

**Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Meeting #5
Notes, March 19, 2009
Corless Auditorium, URI Bay Campus**

Purpose of the Meeting:

- Present the Ocean SAMP fisheries usage maps
- Discuss fisheries issues, concerns and opportunities

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

The facilitator told the audience, numbering about 80 people, that the purpose of the Ocean SAMP is to guide the development of ocean spatial planning standards for Rhode Island's state ocean waters. These standards will be of use in helping decision makers weigh a variety of considerations, including those involving offshore wind projects.

In terms of the validity of a transparent Ocean SAMP public process, Payne described safeguards for ensuring fair decisions: 1) Involvement of both the federal and state governments means one checks the other; 2) Both state CRMC and Energy Siting boards are mandated to abide by due process and are subject to court review if necessary; and 3) Applicants tend to avoid situations that could make them prone to lengthy court procedures.

Payne said that the public process is dependent upon prudence, transparency, and efforts to ensure a balance between protecting the present and preparing the future. "We're using science as the best way to figure this out," he said.

New Ocean SAMP Developments – Grover Fugate, CRMC

Fugate said that SAMP studies are progressing and that URI is working to translate raw data into maps and formats that are web- and user-friendly. He also said that the federal government, especially via the Minerals Management Service and the Army Corps of Engineers, will – contrary to at least one media report -- play a large role in determining the future of wind farms or other offshore alternative energy projects in ocean waters.

Ocean SAMP fisheries usage maps – Dave Beutel, URI

Beutel presented maps that show where people fish in the Ocean SAMP area. Separate maps showed recreational fishing areas, which included areas used by party/charter boat operators as well as those used by individual recreational users, (commercial) fixed gear areas, and (commercial) mobile gear areas. Fishermen had provided data by marking up nautical charts at a series of meetings. The maps illustrate areas important

to different fisheries, how different groups share areas and also how virtually the entire SAMP area is used for fishing, although use frequency varies greatly over the course of a year and from year to year. Beutel said the mapping exercise was enlightening because it yielded a great amount of congruent information. “The information isn’t complete, but it’s close. And person after person provided the same story at each meeting.”

While the maps represent the input of about 100 people (about 50 actually marked up maps), Beutel said some fishermen chose not to share their information because they believed that revealing that information could result in greater competition for the resources in those sites. After the presentation, Fugate indicated the SAMP process would greatly benefit from this input, and added he would like to meet with the fishermen who had not yet participated in SAMP meetings.

At the end of the presentation, Beutel showed a slide that said: “Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out -- James Bryan Conant.” He said the Ocean SAMP will be more useful to all if people assist where possible.

Questions and answers

Q. What was the qualitative measure? Answer (Dave): Where do you fish over one year?

Q. Were people who fish from the shore included? Answer (Dave): Yes

Q. How did you get the information? Answer (Dave): He and Tiffany Smythe met with groups of fishermen and recorded their concerns and there will be a chapter in the SAMP that, among other things, addresses these concerns. Information had also been gathered at past regional Sea Grant meetings. Information from maps and studies from as far back as 1975 have also been useful for showing how fishing and gear use patterns have not changed all that much over the years.

Q: What are the intensities of the uses in these areas and how will the uses be measured? Answer (Dave): That’s the next step. We’re struggling with the question about how to measure it. We’ll look at catch records, for example, to get a sense of the intensity, but to say this area is worth \$10 million? We won’t be able to do that.”

Q. How does the Deepwater plan overlay with the maps? Answer (Dave): We don’t have that info. There has been talk about certain sites, but that’s just guessing now.

Q. Will a chart with coordinates be given? Answer (Dave): The posters have coordinates. We can do that for other maps. (Follow-up note: These maps have been produced and distributed to fishermen).

Public Discussion – Jennifer McCann, URI

McCann provided a brief overview of the Integrated Coastal Management cycle and reviewed a timeline with the group for 2009 (issue identification and research) and 2010 (SAMP preparation and adoption) activities. McCann, with T. Smythe, then reviewed a list of Ocean SAMP fisheries issues and concerns and a list of opportunities as identified in small group meetings previously by fishermen. This included a review of the content that will be covered in the SAMP fisheries technical report which will inform the SAMP fisheries chapter. McCann also reminded the group about upcoming events, and asked Rhode Island Natural History Survey Executive Director David Gregg to describe the April 23 conference sponsored in part by the SAMP, "RINHS Rhode Island's Off-shore Marine Ecosystem and the Potential Impacts of Alternative Energy Development." Related SAMP events are planned for April 22 and 24.

McCann engaged the group in discussion about potential wind farm-related opportunities for the fishing industry. People suggested that the cultural aspect of fishing could provide an economic opportunity for fishermen, as could a potential increased need for boats and licensed boat captains. Other people commented that a wind farm could provide opportunities for creating artificial reefs, more safety mechanisms, education programming, and the potential for better cell phone reception. Finally, economic benefits related to offshore aquaculture, fish farming, and job creation for displaced fishermen were also mentioned. .

Q. How will habitat areas be dealt with? Answer (Grover): We've been told to start looking at an ecosystem services approach. We're going to be doing an intensive study on European experience, as part of this.

Q. Are you doing infield research and are you using our (fisheries) research? Answer (Grover): We're reaching out to you (fishermen). In the end, MMS (Minerals Management Services) will dictate specific research needs in federal waters and a developer would pay for it. We're still working to see which gaps we need to fill. Specific studies will have to be done to federal standards. McCann indicated the Massachusetts (Cape Wind) example of habitat/fish habitat research, per the Cape Wind Environmental Impact Statement, will be put on the Ocean SAMP web site.

Q. The work thus far is impressive, but isn't more infield research from the fishermen needed? Answer (Grover): I'll be happy to meet with the fishermen. You guys are still at the starting gate. A member of the audience pointed out that while the Greenwich Bay SAMP had started with some difficulty in terms of the relationship between CRMC and Warwick residents, the Greenwich Bay SAMP is now underscored by a positive relationship. Payne said that a process of elimination will help tailor the research needs and areas further.

Closing comments:

Payne noted that tension in a meeting can be appropriate and useful, and said that there is logically a tenseness related to the fishermen's protection of proprietary fishing location information.

Next meeting: Tuesday, April 7 from 6 – 9 p.m., Hazard Rooms A & B, URI Coastal Institute, URI Bay Campus