



NEW ENGLAND BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

March 10, 2026

To Chairman Shanley and the members of the House State Government & Elections Committee

Re: BHA Opposition to RI-2026-H8216 – CRMC Water Type Classification

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. Our members recognize that to accomplish this mission we must protect and manage the habitats and ecosystems that fish and wildlife rely on and ensure that the public has ample access to them. With these things in mind, BHA urges the Committee to **oppose H8216**, which seeks to compel the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) to conduct a “complete reassessment of all waters classified as Type 1 through Type 4, evaluating whether the original water type designations meet current goals or require revision...”.

In their current form, water type classifications are a regulatory framework that exists within CRMC's Red Book (650-RICR-20-00-1), promulgated pursuant to CRMC's broad authority to “develop and adopt policies and regulations necessary to manage the coastal resources of the state...” (§ 46-23). While there was a time when legislators occupied seats on RI's coastal council, and subsequently legislative priorities were closely interwoven with coastal regulations, voters rejected such entanglements by electing to amend RI's constitution in 2004. H8216, which is a legislative directive aimed at compelling regulatory changes, should be viewed through this same lens and rejected.

Of additional concern, legislation passed in 2025 compelled a complete overhaul of CRMC's membership, which has yet to occur despite a March 1, 2026 deadline. While we appreciate the significance that water type classifications play in RI's coastal policy, we question whether changes as expansive as those proposed in H8216 are what a newly seated council should focus on immediately. Once seated, the new council will inherit a tremendous backlog of permitting and other work, which will take years to catch up on, if ever. Given that there is currently a procedure in place that allows both CRMC and affected parties to propose and consider water type changes on an as-needed basis, we disagree with prioritizing state-wide water type classification reform at this time, and question the need for such reform at any time.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Michael Woods
Saunderstown, RI 02874
rhodeisland@backcountryhunters.org
Chair, New England Chapter Board
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers