



NEWPORT, RI (May 18, 2018) – When the [Volvo Ocean Race](#) first visited Newport in 2015 a highlight of the stopover was the [Ocean Summit](#). It brought together race competitors, organizers, environmentalists, philanthropists and corporate executives to raise awareness of plastics littering the world’s oceans.

The first summit was such a success that the Volvo Ocean Race adopted the model for the current edition of the race and today the Ocean Summit returned to its roots at the [Volvo Ocean Race Newport Stopover](#) at Fort Adams State Park. It was the fourth Ocean Summit hosted in the current edition.

As the Ocean State, Rhode Island has a consciousness for its many rivers, ponds, lakes, bays and coastlines. They provide sustenance, employment and enjoyment to its residents and many visitors.

To keep them vibrant Rhode Island was the first state to enact no-discharge zones, prohibiting marine vessels from pumping sewage or waste overboard. The non-profit group Save the Bay has committed hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up Narragansett Bay to the point where it is clearer and cleaner than at any point since the industrial revolution.

Today, Rhode Island reasserted its leading position as a champion of marine health. Acting on behalf of Governor Gina Raimondo, the Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM), Janet Coit, announced that “Little Rhody” is the first state in the union to sign the [Clean Seas Pledge](#), a campaign of the United Nations to eliminate water pollution from plastics.

Coit also announced two new programs designed to support that pledge—the Zero Plastic Marina Initiative, a voluntary effort between RI DEM, the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association and marina operators to keep plastics out of Narragansett Bay and the ocean coastlines. Also, a pilot program will see fiberglass boats ground up and recycled for use in a new durable, flexible cement.

“Solutions to big problems start somewhere,” said Coit. “We’re aware that the issues surrounding climate change are dire and significant and more needs to be done. Not everyone is aware that 80 percent of the plastics in the ocean come from land. By taking on this problem here and demonstrating what can be done to solve it can have a ripple effect around the world.”

The RI DEM and Sail Newport co-host the Volvo Ocean Race Newport Stopover along with other RI agencies. The RI DEM manages Fort Adams State Park where Sail Newport, the state’s public sailing center, is headquartered.

“Sail Newport is very proud to be associated with the RI DEM and follows its lead to protect the ‘blue space’ that we cherish as our most important resource,” said Brad Read, the executive director of Sail Newport. “The Sailing Center at Fort Adams State Park applauds the Zero Plastic Marine Initiative announced by Director Coit. Rhode Island might be the smallest state, but we have a big message and strong partnerships to preserve the marine environment for future generations.”

The problem of micro-plastics in the water is a key theme of the Volvo Ocean Race. Race officials say they are alarmed by the amounts of micro-plastic particles in remote areas such as the Southern Ocean and that action must be taken immediately to reverse course.

The highest concentration of micro-plastic pollution was found in the South China Sea where levels of 357 particles per cubic meter were recorded. But researchers were dismayed that levels of nine to 26 particles per cubic meter were found in the middle of the Southern Ocean, the most remote point from land on planet Earth, on the leg from New Zealand to Brazil.

Sustainable initiatives are being enacted in the three towns on Aquidneck Island. Middletown and Portsmouth have agreed to adopt the Clean Seas Pledge. Both towns have pledged to eliminate single-use beverage containers and town council members have pledged to use reusable containers for beverages during council meetings in council chambers. In both cases a signed official resolution exists now with each town and will be filed with Secretary of State after meeting minutes are approved.

In Newport the mayor has agreed to adopt the Clean Seas Pledge. As an initial symbolic step, the mayor has pledged to use reusable containers for beverages during council meetings in council chambers. The Newport City Council members individually signed the Clean Seas Pledge on April 25.

Coit was a featured participant in the 2015 Ocean Summit and again this year. She said that the Ocean Summit is inspiring and that much work lies ahead.

“We’re proud that we kicked off the Ocean Summit in 2015 and that it was such a success,” said Coit. “The Volvo Ocean Race said that we to do this and have sailors

bring attention to climate change and how it effects the oceans. It's an honor to be the first state in America to take the Clean Seas Pledge. We're the Ocean State and we care deeply about the ocean."