



# Burrillville Conservation Commission

105 Harrisville Main Street  
Harrisville, Rhode Island 02830



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## **Invenergy Power Plant Will Cause Permanent Damage – Poses Unacceptable Risk**

### ***High-Powered Coalition of Environmental, Tourism and Conservation Officials Sound the Alarm – Valuable Irreplaceable Forest & Wetlands Are In Jeopardy***

**Chepachet, Rhode Island:** Save the Bay, the Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Metacomet Land Trust and an Eagle Scout joined the Burrillville Conservation Commission to warn that if built, the Invenergy power plant would have wide-ranging and devastating consequences.

What is at stake? Land that is valued for eco-tourism, lush woods that have introduced generations of campers to nature and, perhaps most importantly, a great forest eco-system that houses hundreds of animal and plant species.

According to the members of the coalition, the Invenergy plant will cause forest fragmentation that will have an incremental deadly- effect on the environment. Construction and operation of the plant would cause permanent damage and pose unacceptable risks to the Narragansett Bay watershed.

The proposed power plant site is on a critical wildlife corridor pinch-point of a 26.6 square mile mature-canopy forest stretches across 3 states and is part of the last contiguous forestland along the Eastern Seaboard.

On the site of the Invenergy proposed power plant alone there are 47 species identified in the Rhode Island Action Plan as *Species of Greatest Conservation Need* including some that are endangered or threatened. Construction of the proposed power plant will push those species into further peril.

The forest is also a valuable recreational Rhode Island destination. Each year close 100,000 visitors come to camp, fish and enjoy the pristine forest. Over the past 5 decades, Rhode Islanders have approved millions of dollars to protect and preserve this valuable forestland. Tourism officials warn the Invenergy power plant jeopardizes that investment.



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## Statements from Participants

### RI Audubon Society:

The site where the Invenergy plant will be located is within a critical wildlife corridor. The power plant will disrupt the integrity of the corridor and light pollution from the plant will disturb bird migrations. Birds use stars to navigate. Neotropical migrants like the Cerulean Warbler (which is endangered) come down from Canada and northern New England and pass through Rhode Islands and then head south, using these intact forests. Audubon opposes the Invenergy Power Plant because climate change is the existential threat facing wildlife and people.

### The Nature Conservancy:

Invenergy's proposal for a new power plant – and the pavement, light and noise pollution, wetland destruction and deforestation that comes with it – at this pivotal location would irreversibly disrupt one of the region's healthiest ecosystems along the borderlands with Connecticut. Our analysis of wildlife corridors of the Eastern United States shows that the plant is proposed to be built right on top of an essential pinch point for habitat connectivity. This corridor of unfragmented forest is critical to the health of the ecosystem both on a daily basis and in response to disruptions. Connectivity helps maintain genetic diversity in a population of plants or animals. Additionally, wildlife may need to escape a natural disaster, avoid encroaching human development, or adapt to seasonal changes in the availability of food, water, and shelter. Animals require reliable pathways to find those resources.

Connectivity becomes even more important as our climate changes. As temperature and precipitation patterns shift, many species will need to seek new suitable habitat. When habitat connectivity is cut off, species that can't migrate or adapt will not survive.

### Save the Bay:

The construction and operation of the plant would cause permanent damage and pose unacceptable risks to the Narragansett Bay watershed. Rhode Island must not sacrifice these scarce, undeveloped areas that are so critical to a healthy Narragansett Bay, which is the heart of our State and beloved by residents and visitors alike. The high quality habitat within the Clear and Branch River watersheds, which are within the Bay watershed, are crucial components of the small pristine headwater streams on which native species of trout and other aquatic wildlife depend. A forested area with intact canopies, well-developed shrub layers, and ground cover headwater streams, these areas are the filtering system for the entire Narragansett Bay watershed. The small headwater streams have more biodiversity by area than the larger rivers that they feed. These headwaters are crucial for the overall health of the Narragansett Bay watershed and they must be protected within that context. Intact forest ecosystems form critical green infrastructure that protects our overall water quality and quality of life, while also preserving resiliency against the effects of future changes in climate.

Rhode Island must not sacrifice these scarce, undeveloped areas that are so critical to a healthy Narragansett Bay, which is the heart of our State and beloved by residents and visitors alike. Save The Bay again calls on the Rhode Island Energy Facility Siting Board to deny Invenergy's application.



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## Metacomet Land Trust:

The proposed plant will have a regional impact and will severely compromise the forest and hydrologic resources of the entire area. We are fortunate to have 25 square miles of protected forests and open space in the Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island tri-state area. These farms, fields and forests have been preserved, in large part, through taxpayer-supported initiatives over the decades and by the foresight of conservationists like the ones with us today.

These are well documented as diverse and thriving habitats and ecosystems that must continue to be preserved. They are unique in all of southern New England. The proposed Invenenergy plant, its auxiliary operations and the pollution it generates will disrupt, harm and eventually destroy this open space and habitat that has been accumulated acre-by-acre over generations. This, indeed, is a forest in jeopardy.

## Blackstone Valley Tourism Council:

Today in development, it's all about place. Protecting it, understanding authenticity, telling its unique story and making it a great place to live, work and visit. Once a place is destroyed, it is almost impossible, and certainly incredibly expensive, to retrieve. Disruption to this pristine landscape, through construction and operations, will create permanent disruption, harmful noise, and fumes to this part of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor. The people of the Blackstone Valley have worked for more than 5 decades, to restore their landscape and waterways, protect their diminishing open spaces, and their heritage and culture.

Burrillville, is the place in Blackstone Valley, where peace and tranquility, can be found sitting on a rock next to a pond, walking down a wooded trail or paddling across Wallum Lake. From a tourism perspective this is like having a gold mine. We need to protect this place. Tourism in Rhode Island, from Burrillville to Westerly, draws thousands of visitors spending hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in the Blackstone Valley. Putting this in jeopardy is just not smart.

## Kyle Peterson, Eagle Scout:

Buck Hill has been a place for thousands of Scouts from the Narragansett Council to visit and explore for many years. The various trails with beautiful scenic views have given Scouts the opportunity to explore this untouched wilderness. However, the construction of this power plant changes the game.

Buck Hill Scout Reservation has always been my favorite place to camp because it is the perfect place to practice scouting while enjoying true natural beauty. If this ecosystem is compromised new scouts and other residents will never know Rhode Island's best-kept secret.

## Burrillville Conservation Commission:

Remember that this forest belongs to all of us, and to our children. Once the forest is gone- it's gone forever. Trading this land area through the mitigation process for another green space will not save the species that call this their home.