

OSAMP Chapter: Recreation & Tourism  
 Comment Period: Public Comment Period #1  
 End Date: 11/9/2009

| Name          | Organization                    | Comment  | Response   |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Eugenia Marks | Audubon Society of Rhode Island | <p>As I commented in 11/4/09 meeting of stakeholders, we think that a noting in text and map the benthic topography of Cox's Ledge that associates pelagic bird observation in that area may be a worthy addition. It may be the case that bird observations occur there because that's where the fishing fleet goes for fish, and the bird watching is incidental to the fishing. The discussion of pelagic bird observation also has a seasonal element as to when various species of petrels, etc. are in the area. I suggest contacting either Charles Roman with the National Park Service or Shai Mitra (Ph.D., URI) with Staten Island Community College for detailed information for dates of bird occurrence and area of use. They may be able to provide information about the more general area of pelagic bird concentrations.</p> | <p>We have added language in the recreation chapter in two places: section 620.5 (offshore wildlife viewing) and 660.1 (policies). This language points out the connection between benthic habitat and wildlife viewing. Additional language was already included in the recreation section of the offshore renewable energy chapter regarding the potential impacts of habitat alteration on these activities. URI researchers are currently working on a study of benthic habitat; data and maps are forthcoming and will be included in the fisheries and ecology chapters. URI researchers are currently working on a study of birds; data and maps are forthcoming and will be included in the ecology chapter. We have notated in the comment database that we will revisit these comments when drafting these chapters. URI researchers working on the bird study have indicated that Cox's Ledge is one of the primary spots that birders visit when going to visit pelagic habitats offshore.</p> |
|               |                                 |  | <p>(continued from above) As noted in the comment, this is primarily because birders go out on fishing trips and pay a reduced fare to accompany these trips. Large numbers of pelagic birds can be seen at Cox's Ledge, but it does not necessarily mean that the largest concentrations of birds are found at Cox's Ledge, as birders are not visiting other offshore sites. The only way to determine where the largest concentrations of birds are found and temporal variation in avian abundance is to systematically survey the entire Ocean SAMP area throughout the annual cycles, which is what URI researchers are currently doing. In addition, URI researchers have summarized historical data for the SAMP area, which will be included in the final report and incorporated into the draft chapter.</p>   |

OSAMP Chapter: Recreation & Tourism  
 Comment Period: Public Comment Period #1  
 End Date: 11/9/2009

| Name          | Organization                    | Comment   | Response   |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Eugenia Marks | Audubon Society of Rhode Island | In the meeting we asked for a note of the benthic topography in the area that might cause upwellings of prey that would attract whales, sharks, and birds that are viewed recreationally. Is there scientific data to support such a map?   | URI researchers are conducting a study of benthic habitat; data and maps are forthcoming and will be included in the fisheries chapter as well as the ecology chapter. We have notated in the comment database that we will revisit this comment when drafting those chapters.   |
| Eugenia Marks | Audubon Society of Rhode Island | The issue of Block Island land mass occurring within the SAMP study area, which was raised during the 11/4 stakeholder session, raises the issue of another recreational use in the study area. Since 1961, Audubon Society of Rhode Island has taken groups to Block Island to observe the fall migration of land-birds and other avian species. Massachusetts and Connecticut Audubon Societies, as well as other private groups, also come to Block Island in fall to observe migration of birds. This recreational use is based on a pattern of first year passerine migrants overshooting the coastal flyway in their nocturnal migration, and finding themselves over water at first light retreat to nearest land mass. This pattern is well-documented by ornithological studies. Landing on the south ends of the island, the birds forage their way north, guided by magnetic or other guidance, and can be seen taking off in small flocks off the north end towards the mainland and the main coastal flyway. | We have added language in section 640 to highlight land-based recreational uses on Block Island and other coastal communities adjacent to the SAMP area, which include land-based bird-watching. However, the Ocean SAMP is focused on the offshore environment, not upland areas, and so upland Block Island and other coastal communities are not addressed in depth in this SAMP. The offshore focus is due to the fact that CRMC already has a regulatory program, including zoning, for coastal lands and waters out to the 3-mile boundary. Regarding bird migratory patterns, URI researchers are conducting a bird study; data and maps are forthcoming. URI researchers working on this study agree that Block Island is an important stopover site for migratory passerines and is one of the most important birding spots in New England. This is why avian researchers have placed a radar unit on the island to quantify avian movement ecology from March through Dec 2009, operating 24/7. These radar data will summarize diurnal variation in flight elevations, flight vectors (direction of flight), and number of targets passing the island. These da |

OSAMP Chapter: Recreation & Tourism  
 Comment Period: Public Comment Period #1  
 End Date: 11/9/2009

| Name          | Organization                    | Comment  | Response          |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Eugenia Marks | Audubon Society of Rhode Island | In addition other species, such as snow geese, fly over the island, while other species, such as Northern Harrier, are seen on Block Island and less frequently on the mainland of Rhode Island. The habitats of Block Island also attract other migrants and the location and isolation of the island bring accidental visitors, such as the recent Western Tanager and a Wheatear from several years ago. The possibility of viewing out-of-range birds is another attraction of Block Island. | See above comment |
| Eugenia Marks | Audubon Society of Rhode Island | We ask that fall bird-watching recreational value of Block Island be noted in this chapter. People who participate in this activity generally spend at least one night on the island and eat in restaurants, all adding to the economic value of this activity. Obviously, ferry is their main means of transportation.  | See above comment |