

A Case Study in Environmental Policy:
Administration of the Rhode Island Freshwater Wetlands Act

by

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PREFACE

Wet wild places stretched across the montage of my childhood in Florida during the 1940's and 1950's.

They were the awesomely empty stretches of the St. John's and Kissimmee Rivers headwaters; they were hollows where cougars might cross in the night; they were lake edges where snakes or alligators surely lurked; and they proffered astounding birds: American Egrets, Green Herons, White Ibis, and, once, a Swallow-tailed Kite.

I have lived in the northeast for seventeen years, and I work for a conservation organization, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, as an editor-publisher and spokesperson. Stemming from its interest in preserving wildlife habitat, the Audubon Society has been active in wetland issues in the state for more than 30 years. The executive director of the organization wrote the current wetland legislation for the state in 1971.

The Audubon Society co-sponsored with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management a survey of the herpetiles (reptiles and amphibians) in the state from 1981 - 1986. I did some survey work which consisted of

driving along the by-ways of urban and rural Rhode Island on rainy March and April nights to identify amphibian species crossing the roads.

During 1988 - 89 I have had the advantage of sitting on a subcommittee which will report on the problems of the permitting process for altering wetlands. In the course of our deliberations, presentations have been made about the Wetlands program and its place in the scheme of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. These meetings have been valuable to the development of this paper in providing direct communication with developers and agency personnel.