

**RARGOM Board Meeting
University of Massachusetts Boston
Minutes**

7 June, 2004

In attendance: I. Babb, A. Bilgili, K. Friedland, L. Incze, L. Mercer, J. Runge, D. Townsend, B. Tripp, J. Turner, G. Wallace.

Brief introductions and news of activities

The meeting started at 10:05 with the traditional around-the-table discussion of news from the member institutions. Topics included regional research vessel needs, announcements of new positions available, personnel changes, cooperative research projects, developments in coastal ocean observing for the Gulf of Maine, and the commissioning of a new NOAA research vessel, the Henry Bigelow.

Update on finances and other administrative matters

1. First, the Board voted in favor of moving the RARGOM headquarters from UMBoston to the University of New Hampshire. J. Runge will move the RARGOM files to UNH after the meeting. A RARGOM account is being established at UNH and dues will be sent there, starting with 2004. J. Runge and G. Wallace will go through the files at some point, to determine what needs to be retained and what can be discarded, especially for documents that are scanned and available electronically.
2. The status of the budget was reviewed. The total dues for 2003 was \$23,352. In addition, the Gulf of Maine Council (and EPA, due to a bureaucratic necessity) has paid through 2004, for a total income of \$23,852. The carryover balance from 2002 was \$12,484 for a total of \$36,336. Expenses for 2003 were \$11,305. Expenses were less than planned because of a staff assistant was not hired and supplies and theme session meeting costs came under budget. This leaves a balance of \$24,531 plus \$500 (prepaid dues) to be carried over to 2004. The board felt that a year-to-year carryover on the order of \$12,000 was fiscally responsible but that \$24,531 was excessive. Because the dues requests for 2004 have been delayed, awaiting formal approval of the move of the RARGOM office to New Hampshire, the Board voted to reduce the full membership rate to the associate member rate for 2004 only. This action will reduce the 2004 carryover balance to an acceptable level.
3. The budget for 2004 was discussed. While the bottom line remains at \$26,000 as voted in the last board meeting on March 8, the Chair was given flexibility in allocation of resources among staff, supplies, meetings and website development, including the cost of scanning archived documents for storage on the RARGOM website. The theme sessions are in many instances paying for themselves, reducing the need for the original allocation (\$7,000) which could be put to good use to support much needed administrative assistance and

website development. The budget for 2005 will be reviewed at the next board meeting, to ensure that dues requests for 2005 can be sent out early in the year.

4. The annual report and 2004 dues requests will be sent out the week of June 14. (**J. Runge, G. Wallace**)

Theme session planning

1. *Integrative, Multidisciplinary Modelling, in the Gulf of Maine*. This session will be held at UMass Boston, July 15. Gordon Wallace is lead organizer: A. Bilgili, J. Manning and J. Runge are on the Steering Committee. The first announcement has been made. Registration forms are posted on the RARGOM website. Those who register will be polled for interest in a social gathering immediately after the meeting.

2. *Research priorities in the Gulf of Maine from a management perspective*. This theme session will be held jointly with the Gulf of Maine Council. Bruce Tripp and David Keeley are the RARGOM organizers. Date is in September, day and venue still to be decided. The Board identified a need make the meeting appealing for participation by scientists. A concise and perhaps formal letter of invitation stating why it is important to attend the session should be sent out well before the meeting. It may be helpful for meeting organizers to indicate how feedback from scientists to the Gulf of Maine Council will have an impact on management issues (**B. Tripp, D. Keeley, J. Runge**).

3. *Theme session on Habitat Restoration*. This session will be held in the fall. D. Keeley and M. Dionne is the lead organizer. J. Runge will contact David for information on prospectus and status of the preparations.

4. There was a brief discussion about a Theme Session in 2005 on *Gulf of Maine Whales*.

5. For theme sessions subsequent to the upcoming session on July 15, the Board recommends a nominal registration fee of \$25 for members and \$35 for non-members.

Web site planning

1. There was a discussion of the progress made in website development. The RARGOM website is recognized as the primary medium by which RARGOM can communicate and distribute information to the Gulf of Maine community.

2. Suggestions for improvements to the website include addition of a category indicating funding opportunities. This was previously a RARGOM service that was discontinued with the cutback in dues. There was no specific action specified at this time, however, as it was not clear how this service could be effectively maintained. It was also suggested that the look of the home page could be redone to give it more of a professional, fresh appeal. One way to do this would be to engage a computer science undergraduates. **B. Tripp, G. Wallace, I. Babb and J. Runge agreed to continue discussion of website development**

during the upcoming interval between Board meetings and to report back to the Board with options for revision.

State of the Gulf Report

The anonymous reviews of the State of the Gulf report (entitled "The Tides of Change: An Environment Report on the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy") were submitted to the Board. The report will be distributed at the Gulf of Maine Summit. The Board recommended that in the acknowledgements, the editors thank the anonymous reviewers and state that RARGOM assisted in the review process. An indication by the editors as to how they responded to the reviewer's comments would be useful. In any event, RARGOM's participation in the review process should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the final product.

GoM Data Partnership

L. Ince provided an overview of the Gulf of Maine Data Partnership. This is a new organization created in 2004 by a Memorandum of Understanding among 15 agencies and organizations that produce or coordinate the dissemination of a wide array of observations about the biological, oceanographic, chemical, geological, and cultural conditions of the Gulf of Maine. Its purpose is to design and implement an ongoing or "dynamic" system for sharing large data bases among each other and with users of the data in the public at-large; and to do so in a way that enables the combining and synthesis of data layers to produce an ecosystem or integrated view of the Gulf of Maine. The Data Partnership is open to all institutions/organizations that are interested in making observations on the GOM available for sharing. The Gulf of Maine Area Program/Census of Marine Life is supporting the effort, with the objective that data aggregation and access will eventually be through GoMOOS as a contribution to regional researchers and the IOOS. The Gulf of Maine Biogeographic Information System (available soon) will be the intermediate step in this process.

Sea Grant request for assistance with regionalization of Sea Grant activities.

J. Runge, B. Tripp and G. Wallace reported on their meeting with the New Hampshire Sea Grant Policy Advisory Committee on May 11. The purpose of the meeting was to explore RARGOM's participation in the development of regional research planning of Sea Grant activities, in response to calls from the U.S. Ocean Commission and NOAA for "regionalization" within NOAA's research programs. Sea Grant had invited RARGOM to the meeting to explore RARGOM's interest and capacity for partnering with the Northeast Sea Grant Programs (New York to Maine) to help evaluate the costs and benefits of regional coordination and to identify regional research priorities.

The RARGOM representatives provided the PAC with an overview of RARGOM, including its goals and organization and its history in the development of regional marine research programs in the Gulf of Maine. While the PAC posed a number of questions

concerning the need to involve RARGOM in Sea Grant planning, the outcome of the meeting was an agreement to pursue a cautious course in partnership with RARGOM on the regionalization issue.

The Board agreed that interaction with Sea Grant on the regionalization issue was an important activity to pursue. The Board recommended that RARGOM hold a workshop on the subject (with more restricted participation than a theme session) in which Sea Grant would be invited to present the Sea Grant perspective and solicit comments and analysis from the RARGOM representatives at the workshop. A formal document describing the proceedings of the workshop could be produced, with the possibility of funding support from Sea Grant. The distribution of the report would be determined in collaboration with Sea Grant.

J. Runge will write a memorandum to Ann Bucklin, Director of NH Sea Grant, that expresses this recommendation as a course for continued interaction between Sea Grant and RARGOM on the subject of regional research.

Participation of RARGOM in a Regional Association umbrella committee.

The Board discussed a proposal to create the Gulf of Maine Regional Association, in which RARGOM would participate as one of four, region-wide organizations. The other participating organizations would be: The Gulf of Maine Council, GoMOOS, and the Gulf of Maine Data Partnership. It is proposed that four regional organizations devoted to the management, science, and monitoring of the Gulf of Maine create a unifying umbrella association for two purposes:

1. To facilitate the exchange of support and services between and among the organizations, each of which would remain independent; and
2. To carry out the duties of a Regional Association under the soon-to-be-established U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS).

This umbrella organization would be an "organization of organizations" whose primary goal to contribute to the overall good and effective stewardship of the Gulf of Maine. A national program to establish and promote an integrated ocean observing system is gaining momentum. Legislation to create the system and authorize funds is making its way through Congress; the recent report of the U.S. Oceans Policy Commission strongly endorses the IOOS, and details of the system are being put into place under the leadership of a national program office, OceanUS. One of the key components of the system is establishment of Regional Associations in each of the approximately 10 coastal regions of the United States, including the Gulf of Maine region. The Regional Associations will be the liaisons between the U.S. federal agencies managing and funding the IOOS and the coastal ocean observing systems producing observations within their respective regions. Each Regional Association must broadly represent users and producers of ocean observations. Each will identify

priorities for observations and for directing the use of IOOS funds to meet national and regional goals.

In the discussion of this topic it was pointed out that it is the role and, in a sense, the obligation of RARGOM, as the regional association of research as well as management institutions, to take on responsibilities such as participation in a Regional Association. The Board nominated J. Runge, D. Townsend and G. Wallace to represent RARGOM in an Organizing Committee that would map out the steps and the legal vehicle for creating a Regional Association. They will report back at the next Board meeting.

RARGOM involvement in a Gulf of Maine Science Council concept

Due to time constraints, discussion of this subject was postponed to the next meeting.

Date and place of next meeting.

Alternative dates for the next meeting of the Board **are Friday, October 15 or Monday, October 18.** J. Runge will poll board members to determine that date that would maximize attendance.