

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

HOUSE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING AND THANKING MEMBERS OF THE EXETER FIRE DEPARTMENT
FOR THEIR HEROIC EFFORTS LEADING THE RESPONSE TO THE WILDFIRE IN
QUEEN'S RIVER PRESERVE

Introduced By: Representatives Cotter, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale, Casimiro,
Spears, Solomon, Tanzi, Shallcross Smith, and Ajello

Date Introduced: May 25, 2023

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Spring is wildfire season in Rhode Island, from mid-March to mid-May, fire
2 is a constant concern. In a trifecta of hazardous developments, temperature spikes, humidity
3 dropping and escalating wind initiated the National Weather Service, and the DEM to issue a
4 "Red Flag Warning" alerting the public to the potential for extreme fire risk in parts of the State;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, In addition, over the last decade, hardwood trees in western and southern
7 areas of Rhode Island had been hard-hit by an infestation of spongy moths, creating a large
8 volume of dead wood, and together with the dried-out leaf litter, pine needles and other debris
9 dropped by the trees over the course of the winter, a dangerous layer of kindling was created in
10 many local forest areas; and

11 WHEREAS, On the night of April 11, one day after the Red Flag Warning had been
12 issued, a brush fire broke out at the Queen's River Preserve in the Big River Management Area in
13 West Greenwich, and quickly became the largest wildfire since 1942, burning acres of woodland,
14 an estimated third of the preserve's acreage; and

15 WHEREAS, The Exeter Fire Department had the lead in responding to the fire, with
16 assistance from the six-person team at the DEM that specializes in wildfires, and firefighters from
17 Connecticut, Massachusetts and Maine. Almost 200 people were on scene to fight back the fire;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, For many hours throughout the night and following day, the Exeter Fire

1 Department organized efforts to continuously douse the flames, dumping 40,000 gallons of water,
2 and monitoring the area for new breakouts and smoldering areas. Fortunately, no persons were
3 injured and no homes were damaged as a result of the heroic efforts led by members of the Exeter
4 Fire Department; and

5 WHEREAS, Throughout history, our State and our Nation have been propitiously blessed
6 with the brave and dedicated efforts of firefighters who are willing to step forward and face
7 potential life and death situations to safeguard our homes and loved ones, and they are eminently
8 deserving of our gratitude and recognition; now, therefore be it

9 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
10 thanks and honors the heroic actions of the Exeter Fire Department and all the brave collaborating
11 districts and agencies for their efforts responding to the wildfire in Queen's River Preserve. They
12 are truly an inspiration to us all and we extend best wishes for their good health, safety, and
13 continued success; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
15 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Exeter Fire Chief Scott Gavitt.

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