

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

1998 Annual Report

Overview

During 1998, the Association's seventh year, activities focused on joint initiatives with the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, planning for research infrastructure, and preparation of programs for 1999. The Association provided support for a variety of regional initiatives, as outlined below. This report lists the organizational objectives for 1998 and provides a record of associated activity.

Regional Collaboration, Funding and Infrastructure

1. Review the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment Action Plan

Larry Mayer, the RARGOM Policy Board representative from the University of Maine, coordinated an assessment of the Council Action Plan. The report is a compilation of comments from six reviewers on three Action Plan goals: (1) "Protect and restore regionally significant coastal habitats", (3) "Protect human health and ecosystem integrity from toxic contaminants in marine habitats", and (5) "Protect and restore fisheries habitats and resources". The reviewers were generally positive about the Plan, and the consensus was that the Plan addressed important regional priorities.

While the scope of the RARGOM review was to develop scientific recommendations for two or three leading actions to assist state and provincial managers regarding the Action Plan, some of the reviewers' comments were more far reaching, and these remarks were included as well (see attached document). The reviewers recommended that the Council develop a mechanism for evaluating progress on Action Plan goals, perhaps through convening a meeting modeled on the "Mechanisms for Improving the Integration of Science and Management" workshop held in 1997, with both resource managers and scientists present, to review, revise, and prioritize the Plan objectives.

The following comments reflect some concerns emphasized most by the reviewers. "Habitat goals would gain from greater consideration of the role of the Gulf of Maine's watershed in affecting habitat. Greater attention is needed in the definition of 'regionally significant habitat', a contentious issue which will require great care from both scientific and social perspectives. Assessment of environmental risk from toxicant is lacking, with more focus on the biological endpoints needed. The criterion of 10% contaminant reduction for remediation success appears to be unrealistic."

2. Assess progress with structure, content and use of REDIMS and EDIMS;

develop recommendations for easier interface between the research and management sides; and encourage greater scientific participation in the distributed research database through example and communication.

In February, 1998, RARGOM and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment held a meeting to assess the status of existing Gulf of Maine data and information systems. Four topics dominated the discussion at the February meeting: (1) current status of the EDIMS and REDIMS systems, (2) the content of an integrated data and information management system, (3) the incentives for individuals and organizations to participate, and (4) funding. Bruce Tripp, the Association Vice Chair, drafted a status report based on the discussion held at the February meeting. Integration of the two systems (REDIMS and EDIMS) is under consideration. Recommendations include creating a single Gulf of Maine web page entry point

for a distributed system for all users, encouraging rapid loading of new scientific data to the system, promoting the use of web pages, forming a joint data and information committee, and convening a workshop in 1999 to devise the system's framework.

Progressing with the task of making data and information more readily available to the research and management communities has proceeded more slowly than anticipated, due to the scope and organizational difficulty of the tasks involved. There exists a gap between expectations and accomplishments, and coordination is a large part of the problem. A large sector of the research community has not yet put their data up for dissemination. Many scientists could use some technical and/or financial support in order to set up their data on a server and then to access other's data. Rich Signell at USGS has been productive in this area and his work provides a model for others. The Association plans to follow the recommendations made in the the 1997 "Mechanisms for Improving the Integration of Science and Management" workshop report; and also review what is web-served and currently available, provide vehicles for researchers who have data to share, encourage them to do so, gather information about what scientists need - both the data and the questions posed that require data, provide a leadership role for further development of a regional data and information system, ascertain the data requirements, and the steps needed to transfer raw data into usable data for others. This activity is dependent on receiving additional financial support. The Association developed a proposal which outlines the long range as well as immediate initiatives, provides specific goals and mechanisms for achieving the objectives, expecting that this work could be funded through a variety of sources.

The results of coastal research are in great demand by many groups and this demand forces research organizations to make some effort in the area of "research translation" and "outreach". The Association participated in the organization and leadership of a workshop titled "Out of the Fog: Towards an Effective Electronic Environmental Information Exchange System", hosted on November 4-6th by two Boston area RARGOM member institutions, MIT and the New England Aquarium. This program broadened the scope of the tasks described above, as it brought together additional groups whose activity is based on the Gulf of Maine ecosystem (fishermen, educators, community groups, business and industry). Funding support for this meeting was provided by the Cabot Foundation and it was co-sponsored by the RARGOM along with other Gulf of Maine institutions and organizations.

Workshop goals were threefold: (1) provide a mechanism for communication and information (possibly data) exchange between existing efforts in the Gulf of Maine and a wider audience of interest groups; (2) enable the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment Data and Information Management Committee and RARGOM to reach broader constituencies, such as NGOs and educators for their electronic-based systems (EDIMs and REDIMs); and (3) to make existing Gulf of Maine information more accessible to a diversity of user groups. Several speakers from around the country shared the challenges and successes in establishing regional information and data systems. The great diversity of potential user groups and the immense variability in their perceived information needs are two obstacles facing those who might wish to provide scientific and technical information more broadly in the region. There was strong consensus that access to and sharing of Gulf of Maine region information and data should be maximized, probably through enhanced linkages among local initiatives. Most participants supported the notion of centralized access (a portal or a front door) to information, with a clear "road map" incorporated to assist users. However, ultimate responsibility for compiling, making available and maintaining information and data should lie with respective interest groups. The assembled workshop participants favored an incremental approach to build on the progress already made by individual initiatives and to minimize costs. Several possible action steps were identified as a follow-up to this workshop, including: (a) facilitate links between groups with related interests, (b) identify an institutional leader to get things

rolling, (c) conduct a gap analysis of existing electronic data/information, and (d) prepare a strategic plan to prioritize action steps and to identify sustainable sources of support for these steps. RARGOM has identified technical information transfer as an issue of importance and will assist member institutions as appropriate or take the lead when warranted.

3. **Develop a practical “platform” strategy and recommendations for the future.**

A: Buoys. This effort will include assessment of existing remote sensing data and locations (such as stream gauges, tide gauges, Sea-man stations, weather buoys) as well as augmentations to the systems (new technologies on new and old platform stations). This effort was begun with a workshop in November at the New England Aquarium and will be continued.

The 1997 workshop about Ocean Observing Systems was held 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. A report has been written and distributed. A national discussion of observing systems is taking shape, and RARGOM's early workshop on this topic is good preparation for what probably will be a lengthy process of program development at state, regional, federal and international levels. RARGOM intends to help coordinate regional discussions, and promote regional interests and needs.

B: Ships. Help develop a regional advisory/scheduling committee for the new WHOI SWATH (in partnership with WHOI, initiated in 1997); evaluate and publicize to the scientific user community the availability of scientific and charter vessels available for scientific work in the Gulf of Maine (effort begun in 1997, to be updated).

The Association collaborated with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Bruce Tripp serving as the liaison, on the development of a SWATH vessel. Model testing has now been completed. The fund raising for the vessel is progressing and the project is moving forward on schedule. Development of this vessel demonstrates a real commitment towards regional research.

A new 85' research vessel owned and operated by the University of Connecticut, the R/V Connecticut, was launched in August in Maine. Delivery was taken in the fall, and an open house was held at the Bigelow Laboratory and Maine Department of Marine Resources dock in Boothbay Harbor.

Continue/strengthen efforts for advocacy of regional science, primarily at the federal agency level; and

Continue to build closer ties with appropriate state, provincial and regional organizations and agencies to improve support for research and increase the utilization of research expertise and results;

Both of these are long term goals that are being worked on actively by some members and especially through the efforts of the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Director through discussions, exchanges of information, attendance at meetings, etc. The goals are to keep RARGOM present and persistent.

Communication

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

966 copies of Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Dynamics Scientific Symposium conference

proceedings were distributed, there are 234 reports remaining. Complimentary copies were sent to conference participants, RARGOM member institution employees, regional resource managers, decision-makers and policy makers. Recipients of the report have been entered into the RARGOM database for future RARGOM report distribution. Reports requested by those not mentioned above have purchased copies at cost: \$15.00 (US) each. An announcement of the report's availability was posted both to Canadian and US marine science email networks as well as the Gulf of Maine NEWS. This document represents a visible regional effort and it serves as an important summary of Gulf of Maine research at this point in time.

5. **Strengthen the scientific content of the *Gulf of Maine NEWS*** through scientific editor (R. Schlitz) and editorial committee. Strengthen the management/policy content of the *Gulf of Maine NEWS* through feature articles highlighting the management implications of the scientific research and regularly discuss science-management issues.

Ronald Schlitz, NEFSC / NMFS, served as the scientific editor of the newsletter during 1998, helping to identify timely and diverse topics for informal scientific contributions to the newsletter, and reviewing articles. Jim Hopkins, Bigelow Laboratory, also volunteered to serve as that organization's local information link to the Association office. This additional support improved the production and content of the *Gulf of Maine NEWS*, which returned to a regular production schedule this year after a hiatus during the preparation of the conference proceedings during 1997. It is anticipated that the other member institutions will likewise identify a point person to serve in this capacity. An effort has been made to achieve content balance through reporting activities based in deep water and coastal areas, featuring research and management issues, and highlighting member institution news.

6. **Create and distribute the 1997 Gulf of Maine bibliography;** investigate adding this to the RARGOM web site;

A comprehensive bibliographic search was conducted to document the literature about the Gulf of Maine published during 1997. This bibliography was published with the spring newsletter, as has been done in the past. It was also been posted on the Association web page.

7. **Improve communication to, within and from member institutions at administrative and scientific levels;** encourage fuller participation on the part of institutional representatives and their colleagues.

Development of good communication links between the institutional representatives and their colleagues remains a challenge for our volunteer organization, particularly given the hectic pace of the research work environment. To this end, we prepared a job description for the institutional representatives and sought broader participation by colleagues of the Board representatives on Association activities.

8. **Continue development of the World Wide Web server** using the Association headquarters as the contact point, make this more visible to the management community by creating links to other web sites and publicizing the address in other media. Report on number of links increased and specifically how web address is publicized;

Little expansion was made during 1998, but this is still a RARGOM priority area. The existing web site is being used by some members. We envision the web page as the initial contact point for information about regional research, but need additional resources to achieve this goal. Eugenia Braasch participated in two computing mini-courses offered through the Dartmouth College computing center to develop her database design and web page skills.

Lew Incze represented the Association at a meeting sponsored by the Conservation Law

Foundation and the Collaboration of Community Foundations in Rockport, Maine on March 4, 1998. The meeting was organized to initiate a discussion about the status of Gulf of Maine related information on the web and to begin to assess how environmental and community groups are using and being served by these resources.

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

It has become apparent that many outreach efforts have been initiated independently by different organizations throughout the Gulf of Maine region; these have now progressed to a point where greater collaboration would be productive. A potential focus for RARGOM in 1999 is to assist with bringing these efforts together, building greater cohesion regionally.

The Association held an annual planning meeting with representatives of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment in October, in Portland, Maine. The discussion reported on the past year's activity, explored ways in which the two organizations could be useful to each other in the future, and how information exchange might be improved. The managers raised the need for summarized scientific information presented in non-technical terms, with a balanced perspective, and in a timely manner. Likewise, the need to generate the next round of research priorities, with input from resource managers, was seen as a regional activity to pursue.

The Joint Statement, originally drafted in 1993 by RARGOM, the Regional Marine Research Program, and the Council on the Marine Environment, has been revised to reflect the completion of the Regional Marine Research Program, but retains the original intentions of the remaining two organizations to collaborate on regional activities as resources permit.

Genie Braasch represented RARGOM at the June 3-5th Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment meeting. She reported to the Council on joint activities and reported back to the Association board about Council developments. David Keeley, Maine State Planning Office, Susan Snow-Cotter, Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program, and Megan Trites-Tolson, Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, served as the contact staff people for the Council to RARGOM during 1998-99.

Consultancy

A lengthy exploration of RARGOM's role in helping to link scientific expertise with regional marine resource problems being addressed at the local level by municipal groups, non-governmental organizations, as well as mid-level managers, took place at the June Board meeting. Currently, such information is provided at the individual initiative of scientists through their involvement in conservation commissions, planning boards, and public health boards, but there is a perceived need for a regionally coordinated scientific consultancy that decision makers could contact for advice. The RARGOM Board discussed some of the feasibility issues associated with executing such an information exchange. Components of this service could include: building a searchable database of researchers with key words detailing their areas of expertise, devising a method for filtering requests, providing help for framing the appropriate questions, providing advice on an as requested basis, designing the structural framework for the information (what aspects of this service must be centralized vs. elements which are more effectively left decentralized), and advertising the availability of this advice. There was unanimous support for further development of this service, with the belief that development of such a system would be a valuable model for other regions. RARGOM seeks partnerships for developing such activity, so that it will be targeted to the specific needs of the users.

Programs

10. Conduct workshops on the following topics:

1. Follow-on to the Ocean Observing Systems workshop held November 1997 (I. Babb, L. Incze; 2 meetings: spring and fall 1998)
2. SWATH consortium/ regional ship scheduling (D. Townsend will chair this effort, D. Pittinger will host meeting at WHOI in April 1998)

11. Assist with future scientific workshops (logistical, external funding).

Potential topics identified to date:

1. Eastern Gulf of Maine Coastal Current Initiative (interest expressed by F. Page, R. Beardsley, R. Geyer, N. Pettigrew, D. Lynch)
2. Mass. Bay/Stellwagen Bank (interest expressed by P. Auster, P. Valentine, G. Wallace)
3. Scientific Basis for Planning Marine Protected Areas in Gulf of Maine (interest expressed by P. Auster, S. Brody, P. Hoagland)

Several workshop topics were reviewed and in some cases planning was initiated, but no major programs were held during 1998. Workshop priorities for 1999 include:

- Organizing a meeting to discuss inshore/offshore exchange, the Eastern Maine coastal current (a recommendation from the St. Andrews scientific symposium of particular relevance this year),
- Convening a regional monitoring workshop to discuss the recommendations of the GulfWatch review and develop next steps, and
- Organizing a follow-on workshop to the 1995 workshop about habitat, to review methodologies to be evaluated in the field (potential partners would include Maine DMR and the US Fish & Wildlife Service).

The following Association goals were ongoing during 1998:

Membership and Financial

12. 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 1998, the Association membership totaled 11 Full Members and 10 Associates (see attachment for membership statistics). The Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and Texas A & M University discontinued their Associate membership. Several new people became institutional RARGOM Board representatives: Judith Pederson replaced Eric Adams for MIT, Kevin Friedland replaced John Boreman for NMFS, and Ian Davison replaced Larry Mayer for the University of Maine. The Association also elected a new Policy Board Chair and Vice Chair to serve a two year term until July 1, 2000. Judith Pederson (MIT) replaced Lew Incze (Bigelow Laboratory) as Chair, Gerald Pesch (EPA) replaced Bruce Tripp (WHOI) as Vice Chair. The contributions made to the Association by these outgoing leaders and representatives are greatly appreciated.

Association Meetings held Regularly around the Region

During 1998 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 provided an opportunity for members to become familiar with some of the other institutional programs and resources. This year, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve in Wells, Maine hosted the June 29 meeting and the

October 29 meeting was held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 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.

Operating Budget Shows Modest Increase

The Association kept its 1998 budget revenues level at the 1997 level in membership dues (Full Membership was \$2750., and Associate Membership was \$650.). However, the 1998 budget, \$56,351., represents an \$8,301. increase over the 1997 budget. These funds were realized through money carried over from 1997 (due in large part to support of the Executive Director's 1997 activity through the St. Andrews conference budget) and made the purchase of a computer for the Association office possible.

Sponsoring Member Support Continues

The Gulf of Maine Regional Marine Research Program provided sponsorship support at \$2,000. and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment provided sponsorship support at \$5,000.

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

The Association's dues-based budget must be supplemented with external funds if we are to meet the goal of expanding our outreach activities. The proposal submitted in late 1997 to the Cox Foundation, Boston Massachusetts was not funded during 1998.

Lew Incze, Chair, January - June

Judith Pederson, Chair, July - present

Bruce Tripp, Vice Chair, January - June

Gerald Pesch, Vice Chair, July - present

Eugenia Braasch, Executive Director

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

1998 Membership Statistics

<u>institution</u>	<u>representative</u>	<u>Gulf of Maine researchers</u>
Full Members		
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences	Lewis Incze	16
Dartmouth College	Christopher Naimie	6
Maine Department of Marine Resources	Linda Mercer	24
MIT Sea Grant College Program	Judith Pederson	26
National Marine Fisheries Service	Kevin Friedland	57
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Gerald Pesch	20
U.S. Geological Survey	Page Valentine	32
University of Maine	Ian Davison	39
University of Massachusetts at Boston	Gordon Wallace	25
University of New Hampshire	Ted Loder	56
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution	Bruce Tripp	60
Associate Members		
Cornell University	Charles Greene	5
Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada	John Loch	115
Huntsman Marine Science Centre	John Allen	7
Island Institute	Philip Conkling	2
Maine State Planning Office	David Keeley	6
National Undersea Research Center University of Connecticut	Ivar Babb	13
New England Aquarium	Scott Kraus	16
University of Massachusetts at Amherst	Francis Juanes	11
University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth	Jefferson Turner	15
Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve	Michele Dionne	<u>7</u>
		558

An additional 175 newsletters are regularly distributed to nonmembers.