Coastal Zone 05 Conference
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Coastal Café: Protecting and Restoring Habitat Using a Regional Ecosystem Approach

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ROUND ONE

Following the presentation the participants broke out into six regions (Gulf of Mexico [two tables], Pacific and Caribbean Islands, Great Lakes, Alaska Complex, Northeast Shelf, and California Current), with each region responding to the following questions:

1. Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?
2. Are these activities successful? What characteristics contribute to their success?
3. Who are the players? What are their respective roles? Who else needs to be involved?
4. What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?
5. What would an effective ecosystem approach to management structure and decision-making process look like?
6. What have been the challenges for these activities and how have they been overcome?
7. What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management?
8. What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

Please note: there were not enough representatives of the Southeast to have a Southeast region table.

Gulf of Mexico (Table 1 of 2)

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- Texas Seashore Protection
- Florida Gulf Islands – nesting birds and sea turtles
- Marine sanctuaries – Coral and Flower Garden Banks
- Tracking of hypoxia zones in Gulf, plus nitrogen and phosphorous in Mississippi Valley

- Mobile Bay and Tampa Bay Estuaries
- Department of Agriculture Wetland Restoration Program
- Louisiana Comprehensive Coastal Erosion Monitoring
- Everglades/Okachobee Program
- Invasive Species Control

Are these activities successful? What characteristics contribute to their success?

- Program existence is a success. But long-term success is unknown.
- Characteristics of Success:
  - dedication
  - work time
  - budgeting
  - mandates
  - partner/cooperation
  - education

Who are the players and what are their respective roles?

- Everyone—federal, state, region, local, volunteers, business, non-profits, commercial and recreational users

Who else needs to be involved?

- Enforcement, residents, public, local government (planning & zoning)

What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?

- Collecting data to determine critical areas (biological, chemical, socio-economic), available resources and programs

What would an effective ecosystem approach to management structure and decision-making process look like?

- Difficult question. Something looking like a food web

What have been the challenges for these activities and how have they been overcome?

- The usual – budget, staff, time, lack of coordination, scale, community support

What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management?

- Define geographical units
- Establish indicators for ecosystems and estuaries
- Federal priorities
- Coordination between federal agencies and funding sources
- Build capacity of regional groups

What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

- Funding – continuity needed in backing of programs

- Define priorities
- Training and outreach
- Programming
- Clearinghouse of data and information

Gulf of Mexico (Table 2 of 2)

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- Coastal Louisiana – diversion and island restoration
- Everglades Project – water flow / hydrology
- Gulf of Mexico Alliance – 5 states looking at common interests across the Gulf: nutrients, water quality, environ education, habitats, wetlands
- PACE – Parishes Against Coastal Erosion
- EPA Gulf of Mexico Program – 5 Gulf states on key areas.

Are these activities successful? What characteristics contribute to their success?
Yes, all to varying degrees

- Coastal Louisiana is starting up/new effort. Developed a coordinated plan.
- Everglades Project has $10 million per year for adaptive mgmt activities (funds and actual implementation) sporadic success
- GOMA – forming the alliance, new effort. Getting MOVs put together.
- PACE – successful lobbying for funding
- EPA GOM Program – annual funding, agreements with each state conducting restoration projects.

Who are the players and what are their respective roles?
Players are known but involvement is lacking

What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?

- Baseline data
- Factors that are driving the changes in topography and morphology.
- Current demands
- Plan development -- How do you reach consensus on what you want to restore.

What would an effective ecosystem approach to management structure and decision-making process look like?

- Same as above, with adaptive management.

What have been the challenges for these activities and how have they been overcome? What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management?

- Education

- Monitoring, near shore and off-shore. Need to take that leadership. Establish a monitoring network for all of coastal US
- Need to lead a collaborative effort for data sharing, fed, state, local
- Public involvement, consensus building, behavioral change, consistent data management
- Work inclusively with stakeholders, accessible and consistent database

What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

- Facilitate cooperation between stakeholders and partners
- Be responsible for building common monitoring network and information database

Pacific and Caribbean Islands

note: only addressed questions one through three

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- MesoAmerican Barrier Reef Project – IDB project
- White-water Blue-water project – Caribbean wide effort
- Hawaiian Islands – effort on eastern shore of Oahu. Ecological characterization, a tool for community management framework Natural Resources Management Plan
- Bahamas, NSF biocomplexity project – science effort, not stakeholder involvement
- Saipan – TNC ecoregional assessment approach possibly to apply to Saipan
- Several others – Indonesia, Fiji, Palau. These are not at the large scale of LME. On island systems, how do you take a nested approach, address scale, measures for success at that scale. Are there region-wide issues that would warrant this large scale approach?
- One idea is to try to help develop a conceptual model to help stakeholders struggling with conservation and development. How to help them focus on crucial linkages that comprise the ecosystem – social, biological, cultural, economic, chemical. NOAA to play role in developing this model for use by stakeholders.

Who are the players? What are their respective roles? Who else needs to be involved?

- The programs are in initial stages. Too early to judge.

What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?

- Have as many as possible stakeholders.

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Great Lakes

note: only one representative from the Great Lakes was in attendance. He offered general comments, not directly tied to the questions.

- How does the ecosystem function? What are the important parameters? Need to do some research geared to answering key questions to enable policy formation.
- In Ohio, created Coastal Research Advisory group comprised of coastal zone program, Sea Grant, NERR, Lake Erie Commission, etc. They give grants to address specific questions and also collaborate with other organizations to get answers. This helps to support policy formation.
- Many organizations and many people are working hard, but there is very little communication/cooperation between them. Trying to coordinate a regional conference to start the dialogue.
- Need people in each small sector to recognize inter-relationships (i.e., land use decisions affect fisheries).

Alaska Complex

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- GEM - Gulf of Alaska ecosystem monitoring
- 2002 AK Oceans and Watersheds conference
- Watershed Planning initiatives
- Prince William Sound ecosystem synthesis
- traditional and local community-based activities
- North Pacific Research Board
- EPA funds an environmental monitoring and assessment program
- Co-management regimes between native organizations and the government (whaling commission, regional organizations)
- Community-based local activities – mining clean-ups, military, oil field restoration, National Forest stream site
- Encouraging coordination between agencies – within state. Northern Pacific fisheries management council

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- Hard to measure, beginning stages on most of these

Who are the players? What are their respective roles?

- Federal government

- State government
- Non-governmental organizations
- Local, community

Who else needs to be involved?

- Communities at every level

What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?

- Identify habitat types, determine locations, mapping

What would an effective ecosystem approach to management structure and decision-making process look like?

- Collaborative
- transparent
- good science
- involve people that live there

What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management? What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

- Support that's regionally appropriate
- Collaborative support, leadership

Northeast Shelf

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- A lot of watershed activities but not at a scale going across the entire geography. Too fragmented. No infrastructure in place at that scale, but if you add all the pieces together, it might make sense ecologically
- Short-term thinking hinders building infrastructure for ecosystem approach to management
- Principally the answer to this question is No, so can't answer 2 & 3.

What crucial steps lie ahead in identifying priority habitats to be protected and restored and acting on those priorities?

- Historical trends, help to establish baselines, monitoring

What would an effective ecosystem approach to management structure and decision-making process look like?

- International Great Lakes commission and Chesapeake Bay are good models to draw on for an ecosystem approach to management as an institutional framework

- Regional ocean councils—how can these function and be structured? Some type of infrastructure to foster holistic approach to geography

What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management? What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

- Federal role of NOAA can be encouraging and promoting long-term vision and interaction
- Translate that toward ecosystem approach to management, funding priorities, local watershed groups to move toward holistic framework
- NOAA's role can be to provide money, oversight, accountability, monitoring,
- Get beyond habitat restoration to get to ecosystem approach to management
- Need proactive rather than reactive approaches
- Think about EAM holistically and THEN pare down to habitat protection and restoration

<u>California Current</u>

Note: More appropriate to say Pacific or West Coast versus California Current. Proposed branding of the ecoregion a concern of the group.

Are there ecosystem approach to management activities related to habitat protection and restoration underway in our region in addition to those mentioned in the presentation? What are they?

- Many examples put forward. Salmon recovery, watershed approaches, NEPs, NERRs, state CZM, ocean mgmt plans, a large array of programs. Also have MPAs

Are these activities successful? What characteristics contribute to their success?

- Combine political backing with consideration of socioeconomics. Human as well as biophysical. Consensus-based approach
- Clear goals and a mandate
- Stable and adequate funding
- Competition. The Oregon watershed enhancement board is an example that is locally based. Do watershed assessments then get a stable source of funds, then competition. Keeps groups engaged and active, but if too competitive, becomes a question of branding. Need to strike a balance to be invigorated and lively but not have people turn on each other and partnerships spoiled
- Build on existing efforts and institutions
- Groups/roles/structures – agency vs. grassroots. Locally-based more successful. More continuity. Agencies give money and then leave, who carries the ball

What have been the challenges for these activities and how have they been overcome?

- Agencies and groups – problems with credit and competition. Everyone trying to be the "hub versus spokes".

What should NOAA consider in order to advance ecosystem approach to management?
What should be NOAA's role in ecosystem approach to management?

- Leverage existing efforts
- Lessons learned
- Get together to speak with one voice, across departments
- Have continuity
- Build a stakeholder base.
- Model what stakeholder involvement means
- Demonstrate
- Work with agencies outside of NOAA.

ROUND TWO

The participants broke up into two groups to discuss ecosystem approach to management needs in habitat research and/or observation and in habitat education and outreach.

Table 1 – discussed both research/observation and education/outreach

- This table viewed research/observations and education /outreach as related and preferred not to treat them separately.
- Two major messages. One top-down, one bottom-up
    - A top down approach is needed for standard protocols, monitoring research and assessment. Making use of the work being done. Also need for a standard message on a broader scale. Not preach to choir but reach out to people less informed. Many people moving to coast from non-coastal states that don't have a coastal ethic. Standard message and a standard way to get it out.
    - A bottom up approach is needed as a way to nest the local into larger scale. "Neighborsheds." Small groups, gather information, implement at local scale and bundle information into larger scale to help decision-makers.
- Concerning research and observations, need to synthesize information that's out there and make it broadly available. What is NOAA's role? Provide funding or technical assistance.

Table 2 – discussed habitat research and observation priority needs for ecosystem approach to management

- Need for habitat assessment and characterization information, synthesize existing information and make it available.
- Information is housed all over the place and not done with idea to integrate it. Fill in gaps for fishery management plans.
- Need data mining, an inventory, gap analysis, and then planning. May need a basic resources inventory, habitat assessment, distribution, and quality.
- No one agency or group can do this, but NOAA could play a role in coordinating filling the gaps.

- NOAA puts a lot of money out there, can have a bit impact.
- Set priorities in putting out our requests for proposals. Target research and follow-up to see if getting the information needed. Research and development – contracts may be needed rather than academics. Serve as information clearing-house, pass along success stories to state agencies and others.
- Does IOOS serve a regional approach? Some subdivisions of IOOS do. NOAA iswell situated to make IOOS responsive to what user groups need.
- Need for developing mitigation sites before buying into them. Forecasting to what end? To say no, you can't mitigate that wetlands loss.
- Have to look all the way from nutrient loading and other factors at high level all the way down to fisheries impacts.
- NOAA's role in decision support can be to help identify the consequences of alternative decisions. Utilize modeling to do this. NOAA has capacity to synthesize data sets and analyze, make available to user groups. Creates an opening for science to be a leveling factor among diverse interests. Can perhaps achieve some agreement around the science.
- Need to get public involved / educated at early stage. Other sectors as well, decision-makers, legislators, managers (including fisheries managers) need to be informed and buy into ecosystem approach to management.
- What's an appropriate NOAA role? One role we are particularly interested in is the applied research grants program. No recent calls for proposals. But that is one avenue to get research around effectiveness of restoration.
- If going to do ecosystem approach to management, would seem to need to have a booklet about the ecosystem, something that can be understood by managers and professionals. Chesapeake Bay office has done one—information on physical characteristics, how to manage, etc. The office has a big guidance document on how to do this.