

CSC Project Proposal – 2020
Date submitted: December 1, 2019

Project Title: Promoting State Policies that Support Land Conservation & Stewardship

Goal: Promote state legislation and policies that safeguard protected lands in Rhode Island, improve stewardship of protected lands, and that support land conservation and the work of land trusts.

Brief Description:

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council (Council) represents the state's land trusts and the interests of the land conservation community in legislative and state policy discussions that impact land conservation. The Council identifies opportunities to improve existing laws to defend land that has been protected with a view toward strengthening the "permanence" and fostering sound stewardship of Rhode Island's protected lands. Further, the Council pursues legislation and state policies that support and enhance land trusts and land conservation in Rhode Island. In addition, the Council defends against legislative proposals that threaten or undermine the status of conservation lands and sound stewardship. This agenda requires consistent vigilance at the statehouse. It covers a variety of issues that address high priority needs of land trusts and conservation organizations that are protecting the priority lands in our communities. The Council has a successful state policy track record.

In 2020, the Council intends to pursue legislation to add liberal interpretation clause to Rhode Island's state enabling legislation for conservation easements. The Council will also be advocating for land conservation funding as part of a state Green Economy Bond. Further, the Council is also exploring legislation and other strategies to: improve protection for fee lands owned by municipal land trusts and to create a funding stream for land conservation. Other policy work that is ongoing is related to sustaining agriculture and safeguarding protected lands from solar energy developments.

The RI Land Trust 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 network enables the Council to proactively address land conservation issues that are emerging in other states before they surface as problems in Rhode Island. The Council also networks with other environmental organizations in Rhode Island and New England to advance policies supporting land conservation and stewardship.

CSC funding is needed to support the ongoing work of the Council on state legislation and policy efforts. Respondents to the CSC 2015 evaluation survey by Cause and Effect rated advocacy and state policy work funded by the CSC as a "very high importance." The Council's survey of land trusts in early 2019 documented that they view state policy work as a top priority for the Council.

Deliverables: The deliverables for this project are:

1. Text of legislation introduced in 2020 and names of lead sponsors.
2. List of legislation monitored and legislation for which the Council and our peers provided testimony
3. Report on legislative outcomes for the 2020 General Assembly

Timetable and Benchmarks:

December 2019 – February 2020 - Draft Legislation and Recruit Sponsors

February - Legislation introduced

January – June - Monitor legislation introduced and build grassroots response to any legislative proposal that is detrimental to the state’s land conservation efforts. Build grassroots support for viable legislation that supports land conservation efforts. Represent land trust community at Statehouse hearings as appropriate.

January – December - Participate in other state policy initiatives that impact land conservation and land trusts

Budget:

Amount	Purpose
\$ 20,000	Support staff and operating costs for the Council for state policy initiatives.

Total \$ 20,000

Payments will be made to the fiscal agent for the project:
TSNE MissionWorks Is fiscal agent for RI Land Trust Council

Contact Information is:

TSNE MissionWorks
89 South Street, Suite 700
Boston, MA 02111

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