

MARINE ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE IN THE NORTHEAST U.S.

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Keywords: ecosystem-based management, integrated management, ecosystem management, ecosystem approaches; regional governance, policy, evaluation, conservation

Oceans and coastlines are home to some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. As overfishing, pollution, coastal erosion, climate change, and a host of other ills continue to take their toll, conventional “single-issue” marine management strategies have proven inadequate to address such complex problems. Consequently, national and international bodies have called for a shift toward more comprehensive, ecosystem-based marine management.

At its core, *ecosystem-based management* (EBM) is about recognizing and drawing on connections. Instead of focusing on single activities, EBM looks at the array of services that we receive from marine ecosystems, the effects that multiple human activities can have on ecological and social systems, and the importance of working towards common goals. Specifically, understanding social and ecological *resilience*—the extent to which a system can maintain its structure, functioning, and identity in the face of disturbance—can enable better predictions of how those systems will respond to various disturbances and a range of management strategies.

This panel session will bring together some of the leading EBM practitioners in the Northeast U.S. to discuss the opportunities and challenges of implementing ecosystem-based approaches at the state level. To date, details on how to implement marine EBM have been sorely lacking, despite enormous policy interest and growing activity at the state and regional scales. Questions for discussion by the panelists and session participants will include: What are the ecological, social, and institutional goals in each case? What institutional and legal mechanisms have enabled or constrained EBM? How is natural and social science information contributing to each process? What management strategies, e.g. ocean zoning, are being used to implement EBM principles? How will success be evaluated? Featured speakers - all confirmed - will include Kathleen Leyden of the Maine State Planning Office, Deerin Babb-Brott of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and Grover Fugate of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council.

Heather Leslie will chair the session, and provide brief introductory remarks. She will set the stage for the panelists’ comments by briefly sharing the lessons learned from the case study section of the forthcoming Island Press book, *Ecosystem-Based Management for the Oceans*, which will be released in June 2009. We anticipate that lively discussion about the diverse EBM efforts underway in Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island, and

elsewhere in the Northeast region of the US will ensue among the panelists and session participants.

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