

Appendix E – Notes from Closing Panel - *Bringing It All Together – Committing to Change*

Acknowledgement: The panelist's remarks were recorded, interpreted and edited by Peter Wells, Amanda Facey and Christine Mackenzie. The remarks were not confirmed with or edited by the panelists.

Rick Spinrad (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

- **THE GOM PROGRAM:** Need to connect national, regional, and local scales in the work on the GOM. Coordination between agencies (US & Canada) is essential, for example contaminants - e.g. North Eastern North America air issues, such as acid rain and mercury.
- **POLICY:** Regarding the recent US Commission Report on Ocean Policy
 - Recommendations have been made; responses are due in December 2004.
 - How much of the report and its recommendations are GOM unique or GOM specific? For example ecosystem - based management can be applied in many places; development of GOMOOS (GOM Ocean Observing System).
- **INDICATORS:** Need rigor in choice of socio-economic indicators; need to develop principles of operation, and ideas of development and application of indicators for GoM; need to ask/establish who owns the indicators? i.e. who is responsible for data management?; who is responsible for QA/QC of the data?; what is the inter-operability of the indicators - this needs to be strengthened? We need the principles to guide indicator development and application.
- **PARTNERSHIPS:** Need more partners.
- **COMMITMENT:**
 - Nine NOAA offices attended the Summit.
 - NOAA will continue to support the program (this is likely).
 - NOAA will continue to honor the work done at the Summit and over the past 15 years.

Priscilla Brooks (Conservation Law Foundation, Marine Conservation Program)

- **REPORTING:** We do need “a report card for health of the GOM”. We need to look at environmental health, both together with and separately from the health of the living resource industries. It is “time to take the fish out of fisheries and put them back into the environment”. Now is the time for an SOE report on GOM, with a comprehensive set of indicators and call for action. We need this in the next 2 years (not 10)! It will be a challenge. We need collectively to help build support for the state of the Gulf report and to ensure monitoring is in place to enable an up-to-date evaluation.
- **INDICATORS:** The conference has been an “impressive first start at identifying indicators - they are vital”. We should develop a comprehensive set of indicators for the GOM and hold research managers accountable for their use and application. Build “buy-in with indicators”; buy-in from clients. NGOs have a role in indicators, through education and advocacy; there is a lot of activity here. It is time to continue with indicators. Note GOM activity on this.

- **COMMITMENT:** The CLF will help with both the choice of and funding for indicators work.

Bob Varney (United States Environmental Protection Agency)

- **INDICATORS:** Emphasis on indicators is long overdue. EPA strongly supports work on indicators; e.g. EPA has put \$20K into the Summit Conference and personnel are participating.
- **DATA:** Harmonizing data is hard but crucial. We need to build on progress in this area. We need to address data issues, and ensure public access to data. Use of data - caution is needed; data should ideally undergo QA/QC; but “there should still be use of non-QA/QC’d data.” (Editor: amazingly, he actually said this!), due to immediate public and political needs.
- **SCIENCE AND POLICY:** There are both scientific needs and public/political needs - both efforts are required but the need for science can be used as a delay for action, i.e. “scientific information can often bog us down”. There is sometimes a simultaneous need for stringent controls and data. For example, beach closures are important as they have an impact with the public, which forces change.
- **PARTNERSHIPS:** There is strength in partnerships, in a well-linked network. Governments will always have limited resources. We need volunteer monitoring efforts and advocacy groups to ensure accountability of programs. It is important to have partnerships for financial support. The NGO’s need travel dollars to support their participation in such conferences.
- **COMMITMENT:** Fiscal support will continue for GOMCME!

Garth Bangay (Environment Canada)

- **INDICATORS:** They are very important, having a role regarding accountability, and keeping/feeding the public constituency, e.g. Arctic & POP’s - levels of contaminants in food. Indicators must be in a format that people understand. It is also important to relate the GOM program to knowledge gained from other similar programs in Canada and the United States.
- **PARTNERSHIPS:** Must involve the private sector:
 - A new policy agenda is being developed in EC, involving competitiveness and addressing sustainability issues in the corporate ethos. Competitiveness will keep industries responsible for their actions. Successful businesses will incorporate sustainability into their work.
 - EC will form partnerships through this lens, and interact with other federal departments.
- **ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:** The ecosystem approach is essential. This department will continue to work with the GOMCME forum.
- **COUNCIL APPROACH:** Cooperation, sharing knowledge and the enthusiasm shown at this conference are all indicators of the viability of the GOMCME initiatives and programs.

Pat Kurkul (National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA)

- **GOMCME:** We are involved with GOMCME, from communications, to ecosystems (with fish), to management and with many discussions at the local level.
- **ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT:** Moving to ecosystem management is a continuum; we need more progress in filling data gaps to assist ecosystem based management; e.g. for near-shore and inshore areas.
- **REPORTING:** The SOE report “Tides of Change” is acceptable; the Summit contributes to data needs and identification of gaps. A State of the Gulf report could be very important. But there are some other notes of caution:
 - A report should be sensitive to existing infrastructure and authorities around the GOM.
 - Indicator sets are complex; they need expert interpreters. The purpose of the indicators should be clearly stated. The report(s) need(s) goals and careful work for clear messages.
- **INDICATORS:** The NFMS is involved with indicators re ecosystem health involving fisheries, covering measures of success, change, and management.
- **FOCUS:** Take a regional focus:
 - Continue ongoing work on areas (e.g. GOM).
 - Contribute to the knowledge base on ecosystem health.
 - Have workshops
 - Tools.
 - Inventory of information.
 - Participate in the Ocean Observing System (OOS), including GOMOOS with its ocean partnership agreement.
 - Participate in the upcoming WHOI workshop – ecosystem approach to management.
- **COMMITMENTS:**
 - NOAA’s database(s) on GoM is(are) extensive. There are research data back to the 1930’s. NOAA is committed to its upkeep.
 - Note, the GOM mapping initiative is an excellent model per next steps.
 - We need to put dollars into research on ecosystem health.

Faith Scattalon (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada)

- **PROGRESS IN CANADA:** There was a recent announcement in the speech from the throne, an important event in Canada (there were 3 sentences on the ocean!). Very importantly, “BoF/GOM is designated as a LOMA (Large Ocean Management Area) in the Oceans Act Policy and Action Plan” (under development).
- **REPORTING ON THE GOM:** Use indicators and a framework for the SOE report. A consistent approach to ecosystem-based management is essential. There has been progress in fisheries management; there is collaboration on fish stock management, and habitat management.
- **INDICATORS:** Link indicators to goals and objectives; link indicators to specific management actions; link indicators to general public interest in oceans; it is important to explain why we need to sustain the health of the GOM.

- **COMMITMENT:** DFO has a strong involvement in GoMC/GoM. There was a lot of buildup towards this meeting, and the work done to date lays a strong foundation for understanding the Gulf as a system and reporting on its health. It is important to include industry and to expand efforts here. There will also be production of a Canadian Oceans Status Report (by 3/06) under the Ocean Act. There will be discussion of conservation objectives (various, including SARA (Species at Risk Act)); it will discuss how plans are addressing these objectives, including the choice and roles of indicators.

Byron James (New Brunswick, Department of Environment and Local Government)

- **SUSTAINABILITY OF THE GOM:** There is the continued debate of economics versus sustainability; both are visible on a daily basis.
- **INVOLVEMENT OF AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY:** The aquaculture sector is growing, evolving, other provinces are involved, other species are being considered, and environmental impacts are being addressed. But it is an industry in some stress; issues being addressed include economics (competition is on rise), fish health, environment, risk management, and the link to traditional fisheries (these are doing well in several cases). Feeling exists in the industry that they are being “elbowed”.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**
 - In NB, there is the recent Coastal Zone Protection Policy.
 - Other NB policies affect the BoF/GOM, e.g. Watershed Protection Policy, Water Classification Policy.
 - A major concern continues with contaminants in the Bay of Fundy, e.g. sewage, Saint John Harbour.
- **INDICATORS:** I agree with what has been said here. We need performance indicators. We need indicators for land use, considering rural communities and involving communities in planning. We need indicators for contaminants, e.g. note the NENA governors’ efforts on acid rain and Hg, and the need to link Council efforts to this. We need community involvement.
- **FISHERIES:** Include the practitioners (the fishers themselves) in search for indicators. Such partnerships will assist in getting the information we need for reporting on the Gulf.
- **AQUACULTURE:** Need more and different indicators to monitor this industry.
- **GOM PARTICIPATION AND COMMITMENT:** The Council should broaden its involvement with coastal industries. A better way must be developed for marine resource planning, involving fisheries, tourism, and communities.

Ted Diers (New Hampshire Coastal Program)

- **MAJOR INVOLVEMENT:** In MA (ocean policy); In ME (indicators). NH is very involved in the GOM Program and the use of indicators.
- **REPORTING:** Need to put the information into a regional context of GOM. The information should lead to more partnerships, and be available to the public. Take the time to move the data and information to appropriate syntheses available to the people of the GOM.

- **INDICATORS:** In NH, we use indicators in the so-called ‘309’ process. We need to decide which indicators – how do they match up? Which ones are important to each jurisdiction? Need to make indicators relevant and understandable. We need financial support for indicator development.
- **NEXT STEPS:** On the ground, implementation of all of this activity (choice of indicators, monitoring, assessment, reporting, etc.) requires financial resources. There are concerns about which direction to take.
- **COMMITMENT:** NH is committed to continued involvement with the GOM program.

Questions/Discussion Following the Panel – Major Points:

- **REPORTING:** Both the Georgia Basin (Pacific Coast) and Great Lakes have standard reporting processes in place? Regionally? A question of commitment was placed to both Bob Varney (EPA) and Garth Bangay (EC), who indicated continued commitment to this process of reporting. A higher level of reporting is needed. Indicators could be chosen that resonate with the various departments and agencies involved, and with the publics they serve, e.g. is the water swimmable, drinkable?; are the fish edible? Context for part of the present report (*Tides of Change Across the Gulf*) was land use - coastal land.
- **INDICATORS:** Indicators of past performance will (may) not work 10-20 yrs from now; we need a comprehensive plan for the GOM that takes into account assessing future stresses. How urgent is this? There is a need for comprehensive planning in the Gulf.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Accountability is one reason to keep reporting, using indicators. The GOMCME should consider a higher level of reporting to maintain the public trust. Express in context of highest priority, public policy issues!! There needs to be a higher level of context for reporting, and it must be linked to accountability.
- **URGENCY!!!** Communicate this sense of urgency, and need for accountability. E.g. NH is already “built out”; NS is the opposite - we have no coastal planning.
- **COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION:** Raise awareness across the region. Put public resonance onto our work!!! Put education first and make it more visible.
- **OTHER POINTS:** Involvement in ecosystem-based fisheries management. How to combine United States/Canada approaches? Need to include local groups (US). Note that “resources” to do this work include people, not just dollars; invest in people, i.e. capacity.
- **NEW ISSUES:** Engage private sector more, e.g. pharmaceuticals are now a coastal contaminants issue. The question of energy issues - is the Council involved? Yes.
- **GPAC:** What is its future? (Note: A meeting was held immediately after the GOM Summit to discuss next steps for GPAC.)