

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

1995 Annual Report

Overview

1995, the Association's fourth year, prompted our organization to put its priorities and activities into sharper focus. The Association's objectives were to:

- plan an interdisciplinary Gulf of Maine scientific workshop to be held in 1996;
- maintain active communication within the Association and with other related groups;
- serve as a source of information, advice and review, using the Association headquarters as the contact point;
- expand the Association membership, responding to and soliciting membership inquiries, and
- solidify the Association's financial status.

While these goals shaped the Association's ongoing activities, other regional developments significantly affected the focus of the Association this year.

Early in the year, (based on the quality of the RARGOM workshop series that the Association initiated in 1993), the Association was asked to help plan and host a Congressional mandated workshop titled the Health of the Gulf of Maine Ecosystem. Members endorsed this activity, believing that this was an important opportunity to present regional concerns to Federal decision makers. The Association staff worked with scientists at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center / NMFS (a member institution) on this event, which was held at Dartmouth College on September 18-20, 1995.

The region experienced significant reductions in state and federal support for research on the Gulf of Maine and anticipates further cutbacks. For scientists conducting research, this translates into fewer RFP opportunities and dollars from programs such as the Regional Marine Research Program and the National Undersea Research Program. At the same time, new research ventures were formed with private support (an example is the Cobscook Bay Ecosystem Study, see *Gulf of Maine NEWS*, winter 1995). Budget reductions at our member institutions also puts considerable pressure on the Association's income sources, which have been primarily generated through institutional membership dues. With this in mind, the Association has established other categories of support, seeking sponsoring memberships, foundation support, and program oriented funding. These developments have underscored the need for cooperative activity, a basic Association premise.

So, with an increasing organizational presence in the region, coupled with diminishing financial resources from traditional sources, the Association anticipates needing to develop new funding partnerships in order to play a larger service role for regional research. The 1996 Gulf of Maine Scientific Symposium will chart out the priority areas for scientific investigation in the region. In addition to fostering an exchange of ideas within the scientific community, this event will set the stage for a second conference where scientists, policy makers, concerned citizens, and resource managers will discuss how the results of research can inform decision making about the uses of our regional resources.

Looking to 1996, the Association will experience a change in officers. With this transition, there will be an opportunity for reflection about our organization and we anticipate growth in vision through that process. We have appreciated the opportunity to serve the Association and encourage others to consider taking a leadership role.

1995 Progress

1.) Regional Workshops

The Health of the Gulf of Maine Ecosystem: Impacts of Multiple Stressors

A workshop titled "The Health of the Gulf of Maine Ecosystem: Impacts of Multiple Stressors" was held at Dartmouth College from September 18-20, 1995, funded by the National Marine Fisheries Program. 63 people participated. The event was mandated by Congress; the resulting Executive Summary and RARGOM Report 96-1 is in production. The goals of this workshop were to assess human-caused factors affecting the health and stability of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem; and to identify research and management options to restore and /or maintain the ecosystem. Workshop participants discussed the status of key ecosystem components that characterize the Gulf of Maine, from three perspectives: anthropogenic impacts, fisheries harvesting, and marine mammal/protected species. The budget for this event was \$28,000., thus this activity significantly leveraged our annual operating budget by more than 50%.

1996 Gulf of Maine Scientific Symposium Planning Underway

Planning for another, comprehensive, Gulf of Maine scientific symposium, to be held in 1996 in St. Andrews, was initiated. A steering committee has been established. The workshop goal is to generate the next set of research priorities and scientific questions for the Gulf of Maine. The workshop is designed to present recent scientific advances from research completed after the Gulf of Maine Scientific Workshop held at Woods Hole in 1991. A workshop planning document is available from the Association headquarters.

A Conference Envisioned for Scientists and Resource Decision Makers

A second, closely related conference concerning science and public policy in the Gulf of Maine has been endorsed by the Association membership, but this activity has not moved beyond the early conceptual stages.

Member Institutions also hosted conferences

Workshops sponsored by other research programs in the region were also planned and attended by Association members: hosted by the Sea Grant Program, the New England Aquarium, the Regional Marine Research Program, and the GLOBEC Georges Bank Program.

These events and their follow-on activities were the priorities for the Association during 1995.

2.) Communication

Association Meetings held Regularly around the Region

During 1995 the Association continued 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. The New England Aquarium hosted the February meeting, a June meeting was held at the University of Maine Darling Marine Center in Walpole, Maine, and the University of New Hampshire in Durham was the setting for a November meeting. There was excellent attendance at all of the meetings. Minutes of all meetings are listed on the RARGOM home page and are also available from the headquarters office.

Alternative mechanisms (such as electronic mail, conference calls, or smaller committee meetings) were used to provide members with opportunities for adequate discussion and timely decision-making on issues that contribute to the Association's mission.

Home Page Established on the World Wide Web

A world wide web home page was established for the Association. The address is: <http://fundy.dartmouth.edu/rargom/> It contains the following categories of information: overview of RARGOM, "Hot" news items, membership information, collaboration with other organizations, Articles of Association, member and associate member institution home page links, representatives to the Association, RARGOM documents and publications (beginning with the Summer 1995 issue, complete copies of the **Gulf of Maine NEWS** are available on this web server), some Gulf of Maine research projects, and other information related to the Gulf of Maine.

INTERNET Use Increases for Member Institutions

A group electronic mail account on the INTERNET has been used for exchange of news and announcements from any member of the Association. The e mail address is: rargom@mac.dartmouth.edu. A second group account was established for the steering committee for the 1996 Gulf of Maine Scientific Symposium: rargom2@mac.dartmouth.edu.

Gulf of Maine NEWS Expands in length and circulation

The *Gulf of Maine NEWS* has been produced on a quarterly basis with articles contributed by researchers from member institutions and as well as others whose work relates to the GOM research community. The newsletter expanded in length to 12 pages, maintaining its regular features (research articles; cruise and field reports; regional events; news from national programs such as NSF, NOAA, EPA, USGS, descriptions of new GOM project starts, new GOM publications received at the headquarters office, announcements of funding opportunities or jobs, calendar and occasional inserts, such as the 1994 Bibliographic search). Circulation also increased to 700 copies per printing, growing requests for the newsletter are an indication of the need for this communication vehicle. Many people have contributed carefully crafted articles, and have provided other information and feedback about the newsletter this year. We expect that the newsletter will continue to evolve into a publication that reflects the science activities and ideas of the GOM research community, with expansion of its scientific content. A target of 16 pages is a realistic goal for 1996.

Collaborative Efforts with other Regional Organizations

The Association held an annual planning meeting with the Regional Marine Research Program staff and a representative of the Council on the Marine Environment at the New England Aquarium in Boston in January. Regular efforts to exchange information and perspectives were made during the year, with representatives from the other two organizations attending our meetings. The annual relocation of the CME headquarters is a continuing problem which needs attention in 1996. The need for ongoing collaboration is increasingly important as our organizations mature. In addition, the Collaboration of Community Foundations for the Gulf of Maine (an affiliation of non-governmental organizations working to link community resources and the marine environment) has maintained regular contact as it carried out its activity.

3.) Membership Status

Institutional Involvement Stable, with Slow Growth Projected

In 1995, the Association membership totaled 13 Full Members and 13 Associates. Cornell University joined as a Full member in 1994, but changed its affiliation to Associate in 1995, the New England Aquarium joined as an Associate member.

Sponsoring Member Opportunities Available

The Association created a new membership category, that of sponsoring member, which offers organizations the opportunity to support the activities of the Association, but has no official voting participation. The Regional Marine Research Program became the first participating group in this category. Other organizations were solicited (the Council on the Marine Environment and the Maine Science and Technology Foundation), but have not yet joined.

4.) Financial Status

Operating Budget Increases are Modest

With constrained budgets, there is increased concern of about the ability to support the Association's activities through membership dues. The Association decided to adjust its revenues through modest changes in membership dues for 1995 (Full Membership was \$2750., down \$ 225., and Associate Membership was \$650., up \$50.). In addition, \$5,000. was received as a sponsoring member dues. At the time of this report, one full member has not sent in their 1995 dues. Dartmouth College, the Association host institution, has been generous in providing accounting staff support and short term coverage of Association expenses.

Contracts Boost the Association's Program Activity

As mentioned earlier, the 1995 budget was significantly amplified by funds received from NMFS/NOAA for the Ecosystem Health workshop. The Association has also received \$5,000. from the Environmental Protection Agency for its planning activity on the 1996 Scientific Symposium. We are optimistic about additional contributions from other regional institutions towards this upcoming endeavor.

Gordon Wallace, Chair

Daniel Lynch, Executive Director

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