

State of Rhode Island

Program Names: Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan

**Program Entity: Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council
University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography
Rhode Island Sea Grant**

Program History: Authority and Date(s) Created:

1. Marine Resources Development Plan.

2004: The Rhode Island General Assembly enacted legislation authorizing the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), the state's coastal zone management agency, to use Special Area Management Plans (SAMPs) as the primary planning tool to manage and balance use of Narragansett Bay resources. Over the years the CMRC has [adopted other SAMPs](#) to address coastal development and conservation issues (Pawcatuck River Estuary, 1992; Salt Ponds, 1999; Narrow River, 1999; Greenwich Bay, 2005; Aquidneck Island, 2009; Metro Bay, 2009).

2. Ocean SAMP

2007: Rhode Island's Office of Energy Resources (OER) determined that offshore wind farms would be necessary for achieving Governor Donald Carcieri's mandate that wind resources provide 15 percent of the state's electrical power by 2011. The CRMC subsequently proposed, and the governor supported, [an ocean SAMP](#) to guide development of energy facilities while protecting existing uses and ecological values. The SAMP is expected to be completed by July 1, 2010.

Funding Source(s)/Level:

In 2007, Rhode Island's Office of Energy Resources (OER) committed \$3.2 million from surcharge on electrical rate to be used for renewable energy development toward preparation of the Ocean SAMP. Funding was directed to the University of Rhode Island Sea Grant and Graduate School of Oceanography to provide technical support to the SAMP process. Appendix A of [project proposal](#) by URI to OER provides details of the \$3.2 million budget.

The state contributed an additional \$2.8 million from a developer deposit in escrow account from the [Deep Water Development agreement](#). A federal appropriation via the U.S. Department of Energy provided \$660,000 for environmental background studies. A small amount of federal Coastal Zone Management funding supports some CRMC staff time in support of the project.

Key Program Elements:

1. The Coastal Resources Management Council

The CRMC is the state's coastal zone management agency [created in 1971 by the Rhode Island General Assembly](#). It is composed of a sixteen-member council of appointed representatives of the public and state and local government and supported by a professional staff. It is responsible for the preservation, protection, development and restoration of the coastal areas of the state via the issuance of permits for work with the coastal zone of the state. The CRMC processes applications for a wide variety of activities in the state coastal zone, including residential renovations and new homes, boat docks, subdivisions of land, and commercial and industrial work. The CMRC will adopt the Ocean SAMP when it is completed.

2. The Rhode Island Ocean SAMP

Rhode Island's [study area](#) encompasses approximately 1,467 square miles (3,800 square kilometers) of both state and federal waters, including waters that abut state waters of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. This area was selected because the natural and human connections between these waters and Rhode Island.

The goal of the SAMP is to help achieve the Governor's 15% renewable energy resources goal by enabling wind energy development in the ocean off the Rhode Island coast. The SAMP objectives are to: (1) Maintain the ecology of the ocean resource; (2) Promote and enhance existing commercial and recreational fisheries activities; (3) Maintain a healthy marine transportation network; (4) Promote and enhance existing recreational activities; (5) Determine appropriate and compatible roles for future activities within the study area, including offshore renewable energy infrastructure; and, (6) Build a framework for coordinated decision-making between state and federal management agencies.

3. [Research and Mapping Support](#)

GIS maps of the Ocean SAMP area and its conditions are provided by [NarrBay.org](#)

Coordination Functions:

Ocean planning coordination is provided by the CRMC. A large [stakeholder group](#) provides coordination and liaison with stakeholders. State agencies are required to follow the SAMP once it is completed and approved by the CRMC.

Linkage of Science to Management:

NarrBay.org provides ocean data and information products via the Internet to support the Ocean SAMP process.

Rhode Island Sea Grant and the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography are the primary technical and scientific support for the SAMP process.

Data Collection/Sharing/Infrastructure:

A twelve-member [Science Advisory Task Force](#) provides advice to the CRMC for the Ocean SAMP process. Many [research projects](#) are being conducted to support the R.I. Ocean SAMP, some of which are directly applicable to wind farm development because that is the primary driver for the Ocean SAMP. But all these projects are intended to provide a better understanding of the ecology, habitats, physical and cultural characteristics, and uses of Rhode Island's offshore area.

Assessment: Strengths/Weakness

Strengths:

- The Ocean SAMP process has strong political and financial resource support from the state.
- There is an extensive set of research projects to support the Ocean SAMP that are being conducted through the University of Rhode Island.
- The Ocean SAMP encompasses an area of ecological and economic interest to the state of Rhode Island and is not confined to state waters.
- The Ocean SAMP is being developed as part of the RI Coastal Management Program.
- Extensive public and stakeholder engagement.

Weakness:

- Lack of specific mechanisms to identify needed research and funding over time.
- Lack of on-going funding mechanism for marine research to inform on-going state-level ocean planning and management activities by the CRMC.

- Lack of data and information integration mechanism to provide on-going linkage between Ocean SAMP implementation and the research community.

Success/Failure

Success: The RI Ocean SAMP has generated a strong working relationship between the CRMC and the University of Rhode Island Sea Grant and Graduate School of Oceanography..

Applicability to Oregon

The scientific support for the Rhode Island Ocean SAMP reflects a strong working relationship with the academic community that Oregon should emulate.

The financing of the SAMP process by the Office of Energy Resources may offer a potential model to Oregon for future funding for marine research related to ocean wave energy development.

Sources: Various websites, correspondence with Grover Fugate, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council.