

5. **Clarify and communicate.** The efforts of the Partnership will clarify terminology, reduce fears, and promote a common understanding of potentially divisive concepts, for example: commercial harvesting, conservation easements, comprehensive plans, data layers on maps.

6. **Multiple Pathways of Progress.** There are no single one-size-fits-all solutions; rather there is a range of items (tools, strategies, actions, levels of commitment) that lead towards keeping forests as forests.

7. **Diversify.** The Partnership will bring together constituencies with similar interests that may not have traditionally worked together; for example, the land trust community and the forest products and logging industry.



INTRODUCTION

WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic plans are collaboratively crafted documents that capture a systematic assessment of an entity or group's direction and priorities. The RIWP is most likely to fulfill its vision through organization and coordinated, strategic action.

WHAT'S IN IT

This plan includes two key components:

- (1) Descriptions for each part of the plan
- (2) A schedule of activities

Note: the Impact Map was a key component in the original version of the strategic plan, and is described within the document. The Impact Map itself can be found in Appendix B.



Amanda Mahaffey

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The original 2017-21 strategic plan was made possible by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation. RIWP meetings were coordinated by Christopher Riely of Providence Water, Jennifer West of the Narragansett Bay Research Reserve, and Amanda Mahaffey of the Forest Stewards Guild. This strategic planning process utilized guidance and definitions from the NOAA Coastal Services Center and the Institute for Conservation Leadership.

To complete the original plan, RIWP convened six facilitated meetings over the course of 2016. Each meeting included 10-20 participants and emailed input from additional partners. Through these meetings, RIWP:

- Identified the Target Audience (see Appendix A)
- Conducted an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT; see Appendix B)
- Clarified the working Mission Statement and articulated the desired five-year Impact
- Outlined Enabling Conditions, Objectives, Activities, and Timeline
- Identified Partners' roles and areas of focus

Significantly, the Partnership identified the need for a paid, dedicated (likely part-time, initially) RIWP Coordinator to help the Partners execute some of the RIWP's ambitions over the five-year plan window. While this role remains unfilled, the Discussion section elaborates on the potential role of the coordinator and future considerations.

The RIWP has taken intentional steps to develop an updated strategic plan for the 2023-25 period:

- The October 2021 meeting included an initial discussion that focused on the RIWP's strengths in the policy and economics focus area
- The September 2022 meeting was a full-day trip to Prudence Island that included a dedicated strategic planning session in which eight individuals participated. Summary notes from this session were distributed to the Google Group list.
- An online RIWP strategic plan survey including 14 questions (both multiple choice and free response) was conducted over November and December 2022 through use of Google Forms. Twelve responses were collected and a summary of the survey responses was distributed to the RIWP Google Group list.
- The January 2023 meeting featured a presentation and discussion on the results and content of the strategic planning retreat session and online survey, with consensus of the group informing the co-coordinators' work on revising the plan.
- Key points from the retreat session and online survey:
 - The RIWP can provide input and feedback to the Forest Conservation Commission, but it should not be an advocacy group (while some partners work on advocacy)
 - Partners suggested retaining two of the original focus areas (Policy & Economics and Stewardship), with education left to individual RIWP partners and other forums
 - Partners believed it was important to address equity goals in new plan and the elevation of urban forestry reflects this concern.
 - The new plan should scale goals and activities to be attainable with RIWP capacity
- The April 2023 meeting featured a presentation and discussion of the draft 2023-25 strategic plan by Christopher Riely and Kate Sayles.

IMPACT MAP

This section includes:

- Descriptions of the elements of an Impact Map
- Graphical and verbal breakdowns of the strategic plan elements
- Details on the Enabling Conditions, SMART Objectives, Activities, and Resources

ELEMENTS OF AN IMPACT MAP

During the original strategic planning process in 2016, the RIWP created a one-page Impact Map, a visual depiction of how the organization will leverage its strengths and resources and connects core strategies to achieve a clear and tangible impact. The impact map has been moved to Appendix B for this 2023-2025 Strategic Plan Update.

The key components of an Impact map are:

- **Impact:** The ultimate results of your work
- **Enabling Conditions:** The expected results of activities; conditions that must be in place for the desired impact to be achieved
- **Activities:** Efforts designed and conducted to achieve the desired impact
- **SMART Objectives:** Specific, Measurable, Audience- or issue-directed, Realistic and ambitious, and Time-bound (SMART) statements of achievement that articulate *how* Activities help achieve Enabling Conditions
- **Resources:** The human, financial, and organizational inputs needed to successfully execute activities



The Impact Map (Appendix B) was created from right to left, starting with the Impact and working backwards into the Resources. To achieve the desired five-year Impact, the Enabling Conditions must be true. The Activities identified by RIWP will ideally be conducted to fulfill those Enabling Conditions. The Resources needed include both existing resources and ones to be added within the five-year strategic plan window. The SMART Objectives (not pictured) are statements that articulate the who, when, what, and how much must be achieved to fulfill the Enabling Conditions. Objectives serve as the basis for determining Activities.

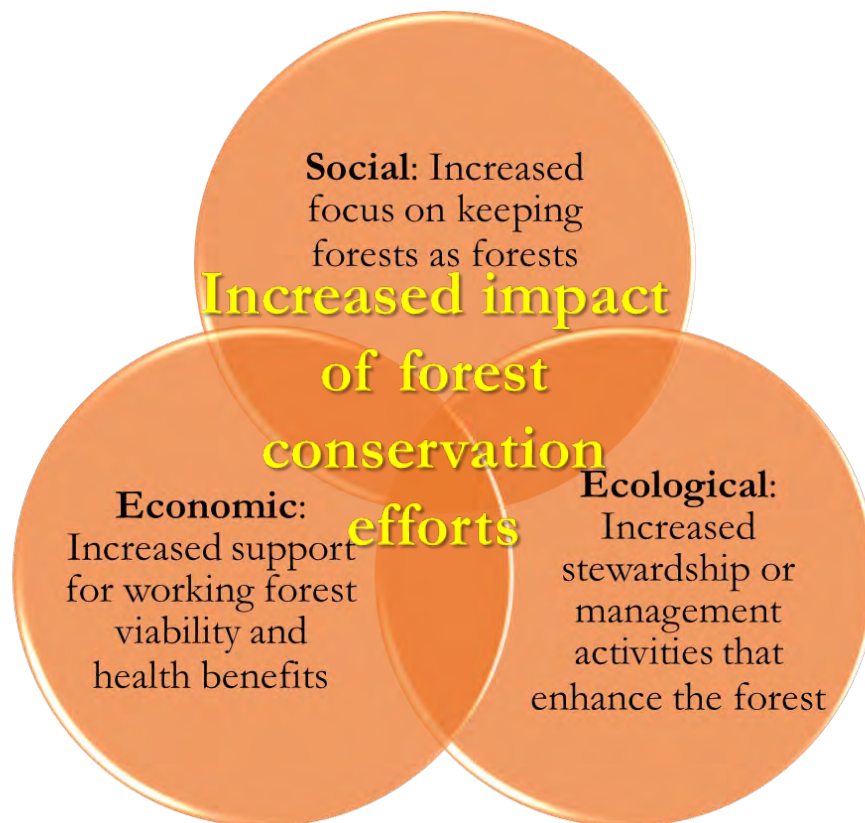
Full Enabling Conditions, Activities, and Resources are described in detail in succeeding sections.

IMPACT

The Impact describes the ultimate results of the organization's work. It can be seen as analogous to long-term outcomes. Impact articulates the Partnership's answer to a fundamental question:

What is the change RIWP aims to create?

Sustained Impact



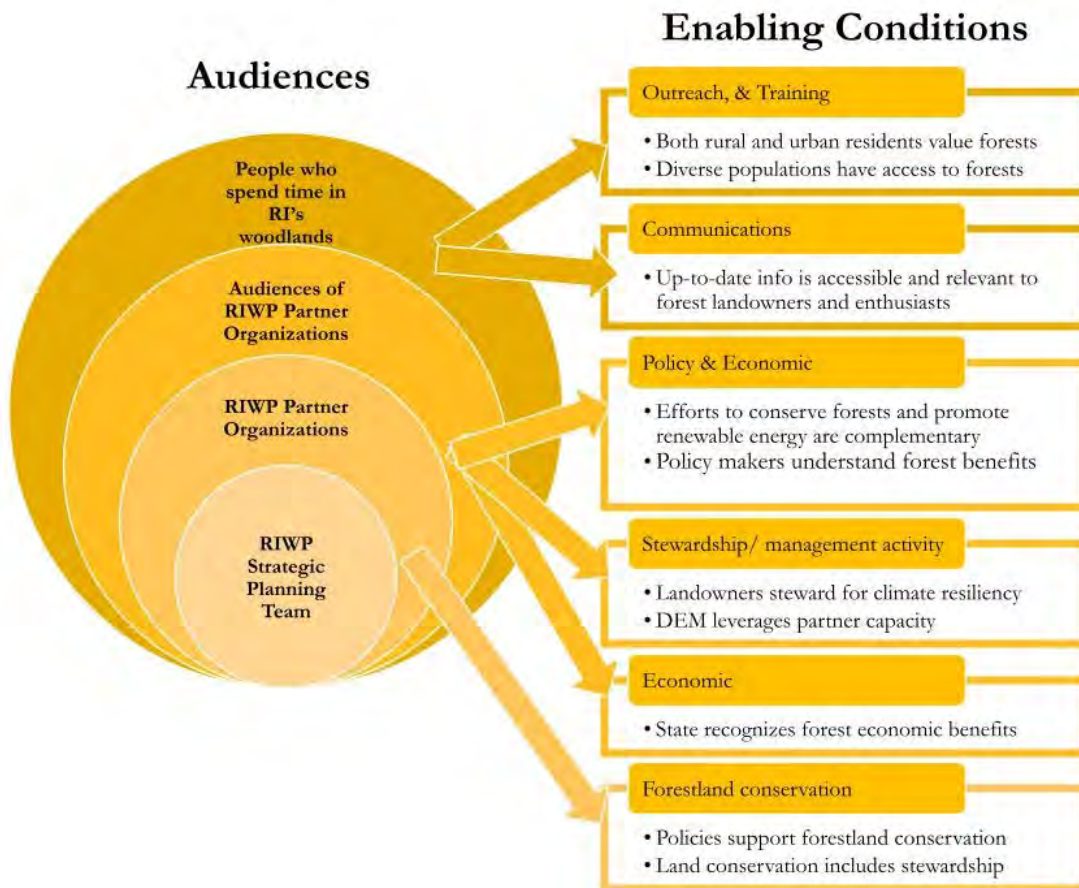
The Rhode Island Woodland Partnership intends to **increase the impact of forest conservation efforts** in the social, ecological, and economic spheres. This includes:

- Increasing support for working forest viability and health benefits;
- Increasing stewardship or management activities that enhance the forest; and
- Increasing the focus on keeping forests as forests.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

Enabling Conditions are conditions that must be true for the Impact to be achieved. In the graphic below, RIWP's Enabling Conditions are grouped by focus area and paired with the target audience of that condition. These focus areas (Education, Outreach, Training, etc.) were identified by the Partnership in 2016, and help organize the Objectives and Activities needed to achieve the desired Impact. Enabling Conditions address a key question:

What must be true for the desired impact to be achieved?



In order for Enabling Conditions to be met, certain audiences must be motivated or empowered to change their behavior (see Appendix A). This, in turn, generates the desired increase in forest conservation efforts.

The graphic above illustrates *whose* behavior must change to achieve the desired impact and *what* the change must be. RIWP partner organizations must concentrate on economic impacts and forestland conservation. Audiences of RIWP partner organizations must increase supportive policies and practices of forest stewardship. People who spend time in Rhode Island's woodlands must increase their appreciation and understanding of forest benefits.

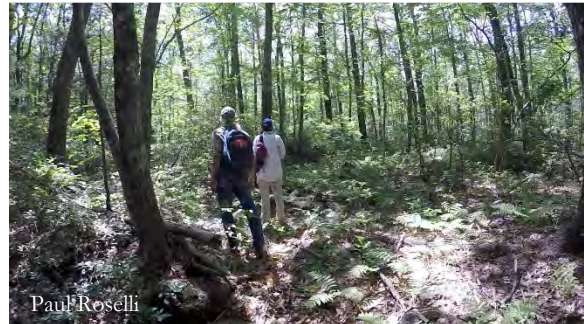
To increase the impact of forest conservation efforts (see Impact), RIWP determined that the following Enabling Conditions must be met:

Outreach, & Training

- **Rural and urban residents value forests.** Rhode Islanders understand the benefits and values that forests provide and recognize the importance of conserving those forests for future generations.
- **Diverse populations appreciate forests.** An increasingly diverse population is empowered by education and outreach efforts to visit, appreciate, and/or manage forests, including in their local areas.

Communications

- **Forest landowners and enthusiasts have up to date information.** The RIWP is the first stop for the forest landowner and professional community for the most up to date information and resources.



Policy

- **Policy-makers understand forest benefits.** Policy-makers and the public understand the positive natural and economic benefits of forests: Clean water and air, value of forest products growing in woods, benefits of forests in a changing climate
- **Forest conservation & renewable energy development are complementary.** In order to meet Rhode Island's Act on Climate goals, state and local decision makers will implement policies that both conserve forests and expand renewable energy production.

Economic

- **State recognizes forest economic benefits.** The full range of products and services related to forests and trees are recognized by decision-makers in Rhode Island. Their economic contributions to the state are acknowledged and valued.

Stewardship/management activity

- **Landowners steward land.** Forest landowners, including conservation owners, engage in stewardship and land management
- **DEM leverages capacity.** Resources are leveraged to help DEM improve stewardship capacity.

Forestland conservation

- **Policies support conservation.** Support exists for policies and practices that advance forest preservation, conservation, and stewardship
- **Acquisitions include stewardship.** Stewardship goals and activities are more frequently incorporated into acquisitions by all types of landowners.

How will we create this change? The following section outlines SMART Objectives, Activities, and Resources needed to create these Enabling Conditions and achieve the desired Impact.

SMART OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES

This section organizes RIWP Enabling Conditions and associated SMART Objectives, Activities, and Resources by areas of focus that emerged during the strategic planning discussions. These two focus areas have been grouped to capture overlapping Enabling Conditions and target audiences. Education focus area

- *Policy & Economic*: Policy, Economic
- *Stewardship*: Stewardship/Management Activity and Forestland Conservation

When possible, the RIWP uses SMART Objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Audience-directed, Realistic, and Time-bound. They describe *how* Activities will fulfill the Enabling Conditions. This section outlines the Activities that will be implemented to achieve the SMART Objectives, as well as the Resources and lead Partners to complete the Activities. The **bold** text appears in the Impact Map; the non-bold text provides additional details.



Each Activity includes a Who – Lead. The Lead Partners include one or more RIWP members who are really interested in this activity and are willing to take the lead on its implementation. If a new dedicated Coordinator will be helping with this activity, the Lead Partner(s) would be responsible for supervising this person’s work on this activity.

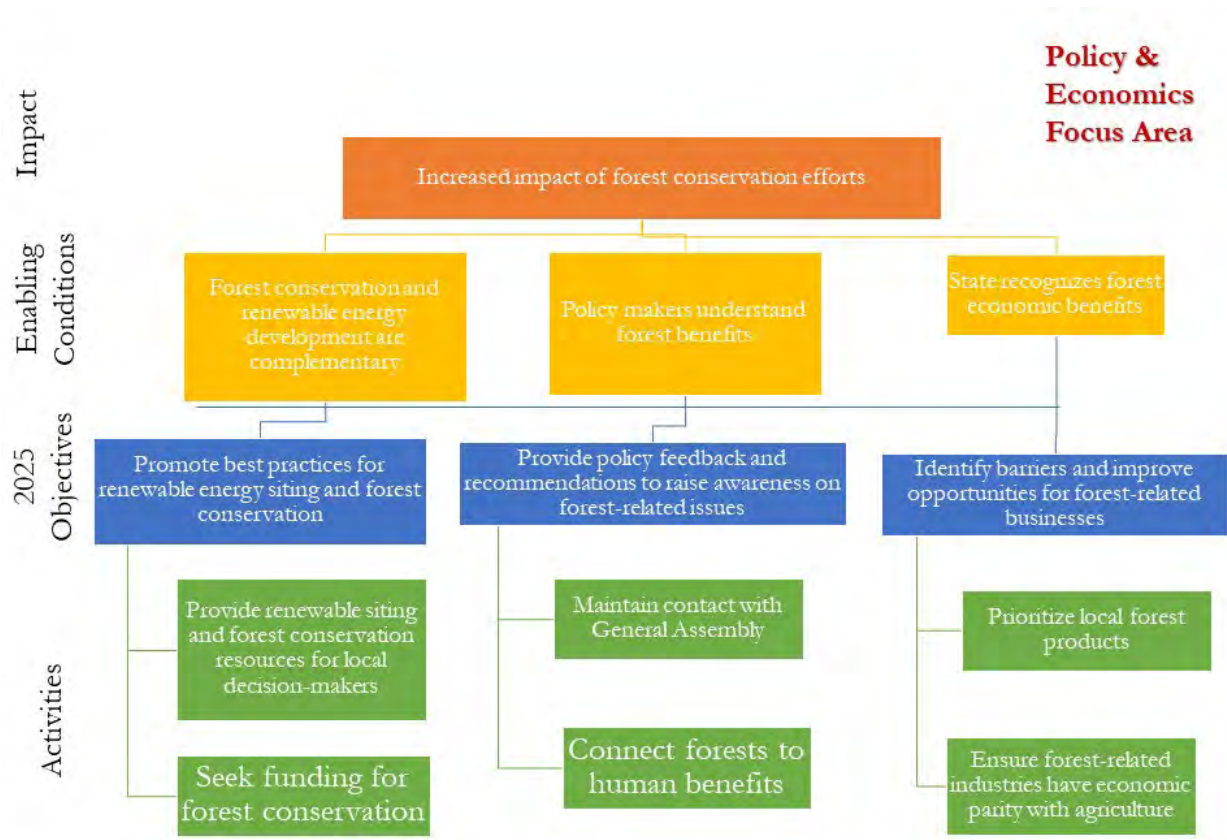
Each Activity also includes a Who – Support. Supporting Partners are other RIWP members who are willing to help out with this activity in a

small way but are not able or willing to take the lead on it and/or commit to making time for this activity whenever needed. Other Partners are non-RIWP groups that might be helpful for implementing the activity and whom we would expect to contact, but until they are partners we cannot make any commitments on their behalf.

POLICY & ECONOMICS FOCUS

This section includes the focus areas of Policy and Economics.

The graphic below depicts the connections between the five-year Impact, Enabling Conditions, 2025 Objectives, and Activities for this focus area.



ENABLING CONDITIONS – POLICY & ECONOMICS FOCUS

Policy

- **Policy-makers understand forest benefits.** Policy-makers and the public understand the positive natural and economic benefits of forests: Clean water and air, value of forest products growing in woods, benefits of forests in a changing climate.
- **Efforts to conserve forests & promote renewable energy development are complementary.** In order to meet Rhode Island's Act on Climate goals, state and local decision makers will implement policies that both conserve forests and expand renewable energy production.



Paul Roselli

Economic

- **State recognizes forest economic benefits.** The full range of products and services related to forests and trees are recognized by decision-makers. Their economic contributions to the state are acknowledged and valued.

2025 OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES

- The RIWP will promote best management practices for renewable energy siting and forest conservation.
 - Activity: **Provide renewable energy siting and forest conservation resources for decision makers.** In order to meet Rhode Island's Act on Climate goals, we need to increase the level of renewable energy production while also permanently conserving significant forestland. RIWP will provide information and resources to decision makers.
 - Resources: Contacts with member and allied organizations working on state climate change policy, member and allied organizations working on forest conservation
 - Who – Lead: RIWP member(s) or agreed upon by consensus of active members.
 - Who – Support: Consistent representation from partners
 - Activity: **Seek funding for forest conservation.** RIWP will identify sources of funding for forest conservation projects statewide and make additional recommendations regarding funding to policy makers.
 - Resources: RI Forest Action Plan, RI Wildlife Action Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), RI Forest Health Works Project
 - Who – Lead: Kate Sayles (RILTC); NRCS
 - Who – Support: Subcommittee/working group established for this purpose
- The RIWP will prioritize providing feedback and recommendations to raise awareness on forest-related issues to policy makers.

- Activity: **Maintain contact with the General Assembly.** While the RIWP would not like to take a position as a direct advocacy group, we will support the implementation of good policies and ensure that decision makers have the information they need to make good decisions.

Resources: RI General Assembly contacts, RI Forest Action Plan, RI Wildlife Action Plan, Value of RI Forests Report

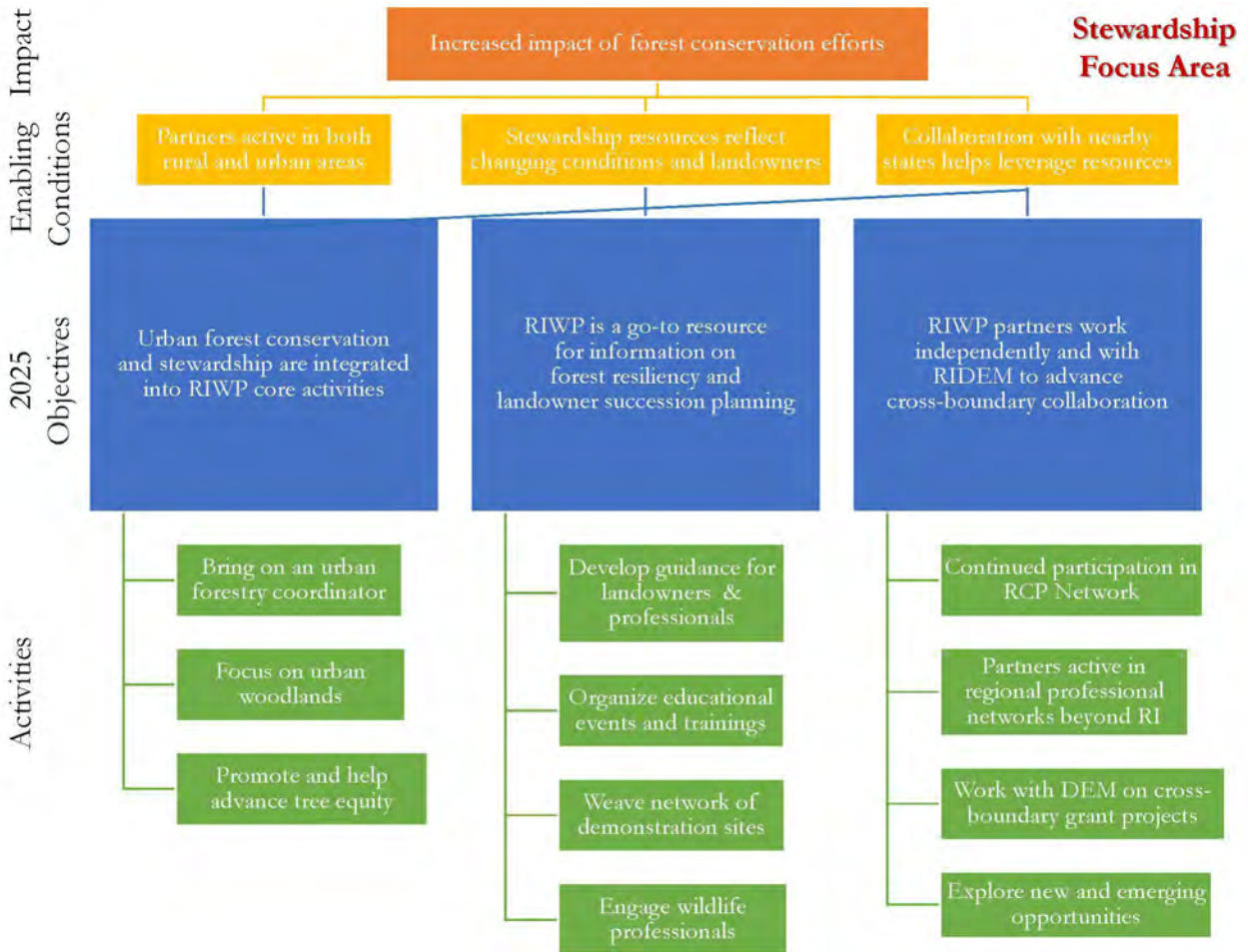
- Who – Lead: RIWP members with legislative contacts, Partnership members who are on the Forest Conservation Commission.
 - Who – Support: DEM-DAFE Other: RI Agricultural Council
- The RIWP will identify barriers and improve opportunities for forest-related businesses.
 - Activity: **Ensure forest-related industries have economic parity with agriculture** to ensure that woods operators have the same benefits as farmers.
 - Resources: Farm, Forest & Open Space current use tax law, state laws that pertain to agricultural benefits, Economic Impact of RI's Forestry and Wood Products Sector report, RI Wood Operators Organization
 - Who – Lead: RIWP members, General Assembly
 - Who – Support: RIWP members
 - Activity: **Prioritize the marketing and promotion of local forest products.**
 - Resources: PR intern, RIWP Coordinator, RI Wood Operators Organization
 - Who – Lead: RC&D, URI, DEM-DAFE
 - Who – Support: RIWP members



STEWARDSHIP FOCUS

This section includes the focus areas of Stewardship and Management Activities as well as Forestland Conservation.

The graphic below depicts the connections between the Sustained Impact, Enabling Conditions, 2025 Objectives, and Activities for this focus area.



ENABLING CONDITIONS – STEWARDSHIP FOCUS

Rural-to-urban geographic focus

- **Partners are active in both rural and urban areas.** Policies and practices that advance forest conservation and stewardship are advanced in all types of communities.

Stewardship/management activity

- **Stewardship resources reflect changing conditions.** Activities are focused on current and evolving forest issues and concerns.
- **Succession planning is incorporated into stewardship.** Resources are available and accessible to landowners and professionals.



Cross-boundary initiatives

- **Collaboration with nearby states.** This helps leverage additional resources and capacity to help improve stewardship in RI.

2025 OBJECTIVES

- Urban forest conservation and stewardship are integrated into RIWP core activities.
 - Activity: **Urban forestry coordinator.** Recruit a third co-coordinator who is currently involved in urban forestry work and will strengthen RIWP's presence in this area
 - Resources: RI professional and interpersonal networks
 - Who – Lead: URI, RILTC
 - Who – Support: DEM-DAFE, other partners working in urban forestry
 - Activity: **Serve as a resource and voice for urban woodlands.** Help introduce community groups to the many values that urban woodlands provide and tap partners' expertise for guidance on care of these sometimes neglected or undervalued forests.
 - Resources: NRCS programs
 - Who – Lead: DEM-DAFE, This Old Tree, RINHS
 - Who – Support: NRCS, partners working in urban forestry
 - Activity: **Consider and prioritize tree equity.** Expand use of tree equity data, metrics, and tools developed in RI. Highlight and champion efforts that address environmental justice, human health, and other inequity issues.
 - Resources: Tree equity tools developed American Forests and RI DEM & DOH
 - Who – Lead: DEM-DAFE, Groundwork RI

- Who – Support: Conservation Districts, This Old Tree, other partners working in urban areas
- The RIWP is a go-to resource for information on **climate-smart forestry**, **oak resiliency** and landowner **succession planning**.
 - Activity: **Develop guidance for landowners and professionals**. Produce traditional publications and digital media to promote awareness of issues and best practices
 - Resources: USDA and private grant funding, traditional publications and digital media including RI Woods and RIWP partner organization websites
 - Who – Lead: URI, NRCS, RILTC, DEM-DAFE
 - Who – Support: RIFCO, RISAF, Northern Institute for Applied Climate Science (NIACS), Forest Stewards
 - Activity: **Organize educational events and trainings**. Presentations, woods walks, and workshops inform and engage landowners, land trusts, students, and interested members of the public. Professional trainings expand capacity to implement the up-to-date best practices.
 - Resources: USDA and private grant funding; volunteer efforts
 - Who – Lead: Conservation Districts, RILTC, RIFCO, RINHS, RI RC&D, URI
 - Who – Support: NRCS, DEM-DAFE
 - Activity: **Weave network of demonstration sites**. Organize existing and emerging RI project sites that can be visited (in person or virtually) into a network
 - Resources: RI Woods website
 - Who – Lead: DEM-DAFE, RIFCO, URI
 - Who – Support: NBNERR, NIACS, Providence Water, RINHS
 - Activity: **Engage wildlife professionals**. Greater collaboration with the wildlife community is critical for addressing forest health holistically and boosting public support. Identify and advance collaborative projects with mutual benefits for both forestry and wildlife.
 - Resources: USDA and private grant funding, WAP/Amanda
 - Who – Lead: DEM-DAFE and DFW, RINHS
 - Who – Support: NRCS
- RIWP partners work independently and with RIDEM to advance cross-boundary collaboration.
 - Activity: **Continued participation in RCP Network**. More partners use and contribute to RCP Network offerings, which include New England’s largest single-day conservation conference. A RIWP member represents RI on the steering committee.

- Resources: RCP Network community connections, publications, resources trainings, etc. (most offered at no cost to participants)
 - Who – Lead: NRICD
 - Who – Support: URI, RILTC, RINHS, many other partners
- Activity: **Partners active in professional networks beyond RI.** Partners gain access to valuable information and opportunities through participation in larger networks, while partners also have much to share and offer outside of RI.
- Resources: Professional associations and networks (e.g., Land Trust Alliance, Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Society of American Foresters, Southern New England Forest Climate Adaptation Working Group)
 - Who – Lead and Support: All partners
- Activity: **Work with RIDEM on cross-boundary grant projects.** Coordinated multi-state proposals to competitive federal grant programs can gain an advantage over single-state applications, while private grant programs seek innovative collaborative approaches.
- Resources: Existing collaborations; government and private grant opportunities
 - Who – Lead: DEM-DAFE,
 - Who – Support: RINHS, RILTC, URI
- Activity: **Explore new and emerging opportunities.** The flexible, non-hierarchical structure of the RIWP provides a platform suitable for partners to share information and investigate new opportunities at lower risk to individual partners.
- Resources: Professional networks
 - Who – Lead: Partnership coordinators
 - Who – Support: Partners aware of new opportunities



COORDINATOR ROLE

During the original strategic planning process, the partners determined that RIWP could increase its capacity by hiring a part-time, paid Coordinator and securing grant funding to accomplish several activities over the plan timeframe. Over its first decade, the RIWP’s capacity has been limited due to most coordination and administration being performed on a semi-volunteer basis by 1-2 individuals with other primary work duties. A dedicated Coordinator position could be structured as an independent contractor or an employee of a member 501(c)(3) organization such as one of the state Conservation Districts. The Coordinator would make use of available RCP Network resources and experience in developing this role. Key responsibilities might include:

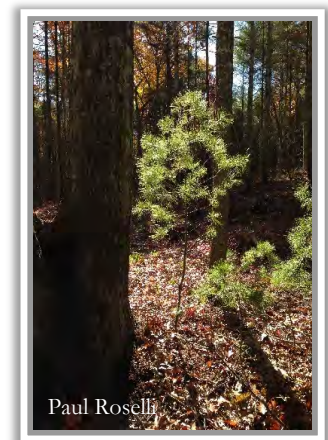
- Organize/coordinate logistics of partnership meetings and events.
- Communicate with RIWP members, partner organizations, and other entities. Develop and maintain an online presence. Reach out to new partners to ensure the full range of economic interests is represented in the partnership.
- Make use of available Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network resources and experience in developing the Partnership and Coordinator role. Actively participate in RCP Network activities, including annual November Gathering.
- Represent RIWP at relevant meetings and events (e.g. steering committee meetings).
- Coordinate grant applications and funded projects.



In some circumstances, the RIWP Coordinator might also perform project work in addition to the coordination tasks described above.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This strategic plan is a “living document” that captures the collective goals, objectives, and desired actions of the Partnership as first expressed in 2016 and updated in 2023. As events unfold in 2023-2025 and beyond, the partners will continue adapt the intent of this document to new circumstances such as changes in the political climate, government agency funding, or unforeseen opportunities. RIWP will pursue the goals outlined in this plan via the activities outlined. However, if resources allow, RIWP may decide to carry out activities that have been slated for later or simply tabled during the planning process.



APPENDIX A: RIWP AUDIENCES

People who spend time in RI's woodlands

- Forest products consumers
- Schools, environmental educational programs, youth groups, summer camps
- Climate groups that benefit from forests
- Forest managers, including urban forests
- Residents, including suburban and urban

Audiences of RIWP Partner Organizations

- Policymakers
- Lawmakers/legislators (elected officials)
- Federal, state, and local decision-makers including town councils, planning boards, town managers
- Disengaged private woodland owners, Small forestland owners
- Funders

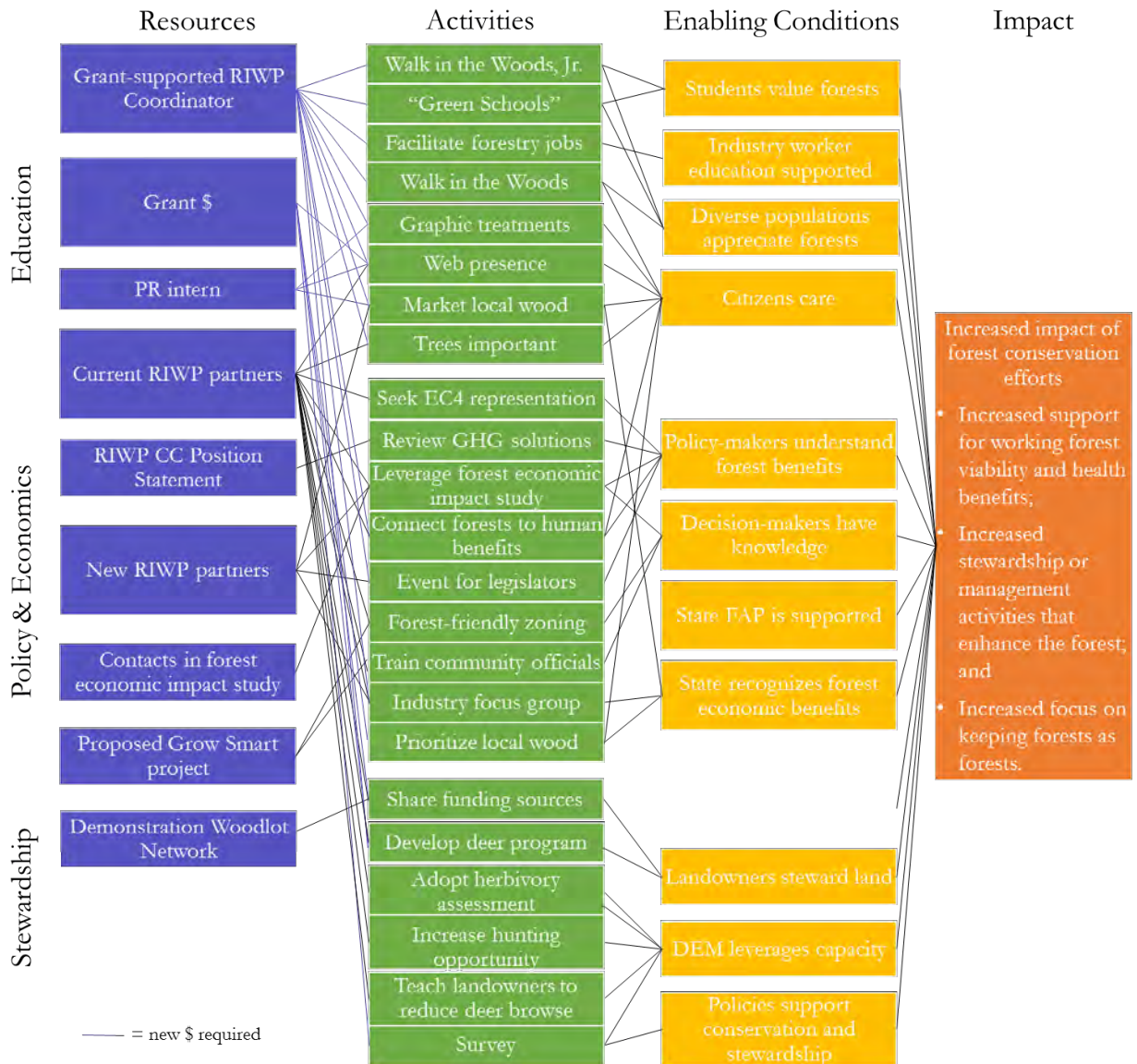
RIWP Partner Organizations

- Current list (see “Partners” in Background section)
- Potential additions that address the RIWP mission:
- Loggers, wood products businesses, forest-related businesses
- land trusts, preservation organizations, non-profits that hold onto property
- advocacy groups with environment as part of their mission, wildlife groups
- state agencies

RIWP Strategic Planning Team

- Partners engaged in planning meetings and providing input to strategic planning process

APPENDIX B: IMPACT MAP



APPENDIX C: SWOT ANALYSIS

The table below summarizes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by RIWP at the February 25, 2016, strategic planning meeting.

STRENGTHS

- Experts
- Passion
- Local ag movement non-GMO - Movement for all-natural products
 - Trends - recreation/outdoors. National parks adoption movement
- Smallest state
 - Small state allows ability to identify tasks comprehensively
 - Unique ability to visualize things and identify tangible tasks in a way other states can't take on.
- Strength of existing partnerships in RI
 - Access to environmental groups (lots)
- Already have lots of plans (stuff)
- Interest/momentum in native species
- Existing research
- Strong public support for land preservation in RI
- Many benefits to forest preservation & stewardship

OPPORTUNITIES

- Climate change - Resilient RI Act
- Scale - strength in numbers
 - Small state
- Vision can help generate and direct funding opportunity
- Clear messaging. Get more people on board.
- State FAP - 2010 -> next plan 2020
- For new engagement/messaging
 - Ability to engage/educate many groups/stakeholders
 - Passion & education for audience. Passion can be caught, not taught.
- Relationship with many other topics
- Many natural resource & community benefits
- Preservation in action. Town forests throughout the state. Examples of where good work is done. Resources with practice.
- SWAP

WEAKNESSES

- Limited in-house technology skills to spread the message
- Few people know that the partnership exists
- Lack of PR/marketing skills
 - No concise message to share regarding RI forest at this time
- Ability to give credit to partnership rather than own organization
 - Identity building - lack of ID or brand
- Lack of funds (equipment)
- Challenge of prioritizing action
- Hard to engage stakeholders
- Limited avenue to express concerns
- Follow-through on existing plans
- Invisible Green Giant - Al Hawkes - Darwin
- Fragmented management
- Lack of clearinghouse for information
- Lots of groups - conflicting messages
- Personnel capacity - Limited capacity to be at the table if we even got a seat at the table. Who from RIWP should join a meeting or group?

THREATS

- Lack of focus (of the partnership) - weakness
- Timeliness of addressing threats. Item today. 5 years from now, if we're not organized, there might be a new threat that will override this.
- Complexity of numerous audiences/goals
- Funding
- Uncertainty of data/projections
- Challenge of personalizing /issue/understand; challenge of getting issue to feel personal to people who may not be already connected.. Communication/messaging challenge. How do you get people to care? Threat is that people don't care.
 - Lack of awareness
- No status or authority
- Lack of expert personnel in State. PR. DEM budget slashes, staff reductions.
- Lack of legislative support includes governor

APPENDIX D: 2020 RHODE ISLAND FOREST ACTION PLAN (FAP)

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/agriculture-and-forest-environment/forest-environment/forestry-info-0>

APPENDIX E: 2015 RHODE ISLAND WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (SWAP)

<https://dem.ri.gov/natural-resources-bureau/fish-wildlife/wildlife-hunting/ri-state-wildlife-action-plan>

APPENDIX F: RHODE ISLAND STATE GUIDE PLAN

<https://planning.ri.gov/state-guide-plan>

APPENDIX G: RHODE ISLAND WOODS WEBSITE

<https://web.uri.edu/rhodeislandwoods/>

<https://riwoods.org> (redirects to official URL above)