

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

1997 Annual Report

Overview

During 1997, the Association's sixth year, activities were focused on two central goals:

- a) the forging of working relationships among scientists, resource managers, and the public, and the concomitant coordination between research and monitoring programs; and
- b) the condensation of research findings from the numerous projects and programs into peer-reviewed, high-visibility publications focused on the Gulf of Maine.

Some community goals are best achieved under the banner of a broad-based group working for common goals. Creation and support of regional research infrastructure is such a goal and RARGOM has helped to create a positive atmosphere at the national level for research support in this region. Association efforts have complemented those of individual member institutions to elevate the visibility and credibility of regional science with national funding agencies, and have helped promote the case for regional science as an important niche within the federal science environment.

This report lists the organizational objectives for 1997 and provides a record of associated activity.

Regional Collaboration, Funding and Infrastructure

1. Strengthen efforts for advocacy of regional science at the federal level; also to establish closer ties with appropriate state, provincial and regional organizations and agencies to improve support for research and utilization of research expertise and results.

On the Federal level, Donald Scavia, Director and Chief Scientist, NOAA/NOS, attended the June board meeting as an invited speaker. Dr. Robert Wall, Chair of the Gulf of Maine Regional Marine Research Program, also participated. During conversation with board members, Dr. Scavia indicated that he believes that there is a niche for regional programs within the existing national funding approaches. In Scavia's view, regional research approaches are being driven by management entities trying to approach problems more effectively. Features of these initiatives include: larger spatial scales, longer time scales (e.g., LTER/LMER), multiple stressors, and involving the human dimension including economic analysis. Scavia also highlighted the need for focus on implementation of the initiatives, saying that: 1) most projects have a prediction endpoint in mind, requiring that investigators think about the full science spectrum, "what are you going to predict and why"; this is especially important in bringing scientists and managers/policy makers together by asking such questions as "what kinds of predictors will help managers do their job?"; and 2) partnerships are very important - between disciplines (i.e., natural and physical sciences and social sciences), between academic and federal researchers, between funding agencies, between regions (these programs "sell" well in Congress and the current Administration - need to bring these aspects together for a successful regional program). Follow-up communications between Don Scavia and Lew Incze indicated that continued efforts to advance regional science should bear fruit in the long term.

2. Make measurable progress with structure, content and use of REDIMS.

RARGOM and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment agreed to jointly assess the status of existing Gulf of Maine data and information systems and recommend future steps to be taken that will effectively build on initial efforts. Issues of accessibility, usefulness to scientists and non-scientists, and level of effort will be included in this assessment. Better integrating the two systems (REDIMS and EDIMS) will be considered, along with costs of any recommended changes.

Data and information subcommittee:

Members: Chris Naimie (Dartmouth College), Rich Signell (USGS), Wendell Brown and Karen Garrison (UNH), in collaboration with Dan Martin (MCZM) and Rafael Herz (U.S. GoM CME Association).

The Charge: The committee will examine the current state of internet availability of data for GoM researchers and other users. This addresses prior plans, and a request from W. Brown to perform a users' evaluation of REDIMS -- Does it provide all the linkages it should? What topic areas are neglected? Is the community of GoM researchers using it as much as they could? Do more people need to be made aware of it? What recommendations should be made for the future? A meeting was suggested, to obtain feedback from a small involved committee (rather than the community at large), to address the EDMIS/REDIMS interface in a coordinating manner with the CME effort, GIS, and to determine long term steps (criteria for data bases, funding for maintaining the system once the current RMRP money is spent).

3. Develop a practical "platform" strategy for the future (buoys, ships, etc.).

In response to the National Weather Service decision not to repair the Boston and Portland operational weather buoys (among approximately 30 similarly designated around the country), the RARGOM policy board approved at their June meeting a letter of response to Dr. Beeton, which was written by Dr. Incze. An additional 1997 workshop about Ocean Observing Systems was also approved, which was held on November 5-6, 1997 at the New England Aquarium in Boston Massachusetts. Lew Incze, Bigelow Laboratory, and Ivar Babb, National Undersea Research Center at Avery Point, CT, served as the workshop co-chairs. 36 scientists attended. The program was science-driven, and focused on the need for an integrated and coordinated data collecting effort between buoys, models, ships, satellite remote sensing as well as agency data (i.e., tide gauges and major river discharges). A report is in process. Per request of the OOS workshop attendees, a follow-on meeting is proposed for spring 1998.

Dick Pittinger, WHOI, and Ivar Babb, NURC, will attend the December meeting to describe the status of new regional research vessels.

Buoys and Ships subcommittee:

Members: Ivar Babb (UConn/NURC), Lew Incze (Bigelow Lab), and Bruce Tripp (WHOI) leaders. The committee ought to have a member from each RARGOM institution. This will place greater organizational and time demands on the committee chair, but will make information gathering easier and more thorough. The committee will decide how it wants to tap into expertise at some of the institutions with large ship and "other platform" operations, that is, by enlisting additional members to the committee or simply having the committee member(s) from those institutions providing the necessary linkages.

The Charge: Report on the availability and capability of current and planned vessels and platforms to support research in the GoM. Assess and report on the community's needs and hopes for support in view of current, anticipated and desired research directions. Federal and non-federal (e.g., university, consortium and private) vessels should be considered. The committee will have to decide just how detailed the first cut of this evaluation ought to be; clearly, the task could be enormous, and reasonable limits will have to be decided. The Policy Board feels that there is at least a shortage of shared information on what is being planned;

there is probably also a shortage of affordable and suitable vessels for work outside normal federal channels. Defining these needs would be a valuable RARGOM function, better served by a broad consortium than by any single or small group of institutions. Broader distribution of information on non-federal vessels, especially, may help potential users as well as providers.

Communication

4. Complete the Proceedings for the Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Dynamics Scientific Symposium.

The Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Dynamics Scientific Symposium and Workshop held in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada, provided the first region-wide opportunity to synthesize and review advances in the scientific understanding of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem since the first Gulf of Maine Scientific Workshop held in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in January 1991. Of particular value was the opportunity to share recent research results and perspectives between Canadian and U.S. scientists and managers having vital interests in the shared resources of the Gulf of Maine. Underlying themes of the Symposium were ecosystem modeling and consideration and recognition of the importance of transboundary linkages between terrestrial (air- and watershed) and adjacent marine ecosystems. The meeting opened with a series of presentations from a panel of Canadian and United States federal and regional environmental managers from the Gulf of Maine region. Each was asked to present the top three issues identified by their agencies and/or regions that required additional scientific information to assist in decision making and policy development.

The conference report, with contributions from 28 authors, plus approximately 100 additional poster abstracts, is 342 pages in length. The proceedings were edited by Gordon Wallace and Eugenia Braasch, and its preparation represented a major RARGOM staff activity during 1997; it is now in press and the report is due to be distributed in January 1998 to the conference participants, plus others in the region who request a copy. 1,200 copies will be printed and made available to non-conference participants at cost through the RARGOM office.

5. Strengthen the scientific content of the *Gulf of Maine News* through appointing a scientific editor and editorial committee.

The RARGOM policy board asked for the appointment of a scientific editor and committee, to identify timely and diverse topics for informal scientific contributions to the newsletter, solicit articles and authors accordingly; provide a quick internal review of submissions as an aid to the authors; and perform these functions on a schedule in coordination with Genie Braasch, who will be production editor. Ronald Schlitz, NEFSC / NMFS, agreed to serve as the scientific editor of the newsletter. He met with Bruce Tripp and Genie Braasch to discuss plans for the publication in September at the WHOI Rinehart Coastal Research Center, and has since contacted the RARGOM board representatives to solicit suggestions of others who might serve on an editorial committee. These initiatives will continue to develop during 1998. No issues of the newsletter were produced during 1997, constraints on staff time forced us to postpone production of the newsletter until the symposium proceedings were published.

A comprehensive bibliographic search was conducted to document the literature about the Gulf of Maine published during 1996 and 1997. This bibliography will be published with the newsletter, as has been done in the past.

6. Improve communication to, within and between member institutions at administrative and scientific levels.

This remains a priority area for RARGOM and we need to develop good communication links between the institutional representatives and their colleagues. To this end, we have begun to prepare a job description for the institutional representatives which will be developed by the group in the near future.

7. Continue development of the World Wide Web server using the Association headquarters as the contact point;

Little expansion was made during 1997, but this is still a RARGOM priority area. The existing web site is being used by some members. We intend to make it an important site for regional research and information.

8. Expand outreach efforts to other regional organizations and the general public using the Internet, the *Gulf of Maine NEWS*, and exhibits.

The Association held an annual planning meeting with the Gulf of Maine Regional Marine Research Program staff and representatives of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment in June at Migis Lodge, Sebago, Maine prior to the Migis Workshop. At that time, RARGOM agreed to collaborate with the CME on the following initiatives for FY '97-'98:

- 1) Develop recommendations for a coordinated regional data and information system for the Gulf of Maine (white paper report due to 1997 fall RARGOM Board meeting and Dec. CME Council meeting);
- 2) Collaborate in the development of the RARGOM www server for scientific and public users to access GoM scientific information;
- 3) Strengthen the science/management/policy content of the *Gulf of Maine NEWS* and *Gulf of Maine Times* (as an added component, a column or feature article will be produced in each issue which highlights the management implications of the scientific research and discusses science-management issues);
- 4) Develop recommendations to assist State and Provincial managers in implementing the CME Action Plan (5-page paper due to 1998 March CME meeting).

Regular efforts to exchange information and perspectives were made during the year, Genie Braasch and Bruce Tripp represented RARGOM at the June 10-13 Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment meeting and the September 29-30 working group meeting, to report to the Council on joint activities. Laura Taylor, Maine State Planning Office, served effectively as the liaison staff person for the CME to RARGOM until June. A replacement has not yet been designated.

Lew Incze attended a meeting of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation held in Danvers, Massachusetts on October, 1997.

Lew Incze also represented RARGOM at the Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Project workshop held November 14-15, at the Huntsman Marine Science Centre, St. Andrews, New Brunswick.

Programs

9. Plan and conduct an interdisciplinary workshop titled "Mechanisms for Improving the Integration of Science and Management in Decisions Affecting the Environmental Quality, Living Resources, and Ecosystem Health of the Gulf of Maine".

This workshop was a follow-on event to the Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Dynamics Scientific Symposium, and was held at the Migis Lodge, Sebago Lake, Maine on June 2-3, 1997. Fifteen people from management and scientific organizations served on the steering committee, and met twice to plan the program. The workshop was co-chaired by Dr. Steven Ballard, University of Maine, Dr. Donald Gordon, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Dr. Mike Connor, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. Forty three people attended (33 were affiliated with RARGOM), representation included 25 institutions (16 were RARGOM member institutions).

The program began with four plenary speakers who provided perspectives about problems with existing mechanisms from the vantage points of scientist (Jerry Schubel, New England Aquarium), manager (Evan Richert, Maine State Planning Office), and discussion of efforts that are in place in Canada (Donald Gordon, Department of Fisheries and Oceans), and the U.S. (Brad Butman, U.S. Geological Survey). Participants were then asked to identify appropriate structures, functions, responsibilities and support needed to improve the integration of scientific and management expertise in the region through working group discussion sessions using specific case study topics to help maintain focus: herring management; licensing of aquaculture pens in Passamaquoddy Bay; urban harbor dredging of contaminated materials; marine habitat protection/restoration; and watershed management.

Results of these discussion groups were adopted by all meeting participants in an integrative final session and three categories of recommendations emerged from the workshop: a) apply the region's expertise to current emerging issues, b) improve regional information management and dissemination, c) develop new tools to integrate science and policy. These are detailed in the resulting RARGOM Report 97-2 which was produced in July 1997 and distributed to all participants, to RARGOM member institutions, to the Council on the Marine Environment distribution list, and to participants at Coastal Zone '97 through an exhibit at that conference held July 21-24.

The workshop budget was \$18,450. and was supported by registration fees and contributions from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Maine State Planning Office, and the New Brunswick Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Dr. Jack Pearce, North American editor of the Fisheries Bulletin, was granted permission to reprint this workshop report in that publication.

The following Association goals were ongoing during 1997:

Membership and Financial

10. Expand the Association membership through targeted recruitment of new representatives at institutions who have an active research role in the Gulf of Maine, with an increase in Canadian participation as a priority.

Institutional Involvement Stable

In 1997, the Association membership totaled 11 Full Members and 14 Associates. The Maine Maritime Academy and the Maine Geological Survey discontinued their Associate membership after many years because of fiscal constraints. The Island Institute joined RARGOM as a new Associate member. Several new people participated this year as institutional RARGOM board representatives: Chris Naimie (Dartmouth College), Gerald Pesch (EPA), Scott Dickerson (Island Institute), John Boreman (NMFS), Ted Loder (UNH), and Jeff Turner (UMass Dartmouth). Interest about membership was expressed from Environment Canada and the Waquoit Bay NERRS, but no action has been taken to date.

Association Meetings held Regularly around the Region

During 1997 the Association continued to conduct its meetings on a rotating basis at various locations within the Gulf of Maine region in order to distribute the travel burdens and the logistics of hosting the meetings. This approach also has provided an opportunity for members to become familiar with some of the other institutional programs and resources. This year, the joint Cornell University / University of New Hampshire Isles of Shoales Laboratory hosted the June 20 meeting and the December 18 meeting will convene at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth's new Center for Marine Science and Technology in New Bedford, Massachusetts. There was excellent attendance at both 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.

Operating Budget Shows Modest Increase

With constrained budgets, there was continued concern about the ability to support the Association's activities through membership dues. The Association kept its 1997 budget revenues at the 1996 level in membership dues (Full Membership was \$2750., and Associate Membership was \$650.).

Sponsoring Member Support Continues

The Gulf of Maine Regional Marine Research Program and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment both provided sponsorship support at the \$5,000. level. Continued support (\$5,000.) is projected from the Council on the Marine Environment for FY '98, but the RMRP is in its final year as a program and will not be able to continue support.

11. Increase operating support by approaching private foundations for general operating support for the Association and through Sponsoring memberships.

We need to supplement our dues-based budget with external funds if we are to meet the goal of expanding our outreach activities, as expressed initially in this report. We have solicited a budget matching grant commitment from the Cox Foundation, Boston Massachusetts to stabilize our operating revenues over the near future (the request is for \$50,000. annually for three years). The Cox trustees will discuss our request at their December board meeting and we will be informed of their decision January 1998.

Lew Incze, Chair

Bruce Tripp, Vice Chair

Eugenia Braasch, Executive Director