

Ocean State Aquaculture Association

Rhode Island's Aquaculture Trade Association
P.O. Box 2031, Kingston, RI 02881

RI CRMC Members
January 24, 2023

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to provide comment on the Raso application in Seagar Cove. I am the executive director of the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association, and one of the architects of our current state aquaculture laws. I have attended several of the hearings on this case.

Farmed shellfish are the highest-value product landed from state waters, valued at more than \$6.9 million; produced by 45 firms that employ several hundred Rhode Islanders working a mere 364 acres of leased grounds. This is a tiny fraction of the over 80,000 acres of state waters. The farms support hundreds of other jobs in the state, well beyond just those who work on the farm.

I write to remind you that it is your obligation under the state Constitution to manage the submerged lands of the state "for the benefit of the sovereign" that is, all the inhabitants of the state. In that regard you are charged with balancing the needs of all the various users of our waters.

I submit that when you are confronted with an application such as this, which inconveniences a small number of people in a relatively insignificant way, you should leap at the opportunity to encourage the sustainable production of seafood. According to testimony by opponents, it appears their primary concern was that water-skiers could not safely ski two at a time in the pond and would have to wait their turn or ski elsewhere. It strikes me that this is a minor inconvenience to a small group at the expense of the greater good.

Supporting this application would conform with stated objectives to promote aquaculture development outlined in both state and federal law.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Rheault, Ph.D.
Executive Director, East Coast Shellfish Growers Association
Treasurer, Ocean State Aquaculture Association