Rhode Island

Coastal Management Program Assessment and Strategy

2026 to 2030

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Introduction

The Coastal Zone Enhancement Program encourages state and territorial coastal management programs to strengthen and improve their federally approved coastal management programs in one or more of nine areas. These “enhancement areas” include wetlands, coastal hazards, public access, marine debris, cumulative and secondary impacts, special area management plans, ocean and Great Lakes resources, energy and government facility siting, and aquaculture. The enhancement program was established under Section 309 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), as amended.

Every five years, states and territories are encouraged to conduct self-assessments of their coastal management programs to determine problems and enhancement opportunities within each of the nine enhancement areas—and to assess the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address identified problems. Each coastal management program identifies high-priority management issues as well as important needs and information gaps the program must fill to address these issues.

This is the eighth Assessment and Strategy that the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has submitted under §309 of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. Seven previous assessments were prepared. As in previous assessments, this one is directed at the nine §309 enhancement areas delineated by the Congress. Each is discussed in a separate chapter using a template provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

This document combines the section 309 Assessment and Strategy requirements into a single document. It contains an assessment of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program (RICRMP) for each of the nine areas contained in section 309, and the Council's strategy for enhancing the RICRMP in the two areas identified as high priority (Public Access and Coastal Hazards). These priority areas were determined using input from an online survey administered to stakeholders that included state and nonprofit agencies, municipalities, private sector trade organizations, academia and CRMC Staff. Stakeholders were asked to rank each of the nine enhancement areas as a high, medium or low priority. Concurrently, CRMC completed Phase I assessments for all nine enhancement areas, the results of which are included in this document. The results of these assessments contributed to the identification of Public Access and Coastal Hazards as high-priority areas and provided the basis for further (Phase II) analyses and strategy development. In addition, Coastal Hazards and Wetlands have been designated as enhancement areas of national importance for this assessment cycle per NOAA CZMA Section 309 Guidance.

Summary of Recent Section 309 Achievements

CRMC's approved 2021-2025 309 Assessment and Strategy identified public access and coastal hazards as high-priority enhancement areas. Several subsequent statewide initiatives and legislation reflected these areas as critical and timely focus areas for the State. For example, with regard to coastal hazards, during the Strategy period the State's first statewide coastal resilience plan, Resilient Rhody 2025 was launched, and the 2021 Act on Climate was enacted. Public access also drew increased statewide attention with an increased demand for public access during the pandemic. Of particular note during the Strategy period was the enactment of several laws relating to public access to the shore, including the 2023 Lateral Access legislation (H5174) and the 2025 ROW Parking legislation (H6093). The CRMC was a mandated lead or participant in efforts and programs associated with these initiatives which supported (and continue to do so) the high-priority enhancement areas of the 2021-2025 Assessment and Strategy.

In addition to these efforts supporting the 2021-2025 high priority enhancement areas, the CRMC accomplished the following in support of its 2021-2025 coastal hazards and public access Section 309 strategies:

- Provided Resilience Education for Planning in Rhode Island (PREP_RI), a series of brief online training modules designed for municipal decision-makers, planning boards, and zoning commissions was updated during this session with assistance from CRMC Staff for the flooding and mapping module. This task supports the 309 task of the development of outreach and technical assistance for coastal resiliency matters that is geared towards municipal officials and municipal land use ordinances.
- Legislation was passed by the General Assembly in 2021 encouraging municipalities to utilize the Coastal Hazards Analysis (CHA) worksheet in their local permitting processes (2021 H 5920). As part of the initial outreach effort, CRMC hosted an instructional webinar in 2022 to review the process with municipal representatives, planners, and zoning officials.
- Developed, produced and improved signage for CRMC Right of Ways (ROWs). CRMC began adding QR-code stickers to signs in 2024, which provided the opportunity to ensure much more information was being made available to the public via our signage. The QR codes bring visitors to CRMC's shoreline-access webpage, where they can find more information about public access. New dedicated funding for signs and signposts helped the CRMC produce and distribute signs with a $25,000 legislature-provided budget. This budget allows for more replacement capacity and better durability of signs.
- Developed and adopted a management plan for the Winnapaug Phase II site which designates and protects in perpetuity 10 parking spaces within the site and proximate to existing designated ROWs.
- CRMC Staff and/or Save The Bay and their volunteers visited all CRMC-designated ROWs, and documented existing conditions. This information was entered into a ROW database developed by Save The Bay and is publicly available. Based on this parking analysis, candidate sites may be identified for future parking improvements in coordination with municipalities. CRMC will continue to work with municipalities as they

their comprehensive plans. CRMC will suggest that municipalities incorporate policies, goals, and or strategies on how to maintain or enhance parking near CRMC rows.

- CRMC Staff continued to work with municipalities during their comprehensive plan updates to address coastal hazards. During such reviews, CRMC staff routinely suggested incorporating policies, goals, and/or actions to enhance local zoning ordinances to minimize development in areas at risk from coastal hazards. Outreach and technical assistance for coastal resilience matters has been provided upon request to municipal officials and regional resilience coordinators who are largely funded through CRMC's BIL capacity building funds. CRMC also continued to work with municipalities to incorporate the CRMC's Coastal Hazard Application process, suggested adaptation strategies, and STORMTOOLS suite of mapping tools into comprehensive plan updates.
- Following the updates to Section 1.3.1(G) to prioritize non-structural and hybrid shoreline protection strategies, the revisions have been effective. Of particular note is the increase in hybrid and non-structural shoreline protection permits issued by the CRMC. By having a strong regulatory basis for the prohibition of most structural shoreline protection, the agency has been an effective messenger of the environmental and geological harms of hardened shorelines. Additionally, CRMC has closely collaborated with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council on the Living Shorelines State of the Practice and Performance Monitoring Guidance Documents. The profile sheets in the former are adopted by CRMC in the Beach SAMP as examples of compliant non-structural shoreline protection strategies, and are provided to applicants for use in their alternatives analyses.

Phase I Assessment

Wetlands

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Protection, restoration, or enhancement of the existing coastal wetlands base, or creation of new coastal wetlands. §309(a)(1)

Note: For the purposes of the Wetlands Assessment, wetlands are "those areas that are inundated or saturated at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." [33 CFR 328.3(b)]. See also pg. 14 of the CZMA Performance Measurement Guidance[1] for a more in-depth discussion of what should be considered a wetland.

Phase I (High-Level) Assessment: (Must be completed by all states.)

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *Using the tables below as a guide, provide information on the status and trends of coastal wetlands. Be as quantitative as possible using state or national wetland trend data.[2] The tables are information presentation suggestions. Feel free to adjust column and row headings to align with data and time frames available in your state or territory. If quantitative data is not available for your state or territory, provide a brief qualitative narrative describing wetlands status and trends and any significant changes since the last assessment.*

Total statewide acreage of all vegetated wetland types as reported in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's 2014 National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) was 63,377 acres. Of special concern to the CRMC are the state's estuarine intertidal wetlands, particularly salt marsh. Total statewide acreage of wetlands classified as Vegetated Estuarine Intertidal by the 2014 NWI was 3,799 acres. CRMC was unable to find data showing trends since this previous NWI. To evaluate trends since the 2021–2025 assessment, CRMC reviewed the newly released 2024 USFWS National Wetlands Status and Trends Report (analyzing data from 2009 to 2019). State-specific acreage totals cannot be updated using this new publication because the USFWS utilizes a statistical sampling methodology based on 5,048 randomly selected country-wide plots. This sample size is mathematically valid only for generating national and broad regional estimates; it does not produce localized or state-by-state acreage tallies.

However, the macro-level trends documented in the 2024 report provide a critical baseline for Rhode Island's current planning cycle. Nationally, net wetland loss accelerated by over 50 percent compared to the prior decade, driven by a catastrophic net loss of 670,000 acres of vegetated wetlands—a geographic footprint larger than the entire land mass of Rhode Island. Most notably for CRMC, estuarine emergent salt marshes experienced a highly significant, long-term, net reduction of 1.7% across the conterminous United States. The report confirms that this loss is driven almost entirely by the conversion of vegetated marsh to non-vegetated tidal flats, shoals, and open deepwater habitats.

These documented federal trends directly mirror and validate the real-time physical degradation observed within Rhode Island's borders. Landward retreat of marsh edges, widening and headward expansion of tidal channel networks, loss of marsh islands, and the development and enlargement of interior depressions found on the marsh platform have been observed statewide over the past two decades. Recent assessments estimate the rate of loss of salt marsh over the past 40 years to be approximately 17% (Watson et al. 2017). Furthermore, the results of the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) that was run statewide in 2014 indicate that under a 5-foot sea level rise scenario, Rhode Island is likely to lose over 80% of its existing intertidal marshes.

Current state of wetlands in 2024 (acres): Approximately 64,000

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate any significant changes at the state or territory level (positive or negative) since the last assessment that could impact the future protection, restoration, enhancement, or creation of coastal wetlands.*

Significant Changes in Wetland Management

Management Category	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y
Wetlands programs (e.g., regulatory, mitigation, restoration, acquisition)	Y

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information.*

a. *Describe the significance of the changes;*

b. *Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and*

c. *Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.*

In 2015, state laws pertaining to freshwater wetlands (R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 2-1-18 through 2-1-28) were amended to strengthen the protection of freshwater wetland resources while streamlining the regulatory framework applicable to projects and activities proposed near wetlands. Implementation of the law required both the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) to undertake rulemaking within their respective programs. Regulations implementing the law went into effect July 1, 2022. The implementing regulations include new or revised definitions required by state law that provide greater consistency between CRMC and DEM programs as well as clarity for applicants and the public, strengthen wetland protection administered at the state level and expand the jurisdiction of state agencies.

Although wetlands were not a focus of our previous 309 strategy, the CRMC continued to manage the Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Trust Fund and Program. Although not a CZM driven change, this program accounts for the majority of CRMC's reported wetland restoration numbers for the annual CZM performance measures report. In 2021, the Rhode Island General Assembly adopted legislation establishing the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) Fund as a program to be administered jointly by the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB), the RI Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), and the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM). The OSCAR fund is a Rhode Island grant program that provides financial support for public projects adaptation and resilience projects that protect or enhance coastal or riverine ecological habitats to address impacts of flooding, erosion, sea level rise, storm surge, or other similar hazards. . Although not specifically a habitat restoration program, habitat restoration is a critical component. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, and CRMC awarded over $2 million in grant funding for thirteen projects in 2025. Approximately $ 400,000 of the funding that went to projects in CRMC jurisdiction were applied to coastal wetland restoration. A new RFP for a second round of funding has been released, and awards are expected to be issued in early 2027.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium __X__

Low _____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

This enhancement area was rated as high priority by 2 of 7 survey respondents and fourth in priority of enhancement areas. The Rhode Island Coastal Wetland Restoration Strategy last underwent an update in 2018, and the 2020-2025 Strategy is still available. The development of the strategy is currently a responsibility that lies with RI DEM and the RI Natural History Survey, although CRMC remains an active partner. A 2026 update is in the final stages of drafting. . The state recognizes that wetlands restoration can provide comprehensive benefits that can aid in other enhancement areas of high priority, such as coastal hazard mitigation. There may be opportunities for projects targeting multiple enhancement areas that also result in benefits for Rhode Island's wetlands.

Coastal Hazards

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Prevent or significantly reduce threats to life and property by eliminating development and redevelopment in high-hazard areas, managing development in other hazard areas, and anticipating and managing the effects of potential sea level rise and Great Lakes level change. §309(a)(2)

Note: For purposes of the Hazards Assessment, coastal hazards include the following traditional hazards and those identified in the CZMA: flooding; coastal storms (including associated storm surge); geological hazards (e.g., tsunamis, earthquakes); shoreline erosion (including bluff and dune erosion); sea level rise; Great Lake level change; land subsidence; and saltwater intrusion.

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization:

1. *In the table below, indicate the general level of risk in the coastal zone for each of the coastal hazards. The following resources may help assess the level of risk for each hazard. Your state may also have other state-specific resources and tools to consult. Additional information and links to these resources can be found in the "Resources" section at the end of the Coastal Hazards Phase I Assessment Template:*

General Level of Hazard Risk in the Coastal Zone

Type of Hazard	**General Level of Risk[2] (H, M, L)**
Flooding (riverine, stormwater)	M
Coastal storms (including storm surge)	H
Geological hazards (e.g., tsunamis, earthquakes)	L
Shoreline erosion	H (location dependent)
Sea level rise	H
Great Lakes level change	n/a
Land subsidence	L
Saltwater intrusion	M (unknown)
Other (please specify)	

2. Additional Data and Reports

- The state's multi-hazard mitigation plan

Since the last assessment, CRMC Staff served on the State Interagency Hazard Mitigation Committee that helped develop the 2024 RI State Hazard Mitigation Plan (Plan). The Plan was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2024.

- Coastal County Snapshots: Flood Exposure

Since the last assessment, CRMC has actively collaborated with RI Sea Grant on the MyCoast Initiative. CRMC has partially funded the initiative, in conjunction with funds from the RI Department of Transportation (DOT). MyCoast is a community science platform in which community members take photos of flooding from their mobile devices, and then upload them to a publicly available, georeferenced database. MyCoast allows three types of monitoring, including:

- King Tides, when normal high tides are predicted to be greater than 0.8 feet than MHW.
- Storm Report, which captures impacts of storm-related flooding and damage.
- CoastSnap, a new feature, with five permanent locations with "phone cradles" to enable informal time-series data capture.

To date, there are 1,942 registered MyCoast volunteers, with a total of 5,933 submissions. My Coast has proved to be a useful tool for local planners and community partners to identify locations with frequent nuisance flooding, and to then leverage community capture photographs in grant applications, reports, and mitigation planning.

●Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper Stormtools maintained and kept current through collaboration with URI Environmental Data Center. Presently, Stormtools is able to model inundation from the following potential storms:

- Nuisance Storms:
    - 1 year recurrence interval (100% annual chance)
    - 2 year recurrence interval (50% annual chance)
    - 3 year recurrence interval (33% annual chance)
    - 5 year recurrence interval (20% annual chance)
    - 10 year recurrence interval (10% annual chance)
- Extra/Tropical Storms
    - 25 year recurrence interval (4% annual chance)
    - 50 year recurrence interval (2% annual chance)
    - 100 year recurrence interval (1% annual chance)

● Sea Level Rise Viewer/Great Lakes Lake Level Change Viewer Stormtools maintained and kept current through collaboration with URI Environmental Data Center. Presently, Stormtools models inundation from the following GMSL scenarios:

- 1 foot sea level rise
- 2 feet sea level rise
    - Using the NOAA high curve, this value is used to evaluate the expected inundation after 30 years.
- 3 feet sea level rise
- 5 feet sea level rise
- 7 feet sea level rise
- 10 feet sea level rise
- 12 feet sea level rise

● National Climate Assessment

The 5th National Climate Assessment, released in 2023, has proven useful to CRMC Staff to relate state-scale climate impacts to national-scale climate impacts. For example, the CRMC Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan (SAMP), issued in 2018, specifically highlights the hazards associated with accelerating sea level rise and changing storm patterns. The 2023 NCA then echoes and updates the data presented in the Beach SAMP.

Another national-level report frequently used by CRMC is the 2022 Technical Report from the Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flood Hazard Scenarios and Tools Interagency Task Force. Specifically, the Interagency Sea Level Rise Scenario Tool is directly linked from the Coastal Hazards Analysis Worksheet.

2. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional data or reports on the level of risk and vulnerability to coastal hazards within your state since the last assessment. The state's multi-hazard mitigation plan may be a good resource to help respond to this question.*

Completed Reports:

● Resilient Rhody 2025 is Rhode Island's first comprehensive statewide climate change and coastal resilience plan, recently updated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) with assistance from CRMC staff and BIL capacity building funding. The 2025 iteration provides a highly structured roadmap to help the state adapt to sea-level rise, extreme weather, and flooding. The updated plan is backed by a major legislative milestone: the passage of the Resilient Rhody Infrastructure Fund in June 2025, which creates a dedicated revolving loan fund to finance local municipal resilience projects.

● The State of Rhode Island's Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated by the RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) and formally accepted by FEMA in 2024. CRMC Staff participated on the State Hazard Mitigation Committee from 2023 through 2024. Critically,

the Plan emphasizes how sea level rise compounds other coastal hazards, including high tide flooding, storm flooding, and erosion. Additionally, the Plan highlights a need for local municipalities to incorporate longer term climate projections in their hazard mitigation planning efforts.

Ongoing Reports:

● URI 0.2% annual chance (500-year) storm mapping products. The revised American Society for Civil Engineers (ASCE) Design Standards call for the 0.2% annual chance storm to be used for base flood elevation designs, rather than the 1% annual chance storm. As a result, both inundation and wind damage maps for the 0.2% annual chance storm are being developed for the Stormtools mapping suite.

● Inventory of shoreline hardening. See “Cumulative and Secondary Impacts” Question 4 for further detail.

Management Characterization

1. *In the tables below, indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if significant state- or territory-level changes (positive or negative) have occurred that could impact the CMP’s ability to prevent or significantly reduce coastal hazards risk since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes in Hazards Statutes, Regulations, Policies, or Case Law

Topic Addressed	Employed by State or Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Changes Since Last Assessment (Y or N)
Elimination of development/redevelopment in high-hazard areas[4]	Y	Y	Y
Management of development/redevelopment in other hazard areas	Y	Y	Y
sea level rise or Great Lakes level change	Y	Y	Y

Significant Changes in Hazards Planning Programs or Initiatives

Topic Addressed	Employed by State or Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Changes Since Last Assessment (Y or N)
Hazard mitigation	Y	Y	Y
Sea level rise or Great Lakes level change	Y	Y	Y

Significant Changes in Hazards Mapping or Modeling Programs or Initiatives

Topic Addressed	Employed by State or Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Changes Since Last Assessment (Y or N)
Sea level rise or Great Lakes level change	Y	Y	N
Other hazards	Y	Y	N

2. *Briefly state how "high-hazard areas" are defined in your coastal zone.*

In general, "high hazard" refers to areas delineated on the FEMA Flood Rate Insurance Map (FIRM) within the VE Zone, or areas with a 1 percent or greater chance of flooding in a given year and an additional hazard associated with coastal storm waves. These include the ocean shorefront of the towns of Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown and Narragansett, which are vulnerable to coastal flooding with a considerable amount of existing development in flood-prone areas (Salt Ponds SAMP, RICRMC 1999).

CRMC regulations also apply the "high hazard" regulations based on geologic and physical features such as:

- Coastal Barriers: Specifically undeveloped or moderately developed barrier islands and spits, which are considered high-hazard because they are the first line of defense and can be breached during major storms.
- Erosive Shorelines: Areas with high rates of shoreline change (generally greater than 1.7 feet per year) where structures are at immediate risk of losing foundational support. Specifically, CRMC increases structural setbacks in these areas to account for annual erosion rates.
- Steep Bluffs: River or coastal bluffs that may erode rapidly with heavy precipitation or flooding.

3. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

Significant Changes in Hazards Statutes, Regulations, Policies, or Case Law:

The development of the Beach SAMP, Stormtools Inundation maps, shoreline change maps, Coastal Environmental Risk Index (CERI), and Coastal Hazards Application (CHA) were all goals accomplished under the 2015-2020 309 Strategy. Since 2020, Staff have been implementing, monitoring, and maintaining these information sources and tools. The active implementation of these tools are reported here as a significant change, as the active implementation resulted in the direct management of development in high hazard and other hazard areas. Additionally, a significant change in hazard planning processes is reported due to the state law encouraging the adoption of the Coastal Hazards Analysis (CHA) process in municipal planning efforts.

Discrete metrics for efficacy and usage of the mapping products (Stormtools, shoreline change, and CERI) are not easily reportable. However, the CHA was introduced in 2019 as a mandatory application component for certain types of work on the shoreline. The worksheet is designed to educate property owners on the risk they inherit when building or performing other activities in a coastal area, and requires them to calculate the projected sea level rise inundation, coastal storm inundation, and shoreline change for the duration of their mortgage (generally 30 years). The CHA is an application requirement for the following types of permits:

1. Construction of new residential, commercial, and industrial buildings

2. Construction of any new infrastructure project subject to treatment of sewage or wastewater or energy production

3. Construction of any new private or public roadway, regardless of length;

4. Construction of new beach pavilions

5. Construction of any new subdivisions with six (6) or more lots, any portion of which is within 200 feet of a shoreline feature.

6. Expansion of existing commercial structures over tidal waters;

7. Expansion greater than 600 square feet, including if via second story addition, to existing residential, commercial, industrial or beach pavilion structures

8. Modification to existing residential, commercial, industrial or beach pavilion structures when such structures are located within the CRMC minimum setback

9. Maintenance applications for foundation replacements (FEMA-compliant, no expansion, etc.)

In the internal CRMC permit database, projects in categories 1 through 3 in the above list are easily filtered by project type, and any application coded with that project type was required to complete a CHA. However, for projects in categories 4 through 9, some applications would qualify for a CHA, while others coded with the same category would not (e.g., the CRMC internal database tags all “maintenance” projects under a single code and does not allow for filtering based on square footage or structure type). As such, the totals below underreport the true totals.

For the period ranging from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2025, 460 CHA worksheets were completed by applicants for new construction projects in the coastal zone (categories 1-3 in the above). Approximately 56% of those applications were for the authorization of a demolition and subsequent rebuild of a structure on the same parcel, which generally enables Staff to require applicants to rebuild in a more inland location. Of additional note, over 200 CHA worksheets were completed in the municipalities in the coastal barrier region (Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett), which have been identified as high hazard areas.

This work was largely implemented by the CRMC permitting staff, and was not a direct 309 action, but is supported under 306 CZM funding. It was, however, a direct result from the previous 309 Assessment and Strategy for the 2015-2020 period.

The major outcome of this change is the community education component. Over 400 households in Rhode Island have now been directly informed of their climate hazard risk for their specific property and have recorded these risks in the land evidence records of their property.

Additionally, legislation was passed by the General Assembly in 2021 encouraging municipalities to utilize the Coastal Hazards Analysis (CHA) worksheet in their local permitting processes (2021 H 5920). As part of the initial outreach effort, CRMC hosted an instructional webinar in 2022 to review the process with municipal representatives, planners, and zoning officials. This work is a 309 driven change.

The expected outcome is for municipalities to adopt a longer hazards planning timeline in their local Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs). The legislation specifically calls for the implementation of local overlay districts bounded by the seven foot (7') sea level rise inundation levels plus one hundred (100) year recurrence coastal storm inundation levels.

The maintenance of the Stormtools maps that enable this analysis are funded under CZM 306 funds.

Significant Changes in Hazards Planning Programs or Initiatives:

The adoption of the 2025 Resilient Rhody and the 2024 State Hazard Mitigation Plan are reported here as a significant change. These were not a 309-funded change, but CZM-supported Staff contributed to the completion of both planning documents.

In regard to future outcomes, the 2025 Resilient Rhody identified 79 Actions for state agencies and partners to complete over the next 5 years. CRMC is a lead organization for 18 action items.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High	__x___
Medium	_____
Low	_____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged*.

This category was ranked the highest priority based on stakeholder engagement resulting from a survey created in early 2025. The CRMC solicited public comment and feedback via this survey, posted it on the CRMC website and alerted the public to it via social media channels. The CRMC received seven completed surveys, some with additional comments in the space provided. Stakeholders included municipalities, industry groups and members of the general public. As such, CRMC maintains its high level priority. Coastal hazards have also been a high priority in several recent state planning documents including the Resilient Rhody State of Resilience Report (December 2024).

Public Access

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Attain increased opportunities for public access, taking into account current and future public access needs, to coastal areas of recreational, historical, aesthetic, ecological, or cultural value. §309(a)(3)

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *Use the table below to provide data on public access availability within the coastal zone.*

Public Access Status and Trends

Type of Access	Current Number[5]	Changes or Trends Since Last Assessment[6] (↑, ↓, –, unknown)	Citation
CRMC-designated public access sites (ROWs)	236	↑ (10)	CRMC ROW Report, 2025-2026 (pending final review)
Beach Access Sites (state-run beaches)	8	—	Rhode Island State Parks (https://riparks.ri.gov/)
Shoreline (other than beach) access sites[1]	Unknown	Unknown	
Recreational boat (power or non-motorized) access sites	46	-	DEM Rec. Fish and Boat Access Guide database; http://www.exploreri.org/waterTrails.php (Paul Jordan, RIDEM, pers. comm.)

[1] State Beaches in Rhode Island are run by the division of RI State Parks, not CRMC. Differentiation of management bodies makes these categories different enough to separate.

Designated scenic vistas or overlook points	5	-	http://www.dot.ri.gov/community/scenicroadways.php
Fishing access points (i.e. piers, jetties)	84	-	DEM Rec. Fish and Boat Access Guided base
Coastal trails/ boardwalks *(Please indicate number of trails/boardwalks and mileage)*	1) 14,270 linear feet of Urban Coastal Greenway 2) East Bay Bike Path (13.8 miles) 3) Newport Cliffwalk (3.5 miles)	↑ 6,000 linear feet of Urban Coastal Greenway	Urban Coastal Greenway/335 public access data (New: Kettle Point and City of Providence/Wexford)
Access sites that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant[7]	At least 6 state beaches	Unknown	
Other (please specify)			

2. *Briefly characterize the demand for coastal public access and the process for periodically assessing demand. Include a statement on the projected population increase for your coastal counties. There are several additional sources of statewide information that may help inform this response, such as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan,[8] the National Survey on Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation,[9] and your state's tourism office.*

Rhode Island's coastal communities are experiencing stagnation in year round population that would be reflected on census data. However, increases in development and tourism/2nd home ownership are continuing to stress public demand for coastal access. RI Statewide Planning produced population projections by municipality in 2022. The report projects minor increases in coastal communities between 2025 and 2030.[2]

Some access sites are not properly maintained and/or marked and thus have become "incorporated" or "privatized" by adjacent property owners. Some public sites are illegally chained and/or blocked off with signs declaring them for use only by neighborhood users.

[2] Population Projections | Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning

Local municipalities need to have an aggressive approach in order to maintain existing sites, identify and develop new sites, and identify and prioritize future access sites to the shore.

3. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional data or reports on the status or trends for coastal public access since the last assessment.*

In 2022 the CRMC, along with Rhode Island Sea Grant, applied for and received funding through the 309 Project of Special Merit. Between 2022 and 2023 the project partners hired Impact by Design to conduct a needs assessment regarding shoreline public access. The public was surveyed on a variety of parameters around use of shoreline rights-of-way and other public access points in Rhode Island, including but not limited to how welcome they felt at locations, the condition of the ROWs, where the majority of users traveled if they were going to the shore, and the ease with which they could access these locations. In summary of the assessment, the majority of users traveled to the southern part of RI to get to the shore, despite the presence of other locations closer to home. Some participants said they did not feel welcome at ROWs and other public access locations. Some participants acknowledged the presence of these access points close to their homes but said they were not as nice, easy to use, or welcoming as others farther south. The results of this needs assessment were to be utilized to create a five-year management plan for the CRMC. Additional funding was secured by CRMC for this work to continue via monies from the Inflation Reduction Act. Pursuant to 2 C.F.R Section 200.340, the Department of Commerce ceased funding for the award in May of 2025.

Since 2020, the public access program has expanded to more than just perpendicular access. Of significant note, lateral access legislation passed in 2023 has strengthened internal management and educational efforts regarding shoreline access. The June 2026 annual CRMC ROW report focuses heavily on internal process changes to the public access program to reflect the increased scope of public access.

That report catalogues structural improvements to the designation process and ROW maintenance efforts. Additionally, the 2026 ROW report focuses more heavily on alternative access points to the shore via permitting procedures.

Management Characterization:

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there have been any significant state- or territory-level management changes (positive or negative) that could impact the future provision of public access to coastal areas of recreational, historical, aesthetic, ecological, or cultural value.*

Significant Changes in Public Access Management

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	Y	Y
Operation/maintenance of existing facilities	N	N	N
Acquisition/enhancement programs	Y	Y	Y

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

During the 2025 legislative session, Rhode Island enacted two significant public access laws that substantially expanded the Coastal Resources Management Council's (CRMC) role in protecting and managing shoreline access.

The first law (2025-S 0716aa / 2025-H 6093Aaa) establishes statewide requirements that municipalities, private entities, and other organizations must meet before reducing or restricting parking near CRMC-designated public rights-of-way to the shore. These requirements include preparing a comprehensive parking plan, evaluating impacts on accessibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), providing a minimum 30-day public comment period, and complying with review and enforcement procedures administered by CRMC and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM).

The second law (2025-H 5686 / 2025-S 0626), which was drafted and proposed by CRMC, requires municipalities to maintain, map, and periodically update inventories of public rights-of-way to tidal waters. This legislation increases transparency regarding shoreline access opportunities while improving coordination between municipalities and CRMC's statewide Rights-of-Way program.

Together, these laws represent a significant advancement in Rhode Island's public access management framework by shifting CRMC's role beyond identifying and designating shoreline access points to providing implementation guidance, technical assistance, municipal coordination, and oversight. The legislation strengthens long-term protection of public shoreline access, promotes access through ADA considerations and public participation, and establishes a more consistent statewide approach to managing and preserving access to Rhode Island's coast.

On June 26, 2023, Rhode Island's shoreline access bill was signed into law. This piece of legislation clarifies the public's right to laterally access the shore up to ten feet landward of the visible high tide line – the line that is recognized by seaweed, shells, or other debris left by the tide. This new law identifies where the shoreline is. Previously in Rhode Island, the public had access up to the mean high tide line, as defined by case law in 1982 (see State vs Ibbison). This boundary was impossible to visually determine and required scientific instrumentation to precisely locate. This new law defines this boundary more clearly, stating that the public has the right to access 10 feet above the last high tide seaweed line (the line closest to the water, if there is more than one) or, if there is no seaweed line, the line of wet beach.

CRMC, in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), the Town of Westerly, and other project partners, advanced acquisition and planning efforts for the Winnapaug property in Westerly, Rhode Island. The acquisition protects a strategically located coastal parcel that provides opportunities to improve long-term public shoreline access while conserving important coastal resources.

Following acquisition of the property, CRMC initiated development of a restoration and public shoreline access management plan to guide future public use of the site. Planning efforts include evaluation of appropriate parking, pedestrian access, resource protection measures, site management, and public access improvements that balance recreational access with protection of sensitive coastal habitats. The project represents an important expansion of Rhode Island's public access network by preserving coastal land for permanent public use and providing opportunities to improve access to the shoreline.

The aforementioned legislative changes were not initiated through Section 309, but directly support and advance RI's CZM objectives. Part of CRMC's 2021 to 2025 Section 309 public access strategy was to identify and prioritize candidate sites for parking enhancements. As a result of this effort, CRMC was able to identify the Winnapaug site and establish a minimum of 10 public parking spaces through an easement. The acquisition itself was

accomplished through partnerships among CRMC, RIDEM, the Town of Westerly, and other state and local partners.

These advancements are expected to strengthen the long-term protection and management of Rhode Island's public shoreline access system. The new parking protection requirements will help preserve public access to CRMC-designated Rights of Way by ensuring that proposed parking reductions are evaluated to consider public access needs, ADA accessibility, and public input before implementation. The municipal rights-of-way inventory requirements will improve the identification, documentation, and public awareness of shoreline access opportunities while promoting consistency between municipal records and CRMC's statewide Right of Way database.

Finalization of the Phase II Winnapaug Property Management Plan is expected to produce a formal framework for balancing sustainable coastal recreation with the preservation of critical environmental assets. The anticipated results of this effort include:

- Expanded permanent public shoreline access opportunities.
- Improved public parking and pedestrian access.
- Long-term protection of sensitive coastal habitats through managed public access
- A model for balancing public access with coastal resource protection that can inform future shoreline access enhancement projects throughout Rhode Island.

3. *Indicate if your state or territory has a publicly available public access guide. How current is the publication and how frequently it is updated?*[10]

CRMC maintains a GIS map on the agency's website indicating Rights of Ways in the state. It is updated as needed or when new Rights of Ways are designated. Additionally, the Shoreline-RI website provides information and images of public access sites throughout the state. This tool is maintained in partnership with the Rhode Island Sea Grant. www.shoreline-ri.com

Publicly Available Access Guide

Public Access Guide	Printed	Online	Mobile App
State or territory has? (Y or N)	N	Y	Y
Web address (if applicable)	N	https://crmcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/attachmentviewer/index.html?appid=7f8f263ce81c4e269c4b87a35371f86f	N
Date of last update		Updated in real time	N/A
Frequency of update		As needed	As needed

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High **__X__**

Medium **_____**

Low **_____**

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Public access remains a top priority for the Council. In 2025, the General Assembly passed two landmark pieces of legislation that greatly increased CRMC's duties regarding the protection and oversight of shoreline access. As evidenced by the new laws passed (see above for more details), public access has become a focal point in each of the most recent legislative sessions. These new laws provide the Agency with broader authority to manage and promote the public's right to reach the coast.

These legal advancements have transformed the Agency's involvement in coastal planning and community outreach. Feedback gathered (from seven completed surveys) from municipal partners, shoreline working groups, and environmental nonprofits consistently highlights that maintaining and defending public access is a paramount concern. Comments received in addition to the surveys are listed below. Consequently, Public Access is designated as a high-priority enhancement area for the upcoming assessment cycle of the Rhode Island Coastal Management Program.

Comments included the following:

“We believe that Ocean planning should include study of methods to reduce the impacts of sea level rise such as coastal erosion as well as methods to return coastal resources to previous conditions in such cases as fish populations and vegetation density where human activities have reduced such populations during past decades. All activities listed above are important. Our prioritization is simply a relative evaluation.”

“Development and adoption of procedures to assess and policies to evaluate existing coastal infrastructure, such as breachways and waterways, are essential amid rising sea levels and heightened storm activity. These challenges underscore the need to effectively evaluate, maintain, and enhance aging grey infrastructure along Rhode Island's South Coast. By implementing structured methodologies, we aim to ensure our coastal assets not only meet current operational demands but also withstand future environmental pressures while promoting sustainability and resilience.”

“Funds should be dedicated to improvements to public access, and to SLR/coastal storms/flooding of infrastructure impacts (hazards).”

Marine Debris

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Reducing marine debris entering the nation's coastal and ocean environment by managing uses and activities that contribute to the entry of such debris. §309(a)(4)

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *In the table below, characterize the existing status and trends of marine debris in the state's coastal zone based on the best-available data.*

Existing Status and Trends of Marine Debris in Coastal Zone

Source of Marine Debris	**Significance of Source** (H, M, L, unknown)	**Type of Impact** (aesthetic, resource damage, user conflicts, other)	**Change Since Last Assessment** (↑, ↓, −, unknown)
Beach/shore litter	L	Aesthetic, resource damage	Unknown
Land-based dumping	L	Aesthetic, resource damage	Unknown
Storm drains and runoff	M	Resource damage	Unknown
Land-based fishing (e.g., fishing line, gear)	M	aesthetic, resource damage, user conflicts	Unknown
Ocean/Great Lakes-based fishing (e.g., derelict fishing gear)	M	aesthetic, resource damage, user conflicts	Unknown
Derelict vessels	L	Aesthetic, user conflicts	Unknown
Vessel-based (e.g., cruise ship, cargo ship, general vessel)	L	Resource damage	Unknown
Hurricane/Storm	Event dependent	Resource damage user conflicts	Unknown
Tsunami	N/A		
Other (please specify)			

2. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific data or reports on the status and trends or potential impacts from marine debris in the coastal zone since the last assessment.*

No state-specific data or reports available at this time.

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there have been any significant state- or territory-level management changes (positive or negative) for how marine debris is managed in the coastal zone.*

Significant Changes in Marine Debris Management

Management Category	Employed by State/Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Changes Since Last Assessment (Y or N)
Marine debris statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	N	N
Marine debris removal programs	Y	N	Y

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

There has been one significant change under the marine debris category since the last assessment. CRMC has been awarded funding via the FY 2025 NOAA Marine Debris Removal under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOAA-NOS-ORR-2025-25974). The project includes removing approximately 250 tons of creosote-soaked timbers and piers from the Providence River in Downtown Providence. The timbers and piers are part of a deteriorated structure that once supported the swing function of the Point Street Bridge. The project will require significant CRMC Staff oversight over the next several years. The project will greatly benefit NOAA trust resources, allow for improved navigational safety of the waterway, and enhance existing tourism activities

occurring in and around Downtown Providence's waterway. The project also proposes several community engagement events that will aim to provide education on the importance and benefits of marine debris removal. The grant was awarded through other CZM-driven changes and not a result of prior 309 awards.

The benefits will be immediate as the waterway will be cleaner, healthier, and safer to navigate for both recreational waterway users and commercial waterway operations. Long term outcomes will include engagement and education activities to enhance awareness of the negative impacts of marine debris. The engagement and education series would aim to alter human behavior to reduce accumulation and reaccumulation of marine debris in the Providence River. It is also worth noting that limiting marine debris in the Providence River will also benefit the entire Narragansett Bay estuary as debris often flows down the estuary and into the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, CRMC Staff have and will continue to attend the Sea Grant and NOAA Marine Debris Programs Regional Coordination meetings. Through these meetings, CRMC will learn from other grantees and contribute knowledge and experience to the region's marine debris collaboration efforts.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium __X__

Low _____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Stakeholder input on marine debris was rated as one of the lowest priorities in the survey. However, there three respondents (43%) categorized marine debris as a medium impact and one respondent (14%) categorized marine debris as a high impact . CRMC Staff rated Marine Debris as a medium priority in part due to stakeholder engagement, but also due marine debris issues being addressed via increased funding from other sources.

Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Development and adoption of procedures to assess, consider, and control cumulative and secondary impacts of coastal growth and development, including the collective effect on various individual uses or activities on coastal resources, such as coastal wetlands and fishery resources. §309(a)(5)

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *Using National Ocean Economics Program Data on population and housing,*[12] *please indicate the change in population and housing units in the state's coastal counties between 2017 and 2021. You may wish to add additional trend comparisons to look at longer time horizons as well (data available back to 1970), but at a minimum, please show change over the most recent five-year period data is available (2017-2021) to approximate current assessment period.*

Trends in Coastal Population and Housing Units

	2017	2021	Percent Change (2017-2021)
Number of people	1,085,105	1,097,092	1.1% increase
Number of housing units	477,251	484,879	1.6% increase

2. *Using the tables below as a guide, provide information on land cover changes and development trends. Be as quantitative as possible using state or national land cover data.*[13] *The tables are a suggestion of how you could present the information. Feel free to adjust column and row headings to align with data and time frames available in your state or territory. If quantitative data on land cover changes and development trends are not available, provide a brief qualitative narrative describing changes in land cover, especially development trends, including significant changes since the last assessment.*

Population and housing growth has slightly accelerated since the last assessment period and there has been an overall increase in the rate of conversion of undeveloped lands to

developed land uses. Since the last assessment, the conversion of undeveloped lands to ground-based solar array installations has occurred, but that growth has slowed in recent years. Due to a shortage of housing both regionally and in the state, the state legislature has passed several housing law packages aimed to increase housing supply and reduce permitting timelines. Housing growth is expected to accelerate during this assessment period and land cover changes are expected.

Distribution of Land Cover Types in Coastal Counties

Rhode Island is somewhat unique amongst coastal states, in that local government is at the municipal level rather than the County level. However, federal LULC data is not readily available at the municipal level, so countywide and statewide summaries are reported here.

The following land use/land cover (LULC) summaries were compiled from the Enhanced Visualization and Analysis Tool provided by Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium; source data is from the USGS Annual National Land Cover Database Collection. Each of the five counties in Rhode Island contains coastline, but to varying degrees.

Impervious Surfaces for Coastal Counties

County	Change in impervious area since 1985 (sq. mi)	Percent impervious surfaces of total area in 2023
Washington	+4.1	6.6%
Providence	+5.9	13.5%
Newport	+2.1	12.2%
Kent	+2.7	12.3%
Bristol	+0.3	17.8%

Statewide Land Cover Changes

Land Cover Type	Land Area Coverage in 1985 (sq. miles)	Land Area Coverage in 2023 (sq. miles)	Percent Net Change
Developed (high, medium, and low intensity, and open space development)	331.52	377.79	14%
Agriculture (cultivated crops and pasture/hay)	54.72	40.57	-25.9%
Grassland	15.95	12.36	-22.5%
Forest (deciduous, evergreen, and mixed)	480.69	453.62	-5..6%
Scrub/shrub	3.57	3.49	-2.2%
Wetland (woody and herbaceous emergent)	149.22	147.28	-1.3%

3. *Briefly characterize how the coastal shoreline has changed in the past five years due to development, including potential changes to shoreline structures such as groins, bulkheads and other shoreline stabilization structures, and docks and piers. If available, include quantitative data that may be available from permitting databases or other resources about changes in shoreline structures.*

From the period of January 1, 2020 through January 1, 2025, permit totals for the following categories of work were issued:

- New residential boating facilities: 181
- New non-residential boating facilities: 19
- New marinas (boating facilities that accommodate >5 vessels): 6
- New structural shoreline protection: 29
- New hybrid shoreline protection: 7
- New nonstructural shoreline protection: 119

The boating facility totals are comparable to the 2015-2020 309 assessment. In this assessment cycle, however, there has been an increase in permitting activity for shoreline protection structures. This in large part was influenced by the erosive winter storm seasons of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Of particular note is the increase in non-structural shoreline protection; this is expanded upon in Management Characterization Point 2.

Outside of permitting activity, the CRMC has been involved in regional efforts to implement and incentivize hybrid and non-structural shoreline protection practices. Of note are the multiple dune revegetation projects that have occurred across the state, which have included partnerships with municipal governments (Westerly, South Kingstown, Charlestown, Tiverton, New Shoreham), State counterparts (DEM), and non-governmental organizations (Save the Bay).

4. *Briefly summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific data or reports on the cumulative and secondary impacts of coastal growth and development, such as water quality, shoreline hardening, and habitat fragmentation, since the last assessment.*

The Salt Ponds Coalition and University of Rhode Island Watershed Watch lead a volunteer monitoring effort for fecal coliform and enterococci bacteria in the coastal lagoons (referred to locally as Salt Ponds) across the southern shore of Rhode Island. Since 2020, data is collected twice per month during the summer seasons. Data from the 2024 summer season was made available online (https://saltpondscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/24_SPC_Bacteria.pdf), but annual trends are not yet available. Of note, the bacteria counts for the majority of locations for the majority of the monitoring period were in the acceptable health range.

Additionally, CRMC is collaborating with partners to document the extent of shoreline hardening. Preliminary mapping has demonstrated that over 30 miles of coastal beach and

coastal salt marsh in Narragansett Bay are backed by hardened structures, and are therefore inhibiting inland habitat migration. In 2026, Staff collaborated with the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program to secure full funding for the comprehensive mapping of structural shoreline protection systems in the state. The primary deliverable will be a comprehensive baseline inventory of SSPs and coastal habitat across RI and will be made publicly available through the RIGIS clearing house. In addition to linear mapping of SSPs, elevations of SSPs will be compared to predicted sea level and coastal storm inundation scenarios to evaluate their resilience. Mapping is expected to be completed by December 2027.

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there have been any significant state-level changes (positive or negative) in the development and adoption of procedures to assess, consider, and control cumulative and secondary impacts of coastal growth and development, including the collective effect on various individual uses or activities on coastal resources, such as coastal wetlands and fishery resources, since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes in Management of Cumulative and Secondary Impacts of Development

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	Y	Y
Guidance documents	Y	Y	N
Management plans (including SAMPs)	Y	N	N

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

During the 2021 to 2025 Section 309 assessment and strategy, , it was reported that CRMC was drafting revisions to its Construction of Shoreline Protection Facilities (Section 1.3.1(G))

regulations. The revisions were formally adopted in 2022. The revisions include new and updated definitions and standards for hybrid and non-structural shoreline protection. The revised section lays out a process by which applicants must demonstrate that use of non-structural or hybrid shoreline protection is not feasible before proposing structural shoreline protection. It also adds detail to the prohibition of structural shoreline protection.

In the five years since, the revisions have been effective. Of particular note is the increase in hybrid and non-structural shoreline protection permits issued by the CRMC. By having a strong regulatory basis for the prohibition of most structural shoreline protection, the agency has been an effective messenger of the environmental and geological harms of hardened shorelines.

The intended outcome of the revised section is to further encourage non-structural shoreline protection methods and to discourage structural shoreline protection, which can have significant negative impacts to shoreline habitats, sediment transport processes and lateral shoreline access.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium __X__

Low _____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

This category was ranked as one of the lowest priorities by the stakeholders engaged as shown in the Summary of Stakeholder Engagement and Public Comment. However, two respondents did rank it as their top priority. While there is some overlap with other areas of the program, namely the Special Area Management Planning which has been maintained as a medium priority, CRMC maintains a medium priority ranking. As noted in the following section, CRMC hopes to reevaluate its Special Area Management Plans, and cumulative and secondary impacts will likely play a large role in developing those recommendations.

Special Area Management Planning

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Preparing and implementing special area management plans for important coastal areas. §309(a)(6)

The Coastal Zone Management Act defines a special area management plan (SAMP) as "a comprehensive plan providing for natural resource protection and reasonable coastal-dependent economic growth containing a detailed and comprehensive statement of policies; standards and criteria to guide public and private uses of lands and waters; and mechanisms for timely implementation in specific geographic areas within the coastal zone. In addition, SAMPs provide for increased specificity in protecting natural resources, reasonable coastal-dependent economic growth, improved protection of life and property in hazardous areas, including those areas likely to be affected by land subsidence, sea level rise, or fluctuating water levels of the Great Lakes, and improved predictability in governmental decision making."

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states and territories.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *In the table below, identify geographic areas in the coastal zone subject to use conflicts that may be able to be addressed through a SAMP. This can include areas that are already covered by a SAMP but where new issues or conflicts have emerged that are not addressed through the current SAMP.*

Geographic Area	**Opportunities for New or Updated Special Area Management Plans** Major conflicts/issues
Narragansett Bay	Establishing submerged cable corridors for offshore energy transmission, implementing marine spatial planning to minimize user conflicts.

2. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific data or reports on the status and trends of SAMPs since the last assessment.*

The state has not made any updates to the SAMPS since the last assessment.

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there have been any significant state- or territory-level management changes (positive or negative) that could help prepare and implement SAMPs in the coastal zone.*

Significant Changes in Special Area Management Planning

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
SAMP policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	N	N
SAMP plans	Y	N	N

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

None of the categories had significant changes and CRMC is not proposing any 309 funding for Special Area Management Planning for this assessment.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High	_____
Medium	__X__
Low	_____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Special Area Management Planning has been maintained as a medium priority. This section received the 3rd highest priority rating based on stakeholder input with only coastal hazards and public access receiving higher priority feedback. An ongoing mission of the program is to keep policy and regulation up to date with the newest research and trends as it relates to coastal zone management. However, due to a lower ranking than public access and coastal hazards and lack of funding, CRMC will not be pursuing funding for a SAMP strategy.

Ocean and Great Lakes Resources

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Planning for the use of ocean [and Great Lakes] resources. §309(a)(7)

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states and territories.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *Understanding the ocean and Great Lakes economy can help improve management of the resources it depends on. Using Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW),*[14] *indicate the status of the ocean and Great Lakes economy as of 2021 (the most recent data) in the tables below. Include graphs and figures, as appropriate, to help illustrate the information. Note ENOW data are not available for the territories. The territories can provide alternative data, if available, or a general narrative, to capture the value of their ocean economy.*

Status of Ocean and Great Lakes Economy for Coastal Counties (2021)

	All Ocean Sectors	Living Resources	Marine Construction	Ship & Boat Building	Marine Transportation	Offshore Mineral Extraction	Tourism & Recreation
Employment (# of Jobs)	42,811	1,427	170	5,262	3,253	145	32,553
Establishments (# of Establishments)	2,435	107	48	37	58	14	2,195
Wages (Millions of Dollars)	$1.6B	$39.4M	$16.7M	$342.2M	$233.9M	$8.6M	$922.5M
GDP (Millions of Dollars)	$3.3B	$128.2M	$28.3M	$602.9M	$364M	$48.8M	$2.2B

Change in Ocean and Great Lakes Economy for Coastal Counties (2005-2021)[15]

	All Ocean Sectors	Living Resources	Marine Construction	Ship & Boat Building	Marine Transportation	Offshore Mineral Extraction	Tourism & Recreation
Employment (# of Jobs)	+2,596	+59	-66	+1,566	+75	-88	+1,052
Establishments (# of Establishments)	+196	+34	-15	-18	+2	-5	+198
Wages (Millions of Dollars)	+$682.7M	+$20.4M	-$170,341	+$183.1M	+$66.1M	-$1.4M	+$414.7M
GDP (Millions of Dollars)	+$1.5M	-$38.2M	-$11.9M	+$360.1M	+$105.4M	-$23.2M	+$961.4M

2. *Understanding existing uses within ocean and Great Lakes waters can help reduce use conflicts and minimize threats when planning for ocean and Great Lakes resources. Using Ocean Reports,*[16] *indicate the number of uses within the ocean or Great Lakes waters off of your state. To avoid duplication, energy uses (including pipelines and cables) are reported under "Energy and Government Facility Siting" in the following template. However, feel free to include energy uses in this table as well if listing all uses within ocean and Great Lakes waters in one place is preferred. Add additional lines, as needed, to include additional uses that are important to your state. Note: The Ocean Reports tool does not include data for the Great Lakes states. Great Lakes states should fill in the table as best they can using other data sources.*

Uses within Ocean or Great Lakes Waters

Type of Use	Number of Sites
Federal sand and gravel leases *(Completed)*	0
Federal sand and gravel leases *(Active)*	0
Federal sand and gravel leases *(Expired)*	0
Federal sand and gravel leases *(Proposed)*	0
Beach Nourishment Projects	8
Ocean Disposal Sites	1
Principle Ports *(Number and Total Tonnage)*	1 (Tonnage per Year: 8,043,051)
Coastal Maintained Channels	20 (within 1 nm)
Designated Anchorage Areas	21 (within 1 nm)
Danger Zones and Restricted Areas	1 restricted area (within 1 nm)
Other (please specify)	1 unexploded ordnance (12 within 20 nm)

3. *In the table below, characterize how the threats to and use conflicts over ocean and Great Lakes resources in the state's or territory's coastal zone have changed since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes to Ocean and Great Lakes Resources and Uses

Resource/Use Change in the Threat to the Resource or Use Conflict	**Since Last Assessment** (↑, ↓, –, unknown)
Benthic habitat (including coral reefs)	↑
Living marine resources (fish, shellfish, marine mammals, birds, etc.)	↑
Sand/gravel	_ _
Cultural/historic	_ _
Other (please specify)	
Transportation/navigation	_ _
Offshore development[17]	↑
Energy production	↑
Fishing (commercial and recreational)	↑
Recreation/tourism	_ _
Sand/gravel extraction	_ _
Dredge disposal	_ _
Aquaculture	↑
Other (please specify)	

4. For those ocean and Great Lakes resources and uses in the table above that had an increase in threat to the resource or increased use conflict in the state's or territory's coastal zone since the last assessment, characterize the major contributors to that increase. Place an "X" in the column if the use or phenomenon is a major contributor to the increase.

Major Contributors to an Increase in Threat or Use Conflict to Ocean and Great Lakes Resources

	Land-based Dev.	Offshore Dev.	Polluted runoff	Invasive species	Fishing (Commercial & Recreational)	Aquaculture	Rec	Marine Trans.	Dredging	Sand & Mineral Ext.	Ocean Acidification	Other
Energy Pro.		X			X							
Living Marine Res. /Fishing		X										

5. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific data or reports on the status and trends of ocean and Great Lakes resources or threats to those resources since the last assessment to augment the national data sets.*

The Marine Minerals Agency's "Interactive BOEM Leases and Planning Areas Maps" tool shows nine OCS renewable energy lease blocks in southern New England. Of those nine lease blocks, six offshore renewable energy projects have undergone federal consistency reviews. Remaining lease blocks are not expected to be developed or undergo federal consistency review in the foreseeable future.

Three projects have completed construction (Vineyard Wind 1; South Fork Wind, Revolution Wind), while one other is under active construction. The presence of undersea cables, construction vessels, wind turbines, and other project components have and will continue to have impacts on the RI commercial fishing industry as well as living marine resources and benthic habitats .

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if any significant state- or territory-level changes (positive or negative) in the management of ocean and Great Lakes resources have occurred since the last assessment?*

Significant Changes to Management of Ocean and Great Lakes Resources

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	N	N
Regional comprehensive ocean/Great Lakes management plans	N	N	N
State comprehensive ocean/Great Lakes management plans	Y	N	N
Single-sector management plans	Y	N	N

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

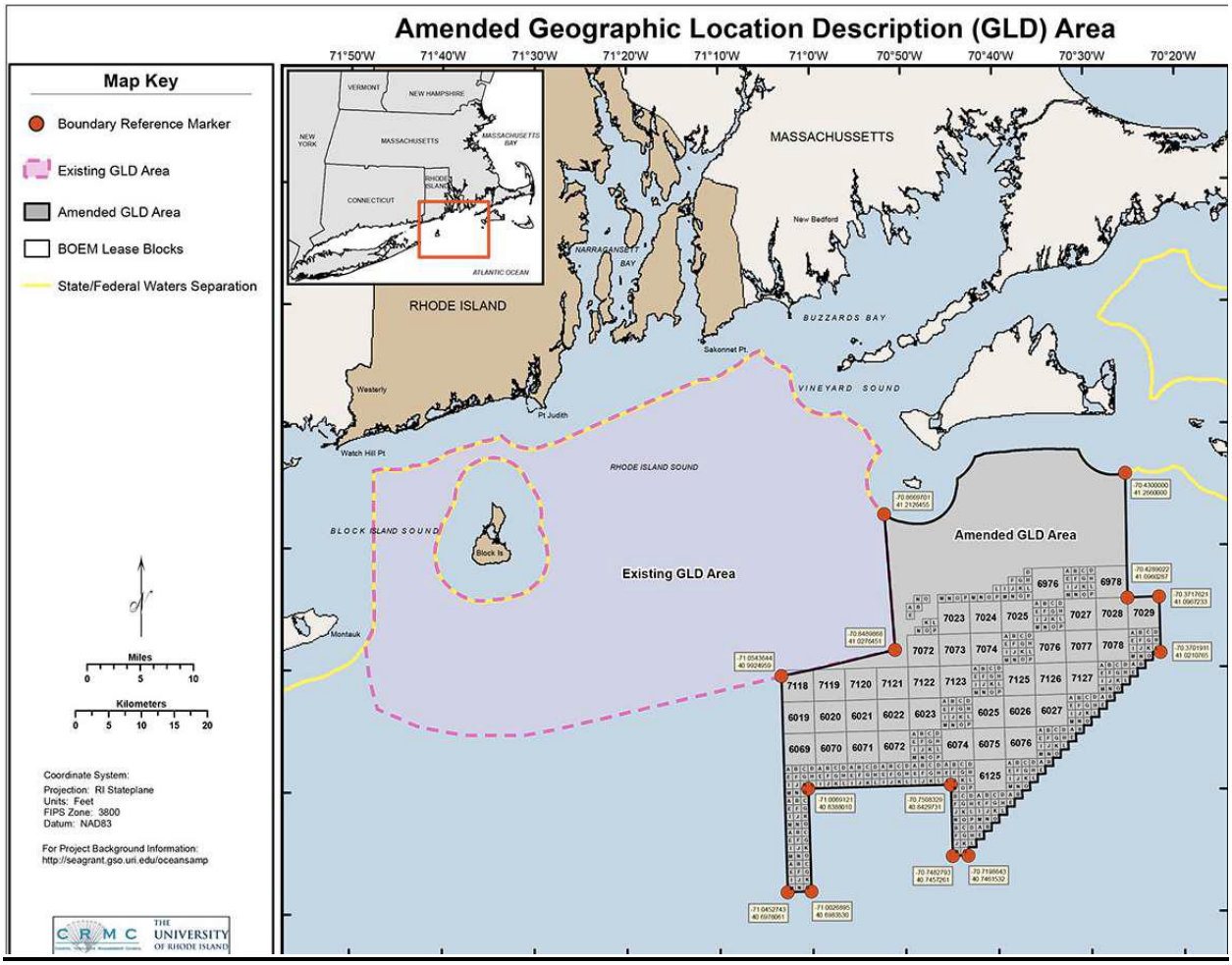
b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

None of the categories had significant changes and CRMC is not proposing any 309 funding for Ocean Resources for this assessment.

3. *Indicate if your state or territory has a comprehensive ocean or Great Lakes management plan.*

Comprehensive Ocean/Great Lakes Management Plan	State Plan	Regional Plan
Completed plan (Y/N) (If yes, specify year completed)	Ocean Special Area Management Plan (Amendments to SAMP approved, Feb. 2020)	N
Under development (Y/N)	N	N
Web address (if available)	https://www.crmc.ri.gov/samp_ocean.html	N
Area covered by plan	2011 (purple) & 2018 (grey) Geographic Location Description areas	N



Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium __X__

Low _____

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Offshore wind energy development is a sector that has seen significant growth and change during the current review period. The CRMC's role for projects located in federal waters is limited to Federal Consistency review.

Programs and mechanisms put in place as the result of the CRMC's federal consistency reviews for activities in the enhancement area have begun to come online during the current review period (i.e., fisheries compensatory mitigation programs). As the CRMC and partner stakeholder groups (commercial and recreational fishermen and their respective organizations) gain experience with enacting these programs, a continuous cycle of communication, revision, and implementation occurs to improve program performance. These programs are a result of prior federal consistency reviews and are a part of the CRMC's obligation to monitor/ensure previously reviewed activities continue to remain consistent with the program.

Energy and Government Facility Siting

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Adoption of procedures and enforceable policies to help facilitate the siting of energy facilities and Government facilities and energy-related activities and Government activities which may be of greater than local significance. §309(a)(8)[18]

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states and territories.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *In the table below, characterize the status and trends of different types of energy facilities and activities in the state's or territory's coastal zone based on best-available data. If available, identify the approximate number of facilities by type. For ocean-facing states and territories (not Great Lakes states), Ocean Reports[19] includes existing data for many energy facilities and activities.*

Status and Trends in Energy Facilities and Activities in the Coastal Zone

Type of Energy Facility/Activity	**Exists in Coastal Zone** (# or Y/N)	**Change in Existing Facilities/Activities Since Last Assessment** (↑, ↓, –, unknown)	**Proposed in Coastal Zone** (# or Y/N)	**Change in Proposed Facilities/Activities Since Last Assessment** (↑, ↓, –, unknown)
Pipelines	Y	–	N	–
Electrical grid (transmission cables)	Y	↑	Y	↑
Ports	Y	–	N	–
Liquid natural gas (LNG)	Y	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Oil)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Gas)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Coal)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Nuclear)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Wave)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Tidal)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Current.ocean, lake, river)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Hydropower)	Y	–	Y	–
Electric Power Facilities (Ocean thermal energy conversion)	N	–	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Solar)	Y	↑	N	–
Electric Power Facilities (Biomass)	N	–	N	–
Other (please specify)				

2. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific information, data, or reports on the status and trends for energy facilities and activities of greater than local significance in the coastal zone since the last assessment.*

No state-specific data or reports available at this time.

3. *Briefly characterize the existing status and trends for federal government facilities and activities of greater than local significance[20] in the state's coastal zone since the last assessment.*

The primary federal government facilities and activities of greater than local significance pertain almost exclusively to Naval Station Newport (NSN). NSN has continued its efforts to modernize its facilities through general upgrades to various structures to maintain mission readiness. Most significantly, Coddington Cove is in the process of major upgrades to improve the Navy's use of the waterfront. New piers, bulkheads, stormwater management, shoreside structures, and other secondary support infrastructure are being constructed/installed. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is now homeporting several vessels at NSN which has contributed mission readiness for the USCG in the region. CRMC continues to conduct regular Federal Consistency Reviews for activities and regularly consults with the Navy and its contractors.

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if significant state- or territory-level changes (positive or negative) that could facilitate or impede energy and government facility siting and activities have occurred since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes in Energy and Government Facility Management

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpretations	Y	N	N
State comprehensive siting plans or procedures	Y	N	N

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

None with significant changes.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium _____

Low __X__

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Offshore wind energy development has been largely paused in the region other than projects that are actively under construction. The CRMC has shifted from conducting active federal consistency reviews for projects to stakeholder engagement/developer relations. This engagement is focused broadly on several topics including but not limited to compensatory mitigation program logistics, working with local organizations to further understand the relationship between offshore wind, commercial/recreational fishing, and the marine environment, and export cable infrastructure.

Aquaculture

Section 309 Enhancement Objective: Adoption of procedures and policies to evaluate and facilitate the siting of public and private aquaculture facilities in the coastal zone, which will enable states to formulate, administer, and implement strategic plans for marine aquaculture. §309(a)(9)

Phase 1 (High-level) Assessment: *(Must be completed by all states and territories.)*

Purpose: To quickly determine whether the enhancement area is a high-priority enhancement objective for the CMP that warrants a more in-depth assessment. The more in-depth assessments of Phase II will help the CMP understand key problems and opportunities that exist for program enhancement and determine the effectiveness of existing management efforts to address those problems.

Resource Characterization

1. *In the table below, characterize the existing status and trends of aquaculture facilities in the state's coastal zone based on the best-available data. Your state Sea Grant Program may have information to help with this assessment.*[21]

Status and Trends of Aquaculture Facilities and Activities

Type of Facility/Activity	Number of Facilities[22]	Approximate Economic Value	Change Since Last Assessment (↑, ↓, –, unknown)
Shellfish farms	89	8 million	↑
Hatcheries	3	800,000	-
Kelp Farms	3	100,000	-

2. *If available, briefly list and summarize the results of any additional state- or territory-specific data or reports on the status and trends or potential impacts from aquaculture activities in the coastal zone since the last assessment.*

The 2024 report can be found here (https://www.crmc.ri.gov/aquaculture/aquareport24.pdf) and includes these highlights:

- In 2024, the overall number of individual aquaculture sites in Rhode Island increased by five for a total of 89 sites.
- The total area now under cultivation increased by 8.22 acres for a total of 392.54 acres.
- Oysters remained the number one aquaculture product with 11,595,512 pieces sold for consumption.
- The farm gate value of aquaculture products for consumption was $7,991,493.
- Oyster seed sales from RI aquaculturists were valued at $804,000.
- Combined farm gate value of aquaculture products for consumption and seed sales was $8,795,493.
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service worked with RI growers to purchase and deploy a record number of approximately 1,638,043 oysters to restoration sites throughout the coastal ponds and Narragansett Bay.
- The total number of aquaculture farm workers employed in 2024 was 198.

Management Characterization

1. *Indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there have been any state- or territory-level changes (positive or negative) that could facilitate or impede the siting of public or private aquaculture facilities in the coastal zone.*

Significant Changes in Aquaculture Management

Management Category	**Employed by State or Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Changes Since Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Aquaculture comprehensive siting plans or procedures	Y	N	N
Other aquaculture statutes, regulations, policies, or case law interpreting these	Y	N	Y

2. *For any management categories with significant changes, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information:*

a. Describe the significance of the changes;

b. Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and

c. Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.

The CRMC aquaculture strategy continues to develop. Cooperation and coordination with stakeholders groups, such recreational fishermen and local harbor management commissions, on siting and mapping has continued to positively evolve. As a result, CRMC and RI Sea Grant have created the ShellFast-RI Aquaculture siting tool designed to help applicants facilitate siting and permitting, see here:

https://crc-uri.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=806df39d4a6649e2a22a5f299b03ae4b.

Since 2020, CRMC aquaculture policies have been modified to address an emerging concern amongst stakeholders regarding local notification of preliminary applications and public notices. As a result, CRMC now notifies property owners within 1000' of an aquaculture application and the Shellfast-RI Aquaculture Siting tool is designed to assist the applicant in identifying properties within 1000' of a proposed site for notification purposes. In addition, CRMC has implemented an Aquaculture email listserv for public notifications of preliminary aquaculture proposals, notices, and meetings. These tools have significantly strengthened CRMC's ability to communicate with the public and stakeholder groups when it comes to aquaculture siting and permitting.

Enhancement Area Prioritization

1. *What level of priority is the enhancement area for the coastal management program?*

High _____

Medium _____

Low __X__

2. *Briefly explain the reason for this level of priority. Include input from stakeholder engagement, including the types of stakeholders engaged.*

Aquaculture in RI is growing at a gradual but consistent pace. We do not anticipate any major changes to that pace. This area was ranked as being of high importance by only two survey respondents. While it is an important area of focus for the agency, near-term activities are expected to be focused on continued implementation of the existing program. This area was not ranked as high priority by survey respondents.

Phase II Assessment

Complete Phase II assessments, using the templates in this section, only for enhancement areas that are identified as high priority for the CMP after the Phase I (high-level) assessments. Delete any templates that are not needed.

Note: Identifying an enhancement area as a high priority does not necessarily mean the CMP would be required to develop a strategy for the enhancement area given other priority enhancement areas and available resources.

Coastal Hazards

In-Depth Resource Characterization

Purpose: To determine key problems and opportunities to improve the CMP's ability to prevent or significantly reduce coastal hazard risks by eliminating development and redevelopment in high-hazard areas and managing the effects of potential sea level rise and Great Lakes level change.

1. *Based on the characterization of coastal hazard risk, what are the three most significant coastal hazards[23] within your coastal zone? Also indicate the geographic scope of the hazard, i.e., is it prevalent throughout the coastal zone, or are there specific areas most at risk?*

	Type of Hazard	**Geographic Scope** (throughout coastal zone or specific areas most threatened)
Hazard 1	Sea Level Rise	Throughout the coastal zone. Most threatened municipalities: Charlestown, Warren, and Westerly.
Hazard 2	Shoreline erosion	Throughout coastal zones. Most threatened municipalities: Charlestown, Narragansett, South Kingstown, Westerly.
Hazard 3	Coastal storms (including storm surge)	Throughout coastal zone. Most threatened municipalities: Warwick and Barrington

2. *Briefly explain why these are currently the most significant coastal hazards within the coastal zone. Cite stakeholder input and/or existing reports or studies to support this assessment.*

These hazards were explicitly prioritized in the RI Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan (Beach SAMP) as the most relevant across the 21 coastal municipalities.

In the 2025 Resilient Rhody update, five relevant climate hazards were identified as a focus for planning efforts across the state: coastal flooding, stormwater flooding, riverine flooding, extreme heat, and extreme wind. The hazards identified for focus here (sea level rise, shoreline erosion, and coastal storms) map well onto the hazards identified in the statewide plan - coastal flooding, stormwater flooding, and extreme wind. However, for the purposes of the assessment, the Agency wishes to pursue these hazards as priorities because of how they interplay and compound on one another across the coastal system.

Hazard 1: Sea Level Rise: A RI State Planning Program demographic study estimates 6,945 individuals live in an estimated 3,321 occupied housing units that are exposed to a projected 7-foot SLR (RI State Planning Program, 2016, “Socioeconomics of Sea Level Rise,” Technical Paper 166) Up to 6.5 feet of sea level rise is predicted for Newport under the High Curve provided in the Sea Level Rise Interagency Task Force 2022 Technical Assessment. The “High Curve” is adopted by CRMC for planning efforts and represents the upper-bound projection scenario of global mean sea level rise by 2100 relative to a year 2000 baseline.

Hazard 2: Shoreline Erosion: A shoreline change analysis conducted as part of the Beach SAMP development revealed the entire RI South Shore is largely erosional, with erosion driven by storms and SLR. The RI south shore could experience a total change of 290 linear feet of erosion by 2065 in the most extreme erosion hot spots.

Hazard 3: Coastal Storms: The frequency and intensity of extra-tropical storms is expected to increase. Storm surge flooding exacerbates flooding from SLR, and storm-driven waves exacerbate normal levels of erosion.

3. *Are there emerging issues of concern, but which lack sufficient information to evaluate the level of the potential threat? If so, please list. Include additional lines if needed.*

Emerging Issue	Information Needed
Many existing shoreline protection structures are not designed for coastal storms, increase erosion, have adverse impacts on adjacent coastal habitats, and diminish lateral access along the shore.	Existing geospatial data for shoreline hardening and coastal habitats are confined only to Narragansett Bay and were last completed in the 1990's. Beach SAMP identified mapping as a future research need in Section 3.3.
The combined effects of SLR, coastal storms, and coastal erosion threaten the continued existence of recreational sites and coastal and maritime infrastructure	Future research is needed on the exposure of recreational sites and infrastructure to storm surge, coastal erosion, and sea level rise. This would include CRMC designated Rights of Way and infrastructure to support the human use of these sites while maintaining habitat and environmental protection. These were cited in Beach SAMP Section 4.8.3.1. This was also identified as a priority via the public survey.

In-Depth Management Characterization

Purpose: To determine the effectiveness of management efforts to address identified problems related to the coastal hazards enhancement objective.

1. *For each coastal hazard management category below, indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if there has been a significant change since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes in Coastal Hazards Statutes, Regulations, and Policies

Management Category	**Employed by State/Territory** (Y or N)	**CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ** (Y or N)	**Significant Change Since the Last Assessment** (Y or N)
Shorefront setbacks/no build areas	Y	Y	Y
Rolling easements	N	N	N
Repair/rebuilding restrictions	Y	Y	N
Hard shoreline protection structure restrictions	Y	Y	Y
Promotion of alternative shoreline stabilization methodologies (i.e., living shorelines/green infrastructure)	Y	Y	Y
Repair/replacement of shore protection structure restrictions	Y	n	n
Inlet management	y	Y	N
Protection of important natural resources for hazard mitigation benefits (e.g., dunes, wetlands, barrier islands, coral reefs) (other than setbacks/no build areas)	Y	Y	N
Repetitive flood loss policies (e.g., relocation, buyouts)	N	N	N
Freeboard requirements	Y	Y	Y
Real estate sales disclosure requirements	N	N	Y
Restrictions on publicly funded infrastructure	Y	Y	N
Infrastructure protection (e.g., considering hazards in siting and design)	Y	Y	Y
Other (please specify)			

Significant Changes to Coastal Hazard Management Planning Programs or Initiatives

Management Category	Employed by State/Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Change Since the Last Assessment (Y or N)
Hazard mitigation plans	Y	Y	Y
Sea level rise/Great Lake level change or climate change adaptation plans	Y	Y	Y
Statewide requirement for local post-disaster recovery planning	Y	Y	N
Sediment management plans	Y	N	N
Beach nourishment plans	N	Y	N
Special Area Management Plans (that address hazards issues)	Y	Y	Y
Managed retreat plans	N	N	N
Other (please specify)			

Significant Changes to Coastal Hazard Research, Mapping, and Education Programs or Initiatives

Management Category	Employed by State/Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Change Since the Last Assessment (Y or N)
General hazards mapping or modeling	Y	Y	Y
Sea level rise mapping or modeling	Y	Y	Y
Hazards monitoring (e.g., erosion rate, shoreline change, high-water marks)	Y	Y	N
Hazards education and outreach	Y	Y	N
Other (please specify)			

2. *Identify and describe the conclusions of any studies that have been done that illustrate the effectiveness of the state's management efforts in addressing coastal hazards since the last assessment. If none, is there any information that you are lacking to assess the effectiveness of the state's management efforts?*

In 2025, staff collaborated with the RI Resilience Team to publish the Resilient Rhody State of Resilience Report (https://climatechange.ri.gov/resilient-rhody-2025). Actionable progress was made on 59 of the 61 statewide resilience goals established in 2018. CRMC was the primary agency for 7 of those 61 goals, 5 of which were completed, and 2 of which remain ongoing.

Identification of Priorities

1. *Considering changes in coastal hazard risk and coastal hazard management since the last assessment and stakeholder input, identify and briefly describe the top one to three management priorities where there is the greatest opportunity for the CMP to improve its ability to more effectively address the most significant hazard risks.*

Management Priority 1: Reevaluation of existing flood hazard recommendations.

The state definition of required building height is nearing its required reevaluation timeline of 10 years. Additionally, planning horizons regarding sea level rise and coastal storm risk are currently inconsistent between state and federal partners. Standardization for both risk communication and regulatory planning purposes has been identified as a need from Resilient Rhody Action 14.06 and from partners with URI Graduate School of Oceanography and Ocean Engineering.

This management priority is further expanded on in the Coastal Hazards Strategy.

Management Priority 2: Long term planning for digital mapping resources

Digital mapping tools are essential for planning, but across the CRMC portfolio, there is a simultaneous need for modernization of static tools, and contingency planning for dynamic tools.

With the adoption of the Beach SAMP, several digital tools are now required for permit applications, municipal planning, and other forms of hazards assessments. While CZMA 306 funds support some of the maintenance and upkeep, there is still a budget deficit and a need for longer term planning. For example, in 2025, a $400,000 budget request to the state legislature failed, and in 2026, a $200,000 request passed. These funds were directly allocated to URI for the continued maintenance of Stormtools, RI CHAMP, and MyCoast. While CRMC is only part of the funding landscape, our long term planning includes the assumption of continued upkeep of these tools. One potential intervention would be to create accompanying static maps that may be utilized in the case of

Conversely, several key digital resources are hosted by CRMC, but are only available in a static PDF form. This impedes the ability for managers, designers, and homeowners to comprehensively plan. For example, the land-use zoning restrictions in the Narrow River, Metro

Bay, and Salt Ponds SAMPs are not available as shapefiles. Furthermore, the historic shoreline positions and erosion transects that are analyzed as part of the CHA worksheet are only available as static PDFs, and cannot be overlain with the other digital tools available in the Stormtools suite.

Management Priority 3: Building internal capacity for Strategy management

A unique challenge in the development of this Assessment and Strategy was the lack of Staff continuity. Seven policy staff collaborated on the development of this Assessment and Strategy, none of whom were involved in the development of the previous 309 Strategy. As such, this resulted in difficulties with tracking and reporting of previously identified 309 tasks, and delays in the preparation of this Strategy.

2. *Identify and briefly explain priority needs and information gaps the CMP has for addressing the management priorities identified above. The needs and gaps identified here should not be limited to those items that will be addressed through a Section 309 strategy but should include any items that will be part of a strategy.*

Priority Needs	**Need?** (Y or N)	**Brief Explanation of Need/Gap**
Research	N	.
Mapping/GIS/modeling	Y	While static PDFs of maps are a regulatory need, there is a need for shapefiles of coastal boundaries to be publicly available as well. Potential maps include SAMP boundaries, water types, coastal barriers, historical shoreline positions, and erosion transects.
Data and information management	N	
Training/Capacity building	Y	Additional staff capacity is needed for development of tracking metrics and standardized reporting of accomplishments for the 309 Assessment and Strategy. Staff training is encouraged but opportunities are limited. Increased opportunities for training would greatly improve Staff's ability to effectively implement the 309 Strategy.
Decision-support tools	N	
Communication and outreach	Y	Continue to ensure state and municipal partners and private user groups are informed of changes to CRMC policies, and kept abreast of updated planning tools and hazard mitigation practices.
Other (specify)		

Enhancement Area Strategy Development

1. *Will the CMP develop one or more strategies for this enhancement area?*

   Yes ____X__

   No _____

2. *Briefly explain why a strategy will or will not be developed for this enhancement area.*

A Coastal Hazards Strategy will be developed to address Management Priority 1. The goal of this strategy is to reevaluate the flooding hazard thresholds and development standards with respect to updated sea level rise models and terminology.

A reevaluation of the state definition of building height as defined in the Zoning Enabling Act (RIGL 45-24-31) will allow the CRMC to suggest Stormtools design elevations (SDE) for buildings in the coastal zone. At the suggestion of CRMC, the current SDE used is three-foot (3′) sea level rise (CRMC SDE 3 SLR) Stormtools map during a one-hundred-year (100) storm. CRMC will review the latest sea level rise data and current building trends to determine if the suggested design elevation map is still appropriate. If a new SDE is deemed appropriate, CRMC will recommend a revision of the state definition of minimum building height in the Zoning Enabling Act to the General Assembly for legislative action, and if enacted, will update CRMC regulations to match the new definition of minimum building height. This reevaluation exercise will provide an opportunity for CRMC to improve its ability to effectively address the latest SLR data to more effectively mitigate future impacts of SLR on coastal structures.

Additionally, a series of technical amendments and language updates are needed to ensure state hazards terminology is consistent, clear, and reflective of the best science available.

The CRMP currently references the 2017 Interagency Sea Level Rise Technical Report. A technical amendment to the CRMP will be made in this reporting period to adopt the 2022 report and SLR estimates and update messaging on communication materials. For example, following the publication of the 2017 report, CRMC reported we adopted “the second-highest SLR scenario.” In the 2022 report, the highest scenario was excluded from the Interagency Task Force’s SLR analysis, and the CRMC use of the +2.0m High Curve is now the highest SLR planning scenario.

Additionally, per FEMA and the NFIP guidance, yearly flood risk language (i.e. “1% annual chance”) will replace flood recurrence interval language (i.e. “100-year flood") in the CRMP and the CHA. This will ensure consistent and clear language between the State and its federal partners.

With the success of the initial CHA, the priority for this cycle is to update the CHA with additional modelling information. Specifically, the new minimum design standard guidance from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the International Building Code (2024) recommend 0.2% annual chance storm scenarios be used for planning.

Public Access

In-Depth Resource Characterization

Purpose: To determine key problems and opportunities to improve the CMP's ability to increase and enhance public access opportunities to coastal areas.

1. *What are the three most significant existing or emerging threats or stressors to creating or maintaining public access within your coastal zone? Indicate the geographic scope of the stressor, i.e., is it prevalent throughout the coastal zone or are specific areas most threatened? Stressors can be private development (including conversion of public facilities to private); non-water-dependent commercial or industrial uses of the waterfront; increased demand; erosion; sea level rise or Great Lakes level change; natural disasters; national security; encroachment on public land; or other (please specify).*

	Stressor/Threat	**Geographic Scope** (throughout coastal zone or specific areas most threatened)
Stressor 1	Loss or restriction of parking near shoreline public access sites.	Throughout the coastal zone, particularly for highly trafficked coastal access areas.
Stressor 2	Incomplete identification, inventory, and public awareness of shoreline access points.	Throughout the coastal zone.
Stressor 3	Increasing stewardship and maintenance demands at shoreline access sites.	Throughout the coastal zone.

2. *Briefly explain why these are currently the most significant stressors or threats to public access within the coastal zone. Cite stakeholder input and/or existing reports or studies to support this assessment.*

Through extensive stakeholder engagement involving municipal coordinators, environmental nonprofits, and shoreline working groups, several critical management hurdles were identified. Feedback emphasized that parking availability, public awareness of access points, and the sustainable stewardship of these locations represent the most pressing challenges for the state coastal program. Moreover, the recent codification of lateral shoreline access rights is projected to catalyze higher usage, necessitating expanded initiatives in monitoring, site maintenance, and public education. While all of the stressors are interconnected and solutions are likely to show cobenefits, stressors are further defined below.

Stressor 1: Loss or restriction of parking near shoreline public access sites.

Increasing pressure to reduce or eliminate public parking at CRMC-designated Rights-of-Way (ROWs) threatens the public's ability to reach shoreline access points, particularly in densely developed coastal communities.

The RI 2025-S 0716aa / 2025-H 6093Aaa, hereinafter referred to as the ROW Parking Protection Act, instituted rigorous statewide standards that municipalities or private entities must satisfy prior to reducing parking capacity near CRMC ROWs.

Stressor 2: Incomplete identification, inventory, and public awareness of shoreline access points.

Many municipal ROWs remain poorly documented, inconsistently mapped, or unknown to the public, limiting access opportunities.

The RI legislature adopted a new mandate (2025-H 5686 / 2025-S 0626) for municipalities to develop, map, and refresh comprehensive registries of public pathways leading to tidal waters. Critically, the mandate called for all CRMC adopted Rights of Way to be included on official Town plat maps.

Stressor 3: Increasing stewardship and maintenance demands at shoreline access sites.

Increased public use following recent public access legislation is expected to increase demands for litter removal, vegetation management, signage maintenance, monitoring, and reporting at shoreline access sites. CRMC has limited staff capacity to routinely monitor hundreds of designated access points statewide.

3. *Are there emerging issues of concern, but which lack sufficient information to evaluate the level of the potential threat? If so, please list. Include additional lines if needed.*

Emerging Issue	Information Needed
Recent lateral access legislation has resulted in behavior changes in the shore zone.	Need for continued documentation and tracking of behavior and use changes on the shore. Example tracking metrics include: visitor use patterns, parking demand, maintenance needs, and site condition monitoring.
Loss of parking and public access near CRMC ROWs.	Updated inventory of existing parking conditions at time of adoption of the ROW Parking Protection Act.
Long-term shoreline access impacts from sea level rise and coastal erosion	Ensure access infrastructure can be maintained, even as human use changes and the physical environment changes (flooding, erosion, marsh migration). Coastal squeeze and barrier roll-over has also increasingly impacted sand trail usage, historically used by fishers with beach vehicle permits.

In-Depth Management Characterization

Purpose: To determine the effectiveness of management efforts to address identified problems related to the public access enhancement objective.

1. *For each additional public access management category below that was not already discussed as part of the Phase I assessment, indicate if the approach is employed by the state or territory and if significant changes (positive or negative) have occurred at the state or territory level since the last assessment.*

Significant Changes to Public Access Management

Management Category	Employed by State/Territory (Y or N)	CMP Provides Assistance to Locals that Employ (Y or N)	Significant Changes Since Last Assessment (Y or N)
Comprehensive access management planning	Y	Y	Y
GIS mapping/database of access sites	Y	Y	Y
Public access technical assistance, education, and outreach (including access point and interpretive signage, etc.)	Y	Y	Y
Other (please specify) Volunteer stewardship (Adopt-an-Access Program)	Y	Y	Y

2. *For management categories with significant changes since the last assessment, briefly provide the information below. If this information is provided under another enhancement area or section of the document, please provide a reference to the other section rather than duplicate the information.*

a. *Describe significant changes since the last assessment;*

b. *Specify if they were 309 or other CZM-driven changes; and*

c. *Characterize the outcomes or likely future outcomes of the changes.*

For a full summary, please see Phase 1: Public Access Management Characterization, page 22.

3. Identify and describe the conclusions of any studies that have been done that illustrate the effectiveness of the state's management efforts in providing public access since the last assessment. If none, is there any information that you are lacking to assess the effectiveness of the state's management efforts?

In addition to the annual Right of Way reporting outlined in Phase 1:

Completed Studies:

CRMC Staff and Save The Bay and their volunteers visited all CRMC-designated ROWs in the Spring of 2026 and documented existing conditions. Logged information included signage, litter, obstructions, and parking availability. This information was entered into a ROW database developed by Save The Bay and is publicly available. CRMC Staff are using the information to meet directly with municipal employees to discuss management strategies, especially at locations where signage was not present, in some cases due to vandalism or other damage.

Ongoing Studies:

RI Sea Grant and the URI Coastal Institute, with assistance from CRMC Staff, are leading a research planning project titled "Sustained Access to Rhode Island's Coast in a Changing Climate (SEA-C)." The project is investigating how increased erosion and flooding may lead to the loss of public lands, including impacts on CRMC ROWs. Expected deliverables from the pilot study in Bristol include: (1) baseline geospatial data layers that can be used to identify where existing resources may be threatened or lost due to increased erosion or flooding, (2) quantify human visitation to coastal access sites through (anonymized) cell location records, focus groups, and surveys, and (3) perform legal research to prioritize areas for public access designation.

Identification of Priorities

1. *Considering changes in public access and public access management since the last assessment and stakeholder input, identify and briefly describe the top one to three management priorities where there is the greatest opportunity for the CMP to improve the effectiveness of its management effort to better respond to the most significant public access stressors.(Approximately 1-3 sentences per management priority.)*

Management Priority: Implement New Shoreline Access Legislation

Description: Develop implementation guidance, technical assistance, mapping resources, and review procedures necessary to assist municipalities and private entities in complying with Rhode Island's new shoreline parking protection and municipal ROW inventory laws while ensuring ADA accessibility.

This Management Priority is incorporated in Goal 1 of the Public Access Strategy.

Management Priority: Improve Public Information and Shoreline Access Data

Description: Expand statewide GIS mapping, enhance public education materials, and strengthen shoreline access information to improve public awareness, access opportunities, and long-term coastal access planning.

This Management Priority is incorporated in Goal 2 of the Public Access Strategy.

Management Priority: Improve Long-Term Stewardship of Public Access Sites

Description: Modernize CRMC's shoreline stewardship program through revitalization of the Adopt-an-Access Program, creating standardized volunteer partnerships that improve maintenance, monitoring, reporting, and community engagement while expanding stewardship capacity beyond existing agency resources.

2. *Identify and briefly explain priority needs and information gaps the CMP has to help it address the management priorities identified above. The needs and gaps identified here do not need to be limited to those items that will be addressed through a Section 309 strategy but should include any items that will be part of a strategy.*

Priority Needs	**Need?** (Y or N)	**Brief Explanation of Need/Gap**
Research	Y	A better understanding of visitor use, parking demand, ADA accessibility, and stewardship needs is required for future planning.
Mapping/GIS	Y	Municipal ROW inventories need to be integrated into statewide GIS database and improved public mapping tools.
Data and information management	Y	Standardized municipal reporting and shoreline access inventory management.
Training/Capacity building	Y	Municipal guidance on parking plans, ADA review, ROW inventories, and volunteer stewardship.
Decision-support tools	Y	Parking plan templates, ADA review, inventory standards, etc.
Communication and outreach	Y	Public education regarding shoreline access rights, municipal responsibilities, and implementation procedures
Other (specify) Volunteer Program Development	Y	Development of a revitalized statewide Adopt-an-Access Program and volunteer management framework.

Enhancement Area Strategy Development

1. *Will the CMP develop one or more strategies for this enhancement area?*

   Yes ____X__

   No _____

2. *Briefly explain why a strategy will or will not be developed for this enhancement area.*

A Public Access Strategy will be developed to address Management Priorities 1 and 2 listed herein. Public Access was identified in Phase 1 of the Assessment as a high priority area, and remains a focus for reform and management within the RI Legislature. A strategy is therefore needed to implement proactive, rather than reactive, management.

There is a need to both protect existing popular shoreline access sites, and a need to improve visibility and usability of alternative access sites. As such, the Strategy will incorporate two goals: (1) the inventory and publishing of rights of way that are not officially a designated as a ROW, but are still recognized by CRMC (e.g., if established as a CRMC permit condition), and

(2) a new requirement for municipal harbor management plans to include existing parking near CRMC ROWs.

Goal 1: Guidelines for Development of Municipal Harbor Management Plan Revision

The Parking Protection Act requires increased transparency and mitigation if parking reduction is proposed near a CRMC ROW. The law is focused on mitigating harm, rather than increasing benefits. By incorporating parking inventories into municipal harbor management plans, CRMC can assist in promoting the use and maintenance of parking near ROWs, before any reduction is even proposed.

Additionally, the gathering of baseline data will assist in evaluating future projects that may propose changes to parking configurations. A standardized inventory would allow for staff to evaluate proposed changes, identify potential impacts, and determine whether mitigation measures are appropriate. It would also create a historical record that could be updated as parking conditions change over time.

Goal 2: Capturing and Outlining Existing Alternate Public Shoreline Access (non-Right-of-Way-Designated)

An access opportunity that exists but is difficult to find provides a limited public benefit. Members of the public may be familiar with designated CRMC ROWs but unaware of other shoreline access opportunities established through development permits, easements, or special planning programs.

A publicly available guide would help:

- Residents and visitors discover additional places to access the shoreline.
- Anglers, kayakers, and other recreational users locate appropriate access points.
- Community organizations promote local shoreline resources.
- Municipalities better communicate available public amenities.

This is particularly important in urban areas, where public access opportunities may be distributed among multiple properties and established through different regulatory mechanisms.

Strategy: Coastal Hazards Strategy

This section establishes a clear strategy (or strategies) the CMP plans to pursue during the five-year strategy period based on the management needs identified in the assessment for one or more of its high-priority enhancement areas. The CMPs must use the "Strategy Template" provided in Appendix C. Enhancement area strategies should include enough information for OCM to determine whether (1) the proposed program change or implementation activity adequately addresses the needs identified in the assessment, and (2) the program's work plan to achieve the program change is appropriate and cost-effective. Copy and paste additional strategy templates below as needed. Please make sure "Heading 1" formatting is selected for each title (Go to "Home", "Styles", "Heading 1".)

I. Issue Area(s):

A. The proposed strategy or implementation activities will *primarily* support the following high-priority enhancement area(s) *(check no more than two):*

☐ Aquaculture
☐ Cumulative and Secondary Impacts
☐ Energy and Government Facility Siting
☐ Wetlands
X Coastal Hazards
☐ Marine Debris
☐ Ocean/Great Lakes Resources
☐ Public Access
☐ Special Area Management Planning

B. The proposed strategy or implementation activities will also support the following enhancement areas *(check all that apply)*:

☐ Aquaculture
X Cumulative and Secondary Impacts
☐ Energy and Government Facility Siting
X Wetlands
☐ Coastal Hazards
☐ Marine Debris
☐ Ocean/Great Lakes Resources

X Public Access
☐ Special Area Management Planning

II. Strategy Description

A. The proposed strategy will lead to, or implement, the following types of program changes *(check all that apply):*

☐ A change to coastal zone boundaries;

X New or revised authorities, including statutes, regulations, enforceable policies, administrative decisions, executive orders, and memoranda of agreement/understanding;

X New or revised local coastal programs and implementing ordinances

☐ New or revised coastal land acquisition, management, and restoration programs;

☐ New or revised special area management plans (SAMP) or plans for areas of particular concern (APC) including enforceable policies and other necessary implementation mechanisms or criteria and procedures for designating and managing sedAPCs; and,

X New or revised guidelines, procedures, and policy documents which are formally adopted by a state or territory and provide specific interpretations of enforceable CZM program policies to applicants, local government, and other agencies that will result in meaningful improvements in coastal resource management.

B. Strategy Goal:

Type of Program Change: Revised regulations, ordinances, and guidelines

The goal of this strategy is to reevaluate the flooding hazard thresholds and development standards with respect to updated sea level rise models and terminology. The specific program change proposed is to reevaluate the state definition of building height as defined in the Zoning and Enabling Act (RIGL 45-24-31) and propose to update the definition through statutory changes, and technical amendments to the CRMP to reference updated sea level rise and storm data products.

C. Strategy Description:

The specific program change proposed is to reevaluate the state definition of building height as defined in the Zoning and Enabling Act (RIGL 45-24-31) and propose to update the definition through statutory changes. If a statutory change is enacted, CRMC will revise its regulations to reflect the updated definition and submit the revised statutory and regulatory changes as program changes to its federally-approved coastal management program.

A goal of this strategy is to reevaluate the state definition of building height as defined in the Zoning Enabling Act (RIGL 45-24-31) and revisit the previously suggested Stormtools design elevations (SDE) for buildings in the coastal zone. At the suggestion of CRMC, the current SDE that was applied to the 2017 revision is three foot (3′) sea level rise (CRMC SDE 3 SLR) Stormtools map during a one-hundred-year (100) storm. CRMC's strategy is to review the latest sea level rise data and current building trends to determine if the suggested design elevation map is still appropriate or a new SDE is appropriate. If a new SDE is deemed appropriate, CRMC will recommend a revision of this definition to the General Assembly, and if enacted, will result in Program Change via a regulatory change to State Statue and CRMC regulations. This reevaluation exercise will provide an opportunity for CRMC to improve its ability to effectively address the latest SLR data to more effectively mitigate future impacts of SLR on coastal structures

Additionally, a needed program change is the technical amendment of the CRMP to reference updated sea level rise and coastal storm data products. Achievable amendments include: updating the CHA with the 0.2% annual chance flood and wind damage risks, updating the RICRMP to reference the 2022 Interagency technical report on sea level rise, and replacing flood recurrence interval language with annual chance language.

The Beach SAMP introduced a variety of planning mechanisms, mapping tools, and hazard mitigation strategies. As demonstrated in Phase 1, these tools have had widespread adoption at both the private and municipal planning level. However, some of the scientific models and guides used in the SAMP have already been updated, and the SAMP also identified a variety of future research needs.

The following are discrete, achievable updates to sea level rise and coastal storm data products and science communication. Each of these has been identified as a need to better standardize planning on a regional level:

- Inclusion of the 0.2% chance (500-year storm) inundation risks to the CHA, a guidance document formally adopted in CRMC coastal hazards guidance.
- Inclusion of the 0.2% chance (500-year storm) wind damage risks to the CHA, a guidance document formally adopted in CRMC coastal hazards guidance
- Technical amendment to the RI CRMP to reference the 2022 Interagency Report on Sea Level Rise, and associated updates to communication documents.
- Technical amendment to the RI CRMP to replace flood recurrence interval statistics with flood annual percentage chance statistics.

III. Needs and Gaps Addressed

Identify what priority needs and gaps the strategy addresses, and explain why the proposed program change or implementation activities are the most appropriate means to address said needs and gaps. This discussion should reference the key findings of the assessment and explain how the strategy addresses those findings.

Section 6.5.3 of the CRMC Beach Samp describes the 2017 legislative action that amended Section 45-24-31 of the Zoning Enabling Act. The amendment revised the definition of building height to allow for additional freeboard and height allowances for properties elevating to reduce their flood risk. This allowance was based on CRMC Stormtools Design Elevation (SDE). Per statute, it is required for CRMC to reevaluate the appropriate SDE maps for the purposes of building height calculation by 2027.

This strategy both directly address the need for consistent, up-to-date, hazard communication. While previous 309 strategies have focused on the development of these data and associated tools (e.g., the Beach SAMP, Stormtools Design Elevations, the CHA, etc.), the documents are at an inflection point in which they must either be treated as static or living documents. Over the past 10 years, CRMC has received feedback from fellow State agencies, NGOs, municipalities, and private organizations that the tools developed are useful and effective. The 10 year mark is a logical time frame to revisit and update these tools as needed.

One of the key findings of the assessment was the success of the implementation of the Beach SAMP and the Coastal Hazards Analysis Worksheet. CRMC Coastal Hazards tools are regularly used by residents, legislators, and other stakeholders, and have become an essential tool for regulatory permitting, planning, and hazard communication.

IV. Benefits to Coastal Management

Discuss the anticipated effect of the strategy, including the scope and value of the strategy, in advancing improvements in the CMP and coastal management, in general.

This reevaluation exercise will provide an opportunity for CRMC to improve its ability to effectively address the latest SLR data to more effectively mitigate future impacts of SLR on coastal structures.

This strategy also ensures critical tools risk evaluation tools are updated with the most recent science. This strategy addresses the need for alignment between state and federal hazards communication. It also replaces outdated reports, terms, and models with the current state of the science.

V. Likelihood of Success

Discuss the likelihood of attaining the strategy goal and program change (if not part of the strategy goal) during the five-year assessment cycle or at a later date. Address the nature and degree of support for pursuing the strategy and the proposed program change, as well as the specific actions the state or territory will undertake to maintain or build future support for achieving and implementing the program change, including education and outreach activities.

There is a moderately high likelihood of achieving the program change for the reevaluation of SDEs for state building height. CRMC Staff possess the capacity and expertise needed to draft a policy guidance document, but adoption of a revised statute will require collaboration with the State Legislature. The state legislature has historically been in support of such changes, but the ultimate ability to adopt the revised law is out of CRMC control.

The first stage of work lies fully within CRMC control. Staff will research current SLR models and evaluate current trends of state building heights, and will consolidate that information into a finding of fact report. From there, Staff will draft a policy recommendation to maintain or increase the SDEs to be used for new building heights.

As such, the research and policy recommendation portions of the task have an extremely high likelihood of success.

If the policy recommendation is to increase SDEs, Staff will then work with legislators and partner organizations to introduce legislation. CRMC has positive existing relationships with members of both bodies of the RI General Assembly, and due to the legal requirement to revisit SDEs after 10 years, Staff are confident the recommendation will be introduced. However, the legislative session runs from January through July, and a bill may take more than one year to make it out of committee. To increase the chance of success, Staff will proactively work with partner organizations to garner letters of support.

Due to the inherent uncertainty of the legislative process, the final program change (revised statute) is deemed to have a moderate likelihood of success.

For the needed technical amendments, there is a very high likelihood of achieving program changes.

The 0.2% annual chance flood maps and wind damage maps received continued funding from the RI State Legislature in 2025 to finish the development of these maps (RI S0923). Map development is in its final stages as of the writing of this report. Adoption of the risk maps into the Coastal Hazards Analysis Worksheet is a process that lies fully within CRMC control.

Technical amendments to the scientific standards in the RI CRMP (annual chance storm language, and adoption of the 2022 report) are also feasible in the proposed time frame. Delays, however, may be encountered based on rulemaking scheduling, as only one active rule can be modified at a time. Technical amendments are proposed to be introduced in Year 2 of the Strategy; in case of delays, this allows for completion of the Task before the end of the Strategy period. The SDE amendment is more than a technical amendment, and will require coordination with the legislature; as such, it is proposed to be advanced through rulemaking independently. This amendment is proposed to be initiated in Year 3 or Year 4 of the Strategy, depending on the state legislature.

VI. Coastal Hazards Strategy Work Plan

Strategy Goal: The goal of this strategy is to reevaluate the flooding hazard thresholds and development standards with respect to updated sea level rise models and terminology. The specific program change proposed is to reevaluate the state definition of building height as defined in the Zoning and Enabling Act (RIGL 45-24-31) and propose to update the definition through statutory changes, and technical amendments to the CRMP to reference updated sea level rise and storm data products.

Total Years: 4

Total Budget: $176,000

Description of Activities and Milestones:

Timing	Major Activities / Milestones	Key Products / Decisions
Year 1	N/A	N/A
Year 2	Research current SLR models and evaluate current trends of state building heights Update Coastal Hazards Guidance with 0.2% annual chance inundation maps and wind damage maps.	Consolidate SLR and building height research into a finding of facts report. Publish revised CHA and CHA Viewer
Year 3	Staff will conduct internal workshops to determine policy recommendations based on research. Draft regulatory changes CRMP technical amendments.	Draft a policy recommendation to maintain or change the SDEs to be used for new building heights. Promulgate rulemaking for technical amendments.
Year 4	Engage with legislators to sponsor draft legislation. Engage with partner organizations to solicit letters of support. CRMC Staff provide testimony at hearings.	SDE Legislation is introduced. SDE bill is passed, CRMC promulgates rules.
Year 5	If legislation is unsuccessful, reevaluate and reintroduce. Initiate OCM Program Change for all CRMP technical amendments and for SDE amendment (if passed by legislature).	Final rulemaking will be formally adopted and program change will be completed by NOAA.

VII. Fiscal and Technical Needs

A. Fiscal Needs: *If 309 funding is not sufficient to carry out the proposed strategy, identify additional funding needs. Provide a brief description of what efforts the CMP has made, if any, to secure additional state funds from the legislature and/or from other sources to support this strategy.*

309 Funding is anticipated to be sufficient to carry out the tasks as described.

B. Technical Needs: *If the state does not possess the technical knowledge, skills, or equipment to carry out all or part of the proposed strategy, identify these needs. Provide a brief description of what efforts the CMP has made, if any, to obtain the trained personnel or equipment needed (for example, through agreements with other state agencies).*

CRMC possesses the technical knowledge and institutional expertise necessary to carry out this strategy, including familiarity with SLR models, Stormtools products and modelling outputs, and knowledge of the Zoning Enabling Act.

For the technical amendments proposed, CRMC possesses the technical knowledge and institutional expertise necessary to carry out this strategy, including familiarity with the 2017 and 2022 Interagency SLR Technical Reports, and FEMA floodmaps. Additionally, CRMC Staff have maintained a relationship with the URI Stormtools modelling team, who have been advocating for the inclusion of the 0.2% annual chance storm inundation and wind damage maps.

Upon final completion of the 0.2% annual chance storm maps, which are independently funded beyond 309, no further technical needs or specialized equipment is needed for the Coastal Hazards Strategy implementation.

VIII. Projects of Special Merit (Optional)

*If desired, briefly state what projects of special merit the CMP may wish to pursue to augment this strategy. (Any activities that are necessary to achieve the program change or that the state intends to support with baseline funding should be included in the strategy above.) The information in this section will not be used to evaluate or rank projects of special merit and is simply meant to give CMPs the option to provide additional information if they choose. Project descriptions should be kept very brief (e.g., undertake benthic mapping to provide additional data for ocean management planning). Do not provide detailed project descriptions that would be needed for the funding competitio*n.

1. Creation of a CRMC-hosted GIS hub that contains digital shapefiles of all CRMC coastal hazard planning tools: Erosion transects, SAMP areas, coastal barriers, water types, and 3-foot SLR scenarios for tidal inundation, SLAMM outputs, and the 1% annual chance coastal storm inundation. Staff have the technical capacity to maintain this, but do not have the time needed to develop it. This would directly address Management Priority 2, which was unable to be addressed in the broader Coastal Hazards Strategy.

2. Comprehensive update to the Shoreline Adaptation Inventory and Design Program (SAID). Although a CRMC initiative led by a former CRMC Policy Staff member, successional planning for this tool was not completed prior to their departure from the Agency.

3. The Rhode Island Coastal Property Guide was published in 2014, and is in need of updates. This also would provide an opportunity to develop a targeted communication strategy with realtor agencies in the State.

Strategy: Public Access Strategy

This section establishes a clear strategy (or strategies) the CMP plans to pursue during the five-year strategy period based on the management needs identified in the assessment for one or more of its high-priority enhancement areas. The CMPs must use the "Strategy Template" provided in Appendix C. Enhancement area strategies should include enough information for OCM to determine whether (1) the proposed program change or implementation activity adequately addresses the needs identified in the assessment, and (2) the program's work plan to achieve the program change is appropriate and cost-effective. Copy and paste additional strategy templates below as needed. Please make sure "Heading 1" formatting is selected for each title (Go to "Home", "Styles", "Heading 1".)

I. Issue Area(s):

A. The proposed strategy or implementation activities will *primarily* support the following high-priority enhancement area(s) *(check no more than two):*

☐ Aquaculture
☐ Cumulative and Secondary Impacts
☐ Energy and Government Facility Siting
☐ Wetlands
☐ Coastal Hazards
☐ Marine Debris
☐ Ocean/Great Lakes Resources
X **Public Access**
☐ Special Area Management Planning

B. The proposed strategy or implementation activities will also support the following enhancement areas *(check all that apply)*:

☐ Aquaculture
☐ Cumulative and Secondary Impacts
☐ Energy and Government Facility Siting
☐ Wetlands
☐ Coastal Hazards
☐ Marine Debris
☐ Ocean/Great Lakes Resources

☐ Public Access

☐ Special Area Management Planning

II. Strategy Description

A. The proposed strategy will lead to, or implement, the following types of program changes *(check all that apply):*

☐ A change to coastal zone boundaries;

☐ New or revised authorities, including statutes, regulations, enforceable policies, a ministrative decisions, executive orders, and memoranda of agreement/understanding;

☐ New or revised local coastal programs and implementing ordinances

☐ New or revised coastal land acquisition, management, and restoration programs;

☐ New or revised special area management plans (SAMP) or plans for areas of particular concern (APC) including enforceable policies and other necessary implementation mechanisms or criteria and procedures for designating and managing APCs; and,

X New or revised guidelines, procedures, and policy documents which are formally adopted by a state or territory and provide specific interpretations of enforceable CZM program policies to applicants, local government, and other agencies that will result in meaningful improvements in coastal resource management.

B. ***Strategy Goal:***

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory

Type of Program Change: Revised policy documents

By the end of the five-year assessment period, CRMC will establish a standardized inventory and publicly accessible resource documenting access locations not designated as formal CRMC Right-of-Ways, creating a framework for continued inventory and maintenance of these access resources.

Goal 2: Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision

Type of Program Change: Guidance document revision

By the end of the five-year assessment period, CRMC will update the Guidelines for the Development of Municipal Harbor Management Plans document to incorporate new municipal

requirements to assist in the implementation of the CRMC Parking Protection Act of 2025. This revision will establish standardized parking assessment guidance for documenting existing parking near CRMC-Right-of-Ways. The guidance will also encourage municipalities to plan for parking retention and where possible expansion to better support public access to the tidal lands of the state.

C. Strategy Description

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory - Capturing and Outlining Existing Alternate Public Shoreline Access (non-Right-of-Way-Designated)

In addition to CRMC 240+ right of ways, the Council, through various methods and actions, has created other public access points not designated as a CRMC Right of Way. These include Right of Ways created via permit, public access easements, and Urban Coastal Greenway designations.

The CRMC maintains and executes an active Right of Way designation process and database. Beyond just this form of public access, the Council designates and assigns means of access through a variety of other policy structures, such as easements, Urban Coastal Greenway designations, and permit-related right of ways. The CRMC seeks to create a publicly available list or guide to capture and highlight this alternative form of access in order to improve public awareness of these resources.

The CRMC seeks to create a publicly available resource collecting and outlining all of the alternative public access points that have been established through council policy over our 40+ year history. Although these alternative access points are protected and maintained, the CRMC has never created a complete compilation of these resources, and the public is therefore less aware of these access opportunities than they should be.

Goal 2: Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision - Guidelines for Development of Municipal Harbor Management Plan Revision

Incorporate/update guidance document to include the guidance for municipalities to assess parking near CRMC Right of Ways and incorporate the parking data into municipal harbor management plan updates. This will allow CRMC staff to better understand what parking is available near CRMC right of ways and inventory will help staff better implement the parking protection act of 2025.

- Guidelines may include asking municipalities to include certain policies, goals, and strategies to protect, maintain and where possible expand parking near CRMC ROWs
- Capture additional specific information on existing parking to enhance existing data and create a baseline database of existing parking opportunities at CRMC right of ways into harbor management plans. This will assist in implementing the CRMC Parking Protection Act of 2025.

- Provide municipalities with more exact and detailed information on parking practices and limitations on changing or decreasing the amount of parking near CRMC designated ROWs.
- Educate Harbor Management Commissions on the requirements involved with the Parking Protection Act and how to correctly report, publicize and maintain parking associated with CRMC Right of Ways

III. Needs and Gaps Addressed

Identify what priority needs and gaps the strategy addresses, and explain why the proposed program change or implementation activities are the most appropriate means to address said needs and gaps. This discussion should reference the key findings of the assessment and explain how the strategy addresses those findings.

Goal 1 directly addresses the lack of structure and municipal awareness of existing public access areas beyond CRMC-designated Right of Ways. This additional information will enhance public access throughout the state and reach lesser-served communities, as the concentration of Right of Ways in the state remains solidly in the southern, less populated areas of the state.

Goal 2 directly addresses the lack of implementation around the current CRMC Parking Protection Act via the CRMC Harbor Management Plans. This implementation will allow municipalities to both understand and implement the new parking legislation in a more concrete fashion, and allows the CRMC to assist municipalities in their incorporation of this legislation.

IV. Benefits to Coastal Management

Discuss the anticipated effect of the strategy, including the scope and value of the strategy, in advancing improvements in the CMP and coastal management, in general.

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory:

This strategy will strengthen Rhode Island's Coastal Management Program (CMP) by improving CRMC's ability to identify, document, manage, and communicate public shoreline access opportunities that are not designated as formal CRMC Right-of-Ways (ROWs).

CRMC currently maintains an established database and designation process for more than 240 formal ROWs. However, public access has also been established through other mechanisms, including public access easements, permit conditions, Urban Coastal Greenway designations, and other Council actions. These resources are not currently compiled in a consistent, publicly accessible format.

The strategy will fill this information gap by establishing a standardized inventory and documenting an initial set of alternative access locations. The resulting information will provide

CRMC staff and municipal partners with a more complete understanding of existing public access opportunities and will improve the public's ability to identify and use those resources.

The strategy will also provide a practical foundation for future access planning. A standardized inventory will allow CRMC to better understand the geographic distribution and types of public access established through its programs, identify information gaps, and incorporate alternative access resources into future coastal planning and outreach.

The scope of the project is intentionally limited to establishing the methodology, completing an initial inventory, and developing a public-facing resource such as inclusion in the annual Designation of Public Rights-of-Way to The Tidal Areas of The State Report and a added appendix to the existing CRMC Public Access Guide . This approach provides a measurable program enhancement while creating a framework that can be expanded as resources permit.

Goal 2: Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision:

This strategy will strengthen Rhode Island's Coastal Management Program by improving the integration of public-access parking considerations into municipal Harbor Management Plans and by supporting implementation of the CRMC Parking Protection Act of 2025.

Parking is an important component of functional public shoreline access. The availability of a CRMC-designated ROW does not necessarily ensure that members of the public can effectively reach and use that access. At the same time, CRMC and municipalities may not have consistent information regarding the amount, location, management, or limitations of parking associated with individual ROWs. Although our previous 309 assessment and strategy resulted in creation of parking at Winnapaug and data on existing parking conditions at CRMC rows, more data is needed to develop a full regulation and ensure enforceability.

Revised Harbor Management Plan guidance will establish a consistent framework for municipalities to document existing parking near CRMC ROWs and consider parking protection and management as part of Harbor Management Plan development and review process. The resulting information will improve CRMC's understanding of the existing parking resources that support public shoreline access and build off previous data obtained by CRMC and Save The Bay during our last assessment. Including municipal parking data, from the perspective of the municipality will greatly enhance our ability to provide a baseline for implementation of the Parking Protection Act of 2025. Furthermore, data collected as part of the Harbor Management Plan process will ensure parking data is consistent with municipal data, and foster a collaborative approach to management with CRMC and municipalities. CRMC is hoping this requirement will ensure municipalities are aware of parking numbers and issues, but also actively participate and collaborate in the effort.

The strategy will also clarify expectations for municipalities by providing practical guidance regarding parking associated with CRMC ROWs, including the importance of maintaining public access and considering the potential effects of proposed changes to parking availability.

The anticipated program benefit is therefore both informational and procedural: CRMC will have a more consistent baseline of parking information and a clearer mechanism for incorporating that information into municipal Harbor Management Plans and CRMC's review of those plans.

V. Likelihood of Success

Discuss the likelihood of attaining the strategy goal and program change (if not part of the strategy goal) during the five-year assessment cycle or at a later date. Address the nature and degree of support for pursuing the strategy and the proposed program change, as well as the specific actions the state or territory will undertake to maintain or build future support for achieving and implementing the program change, including education and outreach activities.

All of the proposed actions are explicitly within the parameters and jurisdiction of the CRMC.

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory:

The likelihood of successfully completing this strategy is high because CRMC already maintains the underlying regulatory records, institutional knowledge, and existing public-access program necessary to undertake the work. The project likely does not require the creation of a new regulatory authority or legislative program. Instead, it organizes and improves information generated through existing CRMC programs and decisions.

CRMC will establish a standardized methodology early in the project and use a defined set of priority records to develop the initial inventory. The project goal of documenting alternative access locations is intentionally achievable within the assessment period.

CRMC staff will coordinate, as appropriate, with municipalities and other coastal partners to review and improve the accuracy and usability of the information. Public-facing materials will be developed in a format that can be updated as additional access resources are identified.

Future support will be built through education and outreach associated with the public launch of the resource. CRMC will provide municipalities and other coastal partners with information about the inventory and encourage them to identify corrections or additional access resources. This feedback mechanism will help maintain the resource and support its eventual expansion beyond the initial findings.

Goal 2: Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision:

The likelihood of success is high because the strategy builds upon an existing CRMC program and is supported by the recently enacted state policy concerning protection of parking associated with public shoreline access. The proposed change primarily involves developing and implementing guidance rather than establishing an entirely new regulatory program.

CRMC will work with municipal Harbor Management Commissions and other relevant municipal staff during development of the guidance to ensure that the policies are understandable and reasonably implementable. Early engagement will also allow CRMC to identify differences in municipal parking practices and develop a consistent but flexible approach.

CRMC will provide education and outreach to Harbor Management Commissions regarding the Parking Protection Act, the revised guidance, and the type of parking information that CRMC will be looking for in Harbor Management Plans.

The strategy will focus on achievable implementation milestones: adoption of revised guidance, enhancement and municipal acceptance of previously acquired data baseline parking inventory near CRMC ROWs, municipal education, and application of the guidance during Harbor Management Plan reviews. These steps will update and enhance the program infrastructure and ensure municipalities participate and collaborate in the process of managing parking that supports public shoreline access.

VI. Strategy Work Plan

Using the template below, provide a general work plan that includes the major steps that will lead toward or achieve a program change or implement a previously achieved program change. For example, even if the final adoption of the program change is outside of the CMP's control, what steps will be included in the work plan so the CMP ensures the program change is considered, reviewed, and hopefully adopted by the outside entity? Who are the other stakeholders or elected officials that need to be engaged, and how and when during the strategy development process? What is the decision-making or voting process that is involved in the adoption of the program change, and how will the CMP interact with this process to ensure that the proposed program change is considered? If the state intends to fund implementation activities for the proposed program change, describe those in the plan as well. The plan should identify a schedule for completing the strategy and include major projected milestones (key products, deliverables, activities, and decisions) and budget estimates. If an activity will span two or more years, it can be combined into one entry (i.e., Years 2-3 rather than Year 2 and then Year 3). While the annual milestones are a useful guide to ensure the strategy remains on track, OCM recognizes that they may change somewhat over the course of the five-year strategy due to unforeseen circumstances. The same holds true for the annual budget estimates. Further detailing and adjustment of annual activities, milestones, and budgets will be determined through the annual cooperative agreement negotiation process.

Strategy Goal: Public Access

Total Years: 4

Total Budget: $176,000

Description of Activities and Milestones:

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory:

Timing	Major Activities / Milestones	Key Products / Decisions
Year 1	N/A	N/A
Year 2	Develop inventory methodology; establish definitions, data fields, and review criteria; identify priority records and access categories, assess internal capacity for inventory needs	Inventory methodology and data dictionary; priority record list
Year 3	Conduct historical records review; identify and document candidate access locations; begin database development	Preliminary inventory; candidate access records; initial data
Year 4	Develop and review public-facing guide/web resource; coordinate review with selected municipal/coastal partners	Draft public access guide/resource; stakeholder feedback
Year 5	Finalize and publish public resources; establish maintenance procedures; conduct outreach and evaluate initial use.	Public-facing resource, such as the annual Public Rights-of Way-Report; maintenance protocol; outreach materials; final assessment

Goal 2 Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision:

Timing	Major Activities / Milestones	Key Products / Decisions
Year 1	N/A	N/A

Year 2	Review Parking Protection Act of 2025; review existing Harbor Management Plan guidance; identify guidelines for parking information and municipal reporting needs.	draft framework for revised guidance and identify methodologies for municipalities to achieve consistent data.
Year 3	Develop revised Harbor Management Plan guidance; establish standardized parking data fields and inventory approach; consult with municipal Harbor Management Commissions	Finalize revised guidance; parking inventory template
Year 4	Develop baseline parking inventory for a defined initial set of CRMC ROWs as HMPs are reviewed; conduct municipal outreach and education by holding individual meetings with municipalities and attending harbor management meetings,.	Initial parking database; education/outreach materials
Year 5	Continue implementation; evaluate municipal use of guidance by holding individual meetings with municipalities and attending harbor management meetings,; identify needed revisions;	Implementation assessment; updated materials; recommendations for continued use

VII. Fiscal and Technical Needs

A. Fiscal Needs: *If 309 funding is not sufficient to carry out the proposed strategy, identify additional funding needs. Provide a brief description of what efforts the CMP has made, if any, to secure additional state funds from the legislature and/or from other sources to support this strategy.*

309 Funding is anticipated to be sufficient to carry out the tasks as described.

B. Technical Needs: *If the state does not possess the technical knowledge, skills, or equipment to carry out all or part of the proposed strategy, identify these needs. Provide a brief description of what efforts the CMP has made, if any, to obtain the trained personnel or equipment needed (for example, through agreements with other state agencies).*

Goal 1: Alternative Public Access Inventory

CRMC possesses the core technical knowledge and institutional expertise necessary to carry out this strategy,, permitting and regulatory processes, historical records, and public access

requirements. CRMC staff also have experience maintaining geographic and programmatic information related to coastal access.

Limited technical assistance may be needed for database and mapping development, data standardization, and design of the public-facing web resource. These needs can be addressed through existing CRMC technical resources and, if necessary, targeted contractor assistance or coordination with state information technology and GIS resources.

The project does not require specialized equipment or new regulatory expertise. CRMC will assess technical needs during the first year of the strategy and determine whether existing staff capacity is sufficient or whether limited outside assistance is warranted. Any contracted assistance will be focused on discrete products such as GIS/database structure or web presentation rather than ongoing program management.

CRMC will also draw on existing relationships with municipalities and other coastal partners to assist with information verification and improve the usability of the resulting public resource.

Goal 2: Harbor Management Plan Parking Revision

CRMC possesses the technical and programmatic expertise necessary to develop and implement revised Harbor Management Plan guidance, including expertise in coastal planning, public access, municipal Harbor Management Plans, and CRMC's regulatory and review processes.

The primary technical need will be to develop a consistent method for collecting, organizing, and mapping parking information associated with CRMC Right-of-Ways. CRMC staff have existing GIS and data-management capabilities that can support this work; however, limited technical assistance may be appropriate for database development, GIS analysis, or integration of the parking inventory with existing CRMC data systems.

CRMC will also need to develop clear educational materials explaining the Parking Protection Act of 2025 and the revised Harbor Management Plan requirements. This work can be undertaken using existing CRMC staff expertise, with targeted assistance obtained if specialized communications, mapping, or technical support is needed.

CRMC will evaluate these needs during the initial phase of the strategy and use existing state agency resources, municipal partnerships, and targeted contractual assistance, as appropriate, to address any gaps. No major new equipment or specialized technical infrastructure is anticipated.

VIII. Projects of Special Merit (Optional)

If desired, briefly state what projects of special merit the CMP may wish to pursue to augment this strategy. (Any activities that are necessary to achieve the program change or that the state intends to support with baseline funding should be included in the strategy

above.) The information in this section will not be used to evaluate or rank projects of special merit and is simply meant to give CMPs the option to provide additional information if they choose. Project descriptions should be kept very brief (e.g., undertake benthic mapping to provide additional data for ocean management planning). Do not provide detailed project descriptions that would be needed for the funding competition.

Once the alternative public access inventory is complete, the CRMC will likely need to engage the assistance of contractors or outside experts to help build and expand our current Right of Way ArcGIS Mapper to include this additional information and data. The CMP may wish to pursue the assistance of the Coastal Institute or other local partners in this work. A Project of Special Merit may be the best way to secure funding for this kind of assistance.

5-Year Budget Summary by Strategy

At the end of the strategy section, please include the following budget table summarizing your anticipated Section 309 expenses by strategy for each year. Generally, CMPs should only develop strategies for activities that the state intends to fund and work on given their anticipated level of Section 309 funding. However, in some circumstances, CMPs may wish to use the assessment and strategy development process as a broader strategic planning effort for the CMP. In that case, the CMP may elect to include additional strategies that exceed the state's anticipated Section 309 funding over the five-year period. If the CMP chooses this approach, it should still clearly indicate which strategies it anticipates supporting with Section 309 funding and which strategies it anticipates supporting through other funding sources.

Strategy Title	Anticipated Funding Source (309 or Other)	Year 1 Funding	Year 2 Funding	Year 3 Funding	Year 4 Funding	Year 5 Funding	Total Funding
Coastal Hazards	309	N/A	$44,000	$44,000	$44,000	$44,000	$176,000
Public Access	309	N/A	$44,000	$44,000	$44,000	$44,000	$176,000
Total Funding		**N/A**	**$88,000**	**$88,000**	**$88,000**	**$88,000**	**$352,000**

Summary of Stakeholder and Public Comment

This section provides a list of the stakeholder groups or individuals engaged SUGGESTED CHANGE: This section provides a variety of CRMC priority areas that were included in the survey published to solicit public comment during the assessment development process and a brief summary of their feedback. It also provides a summary of the public comments received during the public comment period and how the CMP responded to those comments.

Category	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Tidal wetlands	2	4	1
Public access	5	1	1
Hazards	6	1	
Marine debris	1	3	2
Cumulative Impacts	2	3	1
SAMPs	3	3	
Energy	3	2	2
Aquaculture	2	2	1
Ocean Resources		4	1

Summary: Section 309 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), as amended in 1990 and 1996, establishes a voluntary coastal zone enhancement grants program to encourage State and Territory Coastal Management Programs to develop program changes in one or more of the following areas: wetlands, coastal hazards, public access, marine debris, cumulative and

secondary impacts, Special Area Management Plans/Planning (SAMPs), ocean/Great Lakes resources, energy and government facility siting, and aquaculture. Under this program, the Secretary of Commerce is authorized to make awards to states and territories to develop and submit for federal approval, program changes that support the attainment of one or more of the enhancement area objectives. Section 309 further requires that the Office for Coastal Management (OCM), in close cooperation with CMPs, their priority management needs and evaluate proposed strategies. As part of the Assessment the RI CRMC asked for input from the public on determining priority enhancement areas through a survey that was completed and compiled in early 2026. Coastal hazards and public access were the clear priority areas as selected by members of the public. Secondary to those were SAMPs and tidal wetlands. Other comments included suggestions such as: Ocean planning should include study of things like minimizing impacts of sea level rise i.e. coastal erosion, as well as methods of returning resources to historic conditions, like fishing populations and vegetation. Funds should be dedicated to improvements to public access, and to sea level rise/coastal storms/flooding of infrastructure impacts (hazards). Adoption of procedures to evaluate existing coastal infrastructure in order to improve resilience to increasing storms and events.

The survey was added to the CRMC website to solicit public comment, and the news was also sent out over social media channels.

Comments received:

Industry group: “We believe that Ocean planning should include study of methods to reduce the impacts of sea level rise such as coastal erosion as well as methods to return coastal resources to previous conditions in such cases as fish populations and vegetation density where human activities have reduced such populations during past decades.
All activities listed above are important. Our prioritization is simply a relative evaluation.”

Municipality: “Development and adoption of procedures to assess and policies to evaluate existing coastal infrastructure, such as breachways and waterways, are essential amid rising sea levels and heightened storm activity. These challenges underscore the need to effectively evaluate, maintain, and enhance aging grey infrastructure along Rhode Island's South Coast. By implementing structured methodologies, we aim to ensure our coastal assets not only meet current operational demands but also withstand future environmental pressures while promoting sustainability and resilience.”

Municipality: “Funds should be dedicated to improvements to public access, and to SLR/coastal storms/flooding of infrastructure impacts (hazards).”

Industry member: “Energy Facilities Siting is a high priority and the rest were medium or low.”

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[1] coast.noaa.gov/data/czm/media/czmapmsguide.pdf

[2] National data on wetlands status and trends include NOAA's Land Cover Atlas (coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/lca.html), the U.S. Geological Survey's National Land Cover Database (usgs.gov/centers/eros/science/national-land-cover-database), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory data (fws.gov/program/national-wetlands-inventory).