

PLUM POINT (from page 1)

Several members of the Environment Committee agreed that public access should not be lost. The bill was "held for further study" in both the House and Senate, and remained in committee.

Approximately a week before the General Assembly session ended, **Rep. Jan Malik**, Chairman of the House Environment Committee contacted RISAA President **Steve Medeiros** and offered to negotiate an agreement to get the legislation moved out of Committee.

He acknowledged that this was a contentious issue, but that he was in favor of public access and preferred to see a compromise bill move forward than see it die and have nothing happen. The reality of a General Assembly that was facing a huge budget shortfall, did not make it feasible to get a new fishing pier built at this time.



Rep. Jan Malik

Several suggestions and options were discussed, and Medeiros repeated the previous insistence that the public not lose access to the Plum Point area. Calls were made to DEM, and the RISAA Board and Fishing Piers Committee discussed options.

A compromise proposal was worked out and agreed upon. It allowed the Dept. of Transportation to tear down the remaining bridge section, mandated that the **parking lot be constructed, mandated shore access to Plum Point and left the door open for a pier and/or other structures there in the future.**

With the help of Rep. Malik and other House Environment Committee members, it passed committee, and then passed the full House with an overwhelming vote of 50 to 3! Then, on the final days of the Session, it passed the Senate Environment Committee and the full Senate. As of this writing, it only requires the signature of the Governor.

RISAA didn't like the last-minute section (d) which was added in after agreeing to the new wording, and it was obviously a "bone" thrown to the Plum Point neighborhood, but the careful wording did not mandate night closure, only suggests it's possibility in the future.

The full text of the legislation follows:

2008 — H 8199 SUBSTITUTE A AS AMENDED
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2008

AN ACT RELATING TO HIGHWAYS - THE JAMESTOWN BRIDGE FISHING PARK

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 24-12-51.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 24-12 entitled "Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority" is hereby amended to read as follows:

Former Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge – Public fishing area.

(a) The director of the department of transportation and department of environmental management are hereby authorized and directed to retain the state-owned land adjacent to the former Jamestown Bridge on the North Kingstown side of the former bridge for use as a public parking area and public shore access site. The land so retained shall be open to the general public at no charge, and shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities, and shall provide the public with free and unfettered access to the shore and/or to any structure built over the water, in accordance with subsection (b) below.

(b) The directors of the department of transportation and department of environmental management are hereby authorized and directed to give due consideration to further development of the public shore access site provided for in this section, particularly with regard to recreational fishing opportunities. Such consideration shall include, but not be limited to, the potential establishment of a public fishing pier, boat access, and/or park. In pursuing further development of the site, the directors shall seek to maximize public use and enjoyment of the site, particularly with regard to fishing access. Any structures or facilities so developed shall be open to the general public at no charge and shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

(c) Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary contained in any general or public law, rule or regulation, the state of Rhode Island shall be responsible for maintenance and security of the site described in this section.

(d) Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the directors of the department of transportation and the department of environmental management are hereby authorized to limit public access to the site described in this section, between sunset and sunrise.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage

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