



NEW ENGLAND BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

April 7, 2026

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

Re: BHA Opposition to RI-2026-H7309 – Exemption from CRMC Regulations for Property Owners

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 H7309**, which seeks to broadly exempt coastal property owners from following Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) regulations related to hardening shoreline property.

Under RI's Constitution, the General Assembly is charged with upholding Rhode Islanders' *"right of fishery, and the privileges of the shore, to which they have been heretofore entitled under the charter and usages of this state"* (Art. 1, Sec.17). Through longstanding statutes, the General Assembly subsequently transfers protection of the public's shoreline interests to the Coastal Resources Management Council, which is tasked in § 46-23 *"to preserve, protect, develop, and, where possible, restore the coastal resources of the state for this and succeeding generations through comprehensive and coordinated long range planning and management designed to produce the maximum benefit for society from these coastal resources..."*

If passed, H7309 would fundamentally alter in the General Assembly's approach to balancing the public's shoreline rights and interests against those of private property owners near the shore. In fact, H7309 essentially empowers coastal property owners to do whatever they feel is "reasonable" with little regard for the impacts it would have to the public's resources. Additionally, it eliminates all meaningful oversight from the legislative or executive branches whatsoever, leaving the judiciary's interpretation of the statute as the only check against irresponsible development. This is particularly troubling because individual members of the public almost certainly lack legal standing to defend the Constitutional shoreline rights shared by all Rhode Islanders. While we appreciate the urgency that some private property owners near the shore feel as a result of rapidly changing environmental conditions, erasing all statutory and/or regulatory involvement in decisions related to coastal development represents both an extreme overcorrection, and a total abandonment of the General Assembly's duty to protect and uphold the public's rights and interests.

With these things in mind, **we urge the Committee, and ultimately the General Assembly, to oppose H7309**, and to uphold the current statutory and regulatory processes involving the public in decisions related to the development of RI's coastal resources.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

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