

Northeast Regional Ocean Council
April 27, 2018 Meeting – NH Department of Environmental Services, Portsmouth, NH
Meeting Summary

Attendees

Rick Bennett, USFWS (NROC Federal Chair); Leann Bullin, BOEM; Jamie Carter, NOAA; Mandy Chestnutt, NFWF (remote); Bridget Cotti-Rausch, EPA / CSO; Steve Couture, NH DES; Michele DesAutels, USCG D1; Kerby Dobbs, BOEM Marine Minerals Division; Claire Enterline, ME (remote); Peter Francis, CT DEEP; Grover Fugate, RI CRMC; Kirsten Howard, NH DES; David Kaiser, NOAA; Julia Knisel; David Kaiser (GLD meeting); MA CZM; Alix Laferriere, NH TNC; Joan LeBlanc, NROC; Julia Lewis, USCG D1; Regina Lyons, US EPA; Trevor Mattera, Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership; Peter Murdoch, USGS; Ivy Mlsna, US EPA; Nick Napoli, NROC; Becca Newhall, NOAA; Matthew Nixon, ME (NROC State Chair); Larry Oliver, USACE; Jeff Reidenauer, BOEM Marine Minerals Division; Eric Roberts, TNC; Jeff Waldner, BOEM Marine Minerals Division; Jeff Willis, RI CRMC

Updates

NROC Executive Committee

Matt Nixon provided an Executive Committee update regarding the status of NROC funding from the following three sources: 1) NOAA Regional Coastal Resilience Grant – NERACOOS, 2) Moore Foundation and in-kind Ocean Planning funds, and 3) NOAA Coastal Resilience Grant – TNC.

Additional detail included in the meeting Briefing Packet.

NERACOOS / NROC Proposal to NCCOS

Matt Nixon reported that NERACOOS submitted a proposal titled “A Generic Predictive Model for Ocean and Coastal Acidification Thresholds from Long Island Sound to the Nova Scotian Shelf”. Proposal includes \$50,000 over three years for NROC to help coordinate stakeholder involvement in workshops, and to communicate and coordinate project efforts with state and federal managers.

Additional detail about this proposal as well as NERACOOS updates about federal data certification, integrated nutrient observatory development, and Northeast Coastal Acidification Network (NECAN) are included in the meeting Briefing Packet.

Gulf of Maine Council

Rebecca Newhall provided an update regarding GOMC activities including plans for a two-day in person meeting and awards reception in Gloucester, MA, June 5-6, 2018. GOMC is also working with partner agencies (NERACOOS, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Huntsman Marine and RARGOM) to plan a multi-day symposium to be held in Portland, ME during the fall of 2019.

Additional detail included in the meeting Briefing Packet.

North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC)

Rick Bennett provided an update regarding the NALCC. LCCs have been proposed to receive zero funding in the President’s FY18 and 19 budgets. In FY 2018, Congress restored funding; however, the structure and function of the LCCs are being discussed with the administration. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working collaboratively with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to identify the function, governance and structure that works best for State / Federal collaborative partnerships.

The goal is to identify a cooperative relationship that facilitates large-scale landscape conservation that is supported by the States and the administration.

Key Points from Audience Updates / Announcements / Opportunities

- Bridget Cotti-Rausch is working as an EPA / CSO program fellow over the next year. With EPA seeking to increase understanding of coastal programs, Bridget will be looking for common themes and bringing information back to headquarters.
- Betsy Nicholson announced completion of a new publication from NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, "[The Economic Contributions of Working Waterfronts](#)" – will debut at the National Working Waterfronts Symposium in a few weeks. This publication provides a methodology for use by local leaders to estimate the economic contribution of their working waterfront or 'local ocean economy'. It will be a companion to the online tutorial.
- Betsy also provided an update regarding NOAA's [Green Infrastructure Effectiveness Database](#), a tool to help decision-makers understand the effectiveness of green infrastructure in protecting people and property from impacts of coastal storms and sea level rise. The database includes searchable literature sources from 1980 to 2018 about the effectiveness of using green infrastructure for reducing coastal hazards.
- Rebecca Newhall noted that [NOAA's Digital Coast](#) has a number of upcoming training opportunities and tools, including: 1) Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings; 2) Introducing Green Infrastructure for Coastal Resilience; and 3) Coastal County Snapshots with economic benefits, exposure and resilience to flooding etc.
- Regina Lyons noted that EPA's Region 1 Administrator is Alexandra Dunn who previously served as Executive Director of the Environmental Council of States. Staff are supportive of coastal programs. Recent budget includes funding for National Estuary Programs (NEP) including a \$1 million competitive grant program. Funding for NEPs not included in the President's budget for FY19.
- Leann Bullin reported that BOEM plans to hold auction for two lease areas off the coast of Massachusetts to develop commercial wind power. A webinar was held on April 26 to discuss auction format and details. A 60-day comment period for the proposed auction began on April 11, 2018. BOEM will also host public open houses during May 2018 to facilitate communication with the fishing industry.
- Jamie Carter noted that NERACOOS, Wells NERR and others are hosting a drone workshop focusing on technology. This will be a three-day invite-only workshop to document the practical uses of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs, commonly known as drones) to management applications in coastal zones. The workshop will focus on documenting and exploring requirements for two main management areas: (a) Habitat mapping and change, and (b) Human use and human impacts. Participants will be invited to effectively represent the private sector, academia, and management agencies.
- Michele DesAutels provided an update regarding USCG D1 leadership and activities. A new Captain will be coming in with a focus on prevention, marine planning and protection. On April 24-25, USCG D1 hosted an Offshore Wind Workshop along with other districts and

headquarters. The workshop provided networking connections and information about leasing and offshore service inspections.

- Larry Oliver noted that the feasibility study and environmental impact statement for dredging New Haven Harbor in CT is expected to be complete this June. The coastal flood risk management project in CT is moving into the alternatives analysis phase.
- Trevor Mattera noted that PREP has released its 2018 State of the Estuaries Report and has now moved on to updating their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.
- USGS products funded under Hurricane Sandy are now coming out. A variety of new tools and models are available. USGS is looking for states to partner on a pilot project to develop tools for predicting or planning around 'compound flooding'. This effort may become part of NOAA's National Water Model. Locations have not yet been selected – NH, MA and RI expressed interest.
- Betsy Nicholson noted that the FY18 Omnibus includes \$30M in funding for coastal resilience grants, which will be run through a partnership between Office for Coastal Management and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Timing may be as soon as June on an RFP.
- Matt Nixon noted that the Coastal States Organization will host their summit December 8-13, 2018 in Long Beach, California. NROC may want to host a panel.
- Grover Fugate reported that RI has been studying the links between sea level rise and flooding. They have high resolution data for coasts and rivers.

Regional Planning Body Updates – Nick Napoli

- Northeast Regional Planning Body will meet on June 21 in Warwick, RI. The Block Island Windfarm Tour will take place on June 20 at 3:00 PM. Anyone interested in attending the tour should let Nick know as soon as possible.
- Maps for planned offshore wind areas are now up on portal (vessel monitoring used the most so far). Other elements are being finalized now. Anyone interested in early access should let Nick know.
- RPB received another grant from the Moore Foundation to look at transitioning financial support for the portal away from private foundations. Funding for the portal will run out in 2020 unless new sources are identified. Anyone with input for potential funding scenarios should contact Nick. One option is to explore financial contributions from those who utilize and benefit from data sets that will end up on the portal (e.g. wind energy companies). Nick will follow up with NROC ocean planning committee.

Habitat Classification and Ocean Mapping (HCOM) Workshop

The committee continues to track various state and federal program's mapping needs and plans in [SeaSketch](#). HCOM may have a 2019 / 2020 winter meeting focused on data needs, plans and understanding of capacity throughout the region.

Claire Enterline and Rebecca Newhall provided an overview from a March 2018 workshop on Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS) led by HCOM. CMECS is a method for classifying and comparing sites by looking at several components such as water column, geform, substrate, and biota. Next meeting will focus on best practices / making sure maps can be applied on regional basis

and determining how to classify / how to get the data. HCOM may consider giving a presentation as part of the Gulf of Maine Symposium.

Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee

Steve Couture, Regina Lyons and Ivy Mlsna provided updates from the Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee.

- NEERS held a workshop on marsh resilience and migration on April 26th which built off many conversations started at previous NROC marsh resiliency workshops. Approximately 100 people attended. Salt marsh grass plantings showed some success but need adaptive management. Hosting a communications workshop might be a good next step.
- In December, NROC co-hosted an Ocean and Coastal Acidification Monitoring Workshop with NECAN. Approximately 25-30 people attended. A [workshop report](#) is available on the NECAN website.
- NECAN will host a webinar series over the summer to revisit state of science in the region.
- Potential grant funding for NECAN would include some funds for NROC coordination.
- Key points from discussion about OCA mitigation:
 - Seawater is monitored for pH or other parameters for growing spat / water quality can then be adjusted to support the spat.
 - Limits and / or bans to reduce fertilizer inputs can help.
 - Since EPA will not be regulating OA at the Clean Water Act level / potential policy decisions at local level should be considered.
 - Microscale treatment of aquaculture sites is currently focusing on nutrient management.
 - Managing landscape is the best tool right now.
 - Island Institute has pilot utilizing kelp to buffer pH around oysters / also looking at crushed oyster shells.
 - One of the current challenges is not viewing broader ecosystem impacts.
 - EPA has released its publication "*Guidelines for Measuring Changes in Seawater pH and Associated Carbonate Chemistry in Coastal Environments of the Eastern United States*"
 - Casco Bay NEP has a proposal in to EPA to conduct a pilot project on how to potentially use shell hash to mitigate ocean acidification.
 - The Nature Conservancy has created a new coalition involving shellfish farms.

Ocean Planning Committee

Regional Planning Body (RPB) Update

Nick Napoli reported that RPB has selected Coastal State Stewardship Foundation as their fiscal sponsor. NROC could potentially collaborate with CSSF on other initiatives. Nick noted that additional funding is needed to support both the NROC and MARCO portals and he will be developing potential options for funding. Cost is approximately \$300,000 - \$600,000 / year for maintenance, not including federal products from shipping and fisheries data, etc. More involvement and support from agencies would be needed to further reduce costs. Depending upon the direction of federal policy, ocean planning work for RPB could potentially be moved to the NROC's ocean planning committee.

Sand Management Update and Next Steps

Jeff Reidenauer and Jeff Waldner provided a report from the April 26 Workshop in Portsmouth, NH. The workshop focused on roles and responsibilities of agencies regarding offshore sand management and placement. Jeff Waldner reviewed case studies for responsible offshore sediment management. Matrix similar to that used for the NROC living shorelines workshop was used. Focused on challenges and opportunities.

Key outcomes from the workshop:

- Need to do baseline studies and data collection on ecological conditions. Look at leveraging / cooperating with states.
- Group is committed to meeting regularly / potentially in sync with NROC meetings. A matrix and summary report from the meeting will be forthcoming.
- BOEM will be rolling out a new marine minerals system website. Will feature robust data set - grab samples, geophysics, interpretation of sand resource areas, etc. Currently meeting with states to provide data management tools so that system will eventually be 'plug n play'. Already met with ME and NH and will meet with MA, RI and NY later.
- A project would need to be of significant scale (~10 - 20 million cy) to move forward. Although there has been no significant extraction in New England yet, the intent is to promote informed, proactive vs. reactionary decisions.
- Betsy Nicholson noted that NOAA put \$3K at NERACOOS that is supposed to be used to support the next sand committee meeting / event. Co-chairs, please use it.

RPB Restoration Sub-committee Report

Ivy Mlsna and Larry Oliver provided an update regarding RPB Restoration Sub-Committee activities. The group is moving forward with data portal update to include completed projects. This strategy will help identify gaps, needs, and highlight priority projects or ideas for states. NOAA restoration portal and Corps projects are being added first. Will include a map of projects with brief description, project cost and phase. An updated, easy to use portal should be an incentive to increase use of the portal. Partners can decide what information they want to submit for inclusion in the portal. NROC members should provide recommendations for projects to their representative on the subcommittee.

Hazards

Julia Knisel provided a presentation and facilitated discussion regarding recent storm activity, damage to the States' shorelines and Federal properties, and needs / potential partnerships and synergies regarding recovery. NROC members were asked to provide damage assessments and / or other needs based on impacts from the Nor'easters in March 2018.

Key points from the discussion:

- Federal partners looking to see if new definition of 100-year storm is needed.
- With five storms taking place over a short period, cumulative impacts were a major factor leading to damage as many coastal areas were already compromised by previous storms.
- Storm prediction tools were helpful to show communities what areas were likely to experience flooding, particularly during smaller storms.

- The level of storms from this past winter may be the new normal for the future.

Federal and state partner needs / concerns following the storms.

- Need to figure out how to use the science from Hurricane Sandy to improve tools for predicting erosion and sea level rise.
- Department of Transportation and Parks Department need to have baseline information to better understand and plan for response to coastal storm damage. NH example - lack of records about historic berm elevations made re-grading and putting materials back onto the beach more challenging.
- Need to address the cumulative impact of these storms. During one storm sand is removed from the coast but then comes back. With multiple storms, sand has left the system and is gone for good. Impact will be accelerated erosion with lack of recovery.
- There is a need to figure out where we need to retreat.
- Creating a permitting approach linked to scenario mapping is important.
- Need to address the liability component / informing about risk. With studies available, municipalities, developers, builders and consultants all have liability exposure.
- Funding is needed to enable USGS to deploy research tools.
- Northeast states need a regional plan outlining how they should respond to sea level rise but do not have money to fund this effort.
- Developers should focus on designs that incorporate sea level rise, storm surge, and erosion. However, there are big discrepancies among some estimates (NOAA / ACOE).
- There is a disconnect between coastal predictions and infrastructure designs because no state DOT has a coastal engineer on staff.
- Need to look at contaminants (sources and sinks) as well as sea level rise / saltwater intrusion.
- May be a need for a hazards workshop this Fall to focus on tools. MA will have a new tool available to forecast 10-20 years in June. Could focus on Atlantic coast / high energy or move inland to look at watershed impacts.
- Julia Knisel will take the recommendation for a hazards workshop and the needs raised during the meeting back to the committee to discuss and come up with recommendations.

Geographic Location Description (GLD) Use and the RPB's Data Portal

During a luncheon meeting, NROC state representatives met with David Kaiser from NOAA to discuss GLD and the potential for using data on the NE Ocean Data Portal to support expansion of GLDs if that is desired by states. Creating a GLD does not prohibit any activity but pushes federal consistency review into offshore areas. States would then have more involvement in review of offshore oil and gas proposals.

BOEM has been directed to look at every area of the continental shelf over the next 5 years to determine what areas to open or close for potential oil / gas activities. Depending on recommendations and industry interest, the program could lead to lease sales in North Atlantic. There is little interest in North Atlantic now because there is better oil elsewhere and there is a lack of infrastructure (pipelines, shipping etc.) to support off-shore drilling.

Phases of the program:

1. Identify areas open / closed
2. Lease sale
3. Exploration plan would be filed by industry that gets lease
4. Propose development

GLDs come into play during Phase 3. If an exploratory plan is located within a GLD, then CZM would review. Even without a GLD, states can request an opportunity to review. Creating a GLD requires showing coastal effects. To make a successful case for a GLD, the area must be defined, and the state's need to show effects on interests (uses, resources, economy, environment) supported with information. Data in the portal can be a first step to evaluating and identifying a GLD. To trigger review, a GLD would need to be in place before an application is filed for exploration.

Creating a regional GLD may be possible if it's part of a regional ocean plan. States could come together to create regional GLD for oil and gas but each state would still need their own proposals for GLD as part of their coastal programs. Geography would have to be driving force, i.e. would need to show that oil and gas activity would impact the entire region based upon geographic features.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Update on the National and Targeted Watershed Coastal Resilience Assessments

Mandy Chestnutt provided an update regarding NFWF National and Targeted Watershed Coastal Resilience Assessments. Their first coastal resilience grants began after Hurricane Sandy when \$102 million was awarded to 54 projects. They are now reviewing these projects to assess impact.

- Started by identifying resiliency hubs and then determining coastal impact on these open areas.
- Conducting national level assessment and targeted watershed assessments.
- Working to identify areas on the landscape where investments in conservation will benefit both human and community resiliency
 - The model looks at protected areas and privately owned open space - leads to resiliency hubs (public) and open space hubs (privately owned)
- Exposure Index = Threat Index + Asset Index

Final products will be rolled out in July. Workshops in targeted watersheds will take place in September. Also looking at case studies to give the model a reality check. Will build knowledge from case studies back into model.

Questions / Answers

- What type of projects? Beach and dune restoration, flood plain restoration, coastally based larger scale restoration projects. Focus on natural vs. hard infrastructure.
- What about vulnerability / community risks? May help communities identify vulnerabilities, help prioritize restorations. Example – Overlaying salt marsh sparrow habitat with resiliency hubs helps prioritize species protection and piggyback on resiliency efforts.
- Any update on NFWF – NOAA coastal resilience grants? Amount of funds and focus area should be known soon / possible RFP in June.

Living Shorelines II Update

Eric Roberts from The Nature Conservancy provided an update on current accomplishments, goals and next steps for the Living Shorelines II project. Issues highlighted in the 'State of the Practice Report' - lack of information, and policy factors impeding use of living shorelines – are driving the current project. Current focus is evaluating effectiveness of projects, raising awareness throughout the region, and creating policy guidance.

Key progress since October 2017:

- Most subaward contracts with states are in place
- Currently drafting contract scope for NROC Coordinator
- Eric was hired in January (60% grant / 40% TNC)
- Project work – some NEPA process still needed
- Held kick-off meeting in February

Next steps:

- Create monitoring protocols workshop
- Reach out to federal partners for agenda feedback
- Putting together case studies to guide small group conversations
- States – ME, RI, MA identifying pilot sites
- December 2018 – conference
- May 30, 2018, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM – Workshop in Gloucester to develop standardized metrics and data for project goals as they relate to different living shoreline projects. Ex. shoreline erosion. 4 sites in NH will be monitored with protocols.
- NROC members recommended the following resources be considered: 1) Delaware and NJ have metrics already, 2) USGS is overseeing project with NFWS can provide some information, and 3) USGS is working on similar effort in NJ.

Federal Partners Brief and Discussion

Federal partners have been meeting twice per year to coordinate and collaborate. Recent common areas of interest are water, drought index / soil moisture, data sharing, high water mark, common services / modeling, consistent data and interpretations among agency information / data. The following points were made in response to question about whether current format of NE Federal Partners is meeting needs of NROC.

- Federal Partners don't have a mandate so they are flexible in their focus and function.
- There is value to federal and state partners meeting together.
- Communication is key so that federal agencies can have 'one voice' whenever possible.
- Having federal partners at the table is important for states to benefit from learning about new policies and opportunities. States can then communicate this information to municipalities.
- NROC may also benefit from federal information on specific topics or issues. NROC should make suggestions if the states would like the feds to focus on something in particular.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 PM

Meeting summary prepared by Joan LeBlanc, NROC Coordinator

Briefing Packet and presentations are available under Council Meeting Materials at:

<http://northeastoceancouncil.org/library/>