

Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)

Goals and Principles for the Ocean SAMP

1. The Ocean SAMP, based on the best available science, will serve as a coastal management and regulatory tool, based on the best available science, which promotes a balanced and comprehensive ecosystem based management 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 of, and adaptation to, global climate change as well as facilitate coordination mechanisms between state and federal agencies and the people of Rhode Island.
2. 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.
3. Goals for the Ocean SAMP:
 - a. **Foster a properly functioning ecosystem that is both ecologically sound and economically beneficial.** Restore and maintain the ecological capacity, integrity, and resilience of the Ocean SAMP's biophysical and socio-economic systems. Conduct research to better understand the current status of the natural resources, ecosystem conditions, and the implications of various human activities. Set standards within the SAMP document to protect and where possible restore and enhance natural resources and ensure that impacts from future activities are avoided and, if they are unavoidable, are minimized and mitigated so they are acceptable to the scientific community and the people of Rhode Island. Establish monitoring protocols to evaluate the consequences of decisions and adapt management to the monitoring results.
 - b. **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 ensuring that negative and mitigated impacts from future activities are avoided and, if they are unavoidable, are minimized.
 - c. **Encourage marine-based economic development that meets the aspirations of local communities and is consistent with and complementary to the state's overall economic development, social, and environmental 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.

- d. **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 appropriate 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.

4. Principles Guiding SAMP Design and Development

- a. **Develop in a transparent manner.** Transparency guides the development of all documents and procedures related to the Ocean SAMP project. Project activities and phases are designed to be easily understandable to the general public. Accurate information must be made available to the public in an appropriate and timely manner.
- b. **Involve all stakeholders.** Targeted efforts ensure opportunity is available for all stakeholders to have access to the SAMP planning process as early as possible. Stakeholder participation ensures that a broad range of issues, concerns, and creative ideas, are examined throughout the SAMP process.
- c. **Honor existing activities.** The Ocean SAMP area is a highly used and biologically and economically valuable place, with major uses such as fishing, tourism, transportation, and military activities. These, along with the area's biology and habitat, must be understood and highly regarded and respected as decisions for the incorporation of future activities are determined.
- d. **Base all decisions on the best available science.** All management and regulatory decisions will be based on the best available science and on ecosystem based management approaches. An adopted SAMP will require that the necessary studies be performed before a future activity is approved to better understand the impact of this activity on the ecosystem. Such necessary studies might include gathering information on baseline resource conditions, potential environmental and economic impacts, and potential mitigation measures.
- e. **Establish monitoring and evaluation that supports adaptive management.** Incorporating monitoring and evaluation in the SAMP will assist in the creation of sound management decisions in an environment exposed to constant change. The SAMP process is 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, monitoring and evaluation mechanism ensures this activity.