

**Rhode Island Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Meeting  
Ocean SAMP update and regional ocean planning  
URI, Narragansett Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI  
May 28, 2013 from 4 – 7 p.m.**

**Welcome and Introductions – Jennifer McCann, URI**

McCann welcomed the group of 50 and said that Rhode Island, having recently implemented its Ocean Special Area Management Plan (Ocean SAMP), is well positioned to provide lessons learned to regional planning, and to benefit from the experiences of others. “We can’t just stay in our own political boundary; we can’t improve our ecosystem without working regionally,” said McCann. “We have to look outside our Rhode Island boundaries.”

**Rhode Island Ocean SAMP Update – Grover Fugate, CRMC and Michelle Carnevale, URI**

Fugate updated the group on Ocean SAMP implementation. He said that the plan has been adopted by the state and federal government and that “it has proven to be a worthy document.” He said a portion of Cox’s Ledge fishing grounds were removed from federal offshore leasing areas due to the efforts of the Ocean SAMP based Fisheries Advisory Board. The leasing process for the larger offshore wind farm area (also known as the Rhode Island/Massachusetts Area of Mutual Interest) will likely begin this summer. Also, a pilot project to develop a small-scale windfarm off of Block Island in state waters is currently in the CRMC and Army Corps of Engineers permitting process.

Carnevale said that Ocean SAMP work continues successfully. A new marine spatial planning document, “The Ocean SAMP Practitioner’s Guide,” is available now ([http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/pdf/Practitioner\\_Guide.pdf](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/pdf/Practitioner_Guide.pdf)) which captures many of the lessons learned through the Ocean SAMP process. In addition, research has continued in the Ocean SAMP area since the last stakeholder meeting in the summer of 2012 including a third year of surveys on the distribution of birds off the coast of Rhode Island, this will provide valuable baseline data on the resource to inform the siting of any future development. Furthermore, URI and CRMC completed an Ocean SAMP Future Science Research Agenda that outlines additional research needs to fully understand the Ocean SAMP area. This research agenda was prescribed in the Ocean SAMP document as a next step in the plans implementation, so that future research funds could be focused on topics where there are still large unknowns. This research agenda is available for viewing on the Ocean SAMP’s new “Implementation” page of the Ocean SAMP website. Since the last stakeholder meeting, Ocean SAMP researchers from URI completed a project under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) to create new monitoring protocols and tools which will help states or the federal government design monitoring programs for offshore renewable energy projects to evaluate their environmental impacts.

Going forward there are a number of new research projects underway including a project on the best practices for identifying submerged cultural resources offshore which is being conducted by the University of Rhode Island in partnership with various Tribes throughout the region. Doug Harris from the Narragansett Indian Tribe described the project's recent workshop that included a number of tribes around the region and how the project will also educate young tribe members on archeological techniques such as scuba diving. Relatedly, URI has also begun a project to create a central database of cultural artifacts that have been caught in fishing nets. For example, an 18<sup>th</sup> century bell from the U.S. Lighthouse Establishment caught in a fishermen's gear has been recorded in the database. The project does not require the artifact to be returned, but rather information on the location and the type of artifact retrieved. Lastly, URI researcher Jeremy Collie described a proposed study on the distribution of lobsters off the coast of Rhode Island that will use Rhode Island fishermen to collect data from ventless traps.

### **Review of Draft Goals – Regional Planning Body**

Betsy Nicholson, of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration provided the group with information about the draft ocean regional planning goals that have been developed for public input and review; at the federal level, a Northeast Regional Planning Body effort is underway which is now working with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council to reflect the National Ocean Policy, gather regional ocean data, analyze it, and compile it in ways that make sense for public use, dialogue and decisionmaking. "We don't have a coordinated way to share and make decisions," said Nicholson, "so we need regional planning so we can take a step back and see what we know – we need context to make decisions." She gave an example of several Northeast states partnering on a regional effort to change aspects of vessel transport so whales wouldn't be so prone to be struck.

The process of creating goals for regional planning is about half-way through the effort; the final product is expected in 2015.

### **New England's Ocean – Nick Napoli, NROC**

Napoli explained to the audience that maps had been posted for the attendees to peruse and comment upon; the maps represent the compilation of many different areas of information important to regional planning: transportation, habitat, fishing resources and cultural resources, among other categories. He said the goal is to ensure that all the information and maps for the regional planning process are placed online at the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (<http://northeastoceancouncil.org/quick-links/>).

Nicholson, Ferguson and Napoli asked the attendees to take their time reviewing the maps, and provide comment on them

### **Draft Goals Review – Betsy Nicolson, NOAA**

After the map review, Nicholson provided a presentation to the group regarding an overview of the draft goals which address effective decisionmaking, healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems, and compatibility of resources. She said that many public meetings are taking place in each region to ensure that community members are able to participate in goal review. She said people can also participate by submitting comments either online or by mail (<http://northeastoceancouncil.org/comment-on-the-draft-ocean-planning-goals/>).

After the overview, people asked questions about the regional effort and regional ocean resources. Some questions focused on the process used to gather the information and ensure accuracy and appropriate scale. Several questions from fishermen addressed the difficulties in supporting fishing stocks through information efforts like the regional planning initiative. Also, people asked about how the regional information can be used locally to inform Rhode Island issues.

### **Next Steps –Jennifer McCann, URI**

McCann thanked everyone for coming and told the attendees to feel free to continue to provide their input on the Ocean SAMP and the regional planning process.