

Annual Report 2004
Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine (RARGOM)

RARGOM now

As discussed in last year's 2003 annual report, RARGOM scaled back its activities and services and refocused on its primary mission, to facilitate communication and encourage collaboration among researchers and environmental decision-makers residing at its member institutions. The report outlined three primary activities of the new RARGOM action plan: 1) quarterly meetings of RARGOM representatives (the Board), 2) Theme Sessions, one-day "regional conversations" on subjects that are hot issues or bottlenecks to scientific research and environmental management in the Gulf of Maine, and 3) development of the RARGOM website as a mechanism for fostering communication among the Gulf of Maine scientific community.

Since submission of last year's report, RARGOM has carried out this action plan with the following accomplishments:

- The RARGOM website (<http://zeus.mbl.edu/rargom/index.html>) is up and running. While there is still a lot of work to be done, RARGOM members can now get information and register for upcoming meetings, see proceedings of theme sessions, find out about the RARGOM member institutions and access RARGOM archives.
- The first RARGOM theme-based symposium, on Coastal Ocean Observations in the Gulf of Maine, was held at the University of New Hampshire on August 12, 2003. The proceedings of the symposium are posted on the website.
- Three theme sessions are in the works for 2004: a symposium on Integrative, Multidisciplinary Modelling to be held at the University of Massachusetts Boston campus on July 15, 2004, a session on Management Priorities for Marine Conservation in the Gulf of Maine, to be held in early fall, and a session of Gulf of Maine habitat restoration, also to be held in the fall.
- The RARGOM headquarters has been relocated from UMASS Boston to UNH
- Four meetings of the Board, during which theme session and website developments have been discussed, as well as ideas for the evolution of RARGOM (see below) were convened between April, 2003 and June 2004.
- RARGOM assisted with the advertisement of a Forum on Coastal Change that took place in April, 2004 at the Coastal Ocean Institute at WHOI
- RARGOM solicited and coordinated reviews from the Gulf of Maine research community for the State of the Gulf report, entitled, "The Tides of Change: An Environment Report on the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy". This report will be presented at the Gulf of Maine Summit sponsored by the Gulf of Maine Council. The summit will be held in St. Andrew's, New Brunswick, October 26-29, 2004.
- RARGOM representatives met with the New Hampshire Sea Grant Policy Advisory Committee to discuss partnership between the Northeast Sea Grant entities and RARGOM for the development of regional research priorities that could be supported within the context of the Sea Grant programs.
- RARGOM is participating in the development of a proposal to create a Gulf of Maine Regional Association, comprising an "organization of organizations",

including the Gulf of Maine Council, GoMOOS, the Gulf of Maine Data Partnership and RARGOM, to coordinate regional management, science and monitoring activities.

The Future of RARGOM: Continued efforts in promoting a regional approach to the study of the Gulf of Maine

While we are pleased to report RARGOM's accomplishments, we would also like to share with you the challenges that we see ahead for RARGOM to meet its role as a regional organization of research, academic, and government institutions. At the plenary discussion in the first Theme Session on Coastal Ocean Observing, meeting participants were explicit about the need for RARGOM to play a role as an advocate for scientific research in the Gulf of Maine. Suggestions include an important role for RARGOM in joining with a Regional Association for Ocean Observing to identify research required to interpret observing data, partnering with other programs in identifying and communicating research and observing needs for Gulf of Maine stewardship, serving to link various research and management institutions for effective inter-disciplinary measurement of observing variables, and developing a regional database of marine research and research expertise, where the RARGOM website could serve as a source for "one-stop shopping" to find out who is doing what in the Gulf of Maine.

In light of these and other discussions, RARGOM recognizes that its role must continue to serve as a strong regional advocate for research on the Gulf of Maine as well as continue to foster communication to bridge the gap between research and stewardship of the GoM. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy report (<http://oceancommission.gov/welcome.html>), in a concise chapter on regional issues, addresses the need for a regional approach to research and management that cuts across jurisdictional and institutional boundaries and focuses efforts within ecosystems rather than political boundaries. Among its recommendations are the formation of regional ocean councils and regional ocean information programs that have functions such as improved regional-scale research programs, oversight of regional ocean observing systems, translation of regional research and data collection into usable products for decision-makers, and designating ad hoc subcommittees to examine issues of regional concern. These are consistent with RARGOM's long-standing purpose and activity over the last decade.

RARGOM is thus well-placed to take on the call by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy to advance the regional approach. We continue to perform this function, for example by coordinating the review of the State of the Gulf report and participation in discussions with Sea Grant on funding of regional research. RARGOM is taking steps to develop and participate in a Gulf of Maine Regional Association, along with the Gulf of Maine Council, GoMOOS, and the Gulf of Maine Ocean Data Partnership. The purpose of the Gulf of Maine Regional Association would be not only to facilitate the exchange of support and services between and among the participating organizations, but also to carry out the duties of a Regional Association under the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). Because the Gulf of Maine is an international body of water, the membership and participation of institutions from both Canada and the U.S. within

RARGOM can facilitate the need for international cooperation in addressing regional research and management issues.

In order to effectively accommodate these roles, RARGOM must continue the process of tuning its mission and its organizational and funding structure. Our goal in the coming year is not only to continue with the present core activities (board meetings, theme sessions and website communication) but also to evaluate the real needs of the international GoM community and subsequently explore external funding sources and an organizational set up that will assure the human and financial resources to successfully serve these needs.

Membership and dues

RARGOM relies on the support of its member institutions to sustain it as it evolves to meet the needs of the GoM region. Our dues for the 2004 fiscal year reflect savings we have made in past year by delaying hiring of a part-time administrative assistant until the office is set up at the University of New Hampshire. We have in addition obtained outside funds, in form of grants, staff support and participant registration fees, to offset many of the costs of the Theme Sessions. For these reasons, the RARGOM board has voted to reduce full membership dues for all members to \$500 for calendar year 2004. This one-time reduction applies to the current fiscal year only; the Board anticipates a return to the usual dues schedule (\$2000 for full membership) once the budget for fiscal year 2005 is adopted at the meeting of the Board this October. The 2003 calendar year financial summary for the Association is provided in Table 1.

With this report we are inviting U.S. and Canadian institutions that are not currently members to join the Association. The Board welcomes new representatives and perspectives to help us develop a regional approach to promote regional research and its benefits supporting good stewardship of the Gulf of Maine.

The underlying value of RARGOM, aside from its functional roles in regional issues, is the opportunity to meet colleagues in an atmosphere of cooperation, where the goal is to do what is best for the Gulf of Maine. We find the Board meetings to be genuinely informative and collegial. We feel that the development of trust and individual relationships can make all the difference for research and management in the region. We thank you, the member institutions, for your continued support to make this happen.

Table 1. Summary financial statement for the Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine, 2003-2004.

<i>2003 Budget</i>	
Carryover from 2002	12,484
Income from 2003 dues	23,352
Expenditures	11,305
Balance and carryover to 2004	24,531
<i>2004 Budget</i>	
Carryover to 2004	24,531
Income from dues (projected)	9,500
External meeting support (projected)	6,000
Expenditures (detailed below)	26,000
Chair	6,000
Vice-chair	1,000
Staff	9,500
Theme session support	3,500
Website development	4,000
Supplies	2,000
Balance and carryover to 2005 (projected)	14,031