

Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Meeting #3 (The Seafloor and the Ocean SAMP) Summary Notes January 6, 6 – 9 p.m., Bay Campus

Summary Notes: *Note* – these notes reflect information and viewpoints overall, rather than “quote-by quote.” The intent is to capture the overall direction and tenor of participants’ contributions, rather than specific wording, as this seems a more useful approach for describing meeting content.

Purpose of the meeting:

- Present information on the formation and material of the seafloor and why this information is important to the Ocean SAMP process.
- Review the SAMP timeline with Stakeholder groups

Chair and Facilitator: Ken Payne

Stakeholders in attendance and members of the public: see list

Agenda Items:

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

The facilitator said that SAMP research activities are starting to yield information and data and that as this information is prepared and analyzed, it will be readily provided to the stakeholder group for further discussion and examination. He reminded the group that the SAMP is cognizant of, and required to consider, the issue of environmental impact and will approach that issue in an integrated manner, giving solid consideration to social, cultural and economic implications. He also said that as a result of the “rich discussion” of the December stakeholder meeting, a follow-up meeting with municipal stakeholders had taken place which resulted in the group’s agreement that meeting regularly to talk about the Ocean SAMP in terms of how it will impact municipal planning and other activities is useful (A group of municipal stakeholders and members of the SAMP team met with Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program officials on January 30 to discuss SAMP issues).

New Ocean SAMP Developments – Grover Fugate, CRMC

Fugate told the group that a great deal of research information has been collected and is the process of being synthesized, with the expectation that some data will be ready for posting on the web in a few months. He said the Tier 1 analysis will eventually be extended into Tier 2, and that meetings are being held often with both government, industry, and community groups to get as much information as possible about existing ocean uses and related issues and concerns. A stakeholder asked if there was any more

information about the Cape Wind project (MA), and Fugate answered that the project is “tied up” with Mineral Management Service and other federal agencies.

K. Payne and Brian Goldman, CRMC attorney, also told the group that the CRMC Ocean SAMP Subcommittee had met for the first time in January and that it would be continuing to meet on a regular basis. A bit later, Chairman Michael Tikoian introduced subcommittee member Don Gomez.

The Ocean Floor: What is it, what’s in it, and why is it important for human and natural activities – Dr. Jon Boothroyd and Dr. John King, URI (see Boothroyd presentation at http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/pdf/stakeholder_meetings/Jan-6_Boothroyd_PPT.pdf)

As part of the SAMP education component, Drs. Boothroyd and King gave presentations about the ocean floor; Boothroyd supplied a geologic history and description about the floor, while King addressed how various portions of the floor may be aptly or poorly suited, specifically in terms of geology, to anchoring a potential project such as a wind farm. Both King and Boothroyd indicated that their SAMP research portions are smaller pieces of a much larger puzzle, and that varied and greater amounts of data are going to have to be gathered and analyzed before any discussions of wind farm sitings can take place.

Group Discussion

Stakeholder questions in response to the presentations largely fell into two categories: Against what criteria were those sites selected for study? What’s the process through which this information will be evaluated, and who’s making the decisions about study sites and associated study funding?

The facilitator told the group that the SAMP is rolling out in an orderly fashion, with each research component, including geological studies, taking place and undergoing a full analysis before being released as a comprehensive tool to the decision making arena. He, as well as CRMC Chairman Michael Tikoian, indicated that the researchers must be given the time and latitude to work out their data, but that this work, in and of itself, is not to be misinterpreted as SAMP recommendations. He also indicated that the CRMC, with the SAMP management team, is responsible for guiding the direction of the research, as well as the funding associated with each particular and distinct research aspect. “We will have a technical presentation at each meeting,” said Payne, going on to say that these components will vary widely – from aesthetic studies, to anthropological and cultural studies, to mammal and bird research.

Geology based Q & A

- Wouldn’t it be better to drive piles into hard, rather than soft, areas of the

floor? (Answer: King says to his knowledge a hard floor would pose an additional drilling challenge.)

- Can we see it (King's research) on a chart? (The answer was yes)
- Did you consider using a tow system? (Answer: King said the decision was made against it because of the challenges associated with snagging on items such as lobster pots.)
- How did you determine which sites to go back over? (Answer: King indicated that sites selected for further study were selected based purely on the research data – “not Deepwater” – and that funds were allocated to those sites seen as most appropriate, and thus most in need of further study)
- When will this data be available? (Answer: Late spring)
- Do we have fault lines here? Do we run the risk of earthquakes? (Yes and to a degree, yes)

SAMP process based Q & A

- Is Deepwater dictating what you're surveying? (Answer: King said no)
- Will this (geology information) recommend to the council how we should zone? (Answer: King said not yet, we have much further to go.)
- Where is the groundtruthing (for the research studies) in this? (Answer: King said all of his studies will be groundtruthed as a matter of course.)
- Who determines how to make the best use of your (researcher) time on this? (Answer: CRMC/SAMP management team makes the determination.)
- Will we be getting a lot of reports on this stuff? (Answer: K. Payne said as much information comes forward will be supplied as fodder for the stakeholder group.)
- Are there lots of meetings taking place about this that we're not in on? (Answer: K. Payne said he cannot speak for meetings outside the stakeholder process; however, he said anything under the stakeholder umbrella is public and postable, with notes included.)

SAMP Outreach Timeline Public Comment – Jennifer McCann, URI

After a break, J. McCann reviewed the outreach timeline with the group, speaking about three distinct kinds of opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement: 1) Stakeholder meetings; 2) Sector or small group meetings; and 3) Public events. In particular, McCann told the group that URI is collaborating with the Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS) to build the SAMP into RINHS' lecture series, with a public conference on April 23 & 24 serving as a cornerstone event. The conference will seek to examine how Rhode Island's marine and coastal ecosystems may be impacted should a wind farm or alternative renewable energy project be placed in Rhode Island's ocean waters. Also, another event is being planned with the goal of

providing initial information about what a wind farm is, how it functions, and what's involved in its construction, maintenance, and decommissioning, and would glean firsthand impacts knowledge from European technical experts who have been studying wind farm impacts on the environment for nearly 20 years. David Gregg, executive director of the RINHS, was introduced and spoke briefly about the Survey and the conference (see <http://www.rinhs.org/> for more information).

McCann also pointed the group to new and updated SAMP materials, including a new organizational chart, to assist stakeholders and the public with their understanding of the project.

Public Comment/Major summary meeting points – Ken Payne, URI. The facilitator observed:

1. “Briar Patch Meetings:” Payne indicated that for the SAMP to have any real and useful impact, it is necessary for a great deal of activity – including small group meetings – to take place so plentiful information can be digested, examined, and ultimately tried-out or modeled as tools to make everyday processes – for example, community planning or utilities oversight – smarter, better, and quicker. The sheer number of meetings will make it impossible for everyone to attend everything, he said, nor should people assume that everyone should be, or needs to be in every meeting – or “briar patch”: “We’ll hold ‘briar patch’ meetings and then describe the scurrings to you,” said Payne. “When people need meetings, we’ll have them, and the results will be shared with all.”
2. Balance: Payne was asked to describe his position in terms of ensuring meetings are both effective and open. Payne said this is a balancing act and that both meeting traits are necessary, but can’t always be accommodated in equal proportions for each and every meeting. “Broad” discussions, with legitimate fields of inquiry” which embrace “fairness and justness” are his primary goal with the stakeholder process, he said.
3. Current of Skepticism: Apparently in response to the tenor of questioning exhibited during post-presentation discussion, Payne spoke to the group about the positive qualities of skepticism, and how being skeptical is often an extremely useful tool for trouble-shooting solutions and ensuring the quality of a product. “Skepticism can be a way of amplifying issues and keeping an open mind, he said, adding that it’s the “type of current” that underpins a line of questioning that ultimately determines whether it’s a help or a hindrance.

Additional Questions

Before the meeting adjourned, several other questions were asked, in response to Payne’s summary:

- What about aesthetics? Are we going to talk about the Cape Wind issues? Are

we going to look at tourism? (Answer: Payne said the group will be looking at aesthetics and he asked Lefteris Pavlides, of Wind Power Rhode Island, to tell the group about the several wind farm aesthetics surveys that have already involved Rhode Island communities. Pavlides briefly described the work to date and indicated that he will continue his involvement in this issue.)

- Is it better to integrate or segregate discussions about various SAMP issues? (Answer: Payne said that to his mind, it all depends, although his leaning is toward openness and inclusion “We’ll do both,” he said.)
- I’m interested to see what kind of a pissing contest this turns out to be...I don’t want the future to be led by fear!” (Answer: Payne used the example of the state’s ability to develop a dredge plan within several years, rather than over decades, as a hopeful indication that the SAMP process will be shaped by cooperation, rather than gridlock, amongst government, community, and private sector entities.

Next meeting: 2/10/09, 6 – 9 p.m. (refreshments 5:30), URI Bay Campus Coastal Institute, Hazard Rms. A & B.

Adjourn