

## **Minutes of the 28 May “Spring” RISG Senior Advisory Committee Meeting**

### **ATTENDANCE**

SAC Members present: Peter August, Ben Cuker, Shelley Dawicki, Dennis Esposito, Kristen Fletcher, Grover Fugate, John Hoey, Ambrose Jerald, Eugene Lyman, Sunshine Menezes, Kate Moran, Dennis Nixon, Rick Rhodes, Richard Ribb, Bob Smith, David Smith, Robert Stankelis, Judith Swift, Nancy Thompson, Robert Weygand

Ex-Officio Members present: Monica Allard-Cox, William Coffey, Barry Costa-Pierce, Alan Desbonnet, James Hurley, Jennifer McCann, Heather Rhodes, Malia Schwartz, Laura Skrobe

### **MINUTES**

1. Barry Costa-Pierce opened the meeting, giving thanks to departing members Glenn Page, Page Nelson, Roylene-Rides-at-the-door and Bruce Kogan for their past service to Rhode Island Sea Grant. Barry also welcomed incoming SAC members Kristen Fletcher, John Hoey, Eugene Lyman, Bob Stankelis and Nancy Thompson. Also noted was the move of David Bengtson and Stephen Olsen to Ex-Officio status as they both are co-PIs on RISG funded proposals.
2. Costa-Pierce made a brief presentation of the National Sea Grant Strategic Plan, presenting critical sections and noting how they align and overlap the RISG Strategic and Implementation Plans (see material in packet).
3. Costa-Pierce reviewed the pending Sea Grant Authorization Legislation (H.R. 5618; see material in packet), noting highlights and new, important sections, including: \$70 million included for regional activities and research; that “international” was added back in (was removed during the Reagan era); that a new evaluation process is described; that a biannual “State of Sea Grant” report to Congress will be implemented.
4. Costa-Pierce gave briefs on the following RISG activities:
  - a. The Narragansett Bay ecosystem-based management book has been published;
  - b. The 2007 Baird Symposium was a great success; the 2008 Baird Symposium will focus on Rhode Island/Block Island Sound and will be a “by invitation only” Think Tank-style workshop;
  - c. A Sustainable Seafood Initiative with Cathy Roheim is being invested in with Program Development funds (see material in packet);
  - d. A “Rhode Island Sea Grant Fellows” initiative is being invested in with Program Development funds;
  - e. An international effort, in partnership with URI Land Grant, and ANAI in Costa Rica, in an “Earth Grant” like style is being considered for a new investment of Program Development funds.
5. Laura Skrobe presented highlights from the Fisheries Extension Program that have taken place since the Fall 2007 SAC meeting (also see material in packet):
  - a. Menhaden Conference and Sector Allocation workshops were conducted. Both were very well received and both were very effective in handling very controversial issues.

- b. Fisheries Enhancement Extension report completed. Leveraged dollars shown based on investment to core fisheries extension is very impressive, \$3.30 generated for every \$1.00 invested.
  - c. Lobster Shell Disease Workshop convened in April 2008. Lots of interesting results presented, but no “smoking gun” yet described. Preliminary research results/findings will be published later this year for public perusal. Final results of the research may be the focus of the 2010 Baird Symposium.
  - d. SNECRI (Southern New England Collaborative Research Initiative) proposal submitted for consideration by the Commercial Fisheries Collaborative. If approved, this will bring \$1.3 million to RI for collaborative fisheries management research efforts.
6. Jennifer McCann presented highlights from the Coastal Communities Extension Program that have taken place since the Fall 2007 SAC meeting (also see material in packet):
- a. The 2007 Baird Symposium, “Vibrant Waterfronts,” was very successful and conversations and actions arising from that event are still ongoing/occurring; some are being applied to the Newport Harbor management/planning initiative. An inventory of RI port and harbors has also come as an outcome of the symposium. Furthermore, the SUCCESS team is currently engaged with the City of Providence in an effort to preserve working waterfronts.
  - b. The Aquidneck Island SAMP process is moving forward in collaboration with RICRMC, with the focus being development of a Greenway Plan for the island.
  - c. In partnership with the Washington County Regional Planning Council, a post natural disaster reconstruction planning initiative is being developed.
  - d. A \$3,297,000 proposal to develop an Ocean SAMP for Rhode Island has been developed and submitted for review. This proposal integrates all elements of RISG, as well as partnering with a variety of other groups and agencies. Grover Fugate provided further detail on the need for an Ocean SAMP relative to renewable energy development in RI.
7. William Coffey presented highlights from the Legal Program that have taken place since the Fall 2007 SAC meeting (also see material in packet):
- a. The RWU Law School/URI Marine Affairs Joint Degree Program has drawn particular interest in the upcoming/applying class at the Law School. Interest in the program has been growing on a continuing basis.
  - b. Efforts continue to develop a workshop for judges that will focus on fisheries law, with an intended date of May 2009 for such an event.
  - c. A proposal is being developed for submittal to the US Dept. of Energy in collaboration with Urban Harbors Institute and others; the focus is legal research around ocean energy issues.
  - d. The 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Law Symposium will be held in October 2008 and will focus on renewable energy resources. Interest is very high and a very good slate of speakers is lined up.
  - e. The search for a Director of the Marine Law Program at RWU is going well and is nearing an end, with a decision being expected sometime next week.
8. Barry Costa-Pierce gave a brief summary of recent grant proposals that have been funded and/or submitted by the RISG team over the past 12 months, and referenced a new grants newsletter (see packet materials) that highlights and details current grant writing initiatives.

LUNCH

9. Alan Desbonnet opened a discussion of the upcoming Request for Proposals process that will accompany development of the RISG 2010–2012 Omnibus proposal. Desbonnet reviewed the process used in the past omnibus (08/10; see packet materials) and the role the SAC played in that process, noting that the input was very useful and that today’s exercise would seek to replicate and/or improve on the previous iteration. In the previous RfP, 3 separate proposal processes played out simultaneously—ecosystems, fisheries, legal—using a traditional peer review process followed by panel review and rating for decision making. It was noted that the final panel review process did not work well because of the broad scope of proposal themes; it was not possible to have a panel of 3 persons with expertise in 7 or 8 different areas, but it was not practical to have a bigger panel given the small number of proposals to be reviewed (7 or 8). This made the proposal selection process cumbersome and inefficient. SAC suggestions to rectify this were:
- a. More clearly define the focus of the RfP so that a narrower range of topics would need to be considered;
  - b. Consider having RISG make the decisions rather than a panel; re: conduct the process under Program Development rather than Research.

Ben Cuker suggested opening the RfP process earlier, or closing later, as at least some potential applicants may be unable to meet an early January preproposal deadline given the holidays; some universities and other institutions may actually close and be incapable of submitting.

Kristen Fletcher also suggested including foundations and other donors in the research priority identification process as this would engage them early in the cycle and may make them more receptive to provide funding in the future.

The group assembled into 3 breakout groups—fisheries, ecosystems, legal—and provided 45 minutes with which to deliberate and come up with a list of priority research areas (see packet materials).

#### **BREAKOUT SESSION REPORT BACK:**

**LEGAL** (Dennis Nixon, Dennis Esposito, Kristen Fletcher, Grover Fugate, Bill Coffey, Kate Moran, Judith Swift, with Bill Coffey reporting):

At a well-attended break-out session convened during the Senior Advisory Council’s Spring 2008 meeting, the following recommendations for priority research areas were developed for the RISG Omnibus Legal Program. It was recognized by all participants that any research in these areas must consider the effects of long and short term climate changes, as well as the need to conserve energy resources and adopt effective “green” conservation measures.

- Identification and analysis of the legal issues (regulatory and statutory) associated with the siting and development of ocean and coastal energy supply facilities.
- Identification and analysis of the legal issues pertaining to (a) the public’s rights of access to and enjoyment of coastal areas and (b) the rights of adjoining property owners.
- Compilation and analysis of U.S. coastal states statutes and regulations pertaining to submerged lands licensing fees, with a particular focus on dedicated funds created by collection of such fees and their permitted uses.
- Assessment and analysis of probable impacts that climate change will have on coastal zone management and funding principles, focusing especially on the Coastal Zone Management Act.

- Identification and analysis of legal and regulatory barriers to the implementation of “Short Sea” intercoastal shipping services with a focus on the I-95 corridor

**ECOSYSTEMS** (Richard Ribb, Bob Stankelis, Ben Cuker, Nancy Thompson, Jen McCann with Jen McCann reporting):

Title of research should be: Working towards creating a sustainable coastal environment for Rhode Island. All research should be put in the context of ENERGY and Global Climate Change (GCC). We are on the brink of amazing change because of these two issues. These need to be front and center of all our work. RISG should be funding research with both short term and long term results.

We support the existing research priorities listed on page 8 of the Implementation plan.

Thoughts on research:

- Viewing RI as an ecosystem, how is/will GCC impacting Rhode Island, both biologically (e.g. restructuring the natural systems) and the people (e.g. fishing industry, citizens);
- Explore social, economic, and biological impacts of the increased energy costs on the coastal environment – includes people and the natural systems;
- How can coastal industries conserve energy (possible specific research topics: green audits, identify tools like building codes, evaluate short sea shipping);
- Research on the economic value of bay uses to help the state and communities make better land and water use decisions;
- Research how to put back the carbon and nitrogen budgets developed from waste water into agriculture;
- Forecast what is a healthy Narragansett Bay natural system?. What are the parameters towards creating a healthy ecosystem?;
- The need to research connecting Energy with food (shellfish aquaculture);
- What are the parameters that will change in 10 years most important changes that will have an impact (e.g. Tourism, reducing our carbon footprint).

**FISHERIES** (Laura Skrobe, Barry Costa-Pierce, David Smith, Bob Smith, John Hoey, Ambrose Jerald, and Shelley Dawicki with Laura Skrobe reporting):

Started discussion by mentioning that things are changing (increasing fuel prices, new administration, etc.) and therefore it is going to be necessary to adapt our priorities accordingly.

- Need for economic/socio-economic studies looking at (1) different management regimes (i.e. alternative to days at sea), (2) comparing old gear versus new gears in relation to fuel efficiency (i.e. fuel usage versus pounds of fish captured) - Do the new gears save fuel? Due possibly to less resistance, less drag? Use SG dollars for collaborative research and NOAA dollars for fuel and other capital costs. Do fuel vs. catch tests;
- SG funding could be used to support education about (1) the new gears that are coming up into management and (2) electronic reporting system, (3) discard mortality using fine scale spatial information to avoid it (e.g., dynamic area management);
- Look at current fishing situation and its impact on coastal fishing communities;
- Need for biological information on data poor stocks – specifically cusk, skates (especially those used as lobster bait);

- Dual roles of offshore wind-energy platforms – can they be used for shellfish aquaculture, possible artificial reef, etc.;
- Marketing of local seafood – value added for fishermen – research questions: does the public really buy local seafood;
- Bar-coding seafood – honesty in advertising – obtain DNA coding for species identification then when a product is shipped, scan the bar code to see if people are really getting what they paid for. For immediate results, have the bar coding tell whether the product is a species or is not that species but doesn't tell what the species is;
- Variety of fish needs to be available to a wider sector of markets (i.e. ethnic market who are reliant on cheap locally caught species).

Desbonnet wrapped up the session with a summary of Next Steps:

1. Minutes of this SAC meeting will be out for review next week and will include detailed summaries of each breakout session for further consideration and amendment if needed.
2. A meeting with other “like organizations” (as suggested by Richard Ribb) will be convened by RISG in June with the intent of exploring research priorities with this group of stakeholders.
3. Extension teams will convene appropriate stakeholder groups and get input on research priorities as well as direction for their extension proposals to the Omnibus.
4. A survey, using the online Survey Monkey service, will be developed (July) and the SAC will be invited to test it out and provide comment for amendment. Invitations to participate in identifying RISG Priority Research areas will go out via pertinent Listservers once a final survey mechanism is developed. [extension team stakeholder input will be applied as it becomes available].
5. A set of priority research areas will be developed for review by early September. Refinement will take place and the set of priorities will be appropriately edited into the RISG 2010–2012 Omnibus Research RfP.
6. Priorities will be reviewed one final time pending outcomes/findings of the 2008 Baird Symposium and the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Marine Law Symposium.

Barry Costa-Pierce wrapped up the meeting, thanking all members for their input and the very valuable contributions they have made to assisting RISG in defining priority research areas.

**Next SAC Meeting — Fall 2008: 12 November 2008; 11:00AM – 4:00PM; CI Hazard Rooms**

Meeting adjourned at 3:55PM