

RARGOM Board Meeting  
Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

16 June, 2006

In attendance: I. Babb, M. Dionne, James DuPrie, S. Hale, L. Incze, R. Konisky, K. Leyden, L. Mercer, J. Runge, L. Rutter, M. Tyrell, G. Wallace

**Research at the Wells NERR featured**

It is intended that the summer meeting of the RARGOM board feature one of its member institutions; this time it was the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. The morning part of the meeting was devoted to a presentation of research projects conducted at the Wells NERR by staff and graduate students. Studies include marsh restoration, impacts on community structure of crab-gastropod interactions and effects of introduced snails on *Spartina*. The value of the Wells NERR as a research center for controlled testing of hypotheses about salt marsh and estuarine processes came across clearly in the presentations.

**Other regional news**

**Ray Konisky** is Program Manager for the Ecosystem Indicator Partnership (ESIP), a committee of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment. ESIP is developing indicators for the Gulf of Maine and integrating regional data for a new Web-based reporting system for marine ecosystem monitoring. Activities of ESIP initially center on convening regional experts in six indicator areas: coastal development, contaminants and pathogens, eutrophication, aquatic habitat, fisheries and aquaculture, and climate change.

**Ivar Babb** provided a synopsis of recent research program activities at the University of Connecticut. UCONN has a new, fast 40' coastal research vessel, the RV Lowell Weiker. There is uncertainty about the future of NURC, as its budget was zeroed out in recent Congressional budget planning sessions. Research highlights include a survey for invasive sea squirts in Long Island Sound, a Seafloor Habitat Recovery and Monitoring program and live web broadcasts from shipwrecks in the Stellwagen Marine Sanctuary.

**Linda Mercer** gave an update on activities at the Maine Department of Marine Resources. The Department conducts a number of research, monitoring and survey projects on species of commercial interest. Highlighted were the the scallop fishery, which used to be productive but in not doing well, the sea urchin dive survey, a ventless trap survey for lobsters, and the status of and water quality monitoring sites for harmful algal blooms. Position vacancies for a Natural Resource Educator and a Biological Monitoring and Assessment senior scientist were announced.

**Lew Incze** outlined research activities at the University of Southern Maine. T. Willis and K. Wilson are studying catadromous fish (e.g. shad and blueback herring) migrations into

rivers, estuaries and lakes, including a large project to restore the Penobscot River for fish migration. The Census of Marine Life will conduct a workshop in 2007. Research on Platts Bank has discovered dense patches of euphausiids probably related to propagation of internal waves, attracting consumers such as herring and whales. The Union of Concerned Scientists is conducting regional climate impact analysis involving expertise at USM.

**Gordon Wallace** featured some of the research activities at UMASS Boston. A high resolution model, the Massachusetts Bay Forecasting Model, has been developed to simulate heavy metal dynamics and biogeochemistry of Boston Harbor. Some metals haven't declined since 1992. Notable is a persistently high distribution of copper, the primary source of which is the sediments. Statistical tools have been developed to show change in benthic community structure in the western Gulf of Maine. High resolution coring for mercury is being conducted. University researchers are involved in the EPA national coastal assessment project and in the initiation of a Massachusetts Coastal Observing System.

**Stephen Hale** discussed activities at the Environmental Protection Agency Narragansett lab. The EPA National Coastal Assessment survey for New England is part of the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP), which involves measurement of ecological indicators that reflect the ecosystems' biological, chemical and physical attributes, including water quality, sediment quality and fish tissue analysis. The goal is to use biological measures to indicate the physical-chemical status of the environment. An EMAP wetlands survey has started up, with development of indicators that give the status and condition of the water resources. Candidate indices for a benthic index for the Gulf of Maine are being explored, with a Benthic Index Workshop planned for the summer/early fall.

**Kathleen Leyden** provided an update on activities at the Maine Coastal Program at the Maine State Planning Office. The Coastal Program is a partnership of local, regional, and state agencies. It supports management oriented research needs and funds projects such as sources of pollution at Goose Rocks and the Sea Around Us. It provides Shore Stewards and Habitat Restoration grants. It is involved in State Planning and DMR initiatives to determine how are we going to manage the nearshore. This activity is in the incubation/capacity building stage but there is not yet a comprehensive coming together of the representative stakeholders.

**Jeffrey Runge** featured activities at the Coastal Ocean Observing Center at the University of New Hampshire. Using the R/V Gulf Challenger, the Center visits stations for measurement of physical and biological variables in a line extending from Portsmouth Harbor to Wilkinson Basin. The aftermath of the coastal inundation that occurred in May was measured, including remarkable satellite images showing the extent of river freshwater discharge into the western Gulf of Maine.

**Finances update and annual report**

The YTD financial summary (annex) shows a balance of \$13,310.84 for carryover into 2007, on projected income of \$25,950 from membership dues and a Gulf of Maine Council contract of \$5,000 for the Gulfwatch science review. Expenditures this year include website migration to UNH, estimated at \$3,250.

### **Website report**

James DuPrie provided an update on progress in migrating the website to the University of New Hampshire and in redesign of the web page. The decision to migrate from the present home at MBL was made by the website committee following an analysis of costs and benefits. After it was confirmed that RARGOM users do not have access to the MBL library services via the web, it was decided that the balance of benefits weighed on the side of UNH in terms of ability to make updates quickly and to modify content. James and Lynn have started working with the UNH EOS Research Computer Center on the website redesign, and expect to have that completed by the end of the summer.

### **Planning for theme sessions for 2006/2007**

#### *Regional Modeling Center follow up*

A one-day meeting is planned as follow up to the workshop on Regional Modeling Needs held at the Cliff House (RARGOM Theme Session 05-01). The goal of this meeting is to allow broader community response to the theme session report and concepts for regional coordination of integrated modeling activities through a Regional Modeling Center or other community infrastructure. J. Runge is continuing discussions and planning about the organization and content of the meeting. A meeting date has not been set yet.

#### *Gulf of Maine indicators*

This theme session/workshop has been initiated by K. Friedland and M. ten Brink. Ray Konisky, coordinator of the Gulf of Maine Council ESIP program, has agreed to collaborate with the planning of the meeting, with possible venue at the Wells NERR. J. Runge will contact Kevin and Marilyn to encourage scheduling of the session.

#### *Linkages from nearshore to offshore*

Conveners for this meeting are J. Runge, L. Incze and G. Wallace. The session is scheduled for late spring/early summer, 2007. J. Runge will report on progress in planning the session at the next board meeting.

### **Gulfwatch Review**

Planning for scientific review of the Gulfwatch program was discussed. G. Wallace, B. Tripp, S. Hale and J. Runge are on the review committee. Five reviews, some from outside the region will be requested in addition to the review committee comments. A one day theme session, in which the program is presented and reviewers and interested members of the broader community participate, will form part of the review and final report. Compensation for reviewers as well as for review committee members will come from the Gulf of Maine Council, which has offered \$5,000 for the review process. Board members considered that this was too low if reviewers are also to be compensated for travel to the

theme session, and encouraged committee members to seek additional support for the review from the Council. Given that the Gulfwatch program can play an important role in long-term observing of the health of the Gulf of Maine, it was generally considered that support of a rigorous review is a worthwhile investment of resources.

**RARGOM mission statement**

A draft of the RARGOM mission statement was circulated to the board. J. Runge requested comments and suggestions for revision. The revised mission statement will be posted on the newly designed website when it goes online later this summer.

**Next meeting dates and venue for next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on November 17 at U MASS-Boston (note: meeting date was later changed to December 8 to avoid conflict with the RARGOM Theme Session on Nov. 15).