

## 2003 RARGOM Annual Report

Dear RARGOM Members:

This letter accompanying the annual request for membership dues explains the changes that are taking place within the RARGOM organization.

Over the past year, your representatives have been reflecting upon and discussing RARGOM's future direction. Options to either expand or reduce the functions of the organization were considered. In the end, recognizing the financial constraints of many of the members, we have decided to scale back its activities and focus on the purpose upon which RARGOM was originally founded 12 years ago: to foster quality scientific research in the Gulf of Maine by facilitating communication and encouraging collaboration among researchers and environmental decision-makers residing at the member institutions.

The new RARGOM action plan outlines three primary activities of the organization:

- Quarterly meetings of the RARGOM representatives. These meetings offer the opportunity for the representatives to provide and update on relevant scientific activities occurring at each of the member institutions. The new action plan reinforces the important role of each representative as communicator, not only to the other RARGOM institutions, but also to the scientific/management community at his or her home institution. The meetings also serve as a forum for discussion of content and organization of the one-day Theme Sessions that RARGOM will coordinate.
- "Theme Sessions" on scientific topics relevant to the RARGOM community. RARGOM will host regular (2-4 annually) one-day "regional conversations" on subjects that are hot issues or bottlenecks to scientific research and/or environmental management in the Gulf of Maine. A session will be organized by committee composed of RARGOM representatives and other experts familiar with the theme. Each session might consist of several invited talks followed by discussion groups, with the goal of describing the state of the science, identifying research questions and management needs, and establishing links/collaborations to seek research funding and advance the science. Candidate themes include: Coastal Ocean Observing, Coastal Monitoring, Invasive Species, Plankton Productivity, Marine Habitat Conservation, Eutrophication, Biodiversity and Fisheries and Climate Change. The participation of the Canadian as well as the U.S. science and environment community in these sessions will be encouraged.
- The RARGOM Website. The internet is seen as an important mechanism for fostering communication among the Gulf of Maine scientific community. The website will be revitalized, and will serve not only as a link to the member institutions, but also as the distribution center for reports and recommendations arising from the Theme Session discussions.

The new budget for RARGOM reflects the streamlining of its operations. Starting this year, dues for Full and Associate Members have been reduced by 33%. A new, Sponsoring Member category has been established for those agencies that have a fundamental role in securing the functions of the organization. The revenue from this dues structure is estimated to cover the projected annual budget of \$25,000, which covers some support for essential personnel (chair, vice-chair and part-time staff), website development and maintenance, and support for theme sessions, including travel assistance for invited participants. Funding support for theme sessions will also be sought from agencies and organizations with a stake in the particular session topic.

On behalf of the RARGOM representatives, as its newly elected Chair, I would like to express this Board's enthusiasm and commitment to the renewal of RARGOM as a dynamic organization promoting communication among those studying and making decisions about the Gulf of Maine. The role of serving to get people to know each other is in itself justification for a strong RARGOM, as this paves the way for effective, interdisciplinary collaboration. Given the importance of Gulf of Maine to the culture of New England and the Maritime Provinces- its inshore fisheries, the growing coastal communities, the beauty of its coast- and the growing public attention on marine conservation and climate change issues, the need for increased communication and awareness among the Gulf of Maine scientific and environmental decision-making communities has never been higher. Our commitment is that RARGOM contributes to filling this need.

Jeffrey A. Runge  
Chair