



Cork Brook

Forest Legacy Tract, Rhode Island

September 2001

On September 17, 2001, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management acquired a conservation easement to permanently protect 44 acres of forest land in Scituate. The State was able to complete the purchase with funds from the USDA Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program. The \$218,000 forest land protection effort was funded by a grant to the State of Rhode Island and paid to landowner Steve Thomas, who will continue to own the forest.

"I'm tickled to death" was Steve Thomas' reaction upon learning that his parcel had been selected for the Rhode Island Forest Legacy Program. "I'm so happy that I'll be able to keep the farm from being developed."

Mr. Thomas has managed the property for forest resources for more than 20 years. He selectively harvests timber, fuelwood, and alternative forest products such as witch hazel, and will continue to do so following the recommendations of a written forest management plan. Because protection of the property will benefit Cork Brook, a tributary stream of the

Scituate Reservoir, the Providence Water Supply Board has paid for the cost of preparing the plan.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forest Environment administers Rhode Island's Forest Legacy Program. According to Rhode Island State Forester Thomas Dupree, managed forests face the same development pressures as agricultural lands and are of vital significance for green space and wildlife habitats, and to the economy. Small forest and wood-related businesses contribute over \$120 million a year to the State's economy.

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The most common threats to managed forests in Rhode Island are from direct development or through fragmentation of ownership of large forested parcels into smaller parcels, reducing the likelihood of proper forest stewardship. More than half of the State is considered significantly fragmented forest land, primarily in the form of small privately owned parcels.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, afford outstanding scenic views, are home to historic sites, and/or provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever through the use of conservation easements.



A woods road on the Cork Brook property is used for the many different forestry operations that are conducted on the land.

Photo by Paul Ricard