

# Public Conservation Funding in New England

## Recent Trends in Government Spending on Land Protection

### Rhode Island Overview

#### FEDERAL

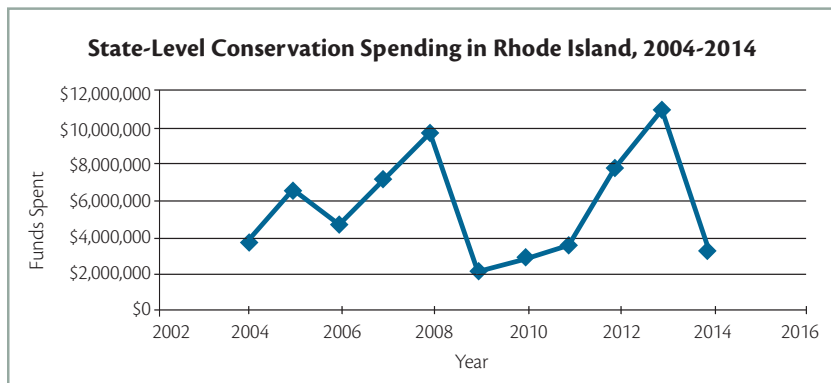
Compared to the rest of the New England states, Rhode Island is not a major recipient of federal conservation funds. LWCF federal funds are occasionally appropriated to this state, most often for the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, but from 2004-2014 none of these appropriations exceeded \$1 million. No Forest Legacy funds have been spent in Rhode Island since 2007, and most of the LWCF stateside grant funds awarded in this state have been for non-acquisition projects.

#### BOND-DRIVEN STATE FUNDING

Rhode Island's main state programs for land conservation include the Local Open Space Grant Program, the Land Conservation and Acquisition Program, and the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, all of which are funded primarily through voter-approved open space bonds. Spending totals in both 2012 and 2013 were largely influenced by the Rocky Point and India Street projects, which were funded by voter-approved bonds specifically aimed at the acquisition of these properties. On a per capita basis, from 2004-2014, the estimated state spending on conservation in Rhode Island was \$58.40 for the full period, or approximately \$5.31 per Rhode Island resident per year.



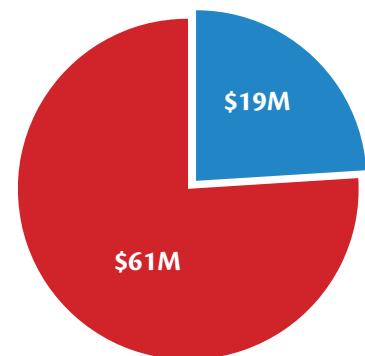
Betty Pond in Scituate, Rhode Island  
(Photo: Rhode Island Woodland Partnership)



Data from *The Trust for Public Land*. Rocky Point and India Street projects accounted for much of the funding in 2012 and 2013.



**Rhode Island:**  
**\$80 M**



In the graph above, estimated federal contributions are represented in blue, state contributions in red. Contributions are summed for the period 2004-2014 and rounded to nearest million (M). Please see the full report for details about calculating estimates and data sources.

◀ Scituate, Rhode Island  
(Photo: Rhode Island Woodland Partnership)

## Regional Overview

### FEDERAL

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the main source of federal funding for conservation in New England, contributing approximately 55-78% of the region's federal funding each year from 2004-2014. In late 2015, LWCF was allowed to expire for the first time in its 50-year history, and was later reauthorized for only three years. The protection of this program is crucial to the continued effort of conserving the New England Landscape.

### LWCF IN ACTION

LWCF supports the Forest Legacy Program, which has helped protect over 1 million acres of land in New England. LWCF also provides funding for regionally significant projects like the four-state Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge.

### OTHER SOURCES OF FEDERAL FUNDING

- Community Forest Program
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- Migratory Bird Conservation Fund
- Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund
- Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program
- National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program
- Wildlife Restoration Program/Pittman-Robertson Act



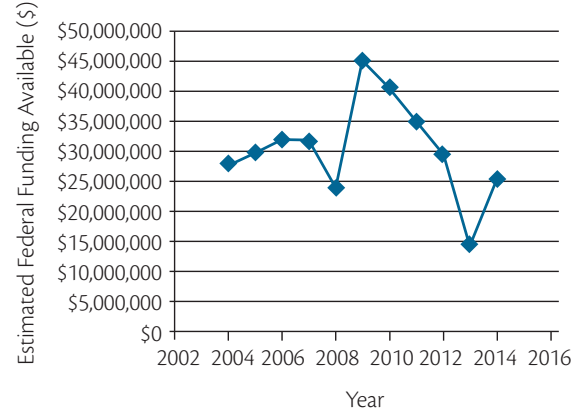
### STATE

Funding for state-level land conservation programs varies widely by state in New England. Massachusetts led the region from 2004-2014 in total state-level conservation spending, while Vermont and Rhode Island invested the most per capita. In several New England states, like Connecticut and New Hampshire, conservation programs have been underfunded or undermined in recent years. In every year from 2004-2014, Connecticut's state spending on conservation was well below the estimated average the state needs to stay on track to meet its goal of 21% of the state's acreage conserved by 2023. In 2014 Connecticut's Community Investment Act was partially diverted to the state's general fund for the 2016-2017 budget. New Hampshire's LCHIP funding was also diverted to other purposes on multiple occasions between 2004 and 2014, and in early 2015 Maine's governor withheld over \$11 million in voter-approved bond funds for the Land for Maine's Future Program, jeopardizing time-sensitive conservation projects.

### LOCAL

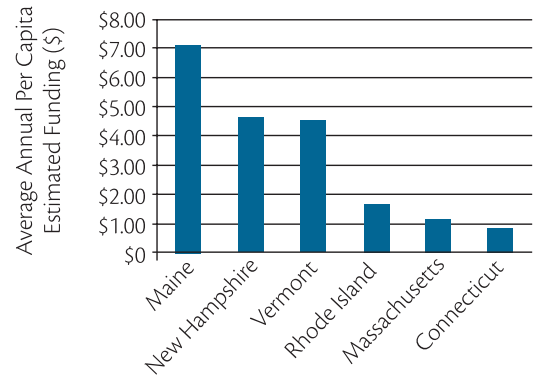
Local funds help communities preserve open space and recreation lands, and often provide critical match funding for larger conservation projects. The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) is an innovative example of strong support at the local level, allowing towns to raise money through a surcharge on local property taxes.

### Estimated New England Federal Funding Total, 2004-2014



Per capita calculations based on 2010 U.S. Census. Please refer to the full report for additional information and data sources.

### Estimated Per Capita Federal Contributions for Land Conservation in New England States, 2004-2014



Estimated total federal contributions for conservation (defined here as land protection through acquisition or easement) in New England. Please note that NRCS programs are excluded from these estimates because we could not obtain data for the full range of years, and some federal program data are based on appropriations rather than spending. Please refer to the full report for additional information and data sources.

To learn more and download the full Public Conservation Funding in New England report, visit [www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/public-funding-report](http://www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/public-funding-report). The Wildlands and Woodlands (W&W) Initiative is a collaborative effort to protect 70 percent of New England in forests over the next 50 years. Achieving the W&W goal will require considerable investment from both public and private sources and continuing innovations in conservation finance.



**Wildlands & Woodlands**  
A Vision for the New England Landscape