



RHODE ISLAND
SALTWATER
ANGLERS
Association



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April 11, 2024

Rep. Evan Shanley
Chairman, House Committee on State Government & Elections
via email: HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov

Re: Support for H 8148

Dear Representative Shanley and House Committee,

Thank you for allowing our in-person testimony in support of H 8148 on April 9. As you requested we are submitting this written testimony.

The Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) represents over 7500 recreational anglers in Southeastern New England. RISAA members rely on the RI coastal resources for their businesses, their livelihood, or their recreational enjoyment. Rich Hittinger served on the Commission 2 years ago to evaluate possible restructuring of CRMC and this Bill incorporates many of the structural changes that we recommended as a Commission.

RISAA Supports creation of the Department of Coastal Resources to eliminate the current structure where a political board has overriding power over technical staff of scientists and engineers on technical issues. RISAA also would like to see structural changes to eliminate internal conflicts such as in the case of aquaculture where CRMC is tasked with both promotion of aquaculture and permitting new aquaculture leases. In the current organization these tasks are actually being handled by 1 person who both promotes aquaculture development and coordinates the permitting process for new lease applications; a set up with built-in conflict. We also anticipate that by removing political pressure exerted by the Council there will be less of a tendency to ignore State law such as was done in the approval of submerged land leases over 25 acres without approval of the RI General Assembly and there will be less of a tendency to ignore the professional staff as was done in the private negotiations for approval of the South Fork Wind Farm even though the staff advised that "the location of the SFW project on Cox Ledge, an area known for its biological diversity, is in our view one of the worst possible locations within Rhode Island Sound for this project."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Travers

Richard Hittinger, 1st Vice President

Scott Travers, Executive Director