

## CSC Project Synopsis -- 2014

### **Project Title: Promoting State Policies that Support Land Conservation & Stewardship; and Fostering Improved Land Trust Stewardship & Collaboration**

#### **Goals:**

- To promote state legislation, policies and initiatives that safeguard and improve stewardship of protected lands in Rhode Island and that support land conservation.
- To provide training and networking opportunities for leaders of Rhode Island's conservation organizations so that they can improve their stewardship knowledge, skills and collaboration so as to ultimately improve stewardship of protected lands across the state.

#### **Brief Description:**

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council (Council) represents the state's land trusts and the interests of the land conservation community, on legislative matters that impact land conservation. The Council identifies changes to existing laws that are needed to strengthen the "permanence" of protected lands and pursues legislation to improve safeguards for conservation lands and foster sound stewardship. We also pursue legislation and state policies that support and enhance land trusts and land conservation in Rhode Island such as opportunities to provide funding for land conservation. Further, the Council defends against legislative proposals that threaten or undermine the status of conservation lands. This agenda requires consistent vigilance and expertise and covers a variety of issues that address high priority needs of land trusts and conservation organizations as they seek to effectively protect the special places in our communities and then steward lands that have been protected. The Council has an eleven year successful track record improving state policies and legislation.

The Council networks with the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), a national group, and with peers in other states to coordinate state policy initiatives related to land conservation. This enables the Council to proactively address land conservation issues that are emerging in other states before they surface as problems in Rhode Island.

In addition to the Council's leadership on state policy, the Council promotes improved stewardship and collaboration within the state's land conservation community.

- Land & Water Conservation Summit - The Council is one of three organizations that collaborate to convene the RI Land & Water Summit in March each year. The Summit offers numerous workshops where leaders from land trusts, watershed organizations and conservation commissions can improve their knowledge and skills for stewardship of protected lands. In particular, the Council organizes a workshop session at the Summit each year for the CSC to share their accomplishments and solicit ideas and priorities from the state's land conservation community. In addition, the Council organizes workshops that promote and educate conservation leaders about stewardship information and techniques that the CSC funds each year.
- Stewardship Assistance Initiatives - Beyond the Summit, the Council has a number of initiatives to help land trusts with stewardship of protected lands.
  - The first stewardship assistance project is attempting to get all land trusts to have trail maps for their trails and get them all posted and available to the public on one website: ExploreRI.com. At the time of this proposal, we

- already have 45 trail maps for land trust trail networks posted on the website. systems posted. In fall 2013, the Council conducted a workshop to trained a core of volunteers to help land trusts map their trails. We are connecting these volunteers with land trusts that need to have their trails mapped and coordinating with the land trusts to get trial maps developed.
- In 2014, the Council is planning to train volunteers and develop two more teams to assist with stewardship. The stewardship areas most likely to be developed in 2014 are trail blazing and monitoring. (Note: we are proposing a separate CSC project initiative to develop a monitoring protocol as a follow-on to the CSC Baseline Document and Management Plan protocols.)

CSC funding is needed to support the ongoing vigilant and effective work of the Council on state legislation and policy efforts and to support the Council's activities organizing the Summit and stewardship assistance initiatives. CSC funding is also needed to support the Summit which is funded and budgeted as a partnership project outside of the Council's budget.

**Deliverables:** The deliverables for this project are:

1. Text of legislation introduced in 2014 and names of lead sponsors.
2. List of legislation monitored and influenced
3. Testimony submitted for legislation
4. Report on legislative outcomes 2014
5. Land & Water Conservation Summit will be held on March 8, 2014 with a CSC workshop and other stewardship workshops.
6. More land trust trails on protected lands around the state will be mapped and the maps will be posted on ExploreRI.org.
7. The Council will hold at least 2 workshops in 2014 to train land trust leaders and volunteers with stewardship skills.
8. The Council will coordinate volunteer stewardship assistance for land trusts on trail mapping and one or two additional stewardship areas (trail blazing, etc.)

#### **Timetable and Benchmarks:**

Dec. 2013 – Jan. 2014	- Identify policy priorities for 2014 and draft legislation and/or support other initiatives such as a statewide bond
January 2014	- Sponsors for legislation recruited
February	- Legislation introduced
January – June	- Monitor legislation introduced and build grass roots response to any proposed legislation detrimental to the state's land conservation efforts. Build grass roots support for viable legislation that supports land conservation efforts. Represent land trust community at Statehouse hearings as appropriate.
March 8, 2014	- Convene RI Land & Water Conservation Summit
March 2014	- Hold 1 <sup>st</sup> Stewardship skill workshop
2014 January	- Issue check for \$20,000 to the RILTC with a clear statement that this funding should support staff and operating costs for the Council to: continue its work shaping the legislative agenda for the land conservation community in Rhode Island; organize the Land & Water Conservation Summit as a stewardship training opportunity; and fostering collaboration among land conservation organizations for stewardship of protected lands.

- Issue a check for \$1000 to the Land & Water Partnership as sponsor for the 2014 Land & Water Conservation Summit

**Budget:**

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
\$ 20,000	Support staff and operating costs for the RILTC for state policy initiatives, stewardship workshops, and initiatives fostering collaboration for stewardship among conservation organizations.
\$ 1,000	Sponsor 2014 Land & Water Conservation Summit
<b>Total \$ 21,000</b>	

Payments will be made as follows:

\$20,000 Payment will be made to: TSNE- RI Land Trust Council at Rhode Island Land Trust Council  
PO Box 633  
Saunderstown, RI 02874

Note: Third Sector New England is fiscal sponsor for RI Land Trust Council

\$1,000 payment will be made to: Land and Water Partnership  
c/o Friends of the Moshassuck  
37 Sixth Street  
Providence, RI 02906

Note: Friends of the Moshassuck is fiscal sponsor for the Land & Water Partnership and for the Land & Water Conservation Summit.

Project oversight will be done by: Rupert Friday, Director, RI Land Trust Council.