

26th Annual International Submerged Lands Management Conference

Rhode Island Urban Coastal Greenway

Speaker: Grover Fugate

Abstract: Sections 140 and 150 of the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Program establish setbacks and coastal buffers that apply to all Rhode Island shorelines. However, as these regulations are more suited to rural and suburban areas of the state and were in appropriate for a hard urban edge. The RICRMC recognized the need for a more flexible approach in its coastal vegetative buffer requirements for urban development. These new urban buffer regulations mitigate for factors that result from the large-scale redevelopment that is anticipated along the Metro Bay Region shoreline, but also allow for economic development. These factors include, but are not limited to: the degradation of Narragansett Bay and its tributaries by stormwater runoff; the potential loss of unique coastal habitats, and the absence of public access along and to the Metro Bay Region shoreline.

This document, the Urban Coastal Greenway (UCG) Regulations for the Metro Bay Region, describes a new regulatory approach toward coastal vegetative buffers for the urbanized environment of northern Narragansett Bay. Urban Coastal Greenways offer a mechanism to redevelop the urban waterfront of the Metro Bay Region in a manner that integrates economic development, expanded public access along and to the shoreline, and provides for the management, protection, and restoration of valuable coastal habitats.

With the development of these new regulations, applicants have a choice between following the coastal buffer and setback regulations as set forth in the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program (RICRMP) or using the UCG option. The UCG policy is intended to provide a permitting option that clarifies and streamlines the regulatory process for urban coastal development, and to create greater flexibility in meeting the Coastal Resources Management Council requirements. The new policy therefore establishes specific standards regarding overall vegetation of the site, management of stormwater runoff using Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, and public access, as described in UCG Section 150.

The increased regulatory flexibility is reflected in the establishment of four Urban Coastal Greenway Zones within the planning boundary of the Metro Bay Special Area Management Plan (SAMP): Residential Zone, Area of Particular Concern Zone, Inner Harbor and River Zone, and Development Zone. The boundaries of these zones have been determined by the existing conditions of coastal habitat, public access infrastructure, single and two-family residential areas, and current municipal plans for development and/or redevelopment. The requirements for each Zone are described in UCG Sections 160 through 190

Another novel component of the Urban Coastal Greenway policy is the inclusion of an option to reduce the UCG width through compensation. The compensation options

generally allow an applicant to reduce the UCG from the standard width to a compact width in return for site or coastal resource enhancements such as improved public access or habitat conservation and preservation. These options are described in Section 230 of this document.

Flexibility is crucial to the management and protection of coastal resources in urban environments. It is desirable to encourage responsible redevelopment of the Metro Bay Region shoreline in order to promote reuse of heretofore abandoned or underutilized brownfield sites, and also to discourage over-development of Rhode Island's dwindling rural and suburban green spaces. Similarly, it is important to protect existing natural coastal habitat that offers unique environmental and social benefits to the Metro Bay Region. The UCG Regulations provide a regulatory framework for accomplishing all of these objectives simultaneously.

Speaker Information: Grover Fugate graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1976, with a degree in Natural Resource Management. After graduation Mr. Fugate worked as an urban forester for a private company in Connecticut. In 1978, Mr. Fugate moved to Canada and went to work in a series of positions including Forester, Land Use Planner, with the Department of Agriculture, Regional Resource Planner, with the Crown Lands Branch, and Director of Shore Zone Management. In 1984, Mr. Fugate completed his MBA from Memorial with a program specialization in resource policy analysis.

In 1986, Mr. Fugate transferred to Rhode Island to assume the duties of the Executive Director of the Coastal Resources Management Council. The council is an independent state agency, set up to be the principle planning and management agency for the state's coastal areas. Mr. Fugate's current duties include, the day to day administration of the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Program for the State of Rhode Island. As part of his duties Mr. Fugate is the council's and states representative to a number of boards, commissions, task forces, and other coastal related organizations. Mr. Fugate also is a guest lecture at the University of Rhode Island and Roger Williams University and a trainer at the Coastal Resources Center for Integrated Coastal Management. He is the recipient of several citations from the Governor and the Legislature for his work in Coastal Management and Community Service. Mr. Fugate has published articles on various issues in coastal and natural resource management.