

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Resource Management Plan Guidelines

June 2004

INTRODUCTION

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness and significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas are identified and nominated at the community level and are reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) administers the ACEC Program on behalf of the Secretary and closely coordinates with the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) regarding coastal ACECs.

Resource management plans (RMPs) are one of the tools that help communities identify and prioritize issues, projects, and partnerships for sustaining the natural and cultural resources in an ACEC. Suggestions for other planning tools and stewardship ideas can be found on the ACEC Program website at www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec/.

The purpose of these *Resource Management Plan Guidelines* is two-fold.

- 1) Outline a framework and provide information to ACEC communities who are interested in resource management planning. These general planning guidelines are applicable to both coastal and inland ACECs.
- 2) Identify additional guidelines for communities preparing state-approved ACEC RMPs, which are plans that address tidelands, Great Ponds, and navigable waterways subject to Chapter 91 jurisdiction.

The basic approach of any resource management plan is to inventory, analyze, recommend management strategies, and implement actions. ACEC Program staff are available to provide information and guidance throughout the planning process.



Wolflleet Harbor ACEC



Squamasset ACEC

Planning tools and stewardship ideas can be found on the ACEC Program website at

www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec/

The basic approach is to inventory, analyze, recommend management strategies, and implement actions.

This document answers the following questions to help communities understand the management planning approach.

Planning Considerations (p. 2)

- What are the benefits of a resource management plan (RMP)?
- How can an RMP be coordinated with other local planning efforts?
- Who can develop an RMP?

Planning Steps (p. 4)

- What are the first steps of the planning process?
- How should the public be involved?
- What information should be gathered?
- How should the RMP be structured?

State-approved RMPs (p. 11)

- How are Chapter 91 regulations addressed in a state-approved RMP?
- How is a state-approved RMP reviewed?

The last two sections of this document include specific recommendations for state-approved ACEC resource management plans. State-approved plans are developed to address the permitting and licensing of private structures for water-dependent use below the high water mark in Commonwealth tidelands, Great Ponds, and navigable rivers and streams under the jurisdiction of the Chapter 91 Waterways Regulations (310 CMR 9.00), administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). These state-approved ACEC RMPs are formally adopted by a municipality and approved by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs. The preparation and approval of these plans follow specific steps and procedures that are outlined in the last two sections of these guidelines.

With these guidelines, the ACEC Program’s 1992 *Final Guidance Document, The Development of Resource Management Plans for Coastal Areas of Critical Environmental Concern* is now updated to include both coastal and inland ACECs, all Chapter 91 waters, and general planning guidance.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN RMP?

Resource management plans provide a framework for ACEC communities to work together to protect and restore an area’s environment while promoting sustainable use and enjoyment of these resources. The planning process leads to a better understanding of an ACEC, increased public education and involvement, and improved management and stewardship.

To achieve its purpose, a resource management plan must present a thorough explanation of existing conditions; past, current and future trends; an assessment of key problems and threats; and workable strategies to address these problems. It must also show how the community intends to play a role in the success of the strategies. Much of the planning is community based, with local and regional goals and objectives guiding the plan. Accomplishing



Ellisville Harbor ACEC

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these goals often requires residents, businesses, and municipalities to consider the long-term health of natural resources and create a plan to preserve the quality and beauty of an area into the future.

Long-range planning for natural resources in ACECs also guides agencies, municipalities, and environmental organizations to restore and protect resources. Plans can be used by these groups to review and permit development projects, create public outreach strategies, seek funding, identify research and resource restoration opportunities, and guide economic growth and sustainable development. Opportunities for funding and public participation can increase upon completion of a resource management plan.

HOW CAN A RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN BE COORDINATED WITH OTHER LOCAL PLANNING EFFORTS?

Resource management planning for an ACEC is based on an ecosystem approach to managing natural and cultural resources. Depending on the size and extent of the ACEC, planning often crosses political boundaries and requires community coordination and involvement. Information important to developing a management plan can be found in a variety of other planning projects and documents, such as local comprehensive and management plans, open space plans and harbor plans, or plans prepared by regional planning agencies and watershed associations. In turn, ACEC plans can also inform and influence these types of local and regional planning efforts.

It is important to note that not all resource management planning for an ACEC needs to begin with the kind of comprehensive management approach outlined in these guidelines. Resource management planning can begin more simply with projects that address specific and perhaps more immediate resource planning needs, such as the preparation of a stand-alone environmental resource inventory, a municipal regulatory assessment, a wetlands restoration plan, or a management plan for particular open space properties. These kinds of plans can address both particular ACEC and community needs and can also serve as building blocks for a more comprehensive RMP.

WHO CAN DEVELOP A RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A resource management plan can be sponsored or prepared by a variety of agencies or organizations. To be successful, it must include strong municipal and community participation and support. One example of long-term coordination and implementation is the Kamposoa Bog Drainage Basin ACEC resource management plan, prepared by the Kamposoa Stewardship Committee with participation from a wide variety of partners. Another example is the state-approved Pleasant Bay ACEC RMP prepared by Chatham, Harwich, and Orleans. The first example involves a voluntary, informal committee that continues to implement the plan. The second example includes a formal structure created by three towns through an inter-municipal agreement to form the Pleasant Bay Alliance, which oversees implementation.

Opportunities for funding and public participation can increase with an RMP.

Information important to developing a plan can be found in a variety of other planning projects and documents.



Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog ACEC

PLANNING STEPS

WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS?

The group that gathers to discuss resource management plan options should first **define the goals and objectives** of the planning process. They should also work to answer some of these basic questions:

- What are the main environmental issues that need to be addressed?
- What is the geographic scope that the plan will cover?
- Is there enough staff and funding from the communities to produce the plan? Does a consultant need to be hired?
- How does the group want to organize their planning committee and public process?
- What commitments are important to obtain from local officials and others before the planning process begins?
- Do the communities want to address Chapter 91 issues related to private structures for water-dependent use and seek a state-approved plan?

All towns within an ACEC are encouraged to cooperate in the development of resource management plans. In many cases, the committee may need to **determine a planning area** that extends beyond the ACEC boundary to consider additional ecological relationships and watershed impacts. In other instances, especially in larger-sized ACECs, it may be appropriate for towns to focus on a smaller geographic area, based on resource considerations. One example would be the preparation of a resource management plan for a lake, Great Pond, or salt marsh system. If a smaller-sized planning area is appropriate, consultation with ACEC Program staff is strongly recommended to help determine an appropriate geographical and ecological planning area.

One of the more practical concerns is **how much staff and volunteer time is available**. If there are significant limitations on either staff time or funding, the community should decide what their planning priorities are by asking what issues are most pressing, and which ones are a priority for funding and staff time. Given the time limitations that local officials often have, communities may want to seek funding to hire the services of a planning consultant.

Groups interested in preparing a resource management plan should **consult ACEC Program staff** who will provide information and general guidance during the early planning stages. Program staff will also attend local meetings and answer questions about the management planning process. DCR approval of an outline and scope of work for the plan is required if the towns intend to submit an ACEC RMP to the Secretary for formal review and approval (see the last two sections of this document for more information on state-approved plans).

The complexity of issues and resources in an area often requires an interdisciplinary and diverse planning committee. Therefore, it is important to obtain commitments from several partners to ensure comprehensive treatment of issues and to garner support for recommended actions. One of

First define the goals and objectives of the planning process.



Miscoe-Warren-Whitehall Watersheds ACEC

What issues are most pressing and which ones are a priority for funding and staff time?

the first steps is to **form a steering committee** with members from each town to provide the leadership, accountability, and coordination needed among different municipalities. It is also important to **identify a project coordinator** to communicate with the towns, nonprofits, and appropriate agencies while overseeing implementation of the scope of work and identifying potential funding needs and sources. Finally, the steering committee should **consider forming a technical advisory committee** with representatives from state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, regional planning agencies, and local officials to provide useful guidance, scientific, regulatory, and policy review, and recommendations for funding opportunities.

HOW SHOULD THE PUBLIC BE INVOLVED?

Public awareness and participation needs to be emphasized throughout the planning process to assure long-term acceptance and implementation of the plan. The community needs to be engaged to help gather information, raise and review issues, develop and evaluate recommendations, and implement actions. The public can also provide estimates of resource use, give observations about environmental conditions and trends, reveal perceived benefits and values, and identify problems and opportunities. This information helps shape the management plan and establish priorities.

When preparing outreach strategies, it is necessary to determine who the different audiences are, a timeline for their involvement, and effective outreach methods that may include surveys, interviews, meetings and presentations, public hearings, and media outreach with newspapers, radio, and local cable TV. It is important for communities to have a forum to express their diverse perspectives and opinions, to identify problems and solutions, and to explore strategies that serve mutual interests.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE GATHERED?

The information needed to develop management recommendations should be gathered for the area's environmental resources, human uses of them, and the interactions and impacts between them. Relying on existing information and local knowledge will minimize time and costs of developing a management plan. Most of the information collected will be from current municipal plans, technical studies and reports, maps, and a variety of other existing data. Identifying data gaps is also a necessary step. New data may not be generated in time for the plan completion. Because of financial and time limitations, it is possible and often appropriate that additional data gathering needs will be incorporated into the final recommendations of a plan.

Technical information should be supplemented by surveying public perceptions and professional observations. Ultimately, all of this information will be synthesized and evaluated in order to identify issues, create management strategies and policies, and develop recommendations. The contents of a resource management plan are described below in more detail.



Hockomock Swamp ACEC

Rely on existing information and local knowledge - also identify data gaps.

HOW SHOULD THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN BE STRUCTURED?

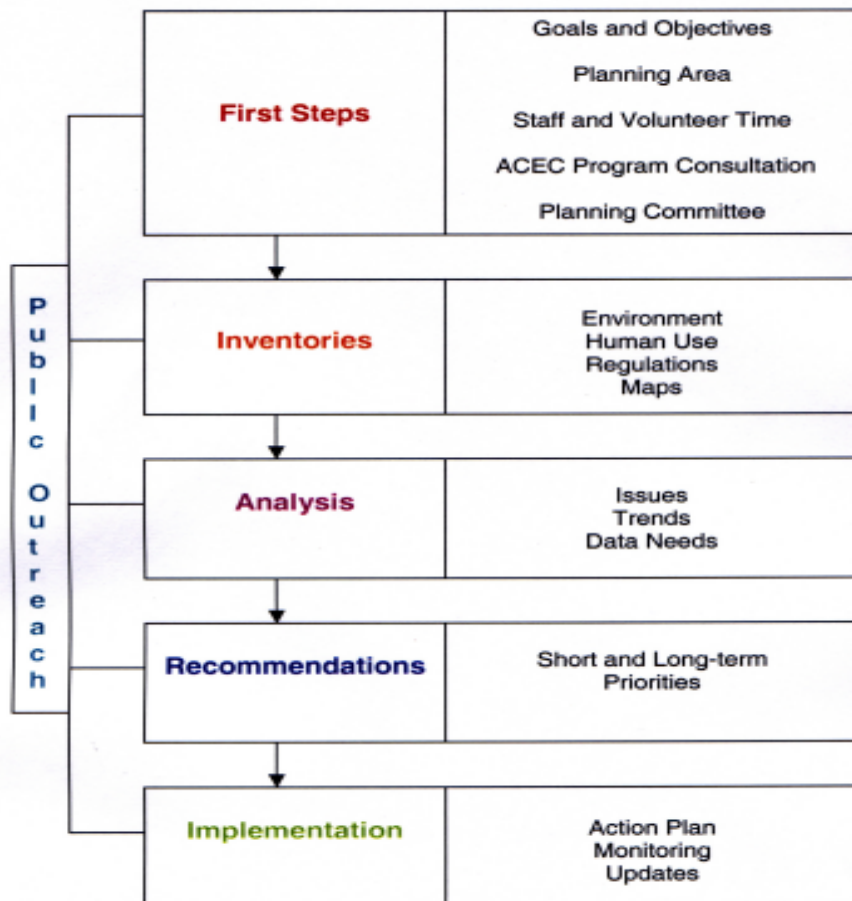
The following list identifies different sections typically found in a resource management plan. A brief explanation for each of these sections follows.

- Overview
 - Executive summary
 - Overview of environmental significance
 - Description of planning process
 - Goals for resource management
- Inventories
 - Environmental
 - Human use
 - Regulatory
 - Maps
- Analysis and identification of issues
- Recommendations and priorities
- Implementation
- Bibliography/appendices



Inner Cape Cod Bay ACEC

Figure 1. ACEC Resource Management Planning Framework



Executive Summary: A well-prepared Executive Summary is essential to help inform managers and the general public about key findings and recommendations in the plan. It should highlight the most important aspects about the ACEC resources, priority findings, issues, and recommendations, and actions needed to begin implementation.

Overview of Environmental Significance: A short summary highlighting the most important wildlife, rare species, water resources, habitats, protected areas, geology, and other key findings about natural resources and their interrelationships sets the context for the entire plan. An environmental inventory is part of the ACEC nomination and designation documents, which can be referenced along with recent findings and research. These documents can also be used to describe key aspects of the ACEC designation including the year designated, acreage, general boundary description, nomination parties, and towns involved.

Description of Planning Process: A brief description of the planning process will include a chronology of plan development and community participation – how many public meetings or hearings were held, announcements and news articles published, surveys conducted, etc. It identifies planning participants such as project coordinators, advisory or steering committees, and representatives from communities, agencies, and organizations active in the area. A summary of citizen groups and non-governmental organizations with their goals, activities, and accomplishments related to the ACEC will assist in planning. This section may also highlight the evolution of the planning process based on important issues, findings, and recommendations.

Goals for Resource Management: The process of developing a plan requires many diverse groups to come together to create a shared vision and translate that vision into management strategies and actions. Management goals are often broad and describe the common aspirations and objectives of the diverse planning partners. Focusing on the long-term sustainability of the resources, human uses, and character of the region will help set goals that provide direction throughout the planning process. Examples of goals include: maintaining resource health; minimizing or alleviating human impacts to resources; restoring impaired resources; and determining whether added safeguards are needed to protect the resources. Local and regional needs and priorities will shape the specific goals of a resource management plan.

Inventories: Inventories help determine what information is essential to the planning process, what is missing, and what is unavailable or outdated. It is important for a planning committee to focus first on compiling existing information and observations rather than spending time and money on generating new supporting data. If the planning committee realizes that important background information is missing, then they can recommend future research, unless that data is determined to be critical to the development of the plan. Information gathered through inventories can be analyzed to identify where to focus management efforts. For example, when environmental resource information is compared with results of the human

ACEC nomination and designation documents can be referenced along with recent findings and research.

A plan requires many diverse groups to come together to create a shared vision.

Inventories help determine what information is essential to the planning process.

use inventory, threats such as surrounding land or water uses and their impacts on water quality can be identified.

Information needed to compile the inventories can be found in the ACEC designation document, academic and scientific papers, federal and state agency resource studies, local conservation and health department and open space committee reports, non-profit organization's newsletters and reports, plans prepared by regional planning agencies and watershed associations, and newspaper articles. A comprehensive review of these sources may not be necessary as long as the information gathered is detailed enough to address the issues and goals of planning.

Environmental Inventory: Describing the location of natural and cultural resources and their conditions and trends is an essential part of the plan. The environmental inventory is the foundation upon which the rest of the plan is developed. The inventory should gather information about the following kinds of resources.

- Physical characteristics of the area, including its watershed and sub-watersheds, hydrology, topography, and geology.
- Ecological resource areas such as wetlands, marshes, floodplains and erosion areas, estuaries, lakes and rivers, forests, meadows, and other natural areas.
- Wildlife resources including birds, fish, shellfish, and rare species.
- Resources utilized by humans such as water supplies, working farms and forest lands, and aquaculture areas.
- Historical and archaeological resources and scenic landscapes.
- Open space and recreational areas, including protected areas, parks, and public access points.
- Historic or recurring events with impacts on the community such as wildfires or floods.

It is especially useful to map this resource information to illustrate the relationship and overlap of different resource areas.

Human Use Inventory: This inventory characterizes human activities, settlement patterns, and the built environment. It looks at trends in the use of the natural resources and how these uses contribute to present and future resource conditions and to the local economy. Human uses within ACECs that need to be described include land use and settlement patterns, transportation and utility networks, dredge activity and disposal areas, marinas, mooring basins, docks and piers, erosion control structures, dams, solid waste facilities, and point and nonpoint sources of pollution. It also may be useful to summarize major project reviews completed or pending in the ACEC.

If the regulation of shoreline structures is being addressed through a state-approved ACEC RMP (p. 11), detailed information must be acquired about water-dependent structures. Sometimes this information is available through the local conservation commissions and the Department of Environmental Protection's Waterways Program, but it also may be necessary to go in the field or use aerial photos to catalog all water-

The environmental inventory is the foundation upon which the rest of the plan is developed.



Kamponsa Bog Drainage Basin ACEC

It may be necessary to go in the field or use aerial photos to catalog all shoreline structures.

dependent structures, including docks and piers, retaining walls, jetties, groins, and boat ramps. This list should determine the type and size of these structures and whether they have received necessary licenses or permits. It is also important to catalog non water-dependent uses along the shoreline.

Regulatory Inventory: Since one goal of the planning process is to determine whether additional safeguards need to be put in place to protect ACEC resources, an understanding of the existing regulatory and management framework is needed. Attention should be focused on an evaluation of local bylaws and regulations of the planning board, conservation commission, board of health, harbormaster or waterways committee, shellfish constable, and other natural resources departments. It is also useful to consider how state and federal management and regulations complement or conflict with local efforts. The regulatory inventory will help point out gaps in resource protection, inconsistencies between local boards and between neighboring towns, and areas of potential conflict. When appropriate, case studies, model bylaws, and examples from other towns and regional planning organizations can be identified.

Maps: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and analysis are increasingly being used as tools to help understand and manage environmental resources. Maps offer visually compelling ways to illustrate, analyze, and disseminate information when preparing a plan. Important things to map in an ACEC include the water resources, land use, open space, human activity, wildlife habitats and rare species areas, and pollution sources. These planning tools help to analyze and identify environmentally sensitive areas, restoration opportunities, areas of intense activity, declining resources, and contamination sources. Maps can be displayed at a variety of public locations, meetings, and workshops to demonstrate local planning concerns, regional issues, and how activities in one community can affect natural resources in neighboring towns. Local input can help improve management decisions by ground-truthing these maps to improve their accuracy and by adding new information to the data layers.

Different scales of maps and resource overlays are usually needed for data collection and analysis. For a list of resources mapped by the state's MassGIS office, see their website at www.state.ma.us/mgis. Specific information about ACEC mapping is available on the ACEC Program website at www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec. More detailed information may be mapped by municipal departments or regional planning agencies, or contained in plans prepared for site-specific projects.

Analysis and Identification of Issues: Analysis is perhaps the most underestimated but essential part of developing a plan. Once the information is gathered from inventories and mapping, analysis will clarify the main issues and identify data gaps and future information needs.

Review local bylaws and regulations and point out gaps in resource protection.

Maps offer visually compelling ways to illustrate complex information.

For a list of resources mapped by the state's MassGIS office, see their website at www.state.ma.us/mgis

The **environmental resource analysis** should summarize:

- the existing health of these resources,
- changes and trends in resources,
- resource threats and degradation, and
- information and research needs.

The **human use analysis** should address:

- concerns about natural resource uses,
- impacts of existing and future uses,
- the location and conflicts of different uses, and
- the potential for managing these conflicts.

The **regulatory analysis** should address:

- the conflict and compatibility between existing regulations and management practices,
- opportunities for enhancing the regulatory approach,
- specific policies and regulations that need to be adopted or amended by the communities and,
- lessons learned from other models of regulation and management.

Information should also be reviewed in order to **evaluate the existing ACEC boundary** and determine whether it should be modified to address community or environmental needs, or to provide additional protection for sensitive resources. The analysis and recommendations of a resource management plan may provide the basis for expanding or reducing the ACEC boundary area. ACEC Program staff should be consulted about potential recommendations to modify the boundary. A clear assessment of the public need and scientific evidence to support the recommendation is required. The procedures to amend an ACEC boundary are the same as those to nominate a new ACEC, and can be found on the ACEC Program website at www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec.

The identification of issues, opportunities, and challenges derived from the analysis can be presented in a concise and comprehensive summary that in turn leads to the development of actions, priorities, and policies.

Recommendations and Priorities: From the analysis, the planning committee will develop recommendations about actions needed to protect or restore the resources and policies to guide future decision-making. Public outreach should be used to gather comments about priorities and issues, to help develop practical management solutions, and to educate the community and gather their support. Recommendations will focus on the goals of the plan and can address future outreach, monitoring, research, restoration, public open space and access, and regulatory changes. Each recommendation can be evaluated based on a certain set of criteria, which can include urgency, feasibility, relative benefit and cost estimates, timeframe, permitting needs, partners, and public support. Prioritizing recommendations and actions based on the criteria will ensure that support and funding are directed to the actions that offer the greatest benefit.



Sandy Neck/Barnstable Harbor ACEC



Karner Brook Watershed ACEC

Prioritize recommendations to ensure that support and funding are directed to actions that offer the greatest benefit.

Implementation: Determining how recommendations will be implemented is one of the most critical parts of the planning process. Some recommendations call for immediate action while others provide a foundation for next steps and research. Given the number and complexity of management recommendations, it is often necessary to develop an action plan that identifies a series of tasks and prioritizes which of these will address the most pressing resource issues during the early phases of implementation. It is also helpful to identify specific projects or grant applications that can help achieve early successes, garner additional support, and establish credibility and momentum.

Action steps and their priorities along with timelines for action and identification of responsible parties should be included. Overall, it is important for an action plan to:

- Involve responsible parties and identify partnerships.
- Create a framework and structure for communities to work together.
- Describe priority recommendations.
- Determine strategies, actions, and timeframes.
- Identify needed resources, such as funding, staff time, or volunteers.
- Specify a process for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and modification of the plan; a formal five-year review and update is recommended.
- Address on-going community involvement and support.

STATE-APPROVED RMPS

HOW ARE CHAPTER 91 WATERWAYS REGULATIONS ADDRESSED IN A STATE-APPROVED ACEC RMP?

One section in the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)'s Chapter 91 Waterways Regulations, 310 CMR 9.32 (1)(e)(4), relates to any "privately-owned structure for water-dependent use below the high water mark" located in a state-designated ACEC. In effect, a state-approved RMP allowing private water-dependent structures within an ACEC is required for any private structure **built after October 4, 1990**. Specifically:

This regulation establishes that the DEP can license private water-dependent structures (including docks and piers) in an ACEC if they were **built before October 4, 1990**. If a resource management plan has been locally adopted and state-approved, the structures must be consistent with the RMP.

However, for private water-dependent structures **built after October 4, 1990**, DEP can only license those structures where there is a locally adopted and state-approved RMP, and where the structures are consistent with that RMP.

A state-approved plan identifies where water-dependent structures may be appropriate, or after thorough analysis and review, the plan may simply recommend the continuation of the Chapter 91 prohibition for these structures within the ACEC.

Identify specific projects to achieve early successes, garner support, and establish momentum.



Pleasant Bay ACEC

A state-approved RMP allowing private water-dependent structures within an ACEC is required for any private structure built after October 4, 1990.

A state-approved plan identifies where water-dependent structures may be appropriate, or may simply recommend the continued Chapter 91 prohibition.

The general approach for inventories, analysis, recommendations, and implementation described in previous sections of these guidelines applies to a state-approved ACEC RMP. However, the state-approved plan must also include:

- A detailed shoreline assessment describing environmental conditions and existing structures (Human Use Inventory p. 8).
- An assessment of all existing docks and piers to determine whether they are licensed and in compliance with local and state regulations.
- Specific guidelines for the licensing of potential new, private docks and piers or water-dependent structures. When considering siting of new structures, the planning committee must address the protection of sensitive environmental resources, the appropriate siting of and design standards for such structures, and regulations and enforcement procedures. For example, the Pleasant Bay ACEC RMP incorporated a resource-based assessment of shoreline throughout the ACEC. The assessment generated an index of sensitivity related to new structures, and provided the basis for prohibiting new structures in a significant proportion of the Bay's shoreline. For the remaining areas, strict guidelines and performance standards were developed for potential licensing of new structures. (See www.pleasantbayalliance.org.)
- Recommendations to identify areas for further study or for suitability of boat ramps, revetments, and other structures and activities below the high water mark.

Recent publications available from the DEP - *Chapter 91 Public Waterfront Act, Small Docks and Piers, A Guide to Permitting Small, Pile-Supported Docks and Piers,* and *Chapter 91 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* – are very useful references (see the DEP website at www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/waterway/wspubs.htm).

A state-approved ACEC RMP should also assess multiple water-dependent issues and activities. These might include public access, boating, aquaculture, and dredging. Regarding dredging, it is important to point out that 310 CMR 9.40 (1) (b) provides limitations on dredging and dredge disposal activities in an ACEC. Projects shall not include: (1) improvement dredging except for the purpose of fisheries or wildlife enhancement; and (2) dredge material disposal except for beach nourishment, dune construction or stabilization or enhancement of fisheries or wildlife resources. Although this regulation regarding improvement dredging and dredge material disposal is not changed by a state-approved RMP, any issues regarding these activities should be identified in the RMP.



Parker River/Essex Bay ACEC

For waterways publications, see the DEP website at www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/waterway/wspubs.htm



Waquoit Bay ACEC

HOW IS A STATE-APPROVED PLAN REVIEWED?

For a state-approved ACEC RMP, Secretary of Environmental Affairs review and approval is required to grant relief from the Chapter 91 prohibition on new privately owned structures for water-dependent use within an ACEC. The final RMP can be submitted to the Secretary for review and approval after being adopted by a mayor and city council or by a board of selectmen of one or more cities or towns affected by the ACEC designation. (If a group other than a recognized municipal board or commission wants to develop a state-approved plan, the group should seek approval from and coordinate closely with their municipality when they begin the process).

The review process outlined below is designed specifically for state-approved ACEC RMPs. The outline is a summary of the procedures for review and approval of state-approved ACEC RMPs provided in the document, *Policy Guidelines for the Review and Approval of ACEC Resource Management Plans (1996)*, available from the ACEC Program and website.

- The Department of Conservation and Recreation must approve an outline and scope of work before a state-approved management plan is begun. Consultation with ACEC Program staff is strongly recommended.
- Once a final state-approved ACEC RMP draft is completed and submitted to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for review and approval, the Secretary may request additional information within 45 days of the submission of the plan. If the plan provides sufficient information, the Secretary will hold a public hearing to receive public comment and testimony regarding the plan.
- The public hearing will be held in the locality of the ACEC, following advance public notice.
- The Secretary will make a decision as to whether or not to approve the state-approved ACEC RMP, or portions of the plan, within 30 days of the public hearing.
- For purposes of the Chapter 91 requirements, a state-approved RMP is considered adopted by a municipality only after a mayor and city council or board of selectmen adopts the plan.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about the ACEC resource management planning process or to obtain further planning information such as maps, resource summaries, designation documents, and other ACEC Program materials, see www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec or contact the following staff:

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Rumney Marshes ACEC

Consultation with ACEC Program staff is strongly recommended.

To obtain further planning information, see the ACEC Program website at www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec

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Westboro Cedar Swamp ACEC

