

OCEAN SAMP Stakeholders Process

Observations from the Chair—

Presiding at meetings has a peculiar and distinct pleasure: One gets to monitor how the meeting is going overall, and one is concerned about the dynamics for all participants. In short, I felt that the October 29 meeting was darn good: Enough tension and interest to make it lively, enough substance to make it worthwhile. To all those who expressed their concerns, aspirations, and anxieties, thank you—you gave the meeting energy.

The Ocean SAMP effort began formally in August—it is just underway. And this stakeholders process is distinct from the stakeholders process convened by the Office of Energy Resources, which concluded that off-shore wind has major renewable energy potential for Rhode Island. The Ocean SAMP stakeholders process will deal with a comprehensive array of issues (those generally that would be included in undertaking an Environmental Impact Statement). The Ocean SAMP is just getting underway, and the stakeholders group is being engaged at the outset. I personally would not countenance being part of a “done deal”—the idea of being window dressing is deeply unappealing to me, and I would have declined the invitation to preside if the process was a sham. I take the work we all are involved in very seriously, it is truly exciting to be part of a process to develop a new and constructive way to handle complex issues in the coastal zone.

Here are some specific thoughts:

We all need to be acutely aware of the pressures on the fishing community, and it was gratifying to hear concerns about those pressures raised forcefully on October 29th.

Similarly, it was good to have the archeological and cultural concerns of the Narragansett Tribe articulated at the outset.

I encourage all stakeholders and members of the public to participate as openly and vibrantly as the representatives of these two communities.

With regard to future meetings:

Agendas, the meetings of the stakeholders group will generally have four segments, 1) an up-date on SAMP activities since the prior meeting, 2) a presentation on a technical/Scientific assessment, 3) an open discussion of stakeholder concerns and interests, and 4) a wrap-up and plan for the next meeting. If anyone one wants anything formally placed on the agenda, please let me know at least a week to ten days in advance, so that staff and the management team can figure out how to handle the matter optimally and so that other stakeholders can be given sufficient notified. Remember we'll begin at 6 PM and finish by 9 PM.

Food, not so much as at the first meeting, but there will be something to sustain us all at each stakeholders meeting.

So my perspective is that we're off to a good start in the stakeholders process.

See you on December 2!

Yours,
Ken Payne