

**Minutes of the 09 November 2006  
Rhode Island Sea Grant Senior Advisory Council Meeting**

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Members present: Peter August, David Bengtston, Ames Colt, Ben Cuker, Shelley Dawicki, Dennis Esposito, Brent Haglund, Sunshine Menezes, James Miller, Kate Moran, Glenn Page, Richard Rhodes, Richard Ribb, Jon Eric Scherer (for Roylene Rides-at-the-door), David Smith, Robert Smith, Michael Sullivan, Judith Swift, Robert Weygand, Jeffrey Willis (for Grover Fugate).

Ad-hoc members present: Monica Allard-Cox (for Malia Schwartz), Kathy Castro, Barry Costa-Pierce, Alan Desbonnet, Kristen Fletcher, Megan Higgins, Jennifer McCann, Heather Rhodes, Laura Skrobe.

1. Barry Costa-Pierce called the meeting to order at 11:10AM.
2. Minutes of the 22 March 2006 SAC meeting were approved as presented.
3. Introduction—Barry Costa-Pierce
  - a. A review of major accomplishments over the past 6 month period was presented, noting that the intent of activities, in general, is changed behaviors in stakeholders.
  - b. The 2005 RISG Annual Report was summarized
    - i. During the previous PAT the RISG program was designated one of the Top Tier programs which brings extra merit funding to the program.
    - ii. \$3 million in funding for Lobster Shell Disease Research was obtained via congressional earmark, with \$1.9 million released for research through a recently completed RfP.
    - iii. The RISG Legal Program has moved from a Program Development “investment” mode to being a fully integrated part of the overall program. The Legal Fellows Program has been a major building block of the fledgling program, and an RfP “Mini-Grants” process is envisioned for the upcoming Omnibus to solicit research proposals for the Legal Program.
    - iv. RISG Sustainable Fisheries has seen expansion of the Commercial Fisheries Center within the university and within the fishing community. The Fisheries program also convened the first meeting ever of all Sea Grant fisheries extension agents to meet and share knowledge, which was a grand success.
    - v. Sustainable Coastal Communities has seen investment by both state and private entities in the Greenwich Bay SAMP that was recently completed. The group is now focusing efforts in the urban area of Narragansett Bay, developing a Metro-Bay SAMP initially focusing on greenways to join towns and agencies as partners.
    - vi. RISG sponsored research has focused for many years on the RI coastal lagoons region, and these efforts are now seeing US Geological Survey investment in further research and the use of “carbon barriers” to removed nitrogen from these ecosystems.

This is a good example of how Sea Grant investments in research are now playing out.

- c. A “Leveraged Dollars” summary was provided, showing that approximately \$4 million was leveraged by Sea Grant funding during the 2004-2006 period, and that approximately 70 graduate and undergraduate students received some form of Sea Grant support during the same time span.
4. A round-the-table set of introductions occurred.
5. Communications Update—Monica Allard-Cox
  - a. A brief overview of communications functions was presented so that this could be considered as a “cross-cutting” element during detailed discussions in afternoon breakout sessions.
6. “Baird” Science Symposium—Barry Costa-Pierce
  - a. The 2006 RISG Annual Science Symposium was described. The continuing series has now been renamed the “Ronald C. Baird Sea Grant Science Symposium” in honor of the recently retired National Sea Grant Director.
  - b. RISG will be sponsoring a 2007 Baird Symposium on the urban coast in Providence, RI.
  - c. RISG will be looking to endow the Baird Symposia, using the model of the Wakefield Symposium  
[\[http://seagrant.uaf.edu/conferences/wakefield/index.html\]](http://seagrant.uaf.edu/conferences/wakefield/index.html)
7. Omnibus Research Priority Setting Process—Alan Desbonnet
  - a. The process that RISG will be using to prioritize research focus areas in the upcoming 2008-2010 Omnibus proposal cycle was outlined.
  - b. An electronic PDF-based survey form was presented for review and consideration, and comments on content and use requested. After much discussion it was generally agreed that the survey forms should:
    - i. Have existing statements recombined and refocused to be clearer and less numerous. The focal point of the statement should be bolded or otherwise highlighted so the respondent immediately knows the intent.
    - ii. The statements should be aggregated into logical, more generalized thematic areas with 5 to 10 statements only.
    - iii. Statements should be cleverly restructured and presented a second time to allow validation. This may make the survey longer but would be worthwhile because it will allow verification of priorities.
    - iv. Include a better introduction on the form explaining how the survey results are to be used by RISG.
    - v. Add a field or fields that will gather demographics data. At a minimum “occupation” of the respondent should be solicited. Other data to consider would be zip code and if they are a data producer or consumer.

- vi. Consider doing “investment” rather than 1–5 rating. Give \$1.00 to invest, for example, then use the spread of invested money to rank priorities. Gets to the same endpoint but may be more intuitive to respondents.
  - c. Revision of the survey mechanism will be undertaken in light of the above suggestions, then emailed to the SAC membership as a test case and to solicit final comments and suggestions. It is anticipated that the revised form will go out to the SAC just prior to, or just following, the Thanksgiving holiday.
  - d. A brief description of envisioned “Mini-Grant” RfPs ideas were given by Kathy Castro and Kristen Fletcher.
- 8. Judith Pedersen, MIT Sea Grant, gave a lunch presentation on the Regional Ocean Sciences Council initiative, requesting input on direction of the effort as well as on priority issues to consider. Further comments can be sent to either Judith or Barry Costa-Pierce. [\[click here to open notes\]](#)
- 9. Breakout Sessions & Report Out [\[click here to open notes\]](#)
  - a. Fisheries Program Report Out—Laura Skrobe
    - i. Process—Revamp the RfP process to promote/require strong outreach of research results, which has not been effectively done to date.
    - ii. Theme for the research will be “Sustainable Fishing Practices” with focal points on climate change, over capacity and “smart gear.”
    - iii. Outreach—Improve the process by “completing the cycle” and getting the message out via PR, media, publications, etc.
  - b. Coastal Program Report Out—Jennifer McCann
    - i. Need to better define what research is needed to support outreach efforts.
    - ii. One focal point should be “Disaster Resilient Communities.”
      - 1. build upon existing efforts in Metro-Bay region
      - 2. define what “resilience” means
      - 3. do this on a regional basis
    - iii. Ecological Habitat Resilience
      - 1. consider the effect of sea level rise
      - 2. document habitat/ecological characteristics for use in post disaster restoration efforts
    - iv. Metro-Bay Industry Ideas
      - 1. research impacts of loss of working waterfront; e.g., conversion of industry to high end condos
      - 2. what is the Sea Grant role in this in light of having no Port Authority for Providence area
      - 3. research overall/regional impacts of loss of working waterfront in Metro-Bay area
      - 4. what are the port security issues?
  - c. Legal Program Report Out—Kristen Fletcher

- i. Mini-grant focus on submerged lands, property rights, energy development, public access and market-based management.
      - ii. Legal gaps and legal hurdles associated with a movement towards ecosystem-based management. There is a need to look for innovative strategies that include market-based incentives, provide answers on how to mitigate legal hurdles and how to link agencies and NGOs as partners. The TNC partnership in previous submerged lands efforts is a good example.
      - iii. Results of the research could be a White Paper that can be useful in fueling further research, used to build a long-term base for research findings and to build partnerships between agencies, states and others.
      - iv. Tribal issues are also a possible area of research, particularly regarding submerged lands, preservation of cultural history and how all this relates to tribal sovereignty.
    - d. Program Administration Report Out—Barry Costa-Pierce
      - i. There is the need to not program all funds so that RISG can continue to be responsive to breaking opportunities for investments.
      - ii. Consider investing in URI as an intellectual and research center for the mitigation of sea level rise due to climate change.
      - iii. Consider EPSCORE marine life science interest and how to pull this together with industry to take advantage of new products and research, and to promote economic development.
      - iv. Consider Ocean Observing Systems and be a “bridge builder” between data collectors, the actual data and potential data users.
      - v. Sea Grant International has investment opportunities with regard to URI U8 and other URI-based international programs. Consider investing in alignment of these and Sea Grant funds to a more complete and effective whole unit.
      - vi. Invest in developing an alternate funding stream focused on small and medium sized family foundations. This would need to occur in-hand with existing and new URI/GSO efforts in similar development directions so as not to create confusion, mixed messages and in-effectiveness.
10. Adjournment—Barry Costa-Pierce
- a. All in attendance were thanked for the very productive meeting they helped create, and for the plethora of creative, innovative and thoughtful ideas and suggestions for moving into the future via the next Omnibus cycle.
  - b. Minutes to the meeting will be posted to the SAC web site within a week or so for review.

c. Meeting was adjourned at 4:04PM

**Next SAC meeting:**

Scheduled for **17 May 2007; 11:00AM–5:00PM.**

Details to follow in the spring.