

*Coastal Resources Management Council*

1978 Original Edition

Chapter 7

Public and  
Governmental  
Participation

## **Public and Governmental Participation**

### **FINDINGS:**

- A. Public and governmental participation is an essential element of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program.
- Public participation is necessary in all phases of program development and implementation. The most effective vehicle for participation is often different for each fact of the program.
  - A variety of public participation programs ensures participation from the most diverse set of governmental bodies, interest groups and concerned individuals.
- B. A traceable, open decision making process is critical if the public is to be a full partner in coastal management decisions.
- The Council has recognized the necessity for adopting formalized procedures which set forth the mechanism through which public and governmental input can occur.
  - All records on which regulatory decisions are made must be open to public inspection.
- C. It is essential that the many groups and individuals with an interest in or who will be affected by the adoption of Council policies and regulations have the opportunity to participate in the development of such policies.
- Numerous mechanisms in addition to testimony at formal hearings can be used to encourage such participation. Such mechanisms include technical input, review of preliminary drafts, meetings, workshops and advisory committees.
- D. Solving many of the complex issues facing the coastal region requires the cooperation and coordination of numerous state and federal agencies, municipal governments, private groups, and individuals.
- Numerous state and municipal groups have adopted plans which are related to the use of the coastal region and its resources.
    - Opportunities exist for facilitating cooperation among these groups including staff interactions and workshops, the State Planning Council, the Council permit review procedures and the A-95 review process.
  - Because of the significance of federal activities within Rhode Island's coastal region and the lack of an existing mechanism for effective state/federal cooperation on coastal issues, the Council finds the special coordinating efforts must be made with federal agencies with an interest in the Rhode Island coastal region.

- E. A critical element in the effective implementation of coastal management plans and policies will be public awareness of the coastal environment, and the management issues relating to the coastal region.
- An informed public and a workable management program are synonymous.
  - Numerous opportunities exist for increasing public consciousness of coastal issues including: media exposure, brochures and newsletters, exhibits, talks and audiovisual presentations, and public workshops.
  - The Council finds it has a special responsibility to prepare Rhode Island's youngest citizens to deal intelligently and knowledgeably with the many coastal issues and decisions they will face as adults. Coastal awareness must be fostered in the state's schools at all levels.

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS:

- A. It shall be the policy of the Council to promote the participation of federal, state, and local governmental bodies, public and private organizations, and private citizens in the preparation of its plans, programs, policies and regulations.
- B. The Council shall cooperate with other governmental agencies in all matters of mutual interest. The Council through its adopted procedures shall ensure a continuous flow of information among agencies in the development of its plans and studies before these are completed and adopted. The Council shall also solicit and consider the opinion of other agencies on any matter before the Council which significantly affects those agencies.
- C. To ensure coordination between the Council and federal agencies, the Council has formed a Federal Advisory Committee. The purpose of the committee is to provide a forum for discussion and conflict resolution. The committee shall convene at least quarterly. Additional meetings will be held as necessary.
- D. The Council shall work with local officials from Rhode Island's municipalities to facilitate the coordination of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program and local plans.
- E. The Council finds that an open, traceable decision making process is essential for an effective coastal management program. The Council will therefore follow the procedures set forth in detail in Appendix B for all permit applications which come before it.
- F. The Council finds that full participation by interested and/or affected groups is essential in the development of Council policies and regulations. The Council finds it can best foster such participation by adopting the following policies:
1. The Council will provide opportunities for public and governmental input in the development of its policies and regulations.

- a. The Council and its staff will consult with experts, professionals and interest groups in the preparation of technical reports upon which policies are based.
    - b. Plans and reports upon which policies and regulations are based shall be made available to the public.
    - c. The Council shall form advisory committees and hold meetings and workshops to formulate and discuss proposed policies as necessary.
  2. The adoption of all policies and regulations by the Council will follow the procedures set forth in Appendix B.
- G. The Council shall continue to sponsor public education programs. Such programs shall include:
- publication and widespread distribution of technical reports
  - exhibits
  - media releases
  - quarterly newsletters (Coastal Features)
  - a speaker's bureau
  - other activities that will foster public awareness
  - special programs for senior citizens on coastal awareness, Rhode Island and offshore oil, and seafood consumer education.
- H. The Council shall continue to sponsor educational activities for school age children. Such activities will include the preparation and dissemination of educational material, supplying speakers to school groups and sponsoring an annual essay contest.