

GOVERNANCE OF THE NORTHEAST REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEMS: A DRAFT PROPOSAL

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Decentralized but coordinated.** The Northeast U.S. and Canadian Maritimes include many ocean observers, modelers and technology providers, and the Regional Association should respect the independence of these many entities while using the RA to support and coordinate their work to advance societal goals. The RA should be a single, corporate planning, coordinating, and funding body, but should not duplicate or compete with the work of existing institutions, organizations, and agencies.
 - The “players” include academic researchers (modelers, observers and others), research institutions with observing infrastructure; user-based observing systems; governmental scientists, operators, data providers, and mappers; and private technology companies and system integrators.
 - The RA should seek to leverage the skills and expertise of existing institutions, organizations, agencies, and investigators to accomplish its mission of an integrated ocean observing system.
2. **Voice for end users.** End users should be part of the governance of the Regional Association, not merely as advisors but as equals, with a voice in the setting of priorities, budgets, and products.
3. **Transparency.** The Regional Association should make its decisions transparently, with opportunities for any qualified entity or investigator to participate.
4. **Sub-regions & other regions.** Although the region is part of a larger whole and is unified by a variety of oceanographic forces, the governance of the RA should recognize that different sub-regions have unique characteristics and constituencies and should provide for explicit recognition of them. The sub-regions include at least the Southern New England Bight and the Gulf of Maine, including Georges Bank, and perhaps the Scotian Shelf and the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelf. Overlap with other regional associations (e.g., Mid Atlantic/MACOORA) should facilitate seamless integration at the national level.
5. **Beyond IOOS.** While the RA is being organized under the auspices of the U.S. IOOS, its governing structure should be robust enough to look beyond IOOS for a variety of opportunities to leverage and integrate the work of its participants in pursuit of societal goals.
6. **Research v operations:** The RA should be structured to blur the distinctions between research and operations, bringing together, leveraging, and coordinating the efforts and assets of both on behalf of end users.

FUNCTIONS

- Region-wide planning of an integrated ocean observing system
- Liaison with the U.S. IOOS program
- Setting and budgeting of priorities
- Applicant and funnel for new IOOS money coming into the region
- Standards setting for an operational system
- Data aggregator and integrator

EXPLANATION OF ATTACHED GOVERNING STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The following chart is a “strawman” for one way in which the Northeast Regional Association might be structured. The RA would be a legal, incorporated, non-profit organization.

Constituencies: At the top of the chart are constituencies organized into three broad categories: academic research institutions, member (end user)-based ocean observing systems, and providers, this last group in turn divided between governmental providers (through New England Governors and Gulf of Maine Ocean Data Partnership) and industry providers. It is envisioned that each of these categories, through existing or new coalitions or “caucuses,” would have nominating authority for members of the RA Board of Governors who would represent the respective constituencies. The members of the different constituencies would come from across the region—southern NE, northern NE, and Maritimes. The category of “membership ocean observing systems” is intended to explicitly recognize that there is such a system existing in the Gulf of Maine (GoMOOS), and a desire to have such a system in the Southern New England Bight. If and when both exist, they would divide the end user nominations between them. Note that GoMOOS and the So. New England Bight analog each would exist with its own identity and organization, carrying out its respective role as a component of an integrated coastal ocean observing system, and, as with any other eligible institution, able to seek IOOS funds through the RA.

Board of Governors: The broad constituencies each would nominate 8 (among the providers, government providers would have 5 seats and industry providers 3) (all numbers are illustrative only) members of the Board of Governors. These 24 members would then name a 25th, who would serve as chair of the Board. It is intended that the chair would be an impartial lead of the governing board, able to facilitate discussions and help resolve conflicts should they occur. A decision will have to be made as to whether any individual seeking funds through the RA could also be a member of the Board of Governors (or should be allowed to participate through the Requirement and Implementation Teams, but not as a member of the Board of Governors).

Program Manager: Rather than create a duplicative executive/staffing structure, it is proposed that the Board of Governors would contract with GoMOOS as the organization’s program manager. (This is the same arrangement used by the Gulf of Maine Ocean Data Partnership – an independent governing entity, with GoMOOS as host.) Decisions will have to be made as to how GoMOOS, even as it is serving as program manager reporting to the Board of Governors, can also pursue IOOS funding of its own operations through the RA.

Requirements and Implementation Teams: These teams are key to the decentralized-but-coordinated principle of the RA. They are patterned after other organizations that use a “systems-engineering” approach – that is, an approach that systematically moves from the identification of measurable outcomes desired, to the requirements of the system and to implementation of that system. It is envisioned that much of the design and contracted work with the academic research institutions¹; much of the interaction between scientists and end users and between researchers and operators; and much of the actual integration of observing and modeling efforts into ocean observing products will occur through these teams. The teams will consist largely of researchers and operators, but with end users also participating on the Products Requirements Team, and with Program Manager staff and PIs from participating institutions co-chairing

¹ This draft does not address how IOOS funds actually would be allocated to different system components, institutions, or investigators. However, a possible, entirely illustrative scheme might involve the following steps:

1. The science and products requirements teams arrive at a design of the observing system (including all subsystems). The teams should probably meet separately at first and later come together to reconcile differences and arrive at a grand design of the system.
2. Next, there should be a prioritization (perhaps by the Bd. of Govs.) as to what elements are implemented first.
3. Once funds are available to the RA, an RFP would be issued soliciting proposals to provide elements of the system.
4. The program manager would convene a peer-review panel to review the proposals and make a recommendation to the Bd of Govs for selection of the proposals.

**DRAFT GOVERNING AND ORG. STRUCTURE:
NORTHEAST REGIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEMS**

