

Rhode Island Offshore Wind Public Participation Guide

Prepared by the
Special Initiative on Offshore Wind

February 2022



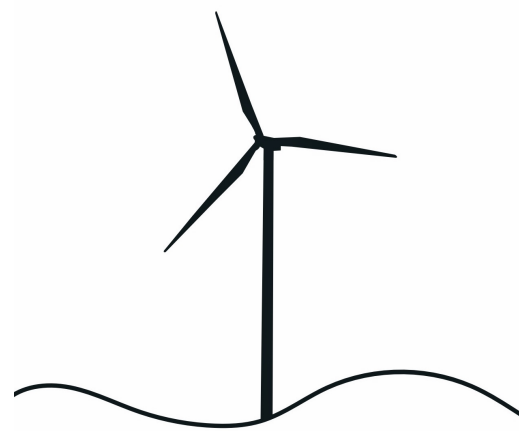
Purpose of This Guide

State policies support robust public participation opportunities for comments and questions relevant to offshore wind development. Each state handles offshore wind regulations differently, and these policies' complex, interwoven nature can make them confusing to the public. This guide aims to present a clear picture of how the public has shaped offshore wind siting in Rhode Island and how they can participate in offshore wind permitting processes in the future.

Your Feedback Makes A Difference

As evidenced in Rhode Island's offshore wind siting processes to date, public feedback can help shape the development of offshore wind in Rhode Island while promoting the protection of the state's unique coastal resources and reducing multiple-use conflicts on the ocean.

As Rhode Island continues to pursue its offshore wind procurement goals, public feedback plays a crucial part in promoting a responsible transition to offshore wind energy with the environmental and economic benefits it promises. Rhode Island state policies provide many offshore wind planning and project level participation opportunities relevant to offshore wind to incorporate feedback to protect Rhode Island's unique coastal resources and minimize conflicts with existing ocean uses.



Special Initiative on
Offshore Wind

Prepared by:
The Special initiative on Offshore Wind
To learn more visit
www.offshorewindpower.org

About the Special Initiative on Offshore Wind

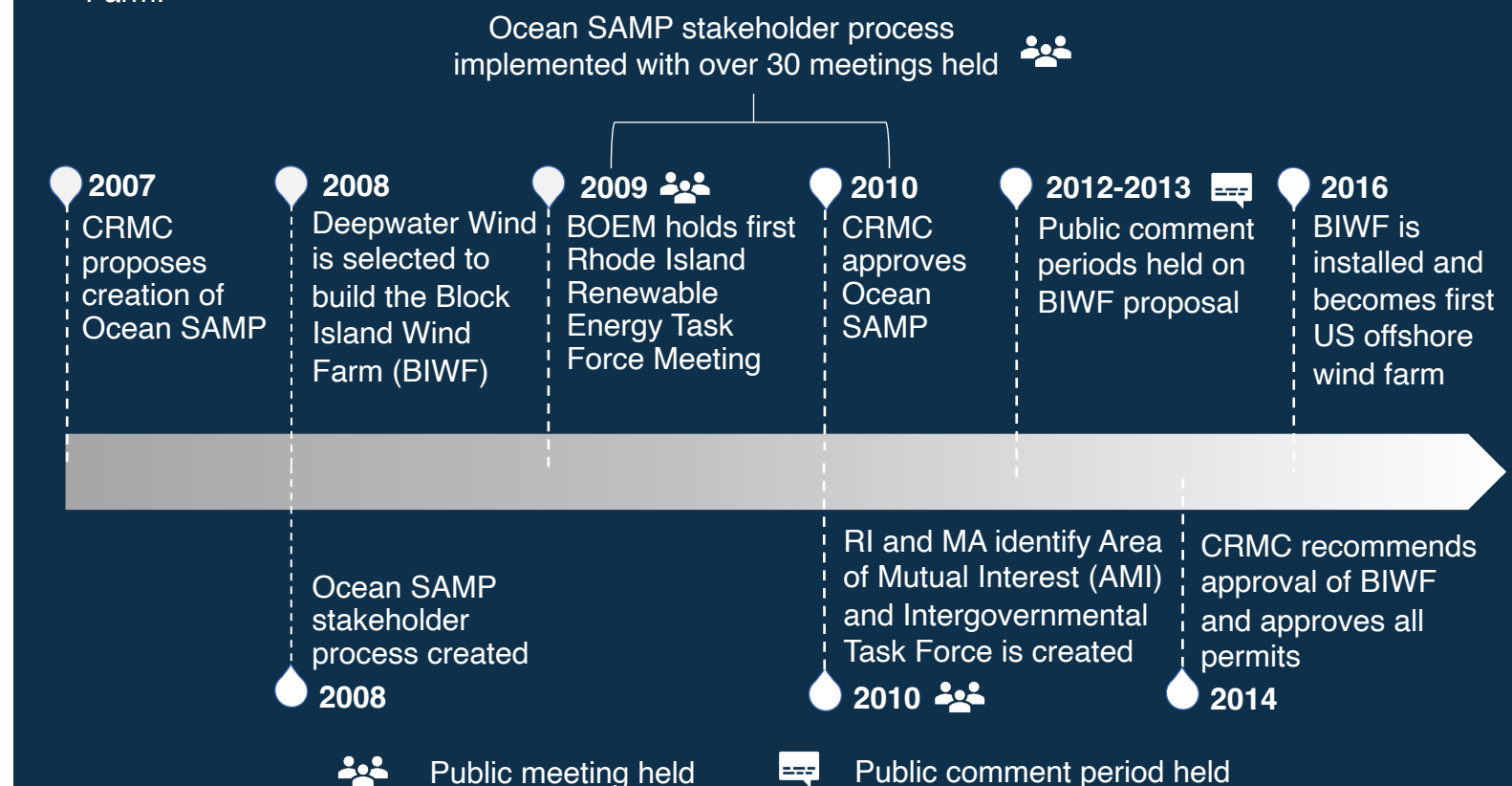
The Special Initiative on Offshore Wind (SIOW) is a leader in advancing offshore wind in the US. As an independent organization, we rely on fact-based research and multi-sector collaboration to provide expertise, analysis, information sharing, and strategic partnerships with industry, advocacy, and government stakeholders to build understanding and drive the deployment of offshore wind. We are guided by a Steering Committee of diverse interests, including representation from offshore wind developers, NGOs, and federal and state policymakers. We are funded by private foundations, do not offer memberships, and have no contractual obligations to any members in the OSW sector, all of which support our objectivity and unique approach to our work.

Rhode Island Offshore Wind Siting Public Participation Timeline

Providing Rhode Island state agencies with meaningful feedback helps. In 2007, then-Governor Carcieri mandated 15% of Rhode Island's electricity generation come from renewable sources by 2020. That same year, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) proposed the creation of the Ocean Special Area Management Plan (Ocean SAMP), which has become the center of Rhode Island's offshore wind siting process. The public and stakeholders have been crucial to the development of the Ocean SAMP since the stakeholder process was created in 2008 and process implementation began in 2009. Between 2008 and 2010, over 30 meetings were held with the public and stakeholders to incorporate their input. Through the Ocean SAMP, a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) was identified off the coast of Rhode Island within state waters with the least impacts to natural habitat and conflicting ocean uses. In 2010, the CRMC approved the Ocean SAMP, which was then federally approved by NOAA in 2011.

While the Ocean SAMP was being developed in 2009, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) held the first Rhode Island Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting. Then, in 2010, Rhode Island and Massachusetts worked together to identify an Area of Mutual Interest (AMI) off their coasts and created an Intergovernmental Task Force. These Task Forces aided the BOEM by providing input on offshore wind leasing processes, excluding high-value fishing areas, identifying data needs, and informing and gathering public input. Throughout the siting and leasing process for the Wind Energy Areas (WEAs), the BOEM held several Task Force meetings and informational meetings, Q&A sessions, community seminars, and public comment periods.

The Ocean SAMP process was central to the development of the Block Island Wind Farm (30 MW), which became the nation's first offshore wind farm in 2016. In 2008, then-Governor Carcieri selected Deepwater Wind to construct the farm off Block Island. In 2008, Deepwater Wind began holding monthly and bi-monthly meetings with the public and stakeholders to gather feedback. Additional public and stakeholder feedback was gathered through public comment periods as part of the state and federal permitting processes. After extensive public input, in 2014, the CRMC approved the Block Island Wind Farm.



Rhode Island Offshore Wind Public Participation Opportunities

Federal Consistency Review

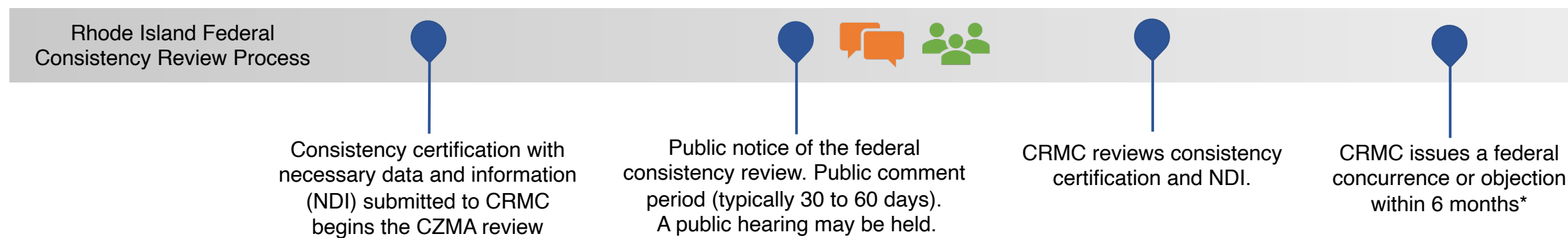
State Permits and Approvals

Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has review authority for proposed federal actions or federal license or permit applications, including those for offshore wind, that have reasonably foreseeable effects on Rhode Island's coastal uses or resources. Per this review authority, the CRMC reviews such proposed federal activities for consistency with the state's enforceable coastal management policies.

Currently, all planned offshore wind projects are located within federal waters on the Outer Continental Shelf. The CRMC's review authority applies to federal activities within the state's coastal zone or in federal waters beyond the state's jurisdiction if such activities may have reasonably foreseeable effects on Rhode Island's coastal uses and resources. The CRMC provides public participation opportunities through its federal consistency review process pursuant to the CZMA.

The following permits or approvals only apply if a portion of an offshore wind project, such as an export cable, falls within state lands or jurisdictional waters. Each approval and permit serves a different purpose in ensuring the conservation of Rhode Island's natural resources for the benefit of the people of Rhode Island. It is at the discretion of the offshore wind developer as to the timing of submitting the applications for these permits and approvals as they must navigate both federal and states processes while weighing other projects considerations.

Following the submission of an application, a public notice that the application is available for public review will be posted. Public notices are issued in writing to abutters and may be posted in a newspaper in circulation within the proposed project area. A 30-day public comment period or public hearing will be held once a public notice has been issued, depending on the permit or approval. In some cases, a public hearing may also be held if requested during the public comment period, or the RIDEM or CRMC decides one should be held.



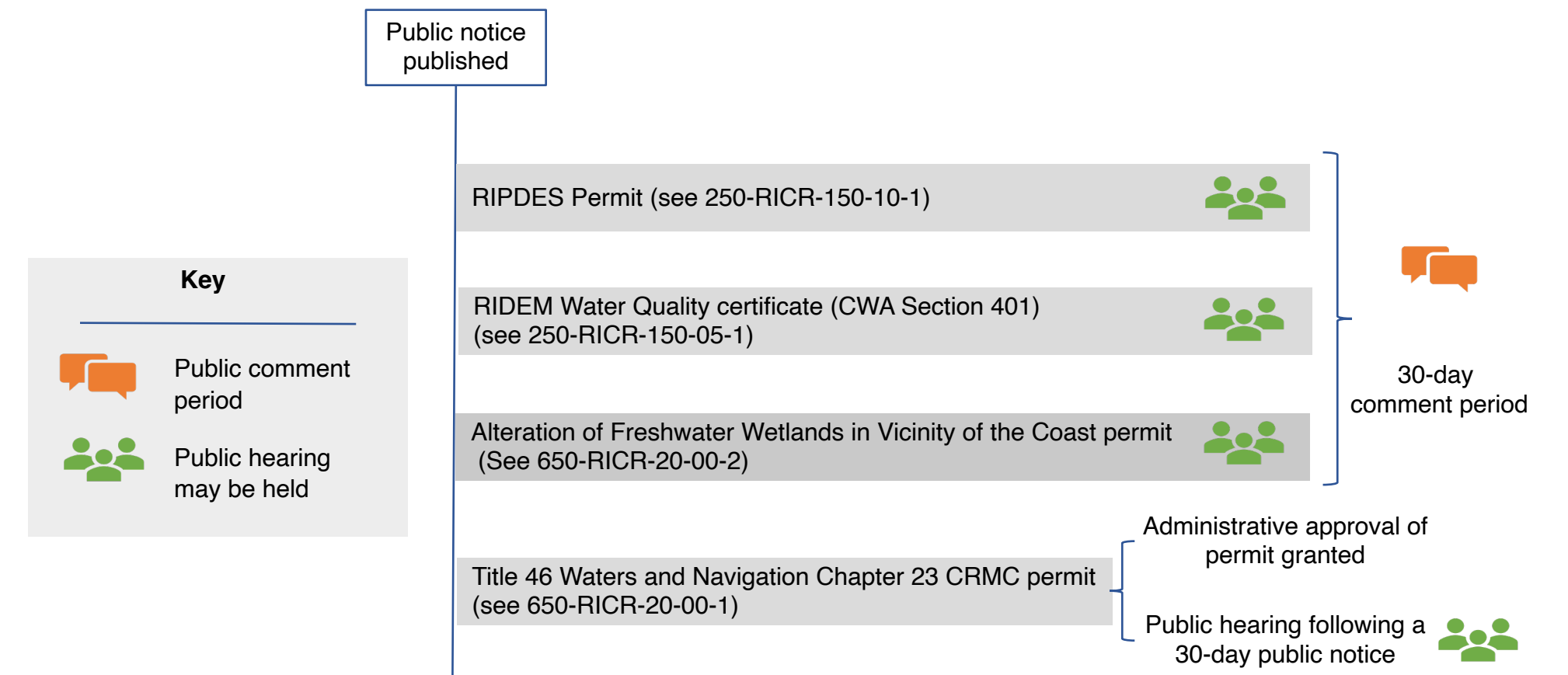
* CRMC and applicant can agree to stay the review period in writing

More information about the federal consistency process can be found at the following resources:

Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Program Red Book see 650-RICR-20-00-01

CRMC Federal Consistency Manual visit http://www.crmc.ri.gov/regulations/Fed_Consistency.pdf

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Federal Consistency website visit <https://coast.noaa.gov/czm/consistency/>



More information about the offshore wind leasing process and public participation opportunities can be found at the following resources:

Rhode Island Wind Energy website: The site provides information on wind energy in Rhode Island including the current market, programs, incentives, and other resources. Visit the website here: <http://www.energy.ri.gov/renewable-energy/wind/>

Public Comment Period: Allows interested parties, including the public, to submit written comments on permits, certifications, and other state regulatory actions for proposed offshore wind development projects. Written comments are accepted, and, in some cases, a public hearing may be requested.

Public Hearing: Allows the state regulatory agency to engage in additional fact-finding and for interested parties, including the public, opportunities to provide oral comments and voice concerns regarding state regulatory actions related to offshore wind development.