

## **Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) Goals and Principles for the Ocean SAMP**

The Ocean SAMP will serve as a coastal management and regulatory tool, based on the best available science, which promotes a balanced and comprehensive approach to the development and protection of Rhode Island's ocean-based resources. It is the intent of the SAMP to contribute to the mitigation and adaptation of global climate change as well as facilitate coordination mechanisms between state and federal agencies and the people of Rhode Island.

The following goals will require engaging a well-informed, well-represented and committed public constituency to work with the Ocean SAMP project team to better understand the Ocean SAMP issues and the ecosystem, and provide input on Ocean SAMP policies and recommendations.

### Goals for the Ocean SAMP

- 1) **Foster a properly functioning ecosystem that can be both ecologically effective and economically beneficial.** Maintain the ecological capacity, integrity, and evolution of the Ocean SAMP's biophysical and socioeconomic systems. Research existing natural conditions and human uses of this region to better understand how this system functions. Set standards within the SAMP document to ensure that impacts from future activities are minimal and acceptable to the scientific community and the people of Rhode Island. Monitor the consequences of decisions and adapt management to the monitoring results.
- 2) **Promote and enhance existing uses.** Through both scientific and anecdotal research, better understand the existing activities taking place within the Ocean SAMP study area. Work with individuals and organizations representing those uses as well as individuals from around the globe working on similar issues to identify policies and actions that can both promote and enhance existing uses while having minimum impact on the natural environment.
- 3) **Encourage marine-based economic development that meets the aspirations of local communities and is consistent and complementary to the state's overall economic development needs and goals.** This development should draw upon and be inspired by the beauty and quality of the environs, including the protection and enhancement of maritime activities, marine culture and a sense of place. Through the development of an ocean spatial zoning tool, with accompanying standards and performance measures, determine appropriate and compatible roles for future activities within the study area, including offshore renewable energy infrastructure.

- 4) **Build a framework for coordinated decision-making between state and federal management agencies.** Engage federal and state agencies in all phases of the Ocean SAMP process to ensure that all regulatory requirements are integrated into the process. Ensure that neighboring states of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts are informed of all major actions. This coordination will allow for the sharing of technical information across all sectors, enhance management of these coastal ecosystems, and streamline the permitting process if appropriate.

#### Principles that Guide SAMP Design and Development

1. **Develop in a transparent manner.** Transparency is needed in the development of all documents and procedures related to the Ocean SAMP project. Project activities and phases need to be easily understandable to the general public. Accurate information must be made available to the public in an appropriate and timely manner.
2. **Involve all stakeholders.** All stakeholders must be involved at the earliest possible stage in the planning process. Stakeholder participation will ensure that the broad range of issues and concerns, as well as creative ideas, are seriously dealt with throughout the SAMP process.
3. **Honor existing activities.** The Ocean SAMP is a highly used and biologically and economically valuable place. Major activities and uses including fishing, tourism, transportation, and military. These, along with the area's biology and habitat, must be understood and honored as decisions for the incorporation of future activities are determined.
4. **Base all decisions on the best available science.** All management and regulatory decisions will be based on the best available science. The SAMP, when formally adopted, will require that the necessary studies be performed before a future activity is approved. Such necessary studies might include gathering information on baseline resource conditions, potential environmental and economic impacts, and potential mitigation measures.
5. **Establish monitoring and evaluation that supports adaptive management.** Incorporating monitoring and evaluation in the planning process will assist in the creation of sound management decisions in an environment exposed to constant change. The planning process must be flexible enough to react to such changes and allow plans to be revised in due course. A strong stakeholder process, coordination among federal and state regulatory agencies, and a transparent, regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism will ensure that this takes place.