Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has scheduled a meeting to review the proposed aquaculture lease in the shellfish spawner sanctuary in Quonochontaug Pond.

To our members:

As you may recall, in January of this year, notices of two proposed commercial viability oyster leases in Quonochontaug Pond were sent out by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). One of those proposed lease sites is in the town of Westerly, just west of Nopaskeek Island and adjacent to Ski Beach. The proposed lease is within a Department of Environmental Management (DEM) shellfish spawner sanctuary that was established in the 1970s to increase shellfish stocks throughout Quonochontaug Pond. Should this aquaculture lease site be approved and then succeed, the applicant would seek a 3-acre commercial aquaculture lease at the site.

CRMC has strongly opposed the proposed aquaculture site in the spawner sanctuary to CRMC, DEM, the Town of Westerly, at public meetings, in the press, through our website, and in emails to our members and other stakeholders. The spawner sanctuary was designated for shellfish restoration, and is closed for harvesting. In the decades since it was established, DEM has stocked many hundreds of bushels of mature scallops, oysters and quahogs to spawn and replenish shellfish stocks throughout the pond. CRMC, its partners, and many volunteers have planted over 800 bushels of quahogs in recent years to restock the sanctuary as part of a $60,000 NOAA grant. We believe leasing this public resource to a private party is a violation of the public trust.

The purpose of this email is to inform our members of the CRMC meeting to review this application, should you want to attend the meeting to express your opinion of the lease, CRMC will be in attendance to firmly reiterate our opposition to this proposed lease. Here is the meeting notice from CRMC:

MEETING NOTICE

March 28, 2013

State Address: Quonochontaug Pond
State Town: Charlestown
Prox. Town: Westerly
Commercial Viability oyster aquaculture

The application for State Asset of Graham Sterling CRMC File Number 2012-01067 will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Coastal Resources Management Council. If you are the applicant, it is necessary that you be present at the meeting to answer any questions that may arise. Please be advised that a copy of the CRMC staff engineer and biologist reports may be obtained from the CRMC office in Westerly for the applicant or their attorney. Interested parties may attend and present evidence for or against, or for informational purposes in accordance with CRMC rules. Parties interested in this matter are encouraged to review the latest information contained in this file and should refer to Management Procedures 5.3.8 among others for additional information.

The meeting is to be held at 6:00 p.m. (doors are to be advised that the CRMC Educational series begins at 6:00 p.m.) on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 in Conference Room A, at the Administrative Building, One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI. Evidence or testimony regarding this case may be submitted at the time of the meeting (see CRMC Management Procedures). The CRMC office policy for public review of files scheduled for review by the full Council states that they are available to the public until 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Please confirm application’s hearing status via CRMC website (www.crmc.org) or by calling 401-783-3370. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired must notify the Council office at 783-3370 at least 72 hours in advance of the hearing date.

Sincerely yours,
Lisa A. Turner, Office Manager
Coastal Resources Management Council

The meeting will be held:
Tuesday April 9, 2013
6:00 PM
Conference Room A
Administrative Building
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI

To see the original commercial viability lease proposal, click here.
To see a map of the lease site, click here.
To see SPC’s original letter of opposition to CRMC, click here.
To see SPC’s previous letter to members regarding our position on the proposed leases, click here.

If you cannot attend the meeting but would like to express your comments or concerns about this project, contact:
Dane Bazzell, CRMC Aquaculture Coordinator, 401-783-3370 dane.bazzell@crmcn.org
Janet Colt, Director of RI DEM, at 401-222-2771 or janet.colt@dem.ri.gov

Thank you again for your support.
Art Ganz, SPC President
Elise Torelli, SPC Executive Director