

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

1993 Annual Report

Overview

At the start of 1993, the Association was beginning its second year, and remained very much in a developmental stage. The challenges before it, as stated in the 1993 workplan, included:

- consolidation of its position as independent, neutral representative of the Gulf of Maine research community
- clarification and development of services to members and to the public
- expansion of its membership
- development of a distinctive series of research-focused publications, including reports and newsletters
- continued advocacy for coherent, regionally-focused research programs.

There has been significant progress made during 1993. A critical factor has been the establishment of the position Associate Director, and the recruitment of Eugenia Braasch in that capacity. Genie brings to the Association the professional skill, energy and continuity necessary to respond to these challenges. She is stationed at the headquarters office at Dartmouth College.

A joint statement of purpose and intent between the Association, the Regional Marine Research Board, and the Council on the Marine Environment was drafted and signed to clarify and strengthen our mutual efforts. This agreement is a milestone in the Association's development as a neutral representative of the professional research community.

Quarterly business meetings of the Association have been established to discuss research and policy issues. These opportunities for discussion have forged new collaborations and have solidified other relationships. A group electronic mail account was established to facilitate timely exchange of news and other announcements to Association representatives. A quarterly newsletter has been issued and, through excellent contributions from Association members, provides a mix of news, analysis, and opinion, in addition to announcements about funding opportunities and other resources. Positive response from the readership has confirmed the need for a communication vehicle of this type. A series of regional workshops has been launched on specific topics of interest to members. These will provide additional communications among members and the region at large, on specific topics of mutual interest.

Administratively, the Association has adjusted its fiscal cycle to a January 1 start date, which puts it one-half year out of phase with the terms of its officers. This will

allow a smooth transition to new officers within an established budget and workplan. Additional yearly structure has been established in the alternate phasing of business meetings and the newsletter, providing a scheduled focal point for Association activity every six weeks.

The Association's primary resource is its existing membership; the accomplishments of 1993 could not have happened without the guidance and effort contributed by individual representatives. It is with this sense of participation toward the mutual goal of understanding the complex and valuable Gulf of Maine ecosystem that the Association welcomes new members from both the Canadian provinces and the United States. Advocacy for a coherent Gulf of Maine research program remains a priority for the Association at both regional and national levels.

The general themes listed above continue to guide the general work of the Association and are re-iterated in the 1994 work plan. Progress toward specific objectives outlined in the 1993 workplan are reviewed serially, below.

1993 Progress

1.) Regional Workshop Series

An overview RARGOM document "Towards Scientific Understanding of the Gulf of Maine" was prepared and serves as the foundation for a workshop series. Four specific workshops have been proposed. Three have been in the planning stages during the past year and are now funded by the Regional Marine Research Program and the UNH Sea Grant Program. They will be held in the fall of 1993 and the spring of 1994.

A **Data and Information Management** workshop will be held November 3, 4, 5, 1993. Its steering committee members are Marilyn Buchholtz ten Brink (USGS), Wendell Brown (UNH), John Paul (EPA), Don Phelps (EPA, Chair), and Jeff Rosen (AMS).

The goal of this workshop is to recommend an approach for the development of an information management system (IMS) that will serve the needs of the greater scientific, regulatory, and management community of the Gulf of Maine. Specific objectives will be to review user needs, review existing IMS's, define attributes for a Gulf of Maine IMS, define approaches for linking the IMS, recommend oversight mechanisms, roles and responsibilities for development, implementation and maintenance for an IMS; develop funding strategies, and define the relationships among the IMS systems that have national scope.

A workshop on **Circulation Modeling in the Gulf of Maine** will be held November 15 and 16 at Dartmouth College. The organizing committee comprises David Brooks (Texas A&M Univ.), David Greenberg (Bedford Institute of Oceanography), Daniel Lynch (Dartmouth College, Chair), Richard Signell (USGS), and David Townsend (Univ. of Maine/RMRP).

There are presently several active circulation modeling projects in the region. Each has its own objectives and scientific plan, operates on different space and time scales, and

has different operable software. This workshop is intended to provide a detailed picture of these diverse projects to the scientific and management communities in order to communicate the nature of the modeling enterprise and the type of results becoming available in the next few years. A second, equally important goal is to enhance the cooperative working linkages among the several active modeling teams, and to share dynamical insights and conceptual problems. The plenary sessions during day one will be open to the scientific and resource management communities; day two will be devoted to working sessions among the modelers.

A **Habitat** workshop will be held at the Maine Department of Marine Resources' new laboratory in Boothbay Harbor in April 1994. The steering committee includes Peter Auster (NURC-UCAP), Michele Dionne (Wells Reserve), Rich Langton (Maine DMR), Dave Stevenson (Maine DMR, Chair) and Page Valentine (USGS).

The goals of the workshop are to exchange information about Gulf of Maine habitats, to identify information gaps, and to develop a framework for a coordinated research program. The workshop will provide information needed to identify and prioritize, in terms of their impacts, natural and human-induced changes to important coastal and offshore marine habitats in the Gulf of Maine. Gulf-wide topics such as the role of scale in biological processes (space/time), topographic and substrate variations, and physical disturbances, will be explored by the working groups. The working groups will represent four habitat areas: estuaries, near shore benthic, offshore benthic, and pelagic.

An additional, related activity is the planning of an **NAS Symposium** on the interface between science and marine policy, to be held in the region May 9-11, 1994. The Council on the Marine Environment is the regional leader in this effort, spearheaded by David Keeley. RARGOM Executive Director Dan Lynch is serving on the steering committee. Other member institutions represented on the steering committee include U. Mass-Boston; UNH; Bedford Institute; UMaine; and NMFS-Gloucester.

The successful execution of these and follow-on events remains a priority activity for the Association through 1994.

2.) Establish Communications

Three business meetings were held during 1993 at locations around the region. The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve hosted the March meeting, the National Undersea Research Center hosted the June meeting, the Maine Department of Marine Resources was the setting for an October meeting. The three member institutions at Woods Hole will host the January 1994 meeting. There has been good participation by the representatives of member institutions at these meetings, with interesting presentations and discussion. Minutes of all meetings are available from the headquarters office. During 1993, the Association decided to conduct its meetings on a rotating basis at various locations within the Gulf of Maine region, to share the travel distance and the logistics of hosting the meeting. This approach has also provided an opportunity for members to become familiar with some of the other institutional programs and resources. As new members join from Canada, travel time and cost issues will have an even greater impact on meeting participation.

Changes to the current meeting design have been suggested: selecting a geographically central location for all meetings and holding fewer meetings during the

year. These ideas need to be considered in light of the need for opportunities to explore and discuss issues and make decisions that are central to the Association's mission and other emerging communication channels.

A group electronic mail account has been established on the Internet to provide a mechanism for exchange of news and announcements from any member of the Association. Not all member institutions have electronic mail capability; the Association wants to provide support for those scientists who want to obtain this resource, which will become a more important communication resource in the future. To ensure equal access and participation by the membership, all matters needing formal review and decision making will continue to be discussed at meetings or via traditional channels (phone, mail, fax).

Two issues of **Gulf of Maine NEWS** have been produced to provide information to members during the intervals between meetings. The articles are contributed by members, and are edited by Eugenia Braasch from the headquarters office. The newsletter's regular features include regional events; news from national programs such as NSF, NOAA, EPA, USGS, descriptions of new GoM project starts such as the U.S. GLOBEC and EMAP programs; new GoM publications received at the headquarters office, announcements of funding opportunities, and a calendar.

Other publications are anticipated as products of specific workshops.

3.) Research Inventory

One of the benefits of Association membership is access to Gulf of Maine information summarized by the Association staff. Three topic areas have been initiated during 1993: descriptions of current research projects, an inventory of research equipment resources such as vessels, and funding sources.

As a first step toward establishing a database of research activity, a "Research Organizations in the Gulf of Maine Directory" was drafted (and is now in notebook form). Using the 1993 Research Centers Directory, this document was designed to supplement the Council on the Marine Environment publication GulfLinks, which lists many Association institutions but lacks scientific staff information, research activity and project detail. As we investigated the scope of the project, we realized that it would significantly intrude on other on-going Association priorities. Beyond the time needed to create such a database; the staff time needed to maintain it, keeping the information current, accurate and useful to researchers is potentially large. Therefore, our thinking has evolved. As a regional information resource, its development needs to occur within the context of the regional information system that is being designed for the Gulf of Maine region through the workshop mentioned above.

A description of research vessels was updated, using Research Vessels of the Northeast as a reference volume, and a schedule field activity was also distributed to encourage greater exchange of available resources. Discussions held with ship operators around the region suggest that there could be an interest in working with the Association to better coordinate scheduling through a group organizational meeting.

Finally, contacts at both regional and national levels have been established at the appropriate federal agencies so that the Association staff can receive and distribute announcements of research opportunities, the Academic Research Information System is regularly scanned as an additional information source.

4.) Consolidate Regional Collaboration

At the beginning of 1993, there was a clear need to articulate the distinctive role of the Association relative to the RMRP Board and the CME; and to establish/maintain satisfying working relations with both. The first step toward this goal is the creation of a three-way cooperative agreement, a "Joint Statement", signed at Council on the Marine Environment meeting on July 16 at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

The Joint Statement, which has been under negotiation during the past year, spells out an agenda for increased communication and collaboration between the Regional Association, the Regional Marine Research Program, and the Council on the Marine Environment. Representatives from each of the three organizations recognized the need for this agreement, citing the importance of integration of research and management efforts in the Gulf of Maine. It was noted that the agreement should be viewed as a first step towards future collaboration. This agreement has tremendous potential. Each separate organization represents a network of institutions that transverses traditional scientific and organizational barriers. Together, our efforts to understand and manage the Gulf of Maine will be greatly amplified.

The Association's role relative to both organizations is the independent spokesman for quality research. A good working relationship has been established with the RMRP Board. The appointment of Dr. David Townsend as the RMRP Executive Director has further enhanced this relationship; Townsend is well known to the Gulf of Maine research community as the past Association Executive Director. In late 1993 the Association will be providing formal input to the planning of the next (third) RFP to be issued by the Board, presently in the formative stages.

Development of Association-CME cooperation has been a priority for 1993. There are joint efforts in the workshop arena, with planning collaboration on the Data and Information Management workshop and the NAS Gulf of Maine Symposium scheduled for May 9-11, 1994 (see above). Also the Association is providing a written review of Environment Canada/CME's draft "State of the Environment Fact Sheet" on the Gulf.

The Collaboration of Community Foundations for the Gulf of Maine is another new regional group which has been established to support citizen-based solutions to environmental issues facing the Gulf of Maine. This group seeks to encourage citizen participation in defining and monitoring ecosystem and community sustainability, increase public education and marine conservation advocacy effort and empower non-governmental organizations and citizen groups concerned with Gulf issues. The Association has been asked to advise this group about the selection of appropriate indicator species for monitoring purposes and to participate in discussions about sustainability.

5.) Membership Development

In 1992, the Association membership totaled 10 full Members and 7 Associates. The 1993 target was 11 Members plus 13 Associates, with Canadian participation a priority. The full member target was met by the addition of NMFS in 1993. Dartmouth College moved from Associate to Full member, with an offsetting change by UMass Amherst's to Associate Membership. The Associate Membership totals 10 at this time, reflecting the addition of Boston University, Mass. CZM, and the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

For 1994, the EPA Narragansett Laboratory has pledged to join as a Full member. Several offers of membership are still under consideration, including Dalhousie and Acadia Universities in Canada. The experience of 1993 suggests a conservative approach in budget planning. Also, there remains a perceived imbalance between the two categories of membership and the distinction between them needs to be clarified.

Broad regional participation is inherent to the Association's mission. While growth is desired and essential, careful recruitment of new representatives will ensure the same level of commitment to the Association program that the current representatives demonstrate.

Eugenia Braasch
Associate Director

Daniel Lynch
Executive Director

Gordon Wallace
Chairman