

## **Gov. McKee, Lt. Gov. Matos, DEM Announce Awardees of Over \$4 Million in Grants for Local Recreation Projects Across RI**

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee, Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos, and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) today announced the awarding of \$4.1 million in matching grants to 13 municipalities to develop or renovate local outdoor recreational facilities. Perennially, the "rec grant" program is DEM's most popular, with three times as many requests for funding (53) as projects obtaining funding in this grant cycle.

The grants will fund 16 projects across the state including new athletic fields, playgrounds, a splash park, a dog park, a kayak/canoe launch, a pump track, walking trails, basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts, and various site improvements.

Since the inception of Earth Day in 1970, efforts to improve air and water quality, clean up contaminated lands, conserve open space, and increase recreational opportunities have greatly enhanced Rhode Islanders' quality of life. Over the past five decades, almost 50,000 acres of land have been protected and nearly \$89 million in grants has been invested for over 550 recreation projects in all 39 Rhode Island cities and towns. These projects are funded by green bonds, which are submitted to the Rhode Island General Assembly as part of the Governor's proposed budget, and if included in the enacted budget, put to the voters as a referendum question on the ballot every two years. Historically, these measures pass overwhelmingly with the 2021 green bond garnering nearly 80 percent of the vote statewide.

"Investments in recreational facilities knit our communities together and are integral to both physical and mental health and well-being," said Governor Dan McKee. "This is why I included a budget article proposing a \$38 million Green Economy and Clean Water bond that will capitalize future local recreation spending in my fiscal year 2023 budget. Providing the funds to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to connect with nature, recreate, and exercise are central to our quality of life."

"Of the many benefits that accrue from providing high-quality recreational facilities, I'd like to focus on those that boost our children," said Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos. "Outdoor play is crucial to child development. It improves moods and concentration, reduces screen time and stress levels, and aids sleep. Parks and playgrounds should and can be equalizers where children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the same access to fun as children from more fortunate economic circumstances. The grants we announce today ensure that this will happen."

"The COVID pandemic put into sharp focus how much public recreation areas and open spaces matter to Rhode Islanders, said DEM Director Terry Gray. "Providing people with places in their neighborhood to get outdoors, have fun, and enjoy nature is part of DEM's core mission and is good for health. When people have fun outside, they appreciate how beautiful and important our environment is, and that helps to start developing our next generation of environmental stewards. We're thrilled to assist communities across Rhode Island to improve and expand their recreational facilities through these grant awards."

Rhode Island's outdoor recreation industry is an important part of our state's economy, generating \$2.4 billion in consumer spending and supporting 24,000 local jobs, according to the Outdoor Industry Association. As part of a larger network of recreational opportunities in the state, municipal facilities play an important role in beautifying communities, supporting public health, strengthening climate resilience, and promoting a cleaner environment.

The grants, which require a community match and range from \$72,000 to \$400,000, are funded through 2021 Beach, Clean Water and Green Bond proceeds. Categories include large grants that range from \$100,000 to \$400,000 each, and small grants of up to \$100,000 each for projects of smaller cost. The state grants will be matched by local funding to generate over \$5 million in recreational project improvements throughout Rhode Island.

Applications were evaluated and scored by the Rhode Island Recreation Resources Review Committee, consisting of government and non-profit members using the Open Project Selection Process developed under the 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. This is one of the "Green Space" grants DEM offers to local communities; other grant funds support Local Open Space and Recreational Trails.

Director Gray noted that the local outdoor recreation grant program funded by green bonds is the most popular of all the grants programs at DEM. DEM received 53 applications for this round totaling more than \$14 million in requests but can fund fewer than one-third of the projects seeking grants.

"While we celebrate the projects that received grants, we know how disappointing it is not to get this funding," Gray said. "This is a highly popular grant program and is always oversubscribed. Governor McKee has proposed a green bond in the budget that would include increased funding for these valuable investments in our communities. This funding will help us meet the demand in this extremely popular program in the future. We encourage communities to keep an eye out for future program announcements and join DEM for grant application workshops and other opportunities to sharpen the descriptions of their terrific projects."

The program offers funding in three categories: small development grants with funding awards up to \$100,000, large development grants with awards up to \$400,000, and acquisition funds that support property acquisition for permanent outdoor recreation with awards up to \$400,000.

Small grants were awarded to the following projects:

- o Barrington: Chianese Pickleball Courts, \$80,000 Convert Chianese Field into four permanent pickleball courts, with a new playing surface, fencing, and permanent pickleball posts and nets.

- o Central Falls: Louis C. Yip Soccer Field Improvements, \$80,000 Improvements to Yip Soccer Field including new scoreboard, storage facilities, benches, picnic tables, bicycle racks, and trash receptacles.

- o Cumberland: Diamond Hill Pump Track Improvements, \$100,000 Upgrade existing pump track space, install obstacle course, renovate lawn area, drainage improvements, accessible path, benches, and bike racks.
- o East Greenwich: Academy Field Improvements, \$100,000 Improvements at Academy Field including new pickleball courts, shade structure, accessible walkway, benches, and accessible parking space.
- o North Providence: Westcott Park Kayak Launch, \$100,000 New canoe/kayak launch on the Woonasquatucket River, trail, and parking improvements.
- o Richmond: Richmond Dog Park, \$71,580 New dog park near the Richmond Heritage Trail with fencing, parking, gazebo, and seating.
- o Smithfield: Deerfield Park Splash Pad, \$100,000 New splash pad between two existing playgrounds.

Large grants were awarded to the following projects:

- o Central Falls: Jenks Park Playground Improvements, \$400,000 Playground improvements including new equipment, site furnishings, lighting, and landscaping.
- o Cranston: Knightsville Park Revitalization, \$400,000 Revitalization of a park in the Knightsville neighborhood with new pavers, gazebo, relocation of war memorial, bocce courts, water fountain, benches, flagpole, irrigation, and landscaping.
- o East Greenwich: Eldridge Park Improvements, \$400,000 Redevelop Eldredge Park with a new accessible perimeter path, reconstruct basketball and ballfield, new outdoor pavilion, benches, and landscaping.
- o East Providence: Kent Heights Recreational Facility Renovation, \$400,000 Renovation of the Kent Heights Recreational Facility including resurfacing basketball and tennis courts, repairs to existing walkways, resurfacing/grading existing multiuse athletic field, new futsal court, accessible walking path and play equipment, landscaping benches, and bike racks.
- o North Providence: Coletti Athletic Complex, \$400,000 Develop Coletti property of approximately five acres to include a multipurpose athletic field, walking trails, and green space.
- o Providence: Roger Williams Park Boardwalk and Fishing/Boating Pier, \$400,000 New elevated boardwalk culminating in a boating and fishing dock over Cunliff Pond from the Temple to Music to the existing boat ramp, additional accessible parking area, benches, lighting, and interpretive signage.
- o Warwick: Apponaug Recreation Complex Improvements, \$320,000 Renovate existing playground with new equipment, accessible surfacing, improved loop paths, accessible

parking, new stair handrails, bleachers, benches, tables, shade trees, interpretive signage, and little league field safety netting.

o West Warwick: Crompton Playground and Stephen Clarke Recreation Area, \$400,000  
Renovate and expand existing playground to improve accessibility and add multiuse pickleball and basketball courts, bocce court, shaded picnic patio and outdoor multimedia space, new accessible fitness trail loop, renovated open lawn space and picnic area, landscaping, and low-impact development stormwater treatment areas.

An Acquisition grant was awarded to the following project:

o Woonsocket: Acquisition for Cass Park Expansion, \$312,500 Acquisition of 1.37 acres adjacent to Silvestri Pond to make improvements to the access road to Dionne Track in Cass Park.

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov). Follow DEM on Facebook, Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates.