

Coastal Features

INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
RHODE ISLAND
COASTAL
RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM

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Oil Spill's Impacts Still Uncertain

On January 26th, when the barge North Cape was finally towed from its grounding site approximately 150 yards offshore from Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge, the short-term impact of the 828,000 gallon spill was evident. From Green Hill to Point Judith, the beach was strewn with dead lobsters, clams, starfish and other marine life, and scores of birds were dead. Yet, in spite of the carnage, University of Rhode Island researchers were advising Governor Almond that, based on initial assessments, the long-term effects of the spill were expected to be minimal.

Following the oil spill, Council staff were on hand to assist in efforts to assess the immediate damage. Teams comprised of representatives from the Coast Guard, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the owners of the damaged vessels and CRMC staff surveyed the shoreline from Point Judith to Green Hill beach for signs of oil contamination. Because of their knowledge of the coastal ponds and shoreline areas, Council staff also were able

to lead teams to particularly vulnerable and sensitive areas.

As the short-term effects of the North Cape oil spill fade, the CRMC will be making efforts to secure funding for research on the spill's long-term impacts and how to better prevent this type of incident in the future. The Council will also be assisting other state and federal agencies and the University in similar efforts. Look for more information on the North Cape oil spill in future issues of Coastal Features.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Dock Registration Program Closes
Page 2
- Aquaculture in Rhode Island
Page 4
- Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program Update
Page 6



Spectators view oil spill clean-up operations from Green Hill Beach.

Dock Registration Program Closes

Since July of 1993, the Council has been working to ensure that all residential docks in Rhode Island waters are registered with the CRMC. Under the Dock Registration Program, dock owners were given a "window" during which time illegal or unpermitted docks could register with the CRMC and apply for a CRMC assent. Once obtained, the assent would legalize the existing dock for a period of fifty years.

Originally scheduled to expire in July of 1994, the General Assembly extended the program to January 1996 by adopting the "Pre-Existing Residential Boating Facilities Program". The purpose of this legislation was not only to extend the deadline for the Council's Dock Registration Program, but also to broaden the scope of docks eligible under the program. The legislation "grandfathered" all residential docks constructed prior to January

1, 1985 as eligible under the Dock Registration Program provided the owner could demonstrate the dock existed prior to January 1, 1985, that it had remained in roughly the same configuration, and that it was presently intact and functional.

For almost three years the Council has worked to make dock owners around the state aware of the Dock Registration Program and its requirements. Workshops were held in Westerly, Warwick, South Kingstown and Tiverton and enforcement staff have been

routinely patrolling waters and issuing warnings for unregistered docks. Community newspapers also helped publicize the program.

With almost 1,400 docks now registered, the Dock Registration Program has achieved its purpose; the Council now has good baseline data on the number of docks in a given area and better information for determining their potential cumulative impacts.

For more information on the Dock Registration Program contact Jeff Willis at 277-2476.

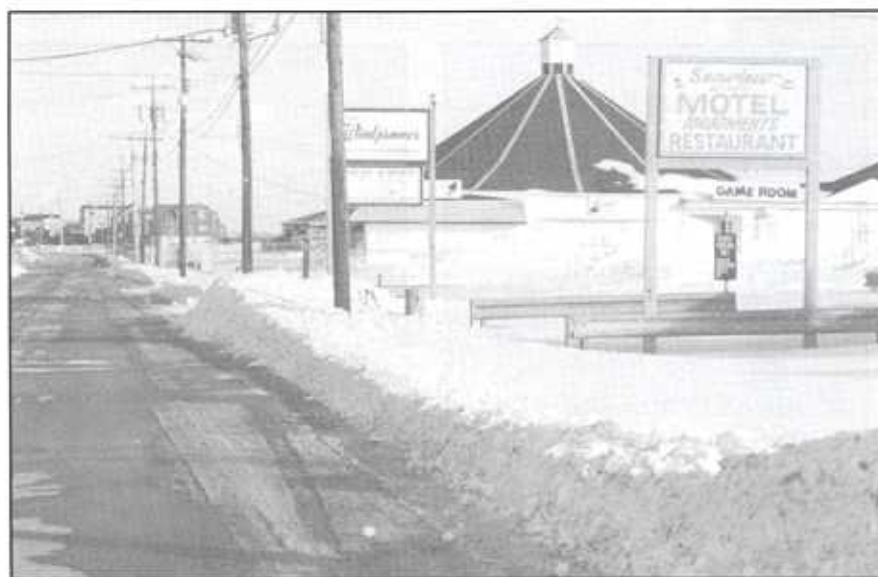
Rhode Island Coast Spared from Blizzard Damages

In spite of the tremendous amount of snowfall and dire predictions of severe coastal flooding and erosion, the "Blizzard of '96" did not result in major problems for the Rhode Island coast. Minor flooding was a problem in some coastal areas, particularly in the Misquamicut section of Westerly. CRMC offices remained open throughout the blizzard and staff were available to respond to any emergency situations. Luckily, the damage to the coast was minimal and no requests were received for emergency permits for storm-related repairs.

Coastal Features

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This issue of *Coastal Features* was edited by Laura Miguel. To comment on any article or to make address changes, write to the CRMC at the Oliver Stedman Government Center, 4808 Tower Hill Road, Wakefield, Rhode Island, 02879.



Atlantic Avenue in Westerly following the Blizzard of '96.

Marina Workshop Held

On January 9th, Council staff participated in a workshop for the marina and boat building industries held at Roger Williams University in Bristol. The focus of the day-long workshop, sponsored by the Rhode Island Marina Assistance Collaborative, was pollution prevention approaches and environmental strategies. Funding for the workshop, which was free for participants, was provided by DEM under the authorities of the Hazardous Waste Reduction, Recycling, Treatment Research and Demonstration Act of 1986, Section 319 of the Clean Water Act and the National Estuary Program.

The workshop featured a marina session where operators were able to learn about cost-effective approaches for reducing toxic and hazardous wastes and about marina operations and maintenance programs. CRMC staff had an opportunity to sit down with marina operators and explain proposed operation and maintenance plan requirements. As part of the program, all participants received a copy of the *Environmental Guide for Marinas* to bring back to their respective facilities and use in the development of their own plans.

With over forty participants, the workshop was a success and future workshops are in the planning phase. Particularly beneficial was the opportunity the regulatory community and private marina industry had for discus-

(continued on page 8)

Revisions to Special Area Management Plans

Council staff continue to work on revisions to The Salt Ponds and Narrow River Special Area Management Plans. Most recently, the focus of this effort has been on appropriate revisions to land use classifications and maps contained in the original plans.

As part of this three year effort, a study on cumulative and secondary impacts to the Salt Ponds and Narrow River watersheds was conducted by the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center. Based on new groundwater, nutrient-loading, and build-out analysis data gathered as part of the study, certain land use classifications and designations have been proposed to be modified. The land use classifications determine the maximum density of development allowable within designated areas. Maps depicting the various designations within the watersheds and associated land use classifications have been developed and are currently under review. As part of the process, Council staff have been meeting with local planners to identify areas where land use classifications, actual development and zoning are inconsistent, and where proposed changes might be necessary or practical.

Over the next months, Council staff will continue to meet with local planners to finalize revisions to the maps. Review and editing of chapters on critical habitats, storm hazards, geological processes and

land use, and accompanying policies and recommendations are expected to be completed by summer of 1996. The revised plans will then be open for public review and comment prior to full Council review which is expected to take place in the fall.

At the time Coastal Features goes to press, little is known of the long-term impacts of the North Cape oil spill on the South County salt ponds. It is therefore unclear how this occurrence will effect the revisions of the Special Area Management Plans, since a primary purpose of these documents is for use as planning tools. As information on the causes and results of the oil spill is developed, the Salt Pond and Narrow River Special Area Management Plans could change substantially. While it is extremely difficult to plan for an oil spill before it happens, hindsight may afford the Council an opportunity to both prevent future spills whenever possible and to ensure that, when a spill cannot be prevented, its effects on the coastal environment are minimized.

For more information on revisions to the Salt Ponds and Narrow River Special Area Management Plans, contact Jim Boyd or Jeff Willis at 277-2476.



Rhode Island Aquaculture Commission

Over the past several years, interest in aquaculture opportunities in the state has been growing. This has been attributed to a number of factors including the severe decline in ground fish stocks, the need to create jobs for displaced fishermen, successes of Rhode Island's neighboring states and the suitability of Rhode Island's marine environment for aquacultural activities.

In January of 1995, a legislative commission was charged with developing "a plan to promote, protect and stimulate aquacultural commerce in Rhode Island." The

Commission is made up of thirteen members and includes representatives from: the Rhode Island General Assembly (both parties); the Department of Economic Development, the State Planning Council and the Department of Environmental Management; the aquaculture industry; the University of Rhode Island's Department of Fisheries, Animal and Veterinary Sciences; and the public. The CRMC's Jim Boyd, an Environmental Scientist who has commercial fishing experience, serves on the commission which is due to report on its findings and recommendations in April of 1996.

In the course of its work, the commission has heard testimony from a number of representatives from private industry, state and federal government and various interest groups. The commission has also visited aquaculture operations in Connecticut and in Massachusetts.

While a large part of their task is to recommend what the state's role should be with regard to the development of a viable aquaculture industry in Rhode Island, there is general agreement that two important steps must be taken to improve the potential for aquaculture in the state. The first of these is the development of a state aquaculture strategic plan that, among other things, identifies areas suitable for aquaculture operations based on environmental as well as other conditions, like existing recreational and commercial uses of marine areas. Such a plan would minimize conflicts between the many varied users of Rhode Island's coastal waters and reduce the burdens on aquaculture permit applicants by providing upfront direction as to where the most suitable sites are located. The second area of action is the need for a clearer and more streamlined permit process for potential aquaculturists. This process could be laid out in the state's strategic plan.

Through the commission's work, the legislature has taken a close look at the existing regulatory and legal climate for aquaculture in Rhode Island. Among some of the

Aquaculture Primer

Aquaculture is a general term used to describe a number of different types of aquatic farming techniques. The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program defines aquaculture as "the culture of aquatic species under natural or artificial conditions in tidal waters or coastal ponds including but not limited to fish farming utilizing pens, tanks, or impoundments and the culture of shellfish on the sea floor or suspended in the water". (RICRMP Section 300.11). The definition is proposed to be modified to include transient gear and aquaculture of aquatic plants. The amendments are due to be discussed by the Council at a public hearing on Tuesday, March 12. Aquaculture conducted on land but within the CRMC's jurisdiction is treated as a commercial operation, as defined in section 300.3 of the RICRMP.

Aquaculture involves the raising of fin fish, shell fish or aquatic plants in either salt or fresh water. Gear can be either permanent or transient and operations can take place in enclosed, semi-enclosed or open areas. Because the range of activities included under the term aquaculture is so broad, regulatory authorities and requirements are often confusing.

The Council, as the primary permitting agency for marine aquaculture activities, currently reviews any aquaculture facility within the coastal zone for: impacts to existing uses, the extent to which a proposed aquaculture operation monopolizes public trust areas, and potential cumulative and scenic impacts, among other criteria. Once an application is received, the Council requests statements from the director of DEM and the chairman of the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council. Applicants may be required to obtain permits from the DEM for importation of fish or shellfish and any discharge, and the Army Corps of Engineers for any structures in tidal waters.

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Rhode Island Aquaculture Commission

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concerns raised, the commission has noted that Rhode Island General Laws are silent on many types of aquaculture, such as aquaculture that utilizes transient gear and aquaculture that is conducted in an indoor environment, and that the permitting process for aquaculture is often lengthy and unnecessarily complicated. The CRMC has made efforts to address some concerns that related to the Council, by recently revising its aquaculture regulations to be consistent with existing state law and to address more aquaculture activities. A public hearing on these regulations will be held March 12 at the Department of Administration, One Capitol Hill, Providence. The Council has also put together an aquaculture checklist and information sheet to assist applicants.

The Council looks forward to the Commission's final report and strongly supports the development of a state aquaculture plan. Such a plan is a necessary building block for a more streamlined permit process, and a more streamlined permit process is necessary for a successful aquaculture industry in Rhode Island.

For more information on the Aquaculture Commission or on the CRMC's aquaculture regulations, contact Jim Boyd at 277-2476.

How Rhode Island Rates

Worldwide, aquaculture accounts for almost 15 percent of the total fish and shellfish harvested and has an estimated value of over \$32 billion. Major aquaculture producing countries include Chile, China, Thailand, Ecuador, Norway and Canada with much of the production in high valued species such as shrimp and salmon.

The U.S. share of total aquaculture production has an estimated value of \$810 million and aquaculture is currently the fastest growing segment of the U. S. agriculture economy. Dominant species include catfish, salmon, trout and oysters.

With over \$60 million in revenues generated annually through aquaculture, Connecticut leads New England in aquaculture production, primarily in the form of oyster cultivation. Aquaculture in Maine, primarily salmon farming, amounts to over \$40 million annually. In contrast, aquaculture revenues in Rhode Island amounted to less than \$300,000 in 1993. Massachusetts, with an aquaculture industry valued at approximately \$8 million, recently completed a strategic plan to support additional aquaculture operations. If the plan is successfully implemented, it is projected that aquaculture revenues will be over \$40 million by the year 2000.

Additional Reading

- Bush and Anderson, Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center. 1993. Northeast Regional Aquaculture Industry Situation and Outlook Report.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 1995. Review of the State of World Fisheries: Aquaculture. FAO Fisheries Circular No. 886. Rome: FAO.
- Rhode Island Department of Administration. 1994. White Paper - Aquaculture: An Assessment of Opportunities and Constraints in Rhode Island. Study done by James L. Anderson and Mark J. Spatz for the Rhode Island Department of Administration. Providence, RI.
- Also see: *Maritimes University of Rhode Island Marine Programs*, Vol. 37(2).

Nonpoint Source News

Section 6217 Update

As many readers of Coastal Features know, the CRMC, together with the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the Department of Administration, Division of Planning (DOP), has been working over the past three years on developing Rhode Island's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP). This effort was initiated in order to meet requirements contained in Section 6217 of the 1991 reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act (see Coastal Features, Summer 1994 and 1995). The state's proposed program was submitted for approval to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in July of 1995.

Rhode Island's program submittal described control measures that are either currently implemented or are proposed to be adopted to address polluted runoff generated by activities such as construction, road work, and marinas. The program submittal proposed an exemption from requirements for agriculture and forestry because these types of activities were not considered to have significant nonpoint source pollution impacts.

Early in January, Rhode Island was in contact with EPA and NOAA concerning the state's proposed program and the news was generally good. Both NOAA and EPA were pleased with the state's submittal and were prepared to discuss remaining concerns so that a conditional approval of Rhode Island's program could be given. Under a conditional approval, the state would have extra

time to develop and implement certain specific components and strategies described in its proposed program. The state would also have additional time to demonstrate the efficacy of existing nonregulatory efforts to control nonpoint source pollution throughout the state. Discussions between staff at NOAA, EPA, DEM and CRMC, as well as the recent adoption of the revised Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Management Plan into the State Guide Plan (see related story) have since resolved a number of these concerns.

Following conditional approval, the CRMC will work to achieve the goals laid out in the CNPCP. Since the Council already requires nonpoint source pollution controls for activities within its jurisdiction, much of the work that lies ahead will involve modifying the CRMC regulations to reflect specific Section 6217 language

Numerous local, state and federal agencies, as well as representatives from private interest groups and concerned citizens assisted in the development of Rhode Island's CNPCP. As a result of their expertise and guidance, the state has completed a workable program to minimize the impacts to coastal waters of polluted runoff from a wide range of activities. No amount of research could replace the valuable input provided by the technical subcommittees and the Interagency Nonpoint Source Advisory Committee. The Council wishes to thank all of those who helped in this formidable task and looks forward to better protection of Rhode Island's coastal waters through CNPCP implementation.

For more information on the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program contact Laura Miguel or Jim Boyd at the CRMC 277-2476.

Nonpoint Source Tips

Potential pollutants, such as sand, salt, antifreeze and other snow fighting chemicals can be a significant source of nonpoint pollution during the winter months. The following are some simple ways to prevent and minimize your own sources of nonpoint pollution associated with the winter.

- When plowing or shoveling, think about where the runoff from the snow melting will go and what it will pick up along its way. A pile of snow on top of an eroding area can increase erosion and associated nonpoint pollution.
- Choose an anti-freeze that is propylene glycol-based, rather than one that is ethylene glycol-based. The propylene glycol-based antifreeze is significantly less toxic to the environment and animals in the event of a spill.
- Use a salt/sand mixture, rather than straight salt on driveways.
- Instead of hosing off driveways, try sweeping them.
- When that occasional warm day arrives to wash your car, use a pail of water rather than a running hose, and an environmentally friendly cleanser.

State Planning Council Adopts Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan

On October 12, 1995, the State Planning Council adopted the Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Management Plan as Element 731 of the State Guide Plan. The plan was developed by the Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Management Program, part of the DEM Office of Environmental Coordination, with the assistance of the Interagency Nonpoint Source Advisory Committee and its technical subcommittees. Numerous government agencies, including the CRMC, and private sector groups contributed to the development of the plan.

The plan updates and replaces Rhode Island's original Nonpoint Source Management Plan developed in 1989 in accordance with requirements contained in section 319 of the Clean Water Act. In addition to coordinating the many nonpoint pollution control efforts throughout the state and maintaining the state's eligibility for funding under section 319 for the next four years, the Nonpoint Source Management Plan serves as an integral component to Rhode Island's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program (CNPCP) developed under Section 6217 of the Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization Amendments.

Under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, federal funds are awarded annually to states to implement federally approved Nonpoint Source Management Plans. The new plan will thus serve as a basis for subsequent 319 work plans developed by DEM's Nonpoint Source Management Program. All projects targeted for funding under Section 319 must be consistent with the recommendations in the plan. To ensure consistency with the CNPCP, the requirements of Section 6217 have been incorporated into the new plan.

As an element of the State Guide Plan, the plan also serves as a means to coordinate other nonpoint source management programs and activities conducted throughout the state. Since many of these programs are supported by a variety of funding sources, the new Nonpoint Source Management Plan will serve as a valuable mechanism to ensure the best use of scarce funds. The plan thereby strengthens the ability of state and federal agencies and municipal governments to manage nonpoint sources of pollution throughout Rhode Island in an orderly and consistent manner.

The plan addresses the protection and restoration of all waters of the state that are threatened or impaired by nonpoint sources of pollution and is divided into two principle parts - statewide management strategies and watershed management strategies. While the plan recognizes the need to maintain and enhance the various regularly and enforcement programs which address nonpoint sources of pollution, the primary emphasis of the plan is on non-regulatory initiatives. The CNPCP, which requires primarily regulatory approaches for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution, and the Nonpoint Source Management Plan are therefore complementary and provide the state with a comprehensive, long term framework for preventing and minimizing nonpoint source pollution impacts to Rhode Island's waters.

For more information on the Rhode Island Nonpoint Source Management Plan or Program contact Bob Ballou at DEM's Office of Environmental Coordination at 277-3434.

Joseph P. Turco Passes Away

The Council expresses its sincerest sympathy to the family of Joseph Turco who passed away in October. Appointed in August of 1971 by then-Governor Frank Licht, Mr. Turco was one of the original members of the CRMC and served on the Council until being replaced in May of 1987. Mr. Turco then served as an interim Council member until January of 1994.

A lifelong resident of Westerly and father of eight, Mr. Turco devoted countless hours to his community and the state in many capacities. In addition to his tenure on the Council, he served as the first Chairman of the Narragansett Bay Commission, was a member of the Westerly Democratic Town Committee and a trustee of the Westerly Calabrese Society.

It was the Council's and, indeed, the state's privilege to have had Joseph Turco serve as a member. He will certainly be missed, but his efforts to manage coastal areas for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders will continue.

Coastal Features

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(continued from page 3)

sions on best management practices to be included in site-specific operation and maintenance plans. The Council would like to thank Jared Rhodes at the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center and John Toic of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation for their efforts in organizing this workshop and for providing CRMC staff with a forum to explain marina operation and maintenance plan requirements.

For more information on the RI Marina Assistance Collaborative and future workshops, contact John Toic at 277-2601 or Jared Rhodes at 874-6224. For more information on the CRMC's marina operation and maintenance program requirements, contact Jeff Willis at 277-2476.