

## **THE RHODE ISLAND OCEAN SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is currently leading the development of a special area management plan (SAMP) for Rhode Island's offshore waters. The Ocean SAMP will define use zones for a 1,547 square mile area of RI's offshore waters through a research and planning process that integrates the best available science with open public input and involvement. The SAMP will allow Rhode Island to refine the zoning of its offshore waters for diverse activities including renewable energy development. The SAMP will also protect current uses and habitats including commercial fishing; critical habitats for fish, marine animals, and birds; marine transportation; and more. The Ocean SAMP will be developed through a two-year process, concluding in July 2010, that includes scientific research on the natural resources and human uses of the SAMP area and extensive stakeholder input from user groups, coastal residents, and concerned citizens. It will result in a SAMP document to be approved by the CRMC, a refined zoning map, and regulatory standards to guide the future uses of RI's offshore waters.

This panel will explore the scientific, regulatory, planning, and human dimensions of the SAMP process. Panelists representing city and state government, the research team, and the stakeholder process will present multiple perspectives on the SAMP process as well as preliminary research results if available. The panel will be moderated by one of the SAMP Principle Investigators. Panel presentations and discussion will explore the SAMP's research agenda; the structure of the stakeholder process; the perspectives of user groups and coastal municipalities; and the regulatory authority of the final SAMP document.

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