Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Meeting #9
Notes, November 4, 6 – 8:30 p.m.
Hazard Rooms A and B, URI Bay Campus

Purpose of the Meeting:

1. Present the Draft Introduction Chapter
2. Present the Draft Recreation and Tourism Chapter

Welcome – Ken Payne, URI

Payne told the group of approximately 60 people that the project has reached the point of producing chapters, and that we would hear about two chapters. He said it remains important, especially now, as chapters are being prepared, for people to be cognizant of the exciting time we are entering as a great deal of brand new information about our ocean waters if being collected, analyzed, and put out for discussion. He also introduced and thanked some of the key advisors on the recreational chapter – Mike Keyworth (R.I. Marine Trades Association), Robin Wallace (R.I. State Yachting Committee), and Ed LeBlanc (U.S. Coast Guard) – for their participation in the review process. Also, Ocean SAMP Outreach Leader Jennifer McCann, of the URI Coastal Resources Center/R.I. Sea Grant (CRC/SG) welcomed Dr. Andrew Gill, a marine biologist from Cranfield University, UK, who was scheduled to present at the 8th Annual Ronald C. Baird Sea Grant Science Symposium/ The Ecology of Marine Wind Farms: Perspectives on Impact Mitigation, Siting, and Future Uses, and is an Ocean SAMP researcher who will be assisting with ecological monitoring during pre-construction, construction, and post-construction phases of a potential offshore windfarm.

New Ocean SAMP Developments – Grover Fugate, CRMC

Fugate told the group that the SAMP is progressing and that it is serving as a useful tool, per the R.I. Marine Resources Development Plan (MRDP), to take a comprehensive approach to planning Rhode Island's ocean resources uses, and to coordinating with other states on similar and joint issues. He said the SAMP has provided major opportunities to start working more closely with Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York to on learning what their ecosystem and adaptive management strategies are shaping up to be, and where they want to be in a decade. He said conversations continue with key federal agencies, especially the U.S. Minerals Management Services and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to ensure the permitting processes for potential pilot and offshore windfarms are as effective and efficient as possible. He also said that in his opinion, Rhode Island remains significantly in front of other states in terms of developing comprehensive zoning plans for coastal and ocean waters and that this is a huge benefit now for Rhode Island in terms of national recognition and a potential opportunity for federal and national support.

Draft Ocean SAMP Introduction Chapter – Grover Fugate, CRMC and Jennifer McCann, URI

McCann presented the introduction chapter to the group and indicated that at the core of the chapter, which will be revised in 2010, are principles which will govern how the SAMP can best serve Rhode Island as a tool for the most open, transparent, understandable and accurate synthesis of data. She said the goal of these principles is to enable all stakeholders to be involved in the process and honor what is important to them about our ocean resources. She said these principles closely reflect the MRDP and are supported by a carefully developed public review process which will enable as much public participation as possible. She went over the public review process and encouraged attendees to send in their written comments as provided by the schedule.

After the presentation, people asked how the team will ensure that data is properly applied across multiple chapters so comprehensive analysis is achieved, and also how the public review process will be monitored so people have as much comment time as possible. Specifically, the following points were made:

1. A process is needed to ensure that data gathered for a chapter is also linked to other appropriate chapters – this could be difficult, so the team needs to be positioned early on with a plan to address this.
2. The ecology of the SAMP region should be fully reflected in each of the chapters; it is not enough to expect a separate ecology chapter to address this major issue.
3. It would be useful if the recreational and tourism chapter could offer information that shows the connection between the land and the water – we can't fully understand marine recreation and tourism issues until we connect land and water data.
4. The public needs more opportunity to comment on the chapters, especially if the SAMP will appear as a whole only at the end of the process – reviewing the chapters is very useful, but we need to be sure people have enough time to review the document as a cohesive whole. We also need to make sure the document is comprehensive and makes sense of complex issues which largely cannot be resolved through separate chapters.

McCann and Fugate indicated that it will be an arduous task to ensure data informs all appropriate topics and chapters, but that the team has planned for this and is prepared to do so. Fugate also said the CRMC is committed to ensuring the public review process is enhanced so anyone who wants to take part in the process may do so at appropriate points throughout the SAMP review and adoption phases.

Draft Recreation and Tourism Chapter – Tiffany Smythe and Michelle Armsby, URI

Smythe and Armsby provided a presentation on the draft recreation and tourism chapter – fishing, sailboat racing, cruising, diving, and wildlife viewing -- emphasizing that there is an offshore, or boat-based focus for the activities discussed in the document. The presentation provided, through mapping, visuals regarding the who, what, where, when and why about each activity. Certain decisions, like placing recreational fishing in the fisheries chapter, had been made to ensure the most effective and efficient use of the information. However, extensive efforts are being made to ensure pertinent data is applied to all appropriate chapters.

After the presentation, people asked questions about the chapter. Questions fell largely were about how the SAMP process would ensure that data – be it about recreational fishing, or ecology, or renewable energy -- is interwoven appropriately, even if the material is split among chapters? The project team indicated significant effort is being made to integrate information both within chapters and across chapters so it makes the most sense.

Major summary meeting points – Ken Payne, URI

Payne indicated that it is "clear we are dealing with interactions of complex systems, and the chapters are a reflection of that complexity." He said as more chapters are rolled out, we will be working more with these questions about how to integrate, present, and categorize information – which is inherently interwoven – into SAMP chapters.

Next Meeting – December 1, 2009, Coastal Institute, URI Bay Campus