

COASTAL FEATURES

June - 1992

The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council's Report on Current Events

George L. Sisson, Jr., Chairman
Grover J. Fugate, CRMC Executive Director

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE GRANTS APPROVAL TO PAWCATUCK PLAN

For the past two years, a group of government agencies and concerned public citizens have been meeting in an effort to develop a long range interstate management plan for the Pawcatuck River / Little Narragansett Bay area. On April 29th, 1992 members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee approved with revision the final draft of an Interstate Management Plan for the Pawcatuck River and Little Narragansett Bay. The long process of approval started in June of 1991 when Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Council, the Connecticut Department of the Environment, the towns of Westerly and Stonington, and members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee reviewed the first draft of a plan to preserve, protect and improve the Pawcatuck River estuary and Little Narragansett Bay, an area which serves as the interstate boundary between Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The development of an interstate management plan for the area grew from several sources. The first was the ongoing concern for the estuary of local residents, which provided for constant pressure on government agencies to assess the changes occurring within the area, and to reconsider the adequacy of programs and policies in place to protect the resource. Secondly, the surge of development in coastal New England in the 1980's pushed concerns about the impacts of this growth upon the estuary to the forefront of the environmental agenda. Lastly, the impacts of a marina dredging project in 1987 on the returning Atlantic salmon highlighted inadequacies in interstate coordination of such projects, and the need for common policies governing the use of the estuary.

Although management of coastal areas and resources is a well-established concept in New England,

management programs are generally based upon and separated by political jurisdictions. Governments often do not recognize the ecological inner relationships between resources, geographic areas and uses of coastal systems. The Interstate Management Plan provides several mechanisms to coordinate these separate government bodies, including the following:

- An Interstate Notice Procedure
- Interstate Memorandums of Agreement
- Coordinated Reviews for Large Scale Projects
- A Pawcatuck River Bi-State Commission

These mechanisms will allow both governments to focus on the identification and restoration of sources of pollution, identification and protection of critical wildlife habitats, guidance and management measures for various uses of the estuary, and to provide a consistent, ecologically-based policy framework for decisions involving the use of the estuary's resources.

This interstate management plan, which will seek the approval of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in June, aims to protect existing water quality and aquatic and shoreline areas of significant value; maintain a balance among the diverse activities which coexist within the estuary; to expand physical and visual public access to the estuary; and to integrate municipal land use policies with considerations for use and protection of the estuary.



WESTERLY SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES DUNE RESTORATION PROJECT

Last August Hurricane Bob swept away tons of sand from local beaches and eroded dunes all along the Rhode Island coast. In October a powerful Noreaster proceeded to aggravate the situation with severe winds and waves. Consequently, areas along the coast which were hit hard by the storms experienced coastal flooding. In an effort to prevent further damage as a result of coastal flooding the town of Westerly, along with the Misquamicut Club and the Misquamicut Fire District, have successfully completed a dune restoration project in the areas of land between Maschaug Pond and Little Maschaug Pond and four individual properties along the Misquamicut headland.

In December of 1991 the Misquamicut Club submitted an emergency application for the reconstruction and restoration of dunes and the installation of snow fencing and the planting of beach grasses along East Beach in Westerly. This area of land, which consists of Maschaug and Little Maschaug Ponds and the barrier beach between the ponds and Block Island Sound, is designated Type 1 (Conservation) Waters in the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program (RICRMP). It is also a recognized nesting location for the Piping Plover, an endangered species according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

After a careful review of the proposal, CRMC staff biologist John Sposato and engineer Tom Medeiros issued an emergency permit with stipulations to protect the natural habitat. For instance, all work had to be complete two weeks prior to last year's arrival date of the Piping Plover, which was provided to the CRMC by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; no operation of equipment was permitted in tidal waters; snow-fencing was only permitted to be planted in accordance with the provisions of section 4 in the RI Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook; all sand and sediment used had to be free of

debris; and the reconstructed dunes had to be planted with American Beach Grass, spaced 12 to 18 inches apart, to a depth of 9 inches and at a density of 3-5 stems per planted group. In addition, the Misquamicut Club was also required to place signs at the site informing the public about the dune restoration project and advising them to keep off of the dunes. CRMC staff then met with the contractor on site to clarify and stress the terms of the permit.

Furthermore, the town of Westerly and the Misquamicut Fire District applied to do the same type of dune restoration projects on the land abutting Little Maschaug Pond and individual properties along the Misquamicut headland. With a few variations both projects were permitted with the same type of stipulations.

During a follow-up site inspection on May 19 CRMC staff characterized the project as a complete success when they saw Piping Plovers occupying an area of the Maschaug Barrier Beach. As a result they reported the Plover siting to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who will continue to monitor this species, which is protected by the federal Endangered Species Act.

Those wishing to comment on articles in
Coastal Features
are invited to do so. Please send to:

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LONGTIME CRMC ENGINEER DEPARTING AFTER 14 YEARS OF SERVICE

Nicholas A. Pisani, a senior civil engineer for the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) for the past 14 years, is leaving our agency to become the principle civil engineer at the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Freshwater Wetlands.

Nick, who graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1978 with a B.S. in Civil and Environmental Engineering, started to work for the CRMC in September of 1978. During his tenure at the agency Nick has seen the level of application review become more detailed as the number of applications has increased. In addition, he has also seen the agency develop a more comprehensive enforcement policy as the area of jurisdiction became more clearly defined.

As an invaluable contributor to the development of regulations for stormwater guidelines and floodplain management, Nick foresees the CRMC developing and implementing more Special Area Management Plans through the state of Rhode Island. For example, he believes that a Special Area Management Plan for Little Compton would greatly help the community by preserving and protecting its natural resources before development occurs in the area. Furthermore, he believes that our agency will concentrate on developing an effective nonpoint source pollution policy and watershed management.

An industrious and diligent member of the CRMC staff, Nick has helped the CRMC define a thorough method of engineering review. His efforts have greatly assisted staff in determining a comprehensive set of application standards.

Although he is looking forward to his new position at DEM/Freshwater Wetlands, Nick says he will miss the scenic locations of his site inspections and the sense of accomplishment he felt when reviewing large land development projects in sensitive coastal areas.

CRMC 312 REVIEW TO HAPPEN THE WEEK OF JUNE 22

Section 312 of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) provides for a "continuing review of the performance of coastal states with respect to coastal management." The scope of an evaluation, as established in the CZMA, includes the "extent to which the state has implemented and enforced the program approved by the Secretary of Commerce, addressed the coastal management needs identified in Section 303 (2) (A), and adhered to the terms of any grant, loan or cooperative agreement funded" under the CZMA. OCRM uses the evaluation recommendations in reviewing states' future financial assistance applications, in defining significant improvement activities in accordance with the 1980 Amendments to the CZMA, and in identifying areas of state program implementations that need continuing scrutiny.

Representatives from NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM) will be visiting the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council to conduct a 312 Review of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program (RICRMP) during the week of June 22. The OCRM Program Analysis Unit will analyze the approved RICRMP, financial award documents, previous evaluation findings, and other relevant correspondence and information. They will also meet with local government officials and representatives from environmental advocacy groups and trades organizations to discuss public opinions about the effectiveness of the RICRMP.

In the past OCRM review teams have placed special emphasis on the following RICRMP components:

- The administration of the coastal permitting process.
- The status and performance of efforts directed at monitoring and enforcing CRMC policies, including detecting non-permitted activities.
- The status of public access efforts, including but not limited to the designation of rights-of-way.
- CRMC plans for administering the Federal Consistency Provision of the CZMA.

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