

Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine

Headquarters: Dartmouth College
Thayer School of Engineering
Hanover, NH 03755 USA
telephone: (603)646-3480
facsimile : (603)646-3856
email: braasch@dartmouth.edu

Minutes of Meeting

New England Aquarium, Boston, Massachusetts, February 24, 1995

Present:

Lew Incze	Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
Daniel Lynch	Dartmouth College
John Allen	Huntsman Marine Science Centre
Dave Wiley	International Wildlife Coalition (guest)
John Barlow	Maine Maritime Academy
Judy Pederson	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Eric Adams	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Ron Schlitz	National Marine Fisheries Service
Ivar Babb	National Undersea Research Center, University of Connecticut
Peter Scheifele	National Undersea Research Center, University of Connecticut
Scott Kraus	New England Aquarium
Carol Barleon	New Hampshire State Planning Office, CME Secretariat (guest)
Eugenia Braasch	RARGOM headquarters at Dartmouth College
Brad Barr	Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
Page Valentine	United States Geological Survey
Marilyn Buchholtz ten Brink	United States Geological Survey
Larry Mayer	University of Maine
Gordon Wallace	University of Massachusetts - Boston
Wendell Brown	University of New Hampshire
Steve Jones	University of New Hampshire, CME Monitoring Committee (guest)
Bruce Tripp	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

The Meeting was called to order by Gordon Wallace at 9:45 a.m., with Genie Braasch and Dan Lynch keeping the minutes. The minutes of the 1 November, 1994 meeting (Wells, Maine) were approved as they stand.

Old Business

CORE

L. Incze reported that CORE (Consortium of Oceanographic Research & Educational Institutions), headquarters opened in Washington, D.C. in January. The administrative team is Admiral James Watkins (Chair), Dr. Richard (Rick) Spinrad (Executive Director), Terry Shaff (Staff) <JOSCHAFF@BROOK.EDU>. Twenty member institutions currently include: Bigelow Laboratory Ocean Science, Columbia Univ., MBARI, North Carolina State Univ., Old Dominion Univ., Oregon State Univ., Rutgers Univ., Texas A & M Univ., Univ. Cal. San Diego, Univ. Delaware, Univ. Hawaii, Univ. Maryland, Univ. Miami, Univ. Michigan, Univ. North Carolina Wilmington, Univ. Rhode Island, Univ. S. Mississippi, Univ. Texas Austin, Univ. Washington, and WHOI.

Their mission statement is similar to the Association's; i.e. advancing the science of oceanography, including marine biology, coastal ecology and resource economics; sharing information and ideas; promoting cooperation; providing public education, and responding to events in Washington. There is a lobbying component to CORE activities which differs from RARGOM's approach. The first meeting of CORE representatives is in two weeks. It is anticipated that discussion will focus on start-up organizational concerns and on establishing a strategic plan.

The group discussed membership in CORE, wondering whether regional science would be adequately represented by CORE. Also, the Association representatives from Federal Agencies recognized the potential conflict of interest problems which might surface from an involvement with this organization. The notion of a subset of non-federal RARGOM institutions joining CORE to promote regional science was also suggested.

Actions to take:

1. M. ten Brink will check with USGS specialist re. federal conflict of interest.
2. L. Incze will attend the CORE meetings and will continue to report back to RARGOM.

New Business

Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Health Workshop

This workshop was initiated last spring, mandated by the Marine Mammals Protection Act to be held by April 30th of this year. During the ensuing months, RARGOM's involvement was proposed and explored. A draft prospectus and cover letter proposal for sole source funding to RARGOM for convening the event were distributed. These documents are the result of meetings and discussions held from December through February by the workshop steering committee members and the RARGOM officers. J. Pearce, recently appointed Chair of the workshop Steering Committee, provided background information about the workshop. He enthusiastically promoted the opportunity for RARGOM involvement, stating that this will be an important meeting because it has the serious interest of Rep. Studds (Mass.), it will focus the attention of other Washington decision makers on the Gulf of Maine, and it will have strong public appeal because fisheries and marine mammals are currently topics of regional concern. Pearce cited other regional programs with the public recognition, conservation and research status that the Gulf of Maine should emulate: Puget Sound and Chesapeake Bay. Pearce reported that the draft prospectus has been circulated for comments, but that the specifics of the agenda and the invited speakers / participants have yet to be finalized. Currently, there are 3 working group topics: fish, marine mammals, and the physical environment as these topics relate to ecosystem health. Pearce proposed that the event would take place in early May at Dartmouth College, with a follow-up report review session in July and a RARGOM workshop report becoming the supporting document for a shorter, Executive Summary report to Congress with research/management/legislative recommendations.

D. Lynch reported that he, G. Wallace, and G. Braasch, have been working with the workshop steering committee through David Dow and recently, Jack Pearce, at NMFS. Lynch and Wallace believe that "this is an opportunity for RARGOM, a fundamentally scientific event, and the kind of thing that we should be doing in the region". Lynch believes that the workshop has high intrinsic merit. The majority of the representatives agreed, and, in a lengthy discussion, the various aspects of the Association's involvement in the workshop were explored. Primarily, concerns were expressed about the organizational status of the workshop: given the short time frame before it is due to be held, that participants and speakers have not yet been invited and confirmed, the lack of specific agenda and discussion details, the lack of active regional marine mammal scientists on the steering committee, and the absence of clearly defined roles/accountability for both the Steering Committee members and RARGOM staff. It was proposed that RARGOM proceed with the recommendations that the workshop be held at a later date, to ensure adequate planning and participation, that RARGOM review the participant list, and provide scientific review of the final report (with the suggestion of multiple authors for keynote papers), and that RARGOM not be involved with making recommendations to Congress.

Actions to take:

1. D. Lynch will call J. Pearce on 2/27/95 to convey the sense of the meeting.

Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

Carol Barleon, CME staff person, reported that a "U.S. Association of the GoM CME" has been set up to receive \$1.9 M from the EPA over the next two years. Guidelines have yet to be established for the disbursement of the funds, but the underlying approach will be to leverage the long term activity of the Council (i.e., purchase of equipment for monitoring activity, development of science curricula). Jim Doyle, Maine State Planning Office, will serve as the Executive Director of this Association. A Canadian counterpart to this group is currently being formed as well. Barleon reported that the CME has entered a new phase of activity, now that it has this money to work with. This year's activity has focused on putting a strategic plan for the next five years in place. At the next Council meeting on April 6-7 in Portsmouth, NH, the representatives will review the work plans proposed by the working group committees and the administrative structure necessary for the disbursement of the EPA funds. In preparation for the April meeting, the working group committees will meet on March 6-7 in St. John, New Brunswick. Steve Jones, who co-chairs the monitoring committee, reported that his group will meet next week to discuss the ways in which the monitoring activity should be put into this larger context. J. Pederson will attend and other RARGOM members were also invited. The minutes of that meeting will be summarized in the next GOM NEWS.

The annual planning meeting of the Association, the RMRBoard, and the CME was held on January 18th in Boston at the New England Aquarium. At that meeting, executives from the three organizations identified ways to assist each other during 1995. Opportunities for collaboration on workshops, the 1996 GOM Scientific conference, publications, and furthering the research program for the region were discussed. The sense of the meeting was that significant progress was being made in coordination between the three groups and that it was counterproductive for the CME to move its administrative headquarters on an annual basis. On the immediate horizon, both groups were solicited for input to the next Fact Sheet, now in its initial planning stages. G. Braasch contacted Kristine Cheetham, of the Public Education and Participation committee; discussed distributed the outline for the CME "Shellfish" Fact Sheet and related correspondence at the meeting.

Actions to take:

1. G. Braasch will draft a letter from RARGOM to Jeff Taylor, current Secretary, CME, suggesting that RARGOM offer its services in scientific review of CME projects, asking for collaboration on the 1996 GOM Scientific conference in St. Andrews, asking for an opportunity to apply for funding for the next revision of the GOM Research Plan, suggesting that the CME dedicate a portion of the \$1.9M to regional research projects and recommending that the CME enlist the services of existing agencies (i.e. Sea Grant, NURP, RMRP) as an advisory group to develop and review the RFP process. RARGOM could help to assemble this group of experts, which would remain independent of RARGOM itself.
2. B. Tripp, with G. Wallace and S. Jones, will draft a letter to the CME about the fact sheet outline. G. Braasch will contact K. Cheetham, asking her if she would like the outline of the Shellfish Fact Sheet distributed to the RARGOM representatives, to identify shellfish experts as potential authors and reviewers of the outline and the penultimate draft for this project.

Gulf of Maine Scientific Workshop

Planning: The initial steering committee is Gordon Wallace (chair), D. Lynch (recording secretary), J. Allen, B. Beardsley, W. Brown, L. Incze, G. Lough, J. Pederson, R. Schlitz, D. Stevenson, and B. Tripp. They have volunteered to get the planning process underway. C. Moors and J. Wiggin will also be contacted to provide advice from the prior event. J. Allen will organize a local steering committee in St. Andrews, to include Wendy Watson Wright, and representatives from other organizations based in St. Andrews (i.e. Atlantic Salmon Federation) which are active in the GOM. G. Braasch will set up a new group email account for the activities of this committee.

When: September 16-19, 1996

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

Budget & Funding: To be determined. It is anticipated that this meeting will attract 200 participants. G. Braasch spoke with J. Wiggin about the budget and sponsors of the 1991 workshop. She will pass along this info. to the Steering Committee.

Program Themes: The group discussed the program focus at length; and as reported at the Nov. 1st meeting, the need for integrating science and management was a key concern. In order to provide an adequate depth of discussion (for participating scientists), along with breadth of scope (for integration of science into other fields - education, management, legislative), the group decided to pursue a two step workshop concept: first, hold an "Advances in Scientific Research" event at St. Andrews, then follow-up that event with a workshop which applies the science to the management setting. But to insure that management considerations are identified for the scientific community, it was suggested that two keynote speakers open the conference; the first speaker would provide a scientific update from the 1991 workshop, the second speaker would pose the continuing and evolving management issues that exist and how these integrate with the scientific process.

The need to develop public attention about the GOM and to further public education was also widely supported and it was recommended that science reporters be invited to attend the conference, perhaps sponsored by the NOAA Office of Public Affairs. J. Allen said that one of the HSMC Board members is the owner of Fundy Cable, another PR channel to explore. Two program design recommendations were made: 1) avoid concurrent sessions that are important, 2) provide lots of time and Internet links for poster presentations.

Session topics were generated. Some suggestions focused on technical advances (i.e. "Advances and Applications in Modeling", "Data Management"), and others were thematic (for example, "Population Fluctuations and Recruitment in the GoM, including fisheries and aquaculture", "Input/Output Budgets - non H2O Mass Flux", "Watersheds - the land margin interface").

Actions to take:

1. G. Braasch will set up a new group email account for the activities of the steering committee.
2. A letter announcing the workshop and soliciting topic recommendations, ideas, and suggestions, will be sent out to scientists, state agencies, congressional staffers, and NGOs. The GOM NEWS will also announce the workshop. Topic proposals (1-2 paragraphs) should be directed to the Steering Committee for consideration.
3. Steering committee will generate a draft prospectus for the spring RARGOM meeting.

New England Aquarium

Scott Kraus, the newly appointed representative to RARGOM from the NEA, described the research activities of his colleagues at the NEA. There are five full time researchers in the Edgerton Lab, with 3-4 staff working for each researcher. While there is not a major oceanography emphasis, the group conducts lots of aerial surveys, and has generated a lot of data about marine mammals in the Bay of Fundy. Here, briefly, is a synopsis: Sebastian Bell & John Prescott study Bluefin Tuna, Black Sea Bass, and Aquaculture, and are planning a Pelagic Tank for the expanded Aquarium; Molly Lutt Cavage studies sea turtles, bycatch issues, and the diving & surfacing behavior of bluefin tuna; Mark Chandler studies eelgrass beds in southern New England, and fresh water biodiversity - inventories of lakes and ponds; Mary Ann Farington, with Arnie Carr (F&WS), studies bycatch mortality, ghost fishing gear and larval fish rearing; Scott Kraus studies marine mammals and Bluefin Tuna, tracks the Right Whales in northern New England, conducting aerial surveys daily from Nov. -March in the Savannah, GA to Daytona, FL region, and during the summer months the Bay of Fundy and Scotian Shelf; Greg Early studies the biology of strandings, and conducts epidemiology monitoring of seals; the new vet, Howard Crumb is also interested in strandings and stress indicators, but is primarily responsible for the care and feeding of the entire aquarium collection.

Kraus outlined the future direction for research at the Aquarium, focusing on systematics, comparative biology, and conservation / sustainable habitats. Currently the NEA research is conducted solely on soft money, with some institutional support for interim non-funded periods.

Financial Report

G. Braasch reported that dues from federal agencies have been promptly processed this year (Thanks) and that she expects that the cash flow difficulties of 1994 will not become an issue for 1995.

Actions to take:

1. All institutions who have not yet sent in their dues are reminded here of their commitment to do so!

Ships

At the Nov. 1st meeting a subcommittee was set up to assess the complex issues of research vessel use in the GOM: J. Allen, I. Babb, J. Barlow, W. Brown, D. Townsend, G. Wallace. The charge: consider over-all vessel availability for educational and research use,

determine what the scientific user needs, create a scientific equipment list, establish a plan for replacement for the next few years, and long term recommendations. The committee has not met, no report was made. The committee needs to be activated.

Actions to take:

1. G. Braasch will ask D. Townsend to chair this effort.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Policy Board Minutes

Present:

Daniel Lynch	Dartmouth College
Ron Schlitz	National Marine Fisheries Service
Marilyn ten Brink	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 4:00 p.m. by G. Wallace.

Huntsman Marine Science Centre (John Allen representative) and the New England Aquarium (Scott Kraus representative) were unanimously voted as Associate Members of the Association. The Association welcomes their involvement.

G. Wallace discussed his concerns about the lack of collaboration among member institutions in the area of ship time and vessel availability.

The need for a revised GoM Research Plan was discussed. The consensus was that the next plan should be written after the 1996 GoM Scientific workshop, and should include, in addition to updated sections in the existing report, inshore and applied research recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eugenia Frey Braasch
28 February, 1995

Mark you calendars!

The next RARGOM meeting will be held on Friday, June 9th, at the Univ. Maine Darling Marine Center, Walpole, Maine. Larry Mayer can arrange a lobster bake lunch at \$25. per person, or we can do our usual sandwich menu. Details for the meeting will be sent out later this spring, at which point we'll ask for your preference.