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Dennis Esposito's Post

Marine Affairs: Esposito Takes the Helm

Posted by Dennis Esposito on 04/14/2015 at 03:23 PM



As I sit here in sunny Mexico, I ask myself: Why do I

go back?

Here's why: I am reflecting upon my longstanding relationship with the Marine Affairs Institute... Seventeen years and counting.

It was 1998 when I taught my first adjunct course, "Environmental Law Survey," and met Matt Harrington, then the only other faculty member at RWU Law who had any interest or experience in Maritime or Environmental Law. A year earlier, Professor Anthony Santoro, the School's first Dean, had gently asked us and a few others to see if it would be feasible to create a legal program that captured Rhode Island's rich tradition as the Ocean State. The rest is history.

Since then, the Marine Affairs Institute and Sea Grant Legal Program has grown into a nationally recognized program that develops leading-edge coastal and marine policy and provides a wonderful opportunity for our students to be immersed (excuse the pun) in this exciting hands-on process.

From that very informal first discussion in 1997, I went on to continue in my private law practice in environmental and coastal law, while also teaching a course or two every year. During that period I never lost sight of the exciting opportunities growing at RWU Law to address the ever-increasing pressures upon our nation's coastal resources.

This is true now more than ever. The Marine Affairs Institute and Sea Grant Legal Program is involved in a first-in-the-nation effort with the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island, The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and a myriad of others, to develop a

statewide plan to address the dual effects of sea-level rise and severe coastal erosion from increased meteorological events (think: Super Storm Sandy, Hurricane Katrina). And that is only a piece of what we are doing!

Addressing the legal ramifications of renewable offshore energy siting, the liabilities associated with massive marine pollution events like the BP oil spill, and the depletion of fishery stocks worldwide also takes up part of our day.

For anyone, from a brand-new law student to a 40-year practitioner like me, to be in the middle of world-changing events and working with scientists, policy makers, government agencies and fellow professors is too good an opportunity to let pass by.

So it's time to put down the sipping tequila, pack the flip-flops, grab a flight back to the States, and join all of you for a while.

Why not?

Stay tuned for more MAI events and opportunities in my next blog...