

9th Annual Land and Water Conservation Summit

Understanding the RI Legislative Process and Developing “Green” Bills

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Summary

- Basic process of the legislative process in RI ; General legislative timeline...being prepared
- Creating a new bill; Finding a good sponsor; Key role of Legislative Council; Committee process
- Tracking a bill using the legislative information system
- Rhode Island's aquaculture legislation as an exemplar of a Green Economy Bill turned into RI Law



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Basic Process of Legislation

- Basic Process: [How a Bill Becomes Law in Rhode Island](#)
- Many of the ‘fine points’ are in the Rules --- “*good fortune favors the well-prepared*” – Louis Pasteur
[2011-2012 RI House Rules](#)
- Legislative calendar --- “*being at the right place at the right time*” [RI Legislative Calendar](#)

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Creating a new bill

- Getting familiar with existing laws:
[Rhode Island General Laws](#)
- Looking at other bills for structure:
 - Example House Resolution -- Rep. Azzinaro Westerly
 - Example of simple House Bill -- Rep. Flaherty et al. 2004
 - Example complex House Bill --- Rep. Rice et al. 2010
- Looking at efforts in other states:
[National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
- Other model legislation? What's your experience?

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Finding Legislative Sponsors

- Best to have ***identical*** House and Senate “companion bills”
- Finding an interested sponsors for your legislation:
 - Checking Committee Memberships
 - Looking for “best fit” legislator
- After the bill is drafted, your sponsor will look for co-sponsors
- Who are some good “green” legislators in your experience?

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Role of Legislative Council

- Sponsoring legislator must submit draft bills to Legislative Council
- Complex legislation frequently assigned to staff attorney for research work & drafting
- Draft bill will be sent to requesting legislator for review & introduction ---- ***critical point!***
- Bill is introduced on floor
 - Regular introduction
 - After deadline introduction per Rules

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After Bill Introduction

- Bill assigned to committee
- Check bill status online: [Checking Committee Bill Inventory](#)
- Written testimony on bill accepted
- Legislator must file “request for hearing” paperwork with Committee Clerk
 - Get supporters ready for hearing
 - Committee Chairman will set date of hearing
 - 3 days notice of hearing

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The Committee Hearing

- Work with your bill sponsor to “manage” your testimony --- *“90% of success is just showing up”* – Woody Allen
- Committee chairman will determine order of testimony from sign-in sheet
- Short and concise; avoid repetition; keep it interesting; most detailed info should be in writing
- Listen opposition testimony for possible bill revisions
- Bills rarely voted on in first hearing

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After the Committee Hearing

- Conduct a post-hearing debriefing session with your bill sponsor
- Simple bills often amended in committee
 - Sponsor works with objectors on concerns
 - Sponsor works with committee chairman on substitute
 - Chairman requests sub-a legislation drafted by Legislative Council w/ sponsor consent
- Bills acted on upon request of sponsor & chairman

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Possible Actions by Committee

- Vote down in committee
- Hold for further study (fate of many complex bills)
- Vote out of committee and on to floor with endorsement
- Vote out of committee and on to floor w/o endorsement

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To the Floor and Beyond

- Committee Chairman manages bill on floor; sponsor ready to answer questions
- Vote, passage, transmittal to other chamber
- Committee process again
- Floor process again
- Passage and transmittal to governor



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Rhode Island Aquaculture Acts as an Exemplar of Complex Legislation



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Summary of Legislative Actions 1995-2002

- 1995 First comprehensive aquaculture bill filed in House
- 1996 'An Aquaculture Act' creates aquaculture coordinator, lead agency & study commission [P.L. Text](#)
- 1998 strategic plan published by Legislative Commission on Aquaculture
- 1998 omnibus aquaculture bill passing in parts [1998 H-8816](#)
- 1999-2002 most remaining sections passing [P.L. Text 2001](#)



Rep. Eileen S. Naughton of Warwick; House sponsor of nearly all RI aquaculture initiatives 1995-2002

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Pitfalls & Opportunities with Aquaculture Act

- Complex bills have many potential stakeholders
- Televised 1996 study commission absolutely critical to eventual success of Aquaculture bills
- 1998 written commission report to General Assembly led by URI Prof. James Anderson
- Long-term thinking by legislators is critical despite two-year election cycle
- Skillful sense of where pitfalls and opportunities lie



Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski of West Kingston; Senate sponsor of nearly all RI aquaculture initiatives 1995-2002

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Overview of Statutory/Policy Changes 1996-2002 Affecting RI Aquaculture

- “One-stop” permitting with lead agency and Aquaculture Coordinator responsible for coordinating inter-agency review
- Recognition of aquaculture as a form of agriculture under tax codes
- Exemption of aquaculture livestock from Fish and Game laws
- Multi-agency “Aquatic Biosecurity Board”
- Simplified leasing and water quality certification procedures

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Growth of Rhode Island Aquaculture



<i>Year</i>	<i>Am. Oysters</i>	<i>Quahogs</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Farms</i>	<i>Acres Leased</i>
1995	87,800	92,514	\$86,668	5	8
1996	126000	187629	\$92,120	6	9
1997	192225	160886	\$275,946	6	17
1998	343700	165456	\$296,980	10	26
1999	352775	246642	\$214,836	14	28
2000	550582	87897	\$314,977	12	30
2001	543978	122196	\$299,998	18	51.5
2002	908000	138199	\$478,160	18	53.75
2003	1,163,519	22477	\$563,891	20	61
2004	1,138,718	23048	\$572,994	22	70.3
2005	1,530,815	32,745	\$744,319	24	85
2006	2,357,736	84,500	\$1,348,525	28	99
2007	2,551,493	34,195	\$1,587,857	30	123
2008	2,680,036	25,150	\$1,692,195	30	123
2009	2,821,166	52,000	\$1,785,135	33	134.5
2010	3,852,414	76,900	\$2,326,948	38	141

Data Courtesy of David Alves & David Beutel, CRMC

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Thank You
Hope you Enjoyed the Summit
and Keep Thinking Big with Us at URI!

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