

**Public Perception of Open Space
Greenspace 2000**

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Abstract

In the spring of 1991, the Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning began the formulation of Greenspace 2000, an open space plan to determine and demonstrate state-wide protection priorities. A primary objective of the plan was to "define an integrated open space system for Rhode Island's future which will protect the essential open space values and functions needed and desired by Rhode Islanders." These values and functions were determined in part through an investigation of public opinions and attitudes concerning open space issues.

This report describes the importance of this investigation, the methods used, and the information learned from the process. The question asked in the public participation process of Greenspace 2000 was "What is most important about open space to society?" To answer this question, a survey and focus group were conducted, polling environmentally sensitive individuals on their ranking of open space resources and values. The results of this research demonstrated that drinking water was perceived to be twice as important as all other value categories, with these remaining categories (agriculture, fisheries, flood plains, forestry, recreation areas, and wildlife) perceived as being of equal importance.

Although the segment of the population sampled was small and environmentally sensitive, knowledge gained through this study can be used to guide and enhance future endeavors to include the public in policy making decisions.