FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Friday, May 18, 2018

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RHODE ISLAND COMMITTED TO REDUCING PLASTIC MARINE DEBRIS

State signs ‘Clean Seas Pledge’ at today’s Volvo Ocean Race ‘Ocean Summit’

PROVIDENCE – At today’s Volvo Ocean Race Ocean Summit at Fort Adams State Park in Newport, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Director Janet Coit said Rhode Island has joined the fight to address the scourge of plastic ocean pollution by signing the Clean Seas Pledge on behalf of Governor Gina M. Raimondo. She also announced the new Zero Plastic Marina Partnership, a voluntary effort between DEM, the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association (RIMTA), and marina operators to keep plastics out of Narragansett Bay and off our ocean coastlines, and a pilot boat recycling program for disposing of abandoned or old fiberglass boats.

“I am proud that Rhode Island is the first state in America to sign the Clean Seas Pledge,” said Governor Gina Raimondo. “In addition to supporting world-class events like the Volvo Ocean Race, our bays, rivers, and coastal waters support commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism, and recreation. I’m excited that DEM is working with our marinas on a voluntary initiative to ban plastics. Let’s keep our waters clean and free of plastic and other marine debris."

The 2018 Volvo Ocean Race (VOR), with its Turn the Tide on Plastics initiative, is a model for spotlighting sustainability and the need to reduce plastic ocean pollution. Richard Brisius, President, Volvo Ocean Race, said, "I would like to congratulate the state of Rhode Island on joining the United Nations-led Clean
Seas campaign to address the impacts plastics are having on our oceans. By individuals, businesses, NGOs and states, such as Rhode Island, working together we can find innovative solutions to educate, innovate and leave a lasting legacy that will help address the plastic problem."

"I'm thrilled to have my home state of Rhode Island sign onto the Clean Seas Pledge here in Newport. Being the U.S. home of the Volvo Ocean Race, and what many consider to be the sailing capital of the world, it makes sense that it would be a leader in stopping plastic pollution. So many sailors have spoken out about seeing plastic at sea, and it's great to see awareness turning into action," said Rob MacMillian, Co-Founder, and Advisor, 11th Hour Racing.

“Sail Newport is very proud of our home state of Rhode Island and RI DEM for their leadership to protect the ‘blue space’ that we live on, play on and cherish as our most important resource. The Sailing Center in Fort Adams will work very hard to help launch the Zero Plastic Marine Partnership and other initiatives announced by Director Janet Coit. We are the smallest state, but we have a big message and strong partnerships here in the Ocean State to solve the ocean pollution problem and preserve the ocean for future generations,” said Brad Read, Executive Director, Sail Newport and the Volvo Ocean Race Newport Stopover.

Andy Tyska, RIMTA Board Member and owner of Bristol Marine said, "It is great to work with DEM and the Governor’s Office on initiatives such as this that advance environmental goals and promote stewardship of our waterways."

“We are proud that Rhode Island, the Ocean State, is the only North American stopover for the Volvo Ocean Race and the first state to sign the Clean Seas Pledge to address the scourge of plastic ocean pollution,” said DEM Director Janet Coit. “Rhode Island is working to promote sustainable practices and recognize the connections between what we do on land and the health of our waterways. On behalf of Governor Raimondo, DEM will be working with the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association and other partners to reduce marine debris, protect our coastlines, and promote stewardship of our one and only planet.”

Making good on signing the Clean Seas Pledge, DEM and RIMTA are launching the Zero Plastic Marina Partnership, a voluntary effort to educate, prevent pollution, encourage recycling, and clean the coastline by keeping plastics out of the environment. The program will begin immediately. A menu of 10 pollution prevention action items have been developed to help marina owners commit to and implement the program; participating marinas and boatyards can customize the program according to their own business practices.

**Action items include:**

- Posting “don’t litter” educational materials around the docks and marina explaining the impacts of plastics in waters and on shorelines;
- Providing readily available systems for plastics recycling;

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• Expanding shrink-wrap recycling from vessel storage;
• Providing water filling stations at the marina as an alternative to single-use bottles;
• Discontinuing use of polystyrene cups and containers at marina restaurants; and
• Hosting and supporting shoreline litter cleanups.

Working with partners, RIMTA has been addressing plastic pollution for more than a decade. Since 2006, when it started its shrink-wrap recycling program, RIMTA, through its members – 53 marinas and boatyards – has recycled more than 1.3 million pounds of shrink-wrap. Last year alone, RIMTA marinas and boatyards recycled more than 145,000 pounds of plastic shrink-wrap. Last week alone, RIMTA recycled another 40,000 pounds.

DEM is also working with RIMTA, 11th Hour Racing, RI Resource Recovery Corporation, and RI Sea Grant on a pilot boat recycling program for abandoned or old fiberglass boats.

The VOR Newport Stopover brings an international spotlight to RI’s first-class amenities and services. The historic Fort Adams State Park is a breathtaking venue that continues to attract top-notch sailing races and events and strengthen the state economy. Sail Newport, which is located at Fort Adams State Park, is New England’s largest public sailing center and a major attraction at the coastal park.

Situated at the mouth of the Newport Harbor, Fort Adams State Park offers a panoramic view of both Newport Harbor and the East Passage of Narragansett Bay. It is perhaps best known for its annual summer concerts when the Jazz Festival and Folk Festival draw thousands to enjoy the music and surroundings. It is one of 13 state parks and 22 major recreational areas under the management of DEM. Before being deeded to the State of Rhode Island in 1965, Fort Adams had served the U.S. Navy for 10 years and the U.S. Army for more than a century. It has the largest economic impact of any Rhode Island state park, with 1.3 million visitors – including nearly 775,000 out-of-state visitors – generating an estimated $64 million in economic output in 2016, according to a University of Rhode Island study.

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