



**Coastal Resources Management Council**  
**Oliver Stedman Government Center**  
**4808 Tower Hill Road**  
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<http://www.crmc.ri.gov/>

**Coastal Shoreline Features**  
**Section 210 of the Coastal Resources**  
**Management Program**

Pursuant to R.I. General Laws § 46-23-6, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has jurisdiction over activities in tidal waters of the state (out to 3 miles) and on all coastal shoreline features and their 200-foot contiguous area (i.e., the 200-foot area landward of the shoreline feature). A CRMC permit is required for any construction or alteration activity on a shoreline feature or within 200 feet of a shoreline feature, and within tidal waters of the state.

Please consult with CRMC staff for shoreline feature verification and applicable setback requirements. Remember, setbacks and buffers are always measured from the most inland edge of the shoreline feature. In some cases there may be more than one shoreline feature on a site, and the setback will be determined by the most inland coastal shoreline feature. See Coastal Resources Management Program Section 140.

When there is uncertainty as to whether CRMC jurisdiction applies to a property, landowners may file a preliminary determination application (\$100 fee). An application is available from the CRMC website at:  
<http://www.crmc.ri.gov/applicationforms/pdfs/Prelimdet.pdf>

**Coastal Beaches (Section 210.1)**

Coastal beaches include expanses of unconsolidated, usually unvegetated sediment commonly subject to wave action, but may also include a vegetated beach berm. Beaches extend from mean low water landward to an upland rise, usually the base of a dune, headland bluff, or coastal protection structure, pilings or foundation. Accordingly, there may be other shoreline coastal features inland of the coastal beach, and the setback would be determined on the most inland edge of these other coastal shoreline features.



**Coastal Beach**

**Barrier Islands and Spits (Section 210.2)**

Barriers are islands or spits comprised of sand, gravel or cobble extending parallel to the coast and separated from the mainland by a coastal pond, tidal water body, or coastal wetland. In addition to a beach, barriers have, in most cases, a frontal foredune zone and often, back barrier dune fields. The lateral limits of barriers are defined by the area where unconsolidated sand or gravel of the barrier abuts bedrock or glacial sediment. The entire barrier is considered a coastal shoreline feature, so a project located anywhere on the barrier would be within CRMC jurisdiction.



**Coastal Barrier**

**Coastal Wetlands (Section 210.3)**

Coastal wetlands include salt marshes and freshwater or brackish wetlands contiguous to salt marshes or other shoreline features. Areas of open water within coastal wetlands are considered a part of the wetland. In addition, coastal wetlands also include freshwater and/or brackish wetlands that are directly associated with non-tidal coastal ponds and

freshwater or brackish wetlands that occur on a barrier beach or are separated from tidal waters by a barrier beach. The setback would be determined by the location of the most inland edge of the wetland or the inland edge of an adjacent and more inland shoreline feature, for example a low coastal bluff or a man-made bulkhead or seawall.



**Coastal Wetland**



**Coastal Wetland**

**Headlands, Bluffs and Cliffs  
(Section 210.4)**

Coastal cliffs and bluffs are elevated landforms on headlands directly abutting coastal waters, a beach, coastal wetland, or a rocky shore. The inland edge of these features is located at the top of the bluff where the slope decreases significantly. In many cases, these bluffs or coastal escarpments may only be a few feet high.



**Coastal Bluff (Block Island)**



**Low Coastal Bluff (Matunuck)**

**Rocky Shorelines (Section 210.5)**

Rocky shores include naturally occurring shorelines composed of bedrock ledge or boulder-strewn areas, extending from below mean low water to above the mean high water mark. These areas frequently contain tide pools. Generally, the inland edge of a rocky shoreline is where the exposed rock ends and robust vegetation begins. In cases where there is a steep slope above the rocky shoreline, the inland edge will be delineated at the top of the slope.



**Rocky Shoreline**

**Man-made Shorelines (Section 210.6)**

Man-made shorelines are those characterized by shoreline protection structures and other alterations, to the extent that natural shoreline features are no longer dominant. Examples of man-made shorelines include: rip-rap revetments; concrete or stone seawalls; and steel or wooden bulkheads. The inland edge of these shoreline features will be the top or most inland edge of the man-made structure. In cases where there is a steep slope above the manmade shoreline, the inland edge will be delineated at the top of the slope.



**Manmade Shoreline**

**Coastal Dunes (Section 210.7)**

Dunes are elevated accumulations of sand formed by wind action. Dunes appear as hills, mounds, or ridges of sand and are typically vegetated with beach grass and shrubs. The foredune zone is the more or less continuous area of dunes running parallel to, and just inland of the beach. The highest elevation points along this ridge are termed the ‘dune crest.’ The inland edge of this coastal feature is the inland edge of the foredune zone, which is defined as 25 feet landward of the dune crest. All setbacks and coastal buffers are measured from this point.



**Coastal Dune**



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