



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

SENATOR STEVEN A. BADDOUR

FIRST ESSEX DISTRICT

ROOM 208

TEL. (617) 722-1604

FAX. (617) 722-1999

E-Mail: Steven.Baddour@state.ma.us

CHAIRMAN:
TRANSPORTATION

VICE-CHAIRMAN:
THE JUDICIARY

MEMBER:
WAYS AND MEANS
POST AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT
MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT

Contact:

Jeevan Ramapriya

Office of Senator Baddour

617-722-1604

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Senator Baddour Says ‘Yes’ to Landmark Oceans Management Bill

Senate, House agree on protections and development plan for state waters

May 22, 2008, Boston – The Senate on Thursday took final action on its landmark “oceans bill” that will allow Massachusetts to establish a management plan for its territorial waters and ensure a public voice in future ocean development projects. The House of Representatives concurred on the Senate’s action, which means the bill is headed to Governor Deval Patrick’s desk and expected to become law.

The House version of the bill differed slightly from the Senate’s, but compromise legislation was hammered out and emerged from conference committee earlier this month.

“This is a significant piece of legislation for the Commonwealth that provides safeguards for the health and oversight of our oceans and specific guidelines for development projects,” Senator Steven A. Baddour (D-Methuen) said. “Just as we have well-established laws for the use of our land, it’s about time that we have a framework and process in place to protect one of the Commonwealth’s greatest assets.”

The compromise bill is a balanced, comprehensive piece of legislation that represents the best interests of both the Senate and the House. The highlights of the compromise bill include:

- The use of an ocean management plan incorporating the best available scientific understandings of marine and ocean resources, mapping, monitoring, and other data.
- Under the authority of the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the management plan would be developed by a 16-member commission, which will include state agency representatives, legislators, municipal officials, and environmental, fishing and industry stakeholders.
- The final plan will guide how state environmental agencies interpret, monitor and enforce the environmental laws of the Commonwealth and set a standard framework to judge future ocean development proposals for state-owned waters which encompass approximately three nautical miles from the coastline.
- The legislation permits the development of appropriately-scaled renewable energy sources in areas identified in, and in a manner consistent with, the ocean management plan.

The legislation also provides safeguards for the treatment of fisheries, recognizing the central role that commercial and recreational fishing plays in our economy.

The bill sets up an ocean science advisory council of marine scientists, non-profits, government agencies and fishing interests to assist the Executive office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in analyzing Massachusetts' ocean resources.

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