

2016 -- S 2718

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LC004440
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO PROPERTY - TRESPASS AND ACTIONS FOR POSSESSION

Introduced By: Senators Sosnowski, Kettle, Felag, Conley, and Archambault

Date Introduced: March 08, 2016

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 34-20 of the General Laws entitled "Trespass and Actions for
2 Possession" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **34-20-1.1. Damages for encroachment on state, municipal or nonprofit land**
4 **conservation organization open space land - Civil Action.** – [\(a\) Definitions. As used in this](#)
5 [section, the following words and terms shall have given to them the meanings set forth below,](#)
6 [unless the context indicates another or different meaning or intent:](#)

7 [\(1\) "Encroach" means to conduct an activity that causes damage or alteration to the land](#)
8 [or vegetation or other features thereon, including, but not limited to, erecting buildings or other](#)
9 [structures, constructing roads, driveways or trails, destroying or moving stone walls, cutting trees](#)
10 [or other vegetation, removing boundary markers, installing lawns or utilities, or using, storing, or](#)
11 [depositing vehicles, materials or debris.](#)

12 [\(2\) "Open space land" means and includes, but is not limited to, any park, forest, wildlife](#)
13 [management area, refuge, preserve, sanctuary, green or wildlife area owned by the state, a](#)
14 [political subdivision of the state or a nonprofit land conservation organization.](#)

15 [\(b\) No person may encroach or cause another person to encroach on open space land or](#)
16 [on any land for which the state, a political subdivision of the state or a nonprofit land](#)
17 [conservation organization holds a conservation easement interest, without permission of the](#)
18 [owner of such open space land or holder of such conservation easement or without other legal](#)
19 [authorization.](#)

1 (c) Any owner of open space land or holder of an interest in a conservation easement
2 subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section may bring an action in the superior court
3 for the county where the land is located against any person who violates the provisions of said
4 subsection with respect to such owner's land or land subject to such conservation easement. The
5 court shall order any person who violates the provisions of subsection (b) of this section to restore
6 the land to its condition as it existed prior to such violation or shall award the landowner the costs
7 of such restoration, including reasonable management costs necessary to achieve such restoration.
8 In addition, the court may award reasonable attorney's fees and costs and such injunctive or
9 equitable relief as the court deems appropriate.

10 (d) In addition to any damages and relief ordered pursuant to subsection (c) of this
11 section, the court may award damages of up to five (5) times the cost of restoration or statutory
12 damages of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000). In determining the amount of the award, the
13 court shall consider the willfulness of the violation, the extent of damage done to natural
14 resources, if any, the appraised value of any trees or shrubs cut, damaged, or carried away as
15 determined in accordance with the latest revision of The Guide for Plant Appraisal, as published
16 by the International Society of Arboriculture, Urbana, Illinois, or a succeeding publisher, any
17 economic gain realized by the violator and any other relevant factors.

18 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO PROPERTY - TRESPASS AND ACTIONS FOR POSSESSION

1 This act would allow the owner of open space land or holder of an interest in a
2 conservation easement to bring an action in superior court to prevent further encroachment of the
3 land and to recover damages resulting from the encroachment.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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