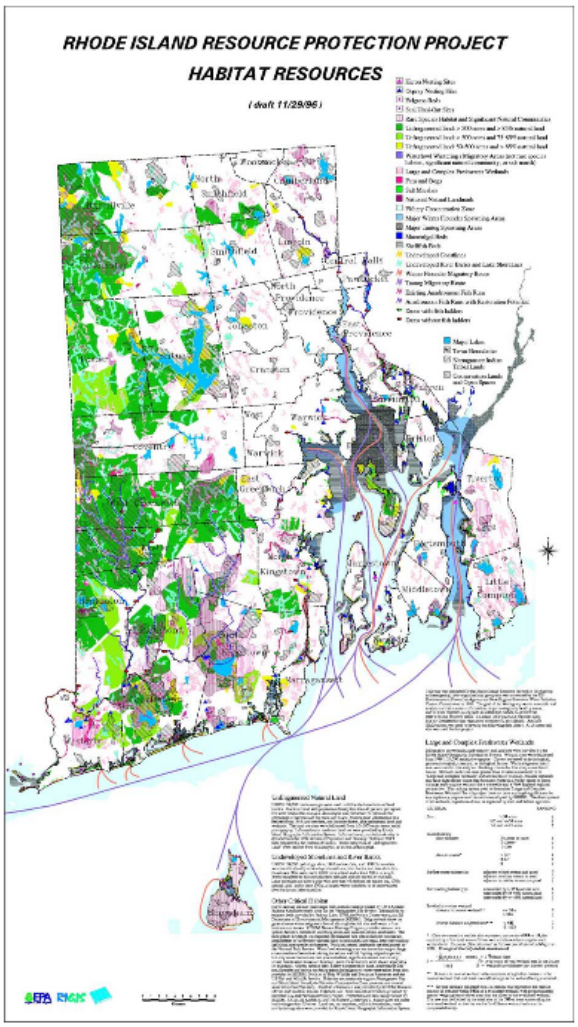
Appendix D: Comments to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Research Park Site

To: Dr. Stephen Swallow, Ad Ho Committee Chair
Faculty Senate Executive Committee

From: Lorraine Joubert, Director
Cooperative Extension, RI NEMO

Date: April 21, 2009

As a staff member of the Cooperative Extension Water Quality Program within the CELS Department of Natural Resources Science, I would like to submit comments for your consideration on the proposed research park. My comments address value of the forest site for teaching and research only.



Value of unfragmented forest in teaching and research
NRS faculty has already described the unique character of the site and its irreplaceable value for research and teaching. Although there is discussion of preserving a portion of the old growth forest for teaching, Dr. Frank Golet has stated that educational use of the site will either be lost or permanently impaired with this scenario. There is abundant evidence in the literature to support this claim. Unfragmented forests tracts are widely recognized as providing ecological functions that isolated forest stands do not, including for example, maintaining natural soil and water hydrology at landscape scales, supporting diverse plant communities, and providing habitat for birds and other wildlife that require relatively large territories free from human disturbance - all subjects of current research and teaching.

A State-significant campus resource In a statewide mapping of the state's most important natural areas by EPA and DEM, the Flagg Road forest was identified as one of the few unfragmented forest areas in South Kingstown and the only one within walking distance of University classrooms as, reported by Applied Biosystems, Inc. 2009. The figure at left shows unfragmented forest in shades of green and yellow concentrated in the west and north. Since this map is based on 1988 land use data some of these forested areas may now be developed. The research park site falls into the smallest size category of forest mapped as unfragmented at > 50 acres, 85% undisturbed. Given that this bit of unfragmented forest is already small by accepted benchmarks, and the most unique core of the site is only 30 acres, it's clear that the current research park proposal threatens continued use of this notable resource for research and teaching.

EPA.1996. Rhode Island Resource Protection Project. http://www.edc.uri.edu/rirpp/images/habitat.jpg

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Please contact me should you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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