

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING



RHODE ISLAND

Implementing the Ocean SAMP: Keeping Rhode Islanders in the Driver's Seat

Known as the "Ocean State," Rhode Island has a long and time-honored connection to its marine waters. The offshore waters of Block Island and Rhode Island Sounds and a swath of the Atlantic Ocean have always played an essential role in Rhode Islanders' lives, work and play.

Over 15,000 years ago, members of the Narragansett Indian Tribe lived in parts of this area, on dry land, before rising sea levels made this area uninhabitable. More recently, commercial and recreational fishermen, the U.S. Navy, mariners, yacht racers and recreational enthusiasts have used these waters to harvest fish, transport goods and people, conduct military exercises, and enjoy the steady winds and natural beauty found here. Located in these waters is a gem called Block Island — one of New England's most popular tourist destinations and a place that The Nature Conservancy lists as one of the "Last Great Places."

It is no wonder that saltwater runs deep in Rhode Islanders' blood.



In 2006, Rhode Island's governor committed to wind energy as an opportunity to generate new jobs and growth industries while tackling rising greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs. The answer lay in tapping the Ocean State's biggest asset — its offshore waters. This led to a marine spatial planning (MSP) effort now known as the Rhode Island Ocean Special Area Management Plan (Ocean SAMP).

Both the process and the plan were designed to minimize conflicts between new and existing uses, and increase protection for natural resources and uses valued by Rhode Islanders, by guiding decisions about not only wind energy but all new uses in these waters. This was an opportunity for Rhode Islanders to shape the future of their offshore waters.

"[The Ocean SAMP] . . .
It's really the touchstone
document. We feel confident
in it . . . we feel stakeholders
feel confident in it . . .
so, we can all use it as
sort of a common base
from which we can make
conclusions and
recommendations."

EDWARD G. LEBLANC
U.S. COAST GUARD
SECTOR SOUTHEASTERN NEW ENGLAND



While Rhode Island's coastal management agency, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), leads the Ocean SAMP effort, it relies upon a longstanding collaboration with the University of Rhode Island, whose researchers, scientists and outreach specialists have a long history of assisting the state with its MSP and coastal management efforts. During planning, Ocean SAMP leaders involved government agencies, the Narragansett Indian Tribe, and stakeholders including fishermen and environmental organizations by listening and responding to their concerns, tapping their experience, and incorporating their input into the plan and its policies. The Ocean SAMP's most innovative policies, developed using the best available science and local knowledge, include:

- Designation of a 13 square-mile Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) southeast of Block Island, pre-selected as a preferred area for wind energy;
- Increased protection of 54 percent of the Ocean SAMP area;
- A streamlined regulatory process to evaluate offshore renewable energy proposals;
- Mechanisms to facilitate continued stakeholder engagement through a new Fishermen's Advisory Board (FAB) and Habitat Advisory Board (HAB); and
- Provisions for regular plan updates every five years to ensure adaptive management.

In 2010, the CRMC formally approved the Ocean SAMP document. The new policies and regulations developed during planning, as well as new knowledge, solid working relationships and trust, have facilitated Ocean SAMP implementation.

Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Reflects Stakeholders' Commitment to the Economy and Environment

The Block Island Wind Farm, the nation's first offshore wind development, is under construction in the REZ. Through the Ocean SAMP process, it was a combination of science, resource user and stakeholder expertise that determined the REZ. This area was selected because it minimized impacts on wildlife, sensitive habitats and protected natural resources and would not significantly

impact existing uses. This meant when it came time to site the Block Island Wind Farm, reviewers knew both government agencies and the public had already vetted the REZ location. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers used Ocean SAMP data, as well, to develop alternative siting scenarios — a required step in the federal environmental review process.

MAP KEY

- State/Federal Waters Separation
- Ferry Routes
- Potential Sea Duck foraging (20m)
- Offshore Dive Sites
- Sailing Areas of Concern
- Renewable Energy Zone
- ENC Navigation Areas

Interpreted Geologic Units Stone & Borns, 1986

Adapted from Stone and Borns, 1986.
Modified by Boothroyd, 2009.

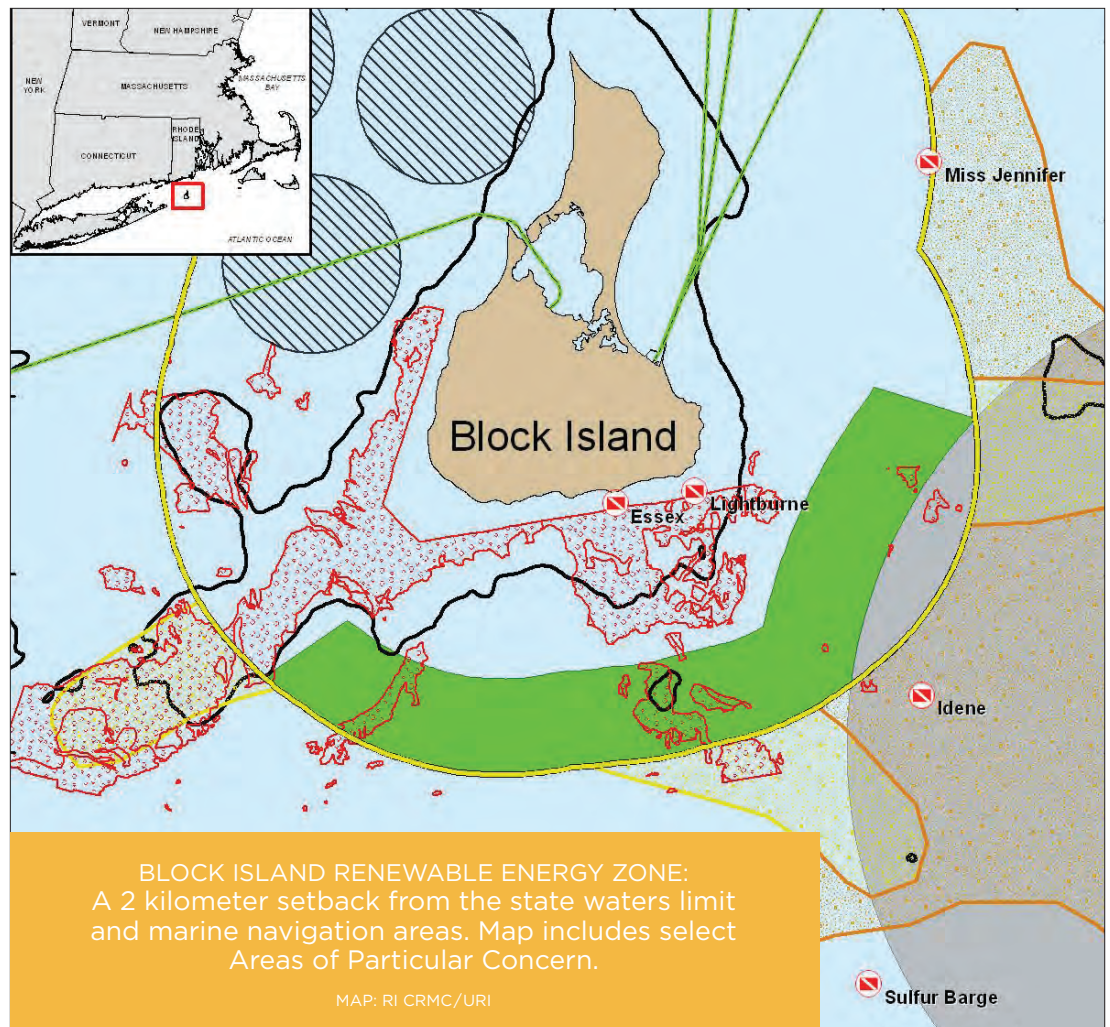
Late Pleistocene

- End Moraine - Blocky
- End Moraine - Boulder
- End Moraine - Boulder, Cobble, Sand

Additional map information from:
Needell and Lewis, 1984
Needell, O'Hara and Knebel, 1983
Schafer and Hartshorn, 1965
Sirkin, 1982

Side-Scan Surveys, 2009

- End Moraine - Boulder



The Ocean SAMP utilizes “the best available science to identify resource conflict-use areas . . . [it has] input from well-informed and committed environmental and civic organizations; local, state, and federal agencies; resource users and researchers.”

BOB LABELLE
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Geographic Location Description (GLD) Puts Rhode Island in the Driver's Seat

In 2011, CRMC received federal government approval for a GLD – a coastal management tool through which a state can exert increased influence over development in adjacent federal waters. This GLD ensures that Ocean SAMP policies and information — created and supported by the people of Rhode Island — will be applied in the review of any federal agency activity or proposed project in both federal and state waters in the SAMP area. The Ocean SAMP provided the extensive data the federal government requires to approve a GLD. Developing the GLD also strengthened the HAB and the FAB's standing with the federal agencies. The FAB, for example, was able to use its standing to influence the fisheries monitoring studies the federal agencies required the Block Island Wind Farm developer to perform.

Area of Mutual Interest (AMI) Agreement Influences Offshore Energy Leasing

In 2010, Rhode Island and Massachusetts established a Memorandum of Understanding to lay out how the states would coordinate wind energy planning and development within the AMI. The goal was to avoid conflict and share both the benefits and the costs of offshore wind in adjacent federal waters. Through this, the two states showed the federal government they were serious about working collaboratively to develop wind energy in shared waters. Even better, the states showed they had scientific and public support — the area had already been vetted through a research and stakeholder process. Ultimately, the federal government followed the states' lead and identified wind energy lease areas in the AMI. This innovative tool for bi-state coordination of wind energy planning owes its existence to the Ocean SAMP.

Ocean SAMP and Regional Ocean Planning Benefit Each Other and All New Englanders

The Ocean SAMP and the regional MSP process are strengthening each other to the benefit of all New Englanders. Yes, both efforts are sharing valuable data. But, equally important, they are building robust relationships — helping others understand the positive impacts that can

come from marine spatial planning. The Northeast Regional Planning Body will release a New England regional ocean plan in late 2016. The information and data being gathered in that process will be invaluable in informing Ocean SAMP implementation. An example is the newly created fine-scale maps showing New England fisheries activity by target species and location. Such data will feed the five-year Ocean SAMP updates — helping ensure the information and data in the state's plan stay current and relevant to stakeholders. In turn, as data are collected for the Ocean SAMP and other Rhode Island waters, the Ocean SAMP team is sharing this with the regional team. Moreover, through its implementation, the Ocean SAMP is supporting the regional effort by demonstrating the tangible benefits it creates for all interests.

While the Ocean SAMP was catalyzed by the issue of wind energy, it continues to underpin decisions on how and what Rhode Islanders will allow for future development in the waters off Rhode Island's coast. Keeping the Ocean SAMP up-to-date will be an intensive process, for which new resources must be identified. But, this will be necessary if the plan is to remain current and relevant to stakeholders and for planners to continue to engage a hard-won constituency. Collaborative efforts, such as that between the Ocean SAMP process and the regional MSP process, are an efficient way to accomplish this, sharing resources and information that benefit both efforts.



PHOTO: URI COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER / RI SEA GRANT



PHOTO: URI COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER /RI SEA GRANT

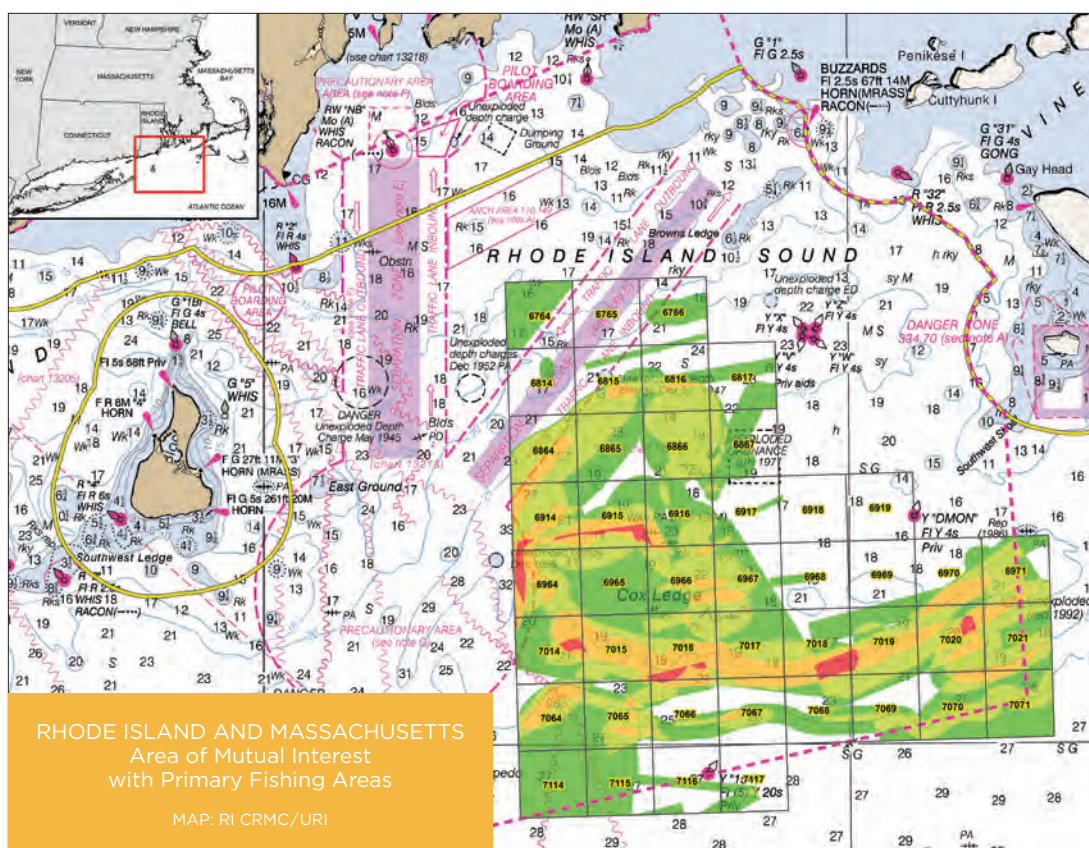
Fishermen Protect Vital Fishing Grounds

The FAB, established by CRMC as part of the Ocean SAMP, comprises nine members from Rhode Island and Massachusetts representing all major commercial and recreational fisheries in the SAMP area. The Ocean SAMP requires developers to consult with the FAB on any matter impacting fishing activities in this area before they can submit a proposal for new development.

A milestone for the FAB was their success in 2012, convincing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to remove a vital fishing ground — Cox's Ledge — from an area of federal waters that was proposed for energy leasing. To respond to this issue, the FAB worked with fishermen and the CRMC in creating detailed maps showing the high intensity of fishing on Cox's Ledge. The FAB then submitted these to BOEM in support of their request. In 2012, BOEM voluntarily honored this request and removed 205 square miles of Cox's Ledge from the proposed leasing area — helping protect fishing grounds from future development.

MAP KEY

- Area of Mutual Interest
- ▭ OceanSAMP Study Area
- State Federal Waters Separation
- Fishing Pressure
of Participating Fisheries
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



Lessons Learned from Rhode Island



The overarching lesson from the Ocean SAMP planning and implementation process is that it has been as much about people, relationship building, and trust as about sound science and appropriate policy instruments. Ocean SAMP implementation illustrates lessons learned that can inform MSP and coastal management practitioners throughout the U.S. and the world. For a more complete description of these lessons, please visit the website www.crc.uri.edu/initiatives_page/msp/

Build a broad base of leadership

During plan development, identify potential leaders from diverse constituencies and provide opportunities for them to participate, contribute knowledge and engage their colleagues. These leaders will act as spokespeople for the process and the plan. The Ocean SAMP has relied on a broad and diverse group of individuals who willingly played leadership roles. This has created distributed leadership and expertise and fostered a broad-based constituency, which has been especially important during plan implementation.

Allow time to build trust

Work proactively to build trust, and allow adequate time for it to develop, especially if there is a history of distrust among key players. Many participants in the SAMP process came with established, trusted working relationships. These have been important during both the planning and implementation phases. Others, however, came with relationships of mistrust, which takes time and hard work to change.

Keep the driver relevant to sustain stakeholder engagement through implementation

Use your planning driver – the pressing issue or problem that triggered the process – to keep stakeholders engaged. Wind energy drove Ocean SAMP development. Today, as the plan is being implemented, it continues to engage stakeholders. This is not by accident. It is a result of ongoing dialogue about wind farms and the implementation of wind energy policies and tools established through the SAMP.

Create clear policy tools to support streamlined decision-making

Build tools into your plan that demonstrably inform and streamline decision-making. Tools that can be applied in the implementation phase keep your plan from gathering dust on a shelf. They contribute to tangible and efficient plan implementation and are a means of continued stakeholder engagement. The REZ allowed the Block Island Wind Farm to be permitted quickly and efficiently. Meanwhile, the FAB and the HAB provide key stakeholder groups with an official means of staying involved in the process.



PHOTO: URI COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER / RI SEA GRANT

Prepare to work even harder during implementation

Plan for the realities of implementation while you are still developing the plan. Implementation is when the real work begins — when decisions based on the plan must be made and when activities laid out in the plan must get underway. It also means seeking new funds to continue research, to coordinate with regional efforts, and to conduct biennial assessments. All of this and more is needed to keep the plan current, fresh and relevant.

In the words of Ken Payne, a longtime Rhode Island statesman and Ocean SAMP Stakeholder Group Chair, the Ocean SAMP: “Took a situation that was potentially highly tense and converted [it] . . . into a space of developing shared understanding. . . . it replaced a battle over impacts with a shared effort and social order.”

**THAT’S WHAT
MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING
CAN DO.**



This document was produced in 2016 by the Coastal Resources Center and Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography. It is one of a series of products sharing lessons learned from the practice of marine spatial planning in the United States and abroad. These products include the “Case Studies in Marine Spatial Planning Report Series” edited by Jennifer McCann. They are part of our ongoing research and capacity-building initiative to strengthen the network of MSP and coastal management practitioners.

For further information, and for access to other documents including technical reports summarizing the three case studies mentioned here, please see www.crc.uri.edu/initiatives_page/msp/