

Plenary session (J. Runge and J. Quintrell, rapporteurs)

A spirited discussion took place among the 15-20 participants who stayed for the final plenary session. The discussion began with identification of several general questions facing the development of the Gulf of Maine Observing System: what biological, physical and chemical variables are changing with time? what measurements need to be made for what purpose? what are the gaps in the present observing structure? what is the most cost-effective suite of variables that should constitute a Gulf of Maine Observing System? However, rather than trying to address these questions directly, the session participants focussed instead on the role of RARGOM in finding answers to these questions and more generally as an advocate for research needed for effective stewardship of the Gulf of Maine. RARGOM's unique position as a working association of Gulf of Maine marine research and management institutions was pointed out. Recommendations for RARGOM included the following:

- Joining with a Regional Association for Ocean Observing to identify research required to interpret observing data.
- Partnering with other programs in getting the word out, including the possibility of a written report, on research and observing needs for Gulf of Maine stewardship, including prioritization of those needs
- Contribution of the Gulf of Maine research community to meetings of the region's management agencies (e.g. the Gulf of Maine Summit)
- Serve to link various research and management institutions for effective inter-disciplinary measurement of observing variables
- Develop a regional database of marine research and research expertise. The RARGOM website could serve as a source for "one-stop shopping" to find out who is doing what in the Gulf of Maine.

RARGOM's present service as a forum for regional conversations on research and management issues and in bringing together members of the Gulf of Maine community in informal and social settings was recognized. The challenge presented by the plenary session participants was for RARGOM to evolve as an association that will meet the regional needs for stewardship of the Gulf of Maine.