

# Rhode Island Sea Grant

## Senior Advisory Council

### Meeting of November 16, 2007

*Members in attendance: Pete August, Ron Baird, Dave Bengtson, Ames Colt, Shelley Dawicki, Dennis Esposito, Grover Fugate, Ambrose Jearld, Stephen Mederios, Kate Moran, Dennis Nixon, Stephen Olsen, Glenn Page, Rick Rhodes, Caroly Shumway, Bob Smith, Dave Smith, Judith Swift, Robert Weygand.*

*Staff in attendance: Kathy Castro, Barry Costa-Pierce, Alan Desbonnet, Kristen Fletcher, Megan Higgins, Jennifer McCann, Heather Rhodes, Malia Schwartz. Jim Hurley attended Ex-Officio from the National Sea Grant office.*

Barry Costa-Pierce called the meeting to order at 11:07 AM

Barry Costa-Pierce reviewed the meeting agenda and introduced new SAC members Steve Mederios, Caroly Shumway, Ronald Baird and Jim Hurley.

Alan Desbonnet reviewed and summarized the research proposal process for the 2008-2010 Omnibus. Details and statistics for the process were provided in the packet to all members. Funded project details will be posted on the RISG website in March 2008 when the projects officially begin.

Costa-Pierce provided a recap of other administrative activities since the spring SAC meeting, highlighting the following:

1. 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Baird Science Symposium on Vibrant Waterfronts
2. Outcomes of previous science symposia
  - a. Narragansett Bay book
  - b. Lobster Disease Initiative
  - c. Etc.
3. NOAA "Listening Session" in June
4. National Sea Grant RIT meeting at Alton Jones to draft out the national program evaluation process
5. Program Development investments for 2008
  - a. Diversity programming with the Nuweetoon School and with the URI Diversity Program
  - b. Sustainable Seafood Initiative with Cathy Roheim

#### **Leadership Team Reports**

LEGAL—Kristen Fletcher

1. Fletcher reported that she has accepted a position with the Coastal States Organization as their new Director. She will leave her current post in early December, but will remain engaged with RISG by serving on the SAC. She outlined interim steps, noting that Megan Higgins will pick up some temporary duties, and that Bill Coffey has been named Interim

Director while a national search is conducted. Costa-Pierce is serving on the Search Committee.

2. Leadership Training efforts dovetailed nicely with diversity programming with the focus on alternate energy sources. Various tribes from across the nation participated, as did Metcalf Institute Diversity Fellows.
3. Fletcher described the legal program focus on energy alternatives, particularly regarding offshore wind energy. Megan Higgins elaborated on an alternative marine energy forum they convened.
4. The next Marine Law Symposium will be 22-24 October, 2008, and will have a focus on alternative energy and the legal issues around these new, cutting edge technologies.
5. Fletcher summarized the efforts of the 6 Law Fellows they have this year, noting they are working on legal issues in fisheries, energy, conservation easements, lateral access, marine biodiversity and protection of "working waterfronts" in urban areas.

#### COASTAL—Jennifer McCann

1. The team has been working with RICRMC to develop policy relative to climate change and sea level rise. RI is one of the first states to do this, and the new policies will go in front of the full council for consideration in early 2008.
2. The Vibrant Waterfront symposium was a success. Examples of images used to show sea level rise scenarios in Providence were shown.
3. The Urban SAMP process has resulted in an Urban Greenways Design Manual that has been adopted and is being used by municipalities in the Providence area. To date, over 2 miles of urban public access has been opened to the public.
4. The team is now engaged in an Aquidneck Island SAMP, and coyotes are being used to define habitat corridors on the island. This is an excellent example of moving scientific research directly into policy, design and planning at the local level.
5. The team is also engaged in developing a Newport Harbor Management Plan. The boat trip during the Vibrant Waterfronts symposium was a springboard to opening the dialog on how to apply what is known about vibrant waterfronts to Newport.
6. Caroly Shumway suggested applying the findings of the symposium inland and into freshwater regions; they are sorely needed. Dennis Nixon suggested engaging with the Land Grant Program in efforts to apply learnings inland. It was also suggested to consider linking with The Nature Conservancy Borderlands Project going on in western RI.

#### FISHERIES—Kathy Castro

1. Costa-Pierce reported on the World Wildlife Federation Smart Gear Competition, noting that RISG won the award for the Eliminator net developed by the Fisheries Extension team over the past year or so.
2. Castro reported that Laura Skrobe had her twins in late summer, and will be returning to duties as of December 1<sup>st</sup>. She further reported that Dave Beutel will be out for several months after having shoulder surgery in mid-December.

3. The Sand County meeting in Mystic, just finished, focused on fisheries and avenues for collaborative efforts amongst groups and donors in moving towards sustainable fisheries.
4. A conference focused on menhaden will take place in late November, and will prove interesting as well as controversial. The intent is to provide the best science on the issue in an unbiased fashion.
5. A conference on fisheries sector management, another controversial issue in the state, will be held in January, hosted by the Northeast Sea Grant Collaborative.
6. Castro reported on the Lobster Shell Disease Initiative, noting that 15 proposals were funded and efforts began in March 2007. About 100 lobsters will be used across all experiments to provide some unified information gleaned across all research on common specimens. Preliminary results of the research will be presented at a shellfisheries conference in April 2008 being held in Providence.
7. The National Fisheries Extension Committee is writing a report to the National Panel attempting to provide justification for a continuation of the Fisheries Enhancement Competition.

Costa-Pierce wrapped up the morning session, noting that the Eliminator Trawl outcomes will have broad economic multipliers with impacts to fisherman as well as net making industries in RI. Stephen Olsen suggested applying a similar approach to the shrimp trawl industry; similar success in that arena would have global impacts.

#### LUNCH 1230–115 PM

Barry Costa-Pierce recapped next steps with the Bay Book coming out in early 2008, noting that plans are being developed with the Narragansett Bay Commission and RI Bays and Watersheds Coordination Team. Outcomes will be reported at the spring SAC meeting.

Costa-Pierce presented a slide show, opening the afternoon session with a discussion of regional efforts.

1. Regional efforts and collaborations is a big deal at the moment, and will no doubt maintain its importance into the foreseeable future. RISG is involved in planning, but not as a lead. RISG will take a leadership role in the next phase, which will be implementation. URI researchers are embedded and closely engaged in all regional planning efforts, allowing RISG to focus its planning efforts on the mid-Atlantic Bight area, which is being led by CT Sea Grant. US Fish & Wildlife in Charlestown RI is engaged in the effort as well, and may be a new ally for RISG to collaborate with more closely in the future. CZM leaders are also organizing regionally, and may present further opportunities, but they will be looking for outcomes of research to apply to policy. Grover Fugate noted that at present there is very little information available for the sounds, while interest in aquaculture and energy in those areas is intensifying, leaving policy and decision makers at a loss.
2. Ames Colt summarized the efforts and intent of the Northeast Regional Ocean Commission, noting that state CZMs are providing some support to this effort, but not much, so funds are

being sought elsewhere. Funds will be applied mainly to the Gulf of Maine region, and also through the Southern New England Ocean Partnership.

3. Grover Fugate summarized CZM regional efforts, and how that is merging with CZM Reauthorization at the national level. He noted there is a need to integrate better with other NOAA programs and offices, and that outcomes and targets for efforts must be developed since CZM reauthorization will be mandating accountability.
4. Costa-Pierce reported that the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Baird Symposium will take place in October 2008, and will mimic the Nutrient Symposium in that it will corral scientists and policy people on Block Island for an intense 3 day session. The focus will be on the “seas and sounds” from the Elizabeth Islands south to New York, and the outcomes will dovetail very nicely with all the ongoing regional efforts. Espisito noted it will also dovetail nicely with the 2008 Law Symposium, since there is a big need for science in considering alternative marine energy. Stephen Olsen suggested doing an “ecohistory” of the sounds and seas, looking back in time to document past uses as well as future potential. These areas used to be highly used, but are not today, and so appear not to have any value other than energy facility siting, which is a very narrow slice of what has and could transpire in that area. Castro suggested checking the MIT website; Cliff Goudey may have mapped and posted some of the uses already.

Costa-Pierce introduced the final afternoon topic, alternate sources of funding for RISG efforts. He introduced Glenn Page, who facilitating a process by which to identify and seek such funds, focusing on alternate pathways other than tradition federal funding sources, or large philanthropy foundations. Costa-Pierce then summarized current RISG funding sources, noting probable futures with each source.

Glenn Page opened the session with a discussion of small philanthropic foundations as possible funding sources, noting that few in the RISG team have any formal training in grant making or fund raising, doing all by “seat of the pants” and building on learning and experience. While progress is made, efforts are often inefficient and sometimes ineffective. Glenn noted there is huge growth in small, community based family foundations, and that many of these want to be involved in the doing, not just providing funds. Family foundations tend to want to see results, and want to see indicators developed that will guide them in assessing results. Therefore, there must be a logical evaluation process in any funding proposal to these foundations. Glenn provided an overview of the various small foundations, noting size, focus areas and types. Glenn then introduced the CESTAS initiative that will take place in March 2008 at Alton Jones.

Costa-Pierce then opened the floor to input, questions and general discussion.

- Ron Baird cautioned that it would be best to be sure that the URI Development Office gives any such efforts in fund raising the “green light” prior to proceeding.
- Kate Moran noted that GSO is in the process of hiring a new development person, and that the development group will reform once that happens. She suggested that RISG engage in the process once again.

- Kristen Fletcher requested that Roger Williams be kept in the loop as well so that there are no conflicts or “double asks” across universities.
- Stephen Olsen noted that CESTA is focused on foundations that URI/GSO would not traditionally focus on, and therefore conflict should be minimal.
- Kate Moran agreed, but reiterated that it will be best for all involved if there is cooperation and collaboration and unity in all fund raising endeavors.
- Barry Costa-Pierce suggested a meeting with CRC, GSO, CELS and RISG to discuss a process that avoids conflict and confusion, yet does not hamper opportunity.
- Judith Swift suggested it may be worthwhile to connect with business and venture capitalists in moving towards solutions, for instance to climate change. A key would be to look for positive reinforcement on both sides, and avoid negatives. Businesses may be willing to give a small percent of profit to RISG efforts addressing climate change or similar problems.
- Ron Baird suggested looking into NOAA offices for matching funds, noting that many offices often have small pockets of money to invest in programs, and they look for other organizations or offices with small pots of funds to partner with to accomplish bigger ends. He suggested this would be more productive than simply asking for more money as it frames the monetary input as an investment rather than a donation.
- Kathy Castro noted that such an approach might work with DEM or other agencies that might be able to pool funds and direct them to RISG, who could then use them as matching funds when approaching philanthropy organizations. This would present a very positive aspect of the request.
- Ames Colt questioned whether it might be possible, assuming a saltwater license is instituted in the near future, that license fees to directed to DEM or even RISG to conduct stock assessments or similar functions.
- Judith Swift questioned whether it might be possible to connect with Whole Foods or similar business, and have a small percent of sales from fish, for instance, go to RISG for education purposes. RISG would provide materials at the fish counter on how/what is being done with the provided funds, making for a positive feedback loop for the consumer. Given the tight profit margins supermarkets work under, this may be tough but still worth looking into further.
- Shelley Dawicki noted that some foundations host researchers, lecturers or presenters, and some give money to sponsor a publication or other communications-related product, and RISG ought to consider this as an avenue of interaction.

#### AFTERNOON BREAK

Barry Costa-Pierce turned the floor over the Jen McCann to lead a discussion on accepting donations from private sources.

Jen recapped the Coastal Extension Team’s work focus, and how that might cause conflict with accepting funds from private sources. RISG strives hard to ensure neutrality in all that it does with regard to the policy arena, and accepting funds from private sources, a developer for instance, could be

viewed as a possible conflict of interest. Jen opened the floor to discussion about how to accept such funds without compromising the perception of Sea Grant's unbiased work ethic.

- Dennis Esposito noted that it is not unusual for municipalities to routinely take funds from developers in the review of specific projects. The funds are then used to hire a consultant to make a review and make recommendations. RIDEM does this, and has a list of acceptable consultants. RISG could request to put on that list.
- Stephen Olsen noted that the issue is if the money would be used to do science related to a policy issue, in which case there would be no conflict, or if the money would be used to create policy, which could then be a conflict.
- Grover Fugate reported that there already is policy saying the RISG/CRC is the agent that CRMC uses to conduct specific studies that then lead to the development of coastal policy for consideration by CRMC. Once the policy is developed and submitted to CRMC, it goes to public comment and is reviewed/approved by the Coastal Council. There is no conflict in the process as currently set up since anything RISG/CRC does is strictly advisory. It would be possible to insert wording into the CRMC Operations document stating that RISG/CRC is the agent that CRMC will use for proposal review; developers pay CRMC a fee, who then "hires" RISG/CRC to conduct the study and develop policy recommendations.
- Caroly Shumway suggested that despite that, some guidelines for avoiding conflict of interest should be developed.
- Dave Bengtson noted that even with all that, the perception of conflict or doubt in the process will not be iron clad. For instance, if someone wants to foster doubt and conflict, the simple fact that a developer is paying for studies and policy development is enough.
- Grover Fugate stated that as long as CRMC played the role of the "middle man" in the funding stream, and that the policies developed are accepted in an advisory status, there should be no hint of conflict or wrong doing. If RISG/CRC were written into the regulations as "the consultant team" for certain issues, then they are simply part of the process.
- Ron Baird stated that it is paramount the Sea Grant maintain neutrality because it does not avoid issues of great conflict, and it would not do well if doubt of neutrality became strong in stake holders. He also noted that Sea Grant is not simply a consultant company; there are many such out there already and Sea Grant is not one of them. Sea Grant provides the science and the interpretation of that science. He felt however, that if RISG was careful, and could find a path that played on Sea Grant strengths without interjecting bias, then it should be looked into more closely. Each instance should be considered individually.
- Grover Fugate suggested contacting Sandra Whitehouse, Chair of the Coastal States Foundation, for further information on accepting funds from private sources.

Barry Costa-Pierce closed the meeting at 4:30PM, thanking all for their input and efforts.

NEXT SAC MEETING — May 2008; date yet to be determined