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Assembly tightens stormwater runoff standards

PROVIDENCE – The Smart Development for a Cleaner Bay Act of 2007 was among the measures approved by the R.I. General Assembly in the final days of the legislative session, according to Environment Rhode Island.

This [is a] bill whose time has come,” said Matt Auten, an advocate for the nonprofit. The measure, sponsored by Rep. Raymond J. Sullivan Jr., D-Coventry and West Greenwich, and Sen. Paul E. Moura, East Providence, will tighten stormwater runoff standards for new and redevelopment projects, to minimize pollution of Narragansett Bay and other bodies of water.

Sullivan said it “will ensure that developers take advantage of the latest techniques to keep pollution from stormwater runoff from entering the watershed.” Such runoff is a source of harmful chemicals and excess bacteria, nitrogen and phosphorus in waterways across the state, Environment Rhode Island said.

Encouraging, but not requiring, smarter development practices is no longer enough to protect the Bay or our rivers and streams from pollution,” Auten said. “Now is the time to require smarter development in Rhode Island,” he added, applauding Sullivan, Moura and the Assembly “for taking a big step in the right direction.

The measure would require that developers adopt low-impact design (LID) as the primary method for managing stormwater runoff. To prevent new pollution and help maintain the natural water supply system, it also would require that developers preserve the same level of on-site “recharge” as each site had before development.

“We can’t live without clean water, so it has to be a consideration whenever land is developed,” Sullivan said.

We need to take every necessary step to preserve Rhode Island’s waterways, and that includes requiring developers to employ the most environmentally-friendly methods,” Moura said. “With several waterfront development projects being proposed in East Providence in the coming years, I’m very committed to ensuring that the purity and beauty of our waterfront is protected.”

Additional information on the Smart Development for a Cleaner Bay Act of 2007 – bills 2007 H-6143 and S-808 – is available at www.rilin.state.ri.us. To learn more about Environment Rhode Island, visit environmentrhodeisland.org