



End of an Era: CRMC's longtime Executive Director Grover Fugate retires



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“We were in the midst of permitting the relocation of the rivers downtown and much of what is in that area did not exist at the time,” Fugate said in a letter addressed to Council members and staff. “The Council had two staff, myself and an office manager...The rest of the (CRMC) staff were scattered throughout the state residing in different agencies.”

- Grover Fugate

In addition to implementing its primary management program – known as the Red Book – the CRMC was also developing its first Special Area Management plans, the Providence Harbor SAMP and the Salt Ponds SAMP. To this day, the CRMC is the only agency that develops and implements these customized regional management strategies, and the CRMC has eight SAMPs and is currently developing another, the Bay SAMP.



Fugate had been often-recognized for his efforts in Rhode Island and beyond. In 2008, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Rhode Island Sea Grant, for his efforts to uphold and execute the CRMC's mandate to “preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, restore the coastal resources of the state.”

CRMC Chair Jennifer Cervenka said in a retirement video presented to Fugate that in her three short years serving as chair alongside Fugate, the Council had dealt with difficult and complex applications as well as the newest and most novel.

[Read more about Fugate here](#)

Taking the reins

The Coastal Resources Management Council's first full-time Executive Director, Grover J. Fugate, retired at the end of May after 34 years at his post. Fugate was hired in February 1986 to bring order to a fledgling CRMC suddenly facing a backlog of coastal permits.

Fugate was hired to address the backlog of 3,000 applications the shorthanded agency was struggling through, and the CRMC's federal parent agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) required the state to address the agency's processing issues, or face de-certification of Rhode Island's coastal program. At that time, one person served as the Council chair and executive director, which obviously wasn't working.



From developing SAMPs, prioritizing dredging, encouraging the state's aquaculture industry to thrive under a streamlined permitting process, and fostering a cooperative relationship with Rhode Island's institutions of higher learning and the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center, to the nation's first offshore wind farm in our own (ocean) backyard, STORMTOOLS and the Coastal Hazards Application process under the R.I. Shoreline Change (Beach) SAMP, all of these accomplishments and more have occurred under Fugate's directorship.

“Without your total Grover package – the knowledge base, your understanding of the process, the political savvy, the bringing people together, the ‘walk softly but carry a big stick’-type of Grover approach –we wouldn't have survived those. I'm so thankful you led us through that. And thank you for the three-plus decades of work in building this agency. I was not witness to most of that time and work, but I know the result. The result is a one-of-a-kind leader of an agency I'm extremely proud to be part of, and I hope in return over the next few years, we can make you proud in building upon your work.” - CRMC Chair Jennifer Cervenka