

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

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Minutes of Meeting

Darling Marine Center, Walpole, Maine, June 9, 1995

Present:

Paty Matrai	Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
Fred Page	Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Daniel Lynch	Dartmouth College
John Allen	Huntsman Marine Science Centre
Linda Mercer	Maine Department of Marine Resources
Joe Kelley	Maine Geological Survey
David Keeley	Maine State Planning Office
Eric Adams	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
David Dow	National Marine Fisheries Service
Greg Lough	National Marine Fisheries Service
Ron Schlitz	National Marine Fisheries Service
Ivar Babb	National Undersea Research Center, University of Connecticut
Eugenia Braasch	RARGOM headquarters at Dartmouth College
Norman Rubinstein	United States Environmental Protection Agency
Page Valentine	United States Geological Survey
Larry Mayer	University of Maine
Bob Wall	University of Maine, Regional Marine Research Program
Gordon Wallace	University of Massachusetts - Boston
Barry Colt	University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth
Wendell Brown	University of New Hampshire
Michele Dionne	Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve
Bruce Tripp	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

The Meeting was called to order by Gordon Wallace at 8:15 a.m., with Genie Braasch and Dan Lynch keeping the minutes.

The minutes of the 24 February meeting (New England Aquarium, Massachusetts) were modified to read (Page 2, third paragraph, the GoM Council on the Marine Environment, "The Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management office, headed by Peg Brady, will serve as the Executive Director office for the U.S. Association of the GoM CME."); the rest of the minutes were approved as they stand.

Old Business

EPA Initiatives

N. Rubinstein reported that a major restructuring of the EPA has been underway. He presented several overheads which illustrate the new reporting channels and mission of the EPA Office of Research and Development (see attached). There are now five major reporting centers: the National Center for Environmental Assessment, the National Center for Extramural Research and Quality Assurance, the National Risk Management Research Lab, the National Exposure Research Lab, and the National Health and Environmental Effects Research Lab (the Narragansett Lab is part of this effort, focusing on Atlantic Ecology). He reported that extra mural funding is now controlled at the national center, rather than at the regional offices. Now that these changes are in effect, it will be important for RARGOM to establish contact with the appropriate liaisons, to inform them about RARGOM and formalize a role for the Association to serve in an advisory capacity. Rubinstein noted that John Paul now heads the Integrated Assessment Group, and that EMAP will enter a second phase, focusing on ecological indicators and community based assessments along the Atlantic seaboard.

Actions to take:

1. N. Rubinstein will identify the key contacts to make: Region I administrator, Health and Environmental Effects national lab, the Narragansett lab, and the Extramural Research national office.
2. G. Braasch will distribute RARGOM materials to these people.

Gulf of Maine Scientific Workshop

Planning: The initial steering committee is Gordon Wallace (chair), J. Allen, B. Beardsley, W. Brown, R. Geyer, D. Gordon, L. Incze, G. Lough, L. Mayer, F. Page, J. Pederson, N. Rubinstein, R. Schlitz, D. Stevenson, and B. Tripp. They met on June 8th at the Darling Marine Center to get the planning process underway. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in about 8 weeks via conference call. G. Braasch has set up a new group email account for the activities of this committee; the address is: <rargom2@mac.dartmouth.edu>. Use this address to distribute comments/ideas to the entire steering committee.

When: September 16-19, 1996

Where: The Algonquin Hotel, St. Andrews, New Brunswick

Budget & Funding: Budget details are yet to be worked out, but it is anticipated that approximately \$30,000 will need to be raised. It is anticipated that this meeting will attract 200 participants, a block of rooms to accommodate this group has been reserved at the Algonquin. G. Braasch spoke with J. Wiggin about the budget and sponsors of the 1991 workshop, and passed along this info. to the Steering Committee.

Program Themes: A draft prospectus was distributed for comment (see attached). At present, four working groups/organizing teams have been established; it is anticipated that these groups will be further divided to facilitate better discussion and to permit a greater number of topics to be addressed.

Publications: The workshop proceedings will be produced as a part of the RARGOM Report series. D. Lynch proposed the idea of also preparing a post symposium, peer reviewed, volume and solicited ideas for journal ideas (i.e. AGU, Estuaries, NWAFO). It was agreed that these two publication endeavors are distinct and that the planning needs for each are extensive and should be kept separate. The notion that the workshop event could catalyze into the journal volume was accepted.

Travel: Group arrangements from the Boston area will be looked into.

Actions to take:

1. Steering committee members will draft proposals for plenary and working group topics, generate participant lists.
2. A letter announcing the workshop will be sent out to scientists, state agencies, congressional staffers, and NGOs.
3. G. Braasch will work with G. Wallace on the budget and fund raising approach.
4. The contract with the Algonquin will be revised and signed.

Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Health Workshop

David Dow, chair of the workshop steering committee presented the current status of the workshop. Following the advice given by those in attendance at the February 24th RARGOM meeting, D. Lynch conveyed the sense of the meeting to Jack Pearce the workshop chair. It was subsequently decided to postpone the workshop event to September, 1995. A meeting (attended by about 40 people) was held in Woods Hole on May 3rd to provide planning for the workshop (D. Lynch and E. Braasch attended). Recommendations made by RARGOM representatives have been forwarded to the steering committee as well. The resulting workshop themes have become broader than the original marine mammal theme, to consider the overall GoM ecosystem health (see attached description). Speakers and participants are being contacted; these decisions should become finalized soon. RARGOM will host the workshop event at Dartmouth College. The contract and purchase order have been approved.

Actions to take:

1. J. Pearce, D. Dow, and the steering committee will finalize participant decisions.
2. G. Braasch will send out invitation letters and reading materials to participants.
3. G. Braasch will make logistical arrangements for the meeting.

Regional Science Program representation at the Federal level

I. Babb reported on the need for advocacy of environmental research in the current political climate and reported briefly on his activities on behalf of NURP this year. He noted that CORE has been very effective for academic research advocacy. D. Lynch indicated that he would like to be able to do more, without jeopardizing RARGOM membership by federal agencies. G. Wallace suggested that the best approach is to be certain that RARGOM presents the case for regional research and delivers these materials to the people in decision making roles. L. Mayer proposed that state constituency staffers be invited to RARGOM meetings. B. Wall agreed, noting that, in his experience, advocacy involves a lot of constant effort and that there are professionals to do this sort of activity full time (would this be the best use of RARGOM staff). He also pointed out that if RARGOM changed its current policy of not lobbying, the Association might be asked to make judgments about which programs to support.

Actions to take:

1. Establish a small subcommittee to think about this
2. Establish baseline, routine communications (GoM NEWS mailing list distribution) with state and federal legislators and key committee members.
3. Produce a brief RARGOM descriptive document for distribution to legislators.
4. Prepare general PR for use in regional media.

Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

D. Lynch reported that he had sent a letter (see attached) to J. Taylor following the February meeting, with several suggestions for cooperative work, but that he had not received any response to these RARGOM initiatives. The intention of the CME to honor the three-way agreement was in question. D. Keeley reported that, from his perspective as both an Association and Council member, this should be a good time to pursue Association- Council involvement, pointing out that a 1995 workplan has been finalized (this was distributed) and that an executive director will be hired shortly. These two developments should alleviate future miscommunication. He suggested that RARGOM researchers prepare 1 page proposals to present to the next working group meeting in Portsmouth, NH

on June 28-29. An RFP for CME sponsored activities will probably be issued by August/September, the intention is to extend the EPA funding with the requirement that projects will be matched by additional funds. D. Lynch reiterated that a single point of contact needs to be established between the two organizations at the executive level before an effective collaboration between the two groups can be achieved. No follow-up actions were identified.

Regional Marine Research Program

B. Wall reported that the last appropriations for the program are those for FY'95, though the RMRP is currently authorized through 1996. Research will close at the summer of 1997. There is some discussion of re-authorization, but this seems unlikely in the current political climate. Nine projects have been recommended to NOAA for funding this year: 5 are extensions and/or expansions of currently funded projects (Anderson et al, Brown, Pettigrew, Cornelion & Bisagni, and Talbot, Moser & Moran), 4 are new projects (Moore & Stegeman, Incze & Lynch, Balch & Fritz, and Xue et al. - on ecosystem modeling). The meeting of the RMR Board and PI's will take place in mid-October, and will include a special session on ecosystem modeling. The possibility of holding the fall RARGOM meeting during that week and including Association representatives was proposed.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at noon, the policy board met during that time (see minutes below).

Gulf of Maine Research Overview

Joe Kelley, Maine Geological Survey, reported the results of his work and showed poster illustrations of aspects of the sea floor atlas that he and his colleagues have been assembling. This work will be summarized in the next newsletter.

Kevin Eckleberger, Director of the Darling Marine Center, gave a slide show "tour" of the facilities and activities at the DMC.

New Business

Research ~ Researchers Database

G. Braasch reported that the number of informational requests is increasing at the Association office. She also noted that the steering committee for the '96 GoM Scientific workshop had requested a report of all current research activity in the region as part of their planning effort. In response to these requests, Braasch has contacted several of the regional research offices (NURP, RMRP, Sea Grant) and some of the RARGOM departmental offices, and has received information about funded projects from 1990-1995. She has designed a relational database that will link this information as it becomes available. (diagram attached). The sense of the meeting was that this was an important service for the Association to provide. Some institutions are currently doing this sort of activity and can forward the information. Issues concerning updating and maintaining the database were expressed. It was recognized that this effort will need refinement and should be envisioned to be a prototype for future expansion, but that this activity could serve a useful purpose in planning the '96 GoM scientific workshop.

Actions to take:

1. Genie will work on setting up the database over the next 6 weeks.
2. Representatives should arrange for researcher and funded project information to be sent to the Association office (electronic copy preferred). Current activity is of highest priority, but information about projects conducted during the past 5 years (since the last GoM Scientific Workshop) is sought. (the diagram shows the data needed for this project)

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

I. Babb reported that a proposal has been drafted to seek experimental closure on Stellwagen Bank, but that it has now been put on hold. Scientists from the National Undersea Research Center at the University of Connecticut, the University of Maine, the University of North Carolina, the Maine Department of Marine Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Sea Education Association, in consultation with the Northeast Fishery Science Center and in cooperation with the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary have begun a multi-year study of the groundfish nursery and spawning areas on Stellwagen Bank. The initial research effort will focus on the effects of mobile fishing gear on groundfish nursery habitats on Stellwagen Bank, but in order to conduct this research as planned, a small area of the Bank will have to be closed to fishing. This will allow the researchers to compare fished (i.e. dragged or trawled) against unfished, protected areas. The work will focus on the role of variable landscape features on microhabitats and associated fauna, benthic prey species, and benthic primary production and demersal zooplankton. Funding for the research will come from a variety of sources, including NURP and the Sanctuary. However, the issue of the closure has generated significant opposition to the research program, principally from the fishing community. After a series of public information meetings on the proposed closure, it was decided that the preliminary research, to be conducted this summer and fall on two cruises funded by the Sanctuary (the first on the R/V ARGO MAINE in July and another on the NOAA vessel FERREL in October) would proceed but that the decision whether to continue to seek the closure from the New England Fishery Management Council would be delayed until the Council makes some decisions on new and more restrictive regulations on groundfishing in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and southern New England (the so-called "Amendment 7" deliberations currently underway). The imposition of these new regulations may cast a different light on the experimental closure being sought by the researchers and the Sanctuary.

It was noted that D. Gordon is conducting similar studies on the Grand Banks.

Actions to take:

1. For further information regarding the research program, contact Peter Auster, NURC/UCONN at (203) 445-4714.

New England Aquarium Forum Series

G. Braasch reported that the NEA has received funding to sponsor a series of forums about environmental controversies in the GoM region. The first of these will focus on issues of pinniped and human interactions and will be held on June 14-15 at the Aquarium. Braasch will attend as a RARGOM representative. Braasch will report on the outcome of the event in the next newsletter.

Coastal RV

B. Tripp reported that a Swath vessel may be acquired by WHOI. It is a 90'x50' double hulled vessel that is very stable in many sea-states. This possible acquisition has been under discussion with the US Navy for approx. 2 years. Based on the level of research effort during the past 3-5 years, there is probably plenty of research work for it. If acquired, the Swath could be based at WHOI, or elsewhere in the GoM area. This will probably need to be a UNOLS-certified vessel, but scheduling would happen locally, (2-5 day cruises, scheduled 3-4 months in advance). WHOI is presently seeking funds to transport the vessel to Woods Hole and to refit it for Gulf of Maine research.

Actions to take:

1. individual RARGOM institutions contact Dick Pittinger at WHOI if interested in helping to subsidize the cost of transport and refitting.
2. if an acquisition decision is made in the near future, sponsor a meeting at WHOI to provide feedback on researcher requirements.

Financial Report and Membership Dues

The Association's expenses are on track with the 1995 budget. Dues have been received from all but the following institutions: Cornell University (will probably not be able to contribute at the Full Member level), DFO, Huntsman Marine Science Centre, Maine Maritime Academy, Texas A&M University, UMass Boston. This represents a potential \$8,100.00 shortfall.

Actions to take:

1. G. Braasch will send out letters to the above institutions with a 2nd invoice.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Policy Board Minutes

Present:

Paty Matrai	Bigelow Lab
Daniel Lynch	Dartmouth College
Linda Mercer	Maine Department of Marine Resources
Eric Adams	MIT
Greg Lough	National Marine Fisheries Service
Ron Schlitz	National Marine Fisheries Service
Ivar Babb	National Undersea Research Center, University of Connecticut
Norm Rubinstein	United States Environmental Protection Agency
Page Valentine	United States Geological Survey
Larry Mayer	University of Maine
Gordon Wallace	University of Massachusetts - Boston
Wendell Brown	University of New Hampshire
Bruce Tripp	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 noon by G. Wallace.

Advocacy Subcommittee

I. Babb, D. Lynch, N. Rubinstein, G. Wallace, and B. Wall will serve on a subcommittee to explore ways in which RARGOM can allow advocacy of regional research.

'96 Gulf of Maine Workshop

The program description distributed earlier was approved unanimously. The contract negotiations with the Algonquin will proceed per the advice of the group, and G. Wallace will sign the contract on behalf of RARGOM. If aspects of the contract become problematic, he will notify the steering committee for guidance. It was suggested that a temporary employee be hired to assist in the coordination of this event.

The associated workshop, "Restructuring the Management ~Science Interface", was discussed at length. It was decided to approach the Council on the Marine Environment to discuss the potential for coordination of this workshop. By the Association's fall meeting, we would know whether to proceed in this joint effort with the CME. It was decided that RARGOM should promote this idea and the sense of the group was to proceed in a joint effort, because this activity is consistent with the ideas expressed in the letter which the Association wrote to J. Taylor in March. The majority (2 organizations opposed) endorsed the idea of G. Wallace writing a letter (proposing possible RARGOM/CME joint initiatives) to the next CME chair, once that office is established in its next location.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eugenia Frey Braasch
19 June, 1995