Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Meeting #2(Global Climate Change)
Summary Notes
December 2008, 6 – 9 p.m., Bay Campus

Summary Notes: *Note* – these notes reflect information and viewpoints overall, rather than "quote-by quote." The intent is to capture the overall direction and tenor of participants' contributions, rather than specific wording, as this seems a more useful approach for describing meeting content.

Purpose of the meeting:

- Present information on the issue of global climate change, how it will impact Rhode Island, and discuss and what practical ways the Ocean SAMP will and could contribute to the solution.
- Discuss in greater depth the Ocean SAMP stakeholder group process.

Chair and Facilitator: Ken Payne
Stakeholders in attendance and members of the public: see list

Agenda Items:

Welcome and Recap of the Ocean SAMP process – Ken Payne, URI

The facilitator, with additional information provided by Jennifer McCann, announced the formation of the Ocean SAMP Fishermen's Working Group, as a forum for enabling full and open discussion of issues pertaining to commercial and recreational fisheries. The group will likely meet on a monthly basis. The facilitator also summarized the events of the last Stakeholder Group meeting on October 29 and activities since then. Payne reviewed the process for joining the group, and restated that his role is to ensure an open, accurate, inclusive and fair environment. He also said that while not every issue will garner a separate working group, such as the fishermen's working group, the stakeholder process is flexible enough to allow for additional meetings and discussions on SAMP issues, should the need overflow the actual stakeholder meetings.

New Ocean SAMP Developments – Grover Fugate, CRMC

Fugate told the group that the federal government has received an application from a developer, Grays Harbor Energy, to place a proposed 100-megawatt OceanLinx Wave Energy Converter, transmission line, and related facilities in federal waters off of the Rhode Island coast. Fugate indicated that the application concerns waters located more than 25 meters from the Rhode Island coast and is beyond CRMC jurisdiction. He said the application points to the significant interest being generated in the development community locally, regionally, and nationally regarding renewable energy sitings and that more such activity can likely be expected. He indicated the Federal Energy

Regulatory Commission, the federal agency in charge of evaluating the application, is keeping CRMC apprised as the review process goes forward. Stakeholders and members of the public asked questions about how the review process would work, and when citizens can expect to hear more about the potential project. Fugate said that the application had come "out of the blue," and that he had only found out about the project very recently. He said he is in close contact with federal agencies and will update the Stakeholders Group at future meetings. Fugate was also asked whether having a SAMP completed prior to the full federal review of the Grays Harbor application will have an impact on the decision. He said it is too early to tell at this point what kind of impact the SAMP could have, although it would likely be better than not to have the work should the federal government want to consult it.

Contributing to Rhode Island's Global Climate Change Solution: The Ocean SAMP– Pam Rubinoff, URI Coastal Resources Center/Rhode Island Sea Grant

As part of the SAMP education component, Rubinoff presented a session (see Ocean SAMP web site at for all Stakeholder Group presentations to date http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/) on climate change impacts for Rhode Island and how the SAMP is an opportunity for the state to explore solutions and start mitigating the problem locally. The presentation provided information about how global dependence on fossil fuels has raised temperatures and made it so that glaciers are melting, ocean waters are increasing, and thus sea levels are rising. Rhode Island is projected to lose land as the levels increase, so proactive coastal planning will become increasingly important.

After the presentation, stakeholders and members of the public asked a wide range of questions concerning how and why precipitation levels would increase in Rhode Island due to climate change, and how greenhouse gases are being monitored instate. There were also questions about how citizens or policymakers can ever expect to get their arms around the unwieldy and pressing issue of climate change, what types of research are being employed to answer the questions, and whether the state is considering applying its already significant coastal management planning expertise to work on terms of the climate change issue. The problem, Fugate indicated, is that "living shorelines" are at stake, and for the amount of time it would take, and the amount of money it would cost, to proactively plan for the protection of all existing shoreline, the timetable isn't feasible.

A discussion about the stakeholder process as it pertains to social, cultural, and economic conditions affected by activities within the SAMP area – Ken Payne, URI

Discussion after the presentation largely spoke to how the state's coastal municipalities can adapt their approaches to community land planning in order to participate in the larger effort to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change impacts. Planners from both South Kingstown and Narragansett spoke to need to have

products and planning tools in place to answer citizen questions, and a Block Island planner said the island, which has been informally deemed a likely location for potential offshore renewable energy sitings, is already considering how the aesthetic issues surrounding wind turbines, as well as the economic benefits that can potentially be gained from windfarm operations, will inform or impact community planning initiatives. Narragansett faces the issue of planning port uses and activities in light of climate change, and planners agreed that while the SAMP is a useful tool, it can be hard to "sell" community members, or keep them interested, in research and science-based issues.

Public Comment

Questions and comments illustrated the spectrum of climate change issues: What will the weather be like? What kinds of steps is the state currently taking to address climate change? How can municipalities expect to support critical services if property – and the attendant tax money – is submerged by sea level rise? The question was also asked how the SAMP research slate addresses climate change, and if the slate is adequate both in scope and funding to achieve the goals. Once comment recommended that any approach to climate change must be both level-headed and cognizant of potential positive effects of climate change – for example, the potential creation of vibrant new harbors or waterfronts. Other questions spoke to the need for more clarity regarding how the SAMP stakeholder group differs from the state's former alternative energy panel.

Major summary meeting points – Ken Payne, URI. The facilitator observed:

1. The state panel emerged as a response to energy needs, while the SAMP reflects a CRMC goal of zoning state ocean waters to plan for and accommodate varied uses, with energy development being one of those potential needs.
2. The scope of SAMP studies specifically speaks to this goal; therefore, it is not the tool with which to fully evaluate whether and how a windfarm can be placed in state waters.
3. The impacts of climate change are myriad and encompass social, economic, and environmental spheres. The SAMP is, in broad brush strokes, an initial opportunity to address these impacts. The stakeholder process, with its education component, has been constructed to mirror all three spheres and complementary issues.

Next meeting: 1/6/09, 6 – 9 p.m. (refreshments 5:30), URI Bay Campus Coastal Institute, Hazard Rms. A & B.

Adjourn