



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Michael M. Tikoian
Chairman

Grover J. Fugate
Executive Director

October 19, 2010

On behalf of the Coastal Resources Management Council, I am pleased to present the Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan. The Ocean SAMP is a major accomplishment that has been recognized by President Obama's Ocean Policy Task Force as a national model for marine spatial planning, and will serve Rhode Island for generations to come by promoting a balanced and comprehensive ecosystem-based management approach to the development and protection of Rhode Island's ocean resources.

The Ocean SAMP is the largest SAMP the CRMC has ever developed, encompassing nearly 1,500 square miles of Rhode Island's ocean waters, and is the first SAMP that manages the offshore environment. While the Ocean SAMP has been hailed as one of the nation's first marine spatial plans and described as the "vanguard" of such initiatives, the CRMC has been zoning the state's waters since 1983 for uses ranging from conservation areas to industrial ports. The Ocean SAMP refines those designations for the state's offshore waters by identifying areas appropriate for offshore renewable energy as well as areas that merit special protection. It also includes comprehensive new regulatory standards for offshore development that will make Rhode Island a leader in managing offshore renewable energy.

The Ocean SAMP document is the result of a two-year research and planning process that builds on CRMC's 35 years of experience developing coastal management plans that integrate the best available science with public input and involvement. The Ocean SAMP's rigorous public process has helped engage a diverse group of stakeholders who have provided extensive input into this document. Research conducted by University of Rhode Island and Roger Williams University experts on topics ranging from benthic habitats to marine mammals to marine policy has given us a new understanding of this ecosystem and provides the scientific basis for Ocean SAMP findings, policies, and standards. The outcome of this intensive process is clear: the Ocean SAMP has achieved what it set out to do.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my fellow Ocean SAMP Subcommittee members: Paul Lemont, David Abedon, and Donald Gomez as well as the other CRMC members for their hard work and dedication to the Ocean SAMP throughout this intensive two-year process. I also want to recognize the hard-work and dedication of the Ocean SAMP team led by CRMC executive director Grover Fugate and Jennifer McCann from the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center. Additionally, I want to thank CRMC Legal Counsel Brian A. Goldman for the countless revisions he made.

I would also like to thank our partners at the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center and Rhode Island Sea Grant for their commitment to making the Ocean SAMP document and stakeholder process the most comprehensive, transparent, and intensive SAMP the CRMC has ever produced.

Finally, I would like to thank the many stakeholders who participated to make the process public, cooperative and ultimately successful. Special thanks go to Ken Payne for facilitating the stakeholder process.

I invite you to read this document, as it underscores the importance, value, and unique resources of the Ocean State's offshore waters. I also encourage you to continue engaging with the Ocean SAMP team as the CRMC implements this plan to manage our ocean waters for the benefit of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael M. Tikoian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending across the middle.

Michael M. Tikoian, Chairman
R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council