

CRMC's 5 percent aquaculture rule seeks to balance use of salt ponds

Nearly a decade has passed since the CRMC instituted its rule of a five-percent threshold of aquaculture use in each of the state's salt ponds. The limit seeks to balance all users and uses of the salt ponds, but conflicts still arise.

"We try to minimize conflict, but it's in every application," said CRMC Aquaculture Coordinator David Beutel at a recent presentation before the Rhode Island Saltwater Association. "You can never get rid of it [But] we are proactive with all stakeholders."

The CRMC adopted the rule in 2009 after much study on carrying capacity and bay.

Carrying capacity is the maximum amount of shellfish aquaculture that can occur in a given water body without unacceptable ecological impact to that body of water (from a biological and ecological perspective).

According to Robert Rheault, executive director of the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association, at the time of the study on carrying capacity, the New England Marine Fisheries Council was recommending a moratorium on new aquaculture leases because of fears that too many grown shellfish would eat all the phytoplankton and the wild stock would starve.



East Beach Farm aquaculture (Photo: Ayla Fox)

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Regarding use of the East Beach Sand Trail

For the 2018 season, CRMC will be issuing beach vehicle permits Monday – Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at its Wakefield offices. RIDEM will be selling beach vehicle permits from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Beginning in mid-May, permits will be sold at Burlingame from 8 a.m. - 11 p.m. Please call 401-322-8910 before going to Burlingame.

Purchasing a Beach Vehicle Permit does not guarantee access to the East Beach Sand Trail. DEM has established a 30-vehicle limit on the sand trail.

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CRMC celebrates 40 years of federal CZMA approval

The Rhode Island CRMC is celebrating 40 years of federal approval for its coastal program, and the state and federal authority that comes with that approval.

The CRMC was created in 1971 by the Rhode Island General Assembly, and a year later, the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) was passed. It is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management, and provides for the management of the nation's coastal resources by balancing economic development with environmental conservation. This mirrors the CRMC's goal and credo:

"...to preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, restore the coastal resources of the state for this and succeeding generations through comprehensive and coordinated long-range planning and management designed to produce the maximum benefit for society from such coastal resources; and that the preservation and restoration of ecological systems shall be the primary guiding principal upon which environmental alteration of coastal resources shall be measured, judged and regulated."

The CZMA encourages states to take a leading role in the management of their coastal regions, and one way states can do this is through the requirement that various federal activities "reasonably likely" to affect any land or water use or natural resource of the coastal zone be consistent with a state's approved coastal zone management program.

Before those activities can occur, federal agencies or applicants for federal approvals or assistance must submit a federal consistency determination to the state coastal management agency, stating that activity will be conducted consistent with that state's federally-approved coastal management program. This process gives the state a valuable opportunity to evaluate proposed federal activities that affect the coastal zone and ensure that the activities meet the state coastal management policies and requirements.

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