

Summary of Discussions

Northeast Regional Planning Body Meeting

June 26, 2014

Cambridge, Massachusetts

This document summarizes discussions and presentations at the fourth meeting of the Northeast Regional Planning Body. The meeting took place on June 26, 2014 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The summary was produced by Meridian Institute, which provides meeting planning and facilitation services for the Northeast Regional Planning Body.

Contents

Executive Summary	i
About This Meeting	1
Meeting Objectives.....	1
Thursday, June 26, 2014.....	2
Tribal Blessing	2
Welcome, Introduction and Agenda Review	2
Overview of Planning Timeline	3
Review of June 25 Natural Resources Workshop: Discussion About Key Themes and Next Steps	3
Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Options Discussion.....	6
Public Comments	9
Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Options Discussion (<i>continued</i>)	10
Updates and Progress Since Last RPB Meeting.....	12
Interagency Coordination Update: Discussion About Key Themes and Next Steps	13
Public Comments	15
Summary of Meeting Outcomes and Review of Next Steps.....	16
Closing remarks	16

Executive Summary

The fourth meeting of the Northeast Regional Planning Body (NE RPB) took place on June 26, 2014 at The Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The meeting was attended by state, federal, New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), and tribal NE RPB appointed members or their alternates. Approximately 83 members of the public attended as observers and 17 total public comments were provided during three public comment sessions held over the course of the meeting. A list of attending NE RPB members and alternates and public participants is included in Appendix A. Click [here](#)¹ for a transcript of the meeting.

Objectives of the meeting were to:

- Review major outcomes from June 25 workshop and progress on key NE RPB activities in the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States*.
- Identify next steps for NE RPB interagency coordination/effective decision-making.
- Identify next steps for engagement with technical experts and stakeholders in the region.
- Provide opportunities for public input about the topics being considered by the NE RPB.

Meeting materials can be found by clicking [here](#).² Additional information about the NE RPB and ocean planning in general is available [here](#).³ This includes information on past and upcoming NE RPB meetings as well as a transcript of the full meeting.

NE RPB discussion during the one-day meeting focused on reviewing outcomes of the June 25, 2014 NE RPB Natural Resources Public Workshop, including establishment of a number of topic-specific expert workgroups, and on identifying next steps for interagency coordination, effective decision-making, and enhancing engagement with technical experts and stakeholders in the region.

Key outcomes from the NE RPB meeting related to stakeholder and technical expert engagement and included:

- A decision to establish a public stakeholder forum in conjunction with the November 2014 NE RPB meeting. The forum will encourage participation from members of existing state advisory groups and be open to the public.
- A decision to continue to utilize, for the time being, a flexible roster of technical experts who are tapped for input on specific topics as they arise. The RPB will work to be more transparent about which technical experts it is engaging for such input. In addition, a subcommittee of RPB members will be formed to explore options associated with establishing a formal standing technical advisory committee.

¹ http://neoceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Transcript_June2014_RPB_Meeting.pdf

² <http://neoceanplanning.org/events/june-2014-rpb-meeting/>

³ <http://neoceanplanning.org/>

About This Meeting

The fourth meeting of the Northeast Regional Planning Body (NE RPB) took place on June 26, 2014 at The Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts following the June 25 NE RPB Natural Resources Public Workshop. The NE RPB meeting was attended by state, federal, NE Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), and tribal NE RPB appointed members or their alternates. Approximately 83 members of the public attended as observers and 17 total public comments were provided during two public comment sessions held over the course of the meeting. A list of NE RPB members and alternates and public participants is included in Appendix A. Click [here](#)⁴ for a transcript of the meeting.

The meeting was called by the NE RPB state, federal, and tribal Co-Leads. The state Co-lead is Grover Fugate, Executive Director, Coastal Resource Management Council, State of Rhode Island; the federal Co-lead is Betsy Nicholson of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); the tribal Co-lead is Richard Getchell, Tribal Outreach Coordinator and Former Tribal Chief, Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians. The meeting was organized in collaboration with John Weber, Nick Napoli, and, Katie Lund, staff for Northeast regional ocean planning, and Meridian Institute, which provided meeting planning and facilitation services and produced this summary document.

Meeting Objectives

Objectives of the meeting were to:

- Review major outcomes from June 25 workshop and progress on key NE RPB activities in the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States*.
- Identify next steps for NE RPB interagency coordination/effective decision-making efforts.
- Identify next steps for engagement with technical experts and stakeholders in the region.
- Provide opportunities for public input about the topics being considered by the NE RPB.
- Meeting materials can be found by clicking [here](#).⁵ Additional information about the NE RPB and ocean planning in general is available [here](#).⁶

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⁵ <http://neoceanplanning.org/events/june-2014-rpb-meeting/>

⁶ <http://neoceanplanning.org/>

Thursday, June 26, 2014

Tribal Blessing

Richard Getchell offered a blessing for meeting participants. He used a braid made of sweet grass as a metaphor for collaboration. Each strand of the braid respectively represented the various levels of government on the NE RPB working closely and collaboratively on ocean planning in the Northeast region.

Welcome, Introduction and Agenda Review

Laura Cantral, Meridian Institute, facilitated a round of introductions. A list of attending NE RPB members, alternates, and public participants is included in Appendix A. She explained that the focus of this meeting would be to review the major outcomes from the June 25 workshop, provide updates on the progress made on the other activities outlined in the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States* (Framework), and identify next steps for NE RPB interagency coordination efforts and engagement with technical experts and stakeholders in the region. She informed the group that there would be two opportunities to receive public comment about the topics being considered by the NE RPB, one following the initial discussion of technical and advisory options and the other following the discussion on interagency coordination.

Ms. Nicholson provided a brief review of the NE RPB's origins and progress to date. The NE RPB was formed as an outcome of the 2010 National Ocean Policy. She stated that the NE RPB represents an evolution in this country's efforts to ensure the maintenance of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes; provide for adaptive management to enhance our understanding and management of the ocean; and coordinate with national security and foreign policy interests. The NE RPB was the first in the nation to be established and is comprised of representatives from the six New England states, ten federally recognized tribes, ten federal agencies, and the NEFMC. The NE RPB is charged with working collaboratively with the public to develop and oversee the implementation of a regional ocean plan that takes into account key land-sea interactions. Ms. Nicholson mentioned White House Counselor John Podesta's recent announcements regarding the White House's renewed commitment to implementing the National Ocean Policy as a tangible outcome of the hard work that the NE RPB agencies, staff, partners, and public participants invested in this effort.

Ms. Nicholson noted an opportunity to work with the new Director of the National Ocean Council, Beth Kerttula. She reminded the group that the nation is still recovering from several large storms, which have renewed interest in understanding how coastal communities can enhance their resilience. Ms. Nicholson reviewed key NE RPB milestones to date include establishment of its membership; signing a charter; developing a framework with corresponding principles, goals, objectives; and outlining a work plan. She stated that the NE RPB started in 2012 and is approximately halfway through its timeline, which will conclude by

2016. The next phase of work will be action oriented and focused on making progress on specific tasks identified in the Framework. Nicholson closed by encouraging RPB members to represent the perspectives of their respective institutions as well as their own perspectives as stewards of the ocean.

Overview of Planning Timeline

Grover Fugate provided an overview of the NE RPB planning timeline. He stated that the NE RPB will be developing a large volume of products throughout 2014 and he encouraged the group to make suggestions on how to manage the amount of work flowing out of this process. The 2014 planning timeline can be found in on slide 2 of Appendix B. Highlights include:

In January 2014, the NE RPB approved the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast* (Framework) which included goals, objectives, and actions to guide the work taking place throughout the spring 2014 leading up to this NE RPB meeting, including the June 25 Natural Resources workshop.

Technical and stakeholder engagement has been occurring throughout the process and the NE RPB will be discussing ways to further that engagement at this meeting.

The NE RPB is holding two public workshops, including the Natural Resources workshop that took place on June 25 and an Effective Decision Making workshop that is planned for fall 2014.

At the November 2014 meeting, the NE RPB will review products, progress to date, and decide on next steps to make progress on the goals.

Review of June 25 Natural Resources Workshop: Discussion About Key Themes and Next Steps

Mr. Napoli presented slides that provided an overview of the discussion that took place at the June 25 workshop. He stated that the objective of this workshop was to discuss ocean natural resources-based information development, including the following (which can also be found on slide 3 of Appendix B):

- 1: Data and methods for marine life distribution and abundance
- 2A: Identify areas of ecological importance
- 2B: Measure ocean health
- 2C: Tradeoffs

Mr. Napoli informed the group that a research team of experts from Duke University and NOAA has been hired to begin work on the distribution and abundance aspect. On June 25, workshop participants received an overview of the research team's capacity, planned activities, examples of their work, and discussed how the related work under the Effective Decision-Making goal might complement the research team's work to maximize its utility for ocean

planning in the Northeast. In breakout groups, workshop participants discussed questions to frame the immediate steps in this work (e.g., how to prioritize species to focus on at first).

Mr. Napoli stated that workshop participants recognized the need for expert work groups to be formed to develop draft products. He has compiled a list of about 50 experts interested in advising this work.

Ms. Cantral then turned to the NE RPB for any reflections on the June 25 workshop. Susan Whalen stated that several workshop participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that key decisions reflect the values of stakeholders and local communities. Mr. Fugate added that the NE RPB faces a challenge in managing expectations in the context of members' existing authorities.

Ms. Nicholson noted that the workshop was a good opportunity to bring stakeholders up to speed and ground them in the purpose of the NE RPB. Joe Atangan observed that the discussions tended to focus on the end point for activities. He noted the importance of keeping the interim steps in mind that might impact these natural resources along the way. Mr. Atangan cautioned about the potential of progress being slowed while gathering data. He encouraged the NE RPB to assure the public that decision making tools are being used to convert data into accessible, meaningful information.

Matthew Nixon remarked that given the varying levels of expertise within the NE RPB's Natural Resources Work Group, there is still a level of uncertainty among participants about this process, particularly regarding any prioritization of certain species. He stated that the workshop was a good opportunity to hear from experts on various topics to help establish greater clarity going forward.

Mr. Napoli outlined the process going forward. Topic-specific work groups will be established to answer a list of key questions that have been identified to help frame the development of draft products. These work groups will advise the NE RPB on how to develop distribution and abundance products and will conduct webinars and other communications outreach to publicize information on the status of the work. He also noted that schedule considerations suggested prioritizing activities as appropriate.

Ms. Nicholson stated that between now and the November 2014 meeting, the NE RPB should be assessing ways to enhance the utility of natural resource-based data by looking at potential policy and legal implications within the existing regulatory framework.

Bruce Carlisle said that the four options discussed at the workshop (Slide 3 of Appendix B) need further consideration. He suggested creating a small group to prepare decision points and options for moving forward, with guidance and input from technical experts. He stated that having a focused group think through the options and integrate those with the regulatory

framework would be helpful in gaining short-term clarity. Mr. Carlisle volunteered to be a part of this group. Mr. Getchell and Ms. Nicholson also volunteered for this small group effort.

Mr. Getchell expressed concerns about time required to gather traditional knowledge and the extent to which that knowledge will be able to change what the NE RPB already knows. He stated that the workshop was a good first step in prioritization, but there are additional topics that still require consideration as potential priorities. He suggested implementing an adaptive model that communicates what the NE RPB knows is missing and adapting the process to include that missing information. He noted the importance of inclusivity in the long term.

Meredith Mendelson emphasized a need for impact analysis. She suggested looking at existing data sources that have been developed for specific purposes, understanding what the purpose of that data collection was originally, how the data has already been applied, and its impact. Sharri Venno replied that the landscape conservation cooperative effort is trying to do just that.

Kathryn Ford said that education and improving knowledge is important in enhancing effective decision making. She expressed support for Mr. Carlisle's suggestion to create a small group focusing on framing some of these issues. This would help her understand what could be accomplished with an ocean plan for the region. Mr. Atangan reminded the group that the purpose of establishing the National Ocean Policy was to go beyond sector-based management and to focus more on an ecosystem-based approach.

Bob LaBelle requested an ecological inventory of the Northeast. Such an inventory would be valuable in driving the project-specific assessments that are occurring. He stated that focusing on general information and later adapting it to specific projects will ultimately save time and effort. He pointed out that agencies with greater capacities and expertise, which that are working on this, could help with this effort.

Mr. Weber encouraged the NE RPB to think about how to continue the conversation with the public as it determines how to move forward from now to November 2014. Meghan Massaua followed up on his remark by noting that the NE RPB is actually working within three different time frames: what can be done by November 2014, what can be done by the end of 2016, and what will require a greater investment of resources in the long-term.

Mr. Fugate volunteered to join Mr. Carlisle in the small group that will identify options for moving forward. He also wondered, given what was discussed at the workshop, whether the existing study will yield the desired end results or whether additional studies will be necessary. Mr. Napoli replied that the Duke/NOAA research team will be taking what they have and integrating it with the state and local data.

Ms. Cantral summarized the discussion about the June 25 workshop and noted that the NE RPB hopes to provide similar opportunities for engagement as its work continues and topics for future workshops become clear. The NE RPB recognized balance as a key theme and the

importance of balancing workload, a need for products, and how the NE RPB can make use of these products for decision making. She noted that activity related to gathering data and methods for marine life distribution and abundance is in motion; the NE RPB has committed to this work and technical work groups are being organized to assist. Updates on the status of that work will be presented to the public via webinars and other communications efforts prior to the November NE RPB meeting. For additional options, there are still questions that need to be answered, which will be the focus of a small group consisting of Mr. Fugate, Ms. Nicholson, Mr. Getchell, and Mr. Carlisle.

Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Options Discussion

During this session, NE RPB Co-Leads presented a series of options for fostering increased engagement by technical experts and stakeholders in the region. Ms. Nicholson began the session by stating that, to date, the NE RPB has been thoughtful about engaging technical and stakeholder experts in meaningful ways. There is a desire in the region to continue to enhance the engagement process, and this topic was flagged for further consideration at the January 2014 NE RPB meeting. She noted that as additional regions establish regional planning bodies and look to engage non-government participants in the process, the Co-Leads decided to seek clarity and legal guidance, which she would share. Ms. Nicholson urged the NE RPB to make a decision on these options by the conclusion of the meeting. She encouraged the NE RPB to think about what could be meaningful and manageable.

Ms. Nicholson thanked Dan Hubbard for ensuring that the NE RPB has proper legal grounding for moving forward and turned to him for further detail. Mr. Hubbard stated that when this process first began, the focus was on transparency. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) is used to ensure that decisions made by the government are done in a way that keeps the impacted members of the public informed along the way. With a limited budget, Mr. Hubbard stated that a FACA committee would be impractical for the NE RPB. Mr. Hubbard explained that the regional planning bodies fall into an exception under the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act for organizations comprised of federal, state, and tribal representatives who, by virtue of their confirmed mission, discuss the administration of federal programs. The NE RPB fits into this exception due to its inter-jurisdictional composition and mission under the National Ocean Policy.

Mr. Hubbard went on to emphasize that this legal status means that decisions must be made by the NE RPB members themselves and must be focused on the shared vision of the National Ocean Policy and its federal programs. Since the NE RPB is not subject to FACA, its subcommittees are also not subject to it because the NE RPB itself does not reside within a particular federal agency. Therefore, the NE RPB can establish stakeholder committees that report back to the full NE RPB, as long as the decision making authority is vested solely in the NE RPB membership.

Ms. Nicholson then described the content of meeting material entitled *Options for Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Functions*, which can be found in Appendix C. Highlights include:

- Technical Advisory Function is intended to access expert opinions from a group of government and non-government colleagues on a variety of subjects. Immediate topics will focus on characterizing marine life and habitats, with other topics discussed as needed in the future.
 - Option 1: Convene an expert panel that would provide individual opinions on specific topic as they arise. This panel would not meet regularly as a standing body, but rather, individual with relevant expertise would be invited to participate in topical workshops or other public meetings.
 - Option 2: Establish a standing technical advisory committee as a subcommittee of the NE RPB with experts in a variety of subjects that will meet regularly and provide advice on process and products to the NE RPB for their deliberation.
- Stakeholder Advisory Function is intended to provide stakeholders with opportunities to provide meaningful feedback on the NE RPB process and products outside of public comment periods.
 - Option 1: Continue with the suite of existing stakeholder activities outlined in the Framework Document and explore ways to maximize functionality, improve regional dialog, and adapt current practices to future needs.
 - Option 2: Establish a standing Stakeholder Advisory Body that would act as a subcommittee that will meet regularly and provide advice to the NE RPB for their deliberation.

Ms. Cantral encouraged the group to vocalize any alternative options, keeping in mind the balance between what is meaningful and what is achievable, and what can be adapted as the process moves forward. She opened up the discussion to NE RPB members.

Mr. Fugate shared that, based on his ocean planning experience, he found technical advisory committees to be more effective in gathering relevant input for specific topics than providing broad technical advice. In addition, his experience with standing stakeholder groups that have a large membership, in an effort to be inclusive, indicates that such groups tend to be unwieldy. Mr. Fugate expressed a wish to ensure that the selected option is the most effective option in helping the NE RPB make decisions. Putting stakeholders on a standing group without financial support may not be the most effective way to engage them. Mr. Fugate also cautioned the group against contributing to stakeholder burnout by creating another body in which stakeholders are expected to participate.

Mr. Atangan recommended that the NE RPB proceed with the option that provides it with the most flexible approach to engage the public. He stated that the rigidity of a technical advisory committee may prevent the NE RPB from having the flexibility needed to take advantage of standing groups that already exist.

Doug Grout shared his belief that a standing body of technical experts would be helpful in synthesizing the broad amounts of information that the NE RPB will be considering, particularly given that the NE RPB membership consists primarily of policy experts. While setting up a technical advisory committee will require time at the beginning, in the long run it will be more efficient to have a group that understands the process and the type of information that needs to be communicated to policymakers. He expressed concerns about an option in which the NE RPB would need to constantly bring ad hoc panels up to speed about the process and the type of information the NE RPB is seeking.

Lorraine Wakeman expressed support for a more flexible approach. She noted that representatives on standing stakeholder groups often struggle to represent the differences of opinion within their own communities.

Glenn Normandeau agreed that it would be difficult to create a standing body that is accurately representative of every interest. He also noted that there are limited resources to support such a body.

Tom Burack followed up by asking Ms. Nicholson to inform the group of what resources are available to support additional stakeholder engagement. Mr. Weber answered by stating that the support for staff is limited to himself, Katie Lund, and Mr. Napoli. The NE RPB's funding is secure through the rest of 2014 and it is unclear what resources the NE RPB will be able to secure after the current calendar year. Mr. Burack responded that it will be important to consider these practical financial constraints in making a decision on whether to establish a formal advisory committee.

Ms. Mendelson shared feedback she has received, indicating that there is a desire for a standing group of advisors consisting of both stakeholders and technical expertise. She said that at a certain point, distinguishing between them may be drawing an arbitrary line. Mel Côté supported the idea of utilizing a hybrid approach to meet several needs at once.

Mr. Fugate encouraged the NE RPB to focus on gathering meaningful stakeholder input. He noted that while it is important to be responsive to local audiences, the mechanism for gathering their input should be manageable and valuable.

Ms. Lund suggested listing work group members, many of whom represent stakeholder interests and are engaged in the planning work, on the NE RPB website to ensure transparency, a topic that came up at the June 25 workshop. She also reminded the NE RPB of its current commitments, including public meetings that include comment opportunities, another planned public workshop for fall 2014, and state advisory meetings that will happen between now and the November 2014 NE RPB meeting.

Ms. Nicholson expressed appreciation for the candid nature of the discussion. With regard to the stakeholder advisory function, she acknowledged that state advisory groups have existing

mechanisms that can be leveraged and their interest in participating in a facilitated cross-regional dialogue should be explored. This would not be a standing committee but rather a way to bring those who are already engaged more deeply into the process for continuity.

Ms. Nicholson suggested the possibility of adding an evening stakeholder session to an existing NE RPB meeting. Mr. Grout expressed support for this idea and asked who would be gathered for such a forum and how the NE RPB would go about deciding who needed to be involved. Mr. Napoli stated that this would be open to any members of existing state committees and others who have interest in the topic. He encouraged the NE RPB to be as inclusive as possible. Ms. Cantral then asked the group to hold further discussion until after the public comment session on this topic.

Public Comments

Ms. Cantral opened the first of two public comments sessions. Nine individuals provided comments during this session. Click [here](#)⁷ for the meeting transcript, which provides a complete record of the public comments. Major themes from the comments included:

- Emphasis on engaging the commercial and recreational fishing communities to discuss economic impacts and tradeoffs. A suggestion was made to provide them with a formal membership role on the NE RPB.
- Concerns about inclusivity and the need for broad representation. A suggestion was made to create a technical advisory committee that does not include anyone who has been involved to date in order to engage new and creative thinkers in this process.
- A request to work with existing organizations within the region that belong to broad networks with better access to the public.
- Encouragement to consider looking at a broader array of data.
- Concerns about a shortage of engagement of non-consumptive recreational ocean interests in ocean planning. A suggestion was made for the NE RPB to establish two subcommittees, a technical advisory committee and a stakeholder advisory board, both of which can include ad hoc panels and other components as needed.
- A recommendation of a hybrid approach to a technical and stakeholder advisory committee that includes a standing subcommittee consisting of scientists from academia, government, and other entities with particular expertise, as well as a stakeholder advisory board as a formal subcommittee.
- A question about how the proposed stakeholder advisory groups would work with existing state advisory groups.

⁷ http://neoceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Transcript_June2014_RPB_Meeting.pdf

- Information about video survey projects that have been conducted that incorporate oceanographic data and analyze a number of species and habitat.

In addition to comment provided during this session, letters sent in advance of the meeting are compiled in Appendix D.

Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Options Discussion (*continued*)

After hearing public comment, Ms. Cantral asked NE RPB members to reach consensus and closure on how to handle the Stakeholder Advisory Function. She presented the additional proposed option to organize a stakeholder forum in conjunction with the November NE RPB meeting. The forum would draw from the existing state advisory groups to encourage their participation and also provide an opportunity for other perspectives to be engaged by making the forum open to the public. She encouraged the NE RPB to need to think carefully about the specific need it has for additional stakeholder input. Ms. Cantral also reminded the NE RPB that there are multiple engagement mechanisms to which they are committed. She reminded the group to keep in mind the need to be open and inclusive while also taking on activities that are manageable within staffing and budgetary constraints. Ms. Cantral then opened up the discussion to the NE RPB members.

Mr. Getchell offered that ecosystem health should be the fundamental purpose that is bringing everyone to the table. Michele DesAutels said that federal agencies conduct outreach to different audiences to provide them with information about various topics, sometimes utilizing partnerships with other organizations. She suggested further utilizing and leveraging federal agencies' existing mechanisms.

Matthew Nixon stated that he was in favor of the new proposed option. He stressed normalizing the relationship of the NE RPB to this stakeholder forum and clarifying what the relationship will be. He suggested documenting the details of this proposed stakeholder forum option in a draft concept paper that discusses when this group would be convened, how many times these stakeholders would be consulted, and about what. Mr. Nixon emphasized the importance of establishing a set procedure to clarify expectations. He concluded by stating that once the new proposed option is outlined, that would set expectations and clarify roles for those participating.

Mr. Atangan expressed strong support for Matt's suggestions and recognized that there is time to identify the topics this stakeholder forum would discuss. Christine Clarke followed up by also expressing support for this proposal. Mr. Grout also expressed support for the idea as a starting point and emphasized the need to be as inclusive as possible in the process.

Ms. Cantral asked the group about their level of comfort with the proposed approach that incorporates their comments, including adding federal stakeholder outreach to the list of ongoing stakeholder engagement opportunities, thinking of how to formalize the relationship through NE RPB documents, and designing the forum around specific topics.

Ms. Venno proposed delaying the NE RPB decision on this idea until after the second public comment session. The group expressed support for Ms. Venno's suggestion and Ms. Cantral moved the discussion forward to the topic of options for the technical advisory function.

Ms. Cantral summarized the two main options for the technical advisory functions offered in *Options for Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Functions*. She asked the group to discuss how to ensure that technical information flowing from engaged experts is delivered to the NE RPB in a useful format, whether the NE RPB has the technical expertise it needs now, and whether those needs will continue to be met in the long term.

Mr. Napoli informed the group that the NE RPB's Natural Resources Work Group consists of 30-40 federal and state policy and technical experts that offer guidance by reviewing and providing input on work group materials and outputs. He stated that at the June 25 workshop, a list of 50-60 individuals has been developed as a potential roster of work group members for each of the three tasks (Marine mammals, fish, and birds).

Mr. Burack expressed support for the flexible approach in Option 1. He stated that the NE RPB can reserve the right to establish a specific panel with a clear charge in the future. Mr. Burack suggested the NE RPB avoid trying to identify a cross section of experts to guide its work until it reaches clarity on the questions that will be asked.

Ms. Nicholson agreed with Mr. Burack that it may be premature for the NE RPB to set up a technical advisory committee and that establishing one now would slow the NE RPB's progress. Regardless, she encouraged the NE RPB to be more transparent about which experts are currently engaged in the process.

Mr. Grout expressed support for the standing technical advisory committee described in Option 2. He emphasized the importance of identifying individuals with the right expertise and bringing them on board in the long term. With regard to timing, he stated that even if the NE RPB decided to establish a technical advisory committee, it would be another year before the details of how that group functions will be advanced enough to have people serve on the committee. He encouraged the group to decide sooner rather than later whether they want to initiate the process to scope out the technical advisory committee membership and mission.

Mr. Atangan replied that he would like to see progress made as quickly as possible. He agreed that there may be a need to establish a standing committee at a later time, but an ad hoc panel of experts would give the NE RPB the flexibility keep moving quickly.

Ms. Wakeman offered that the NE RPB does not have enough information about the focus of the technical advisory committee to make a decision now.

Ms. Cantral summarized the discussion by stating that the flexibility in Option 1 is important and, to some extent, already occurring and the NE RPB seems unsure of how it would utilize a

standing technical advisory committee. Until there is more clarity on those topics, many NE RPB members suggest delaying establishment of a standing technical advisory committee.

Mr. Carlisle asked the group to recognize its responsibility to clarify the specific products it is working toward in the near, medium, and long terms. As the NE RPB approaches its November 2014 meeting, Mr. Carlisle suggested thinking about where additional technical expertise or guidance around information synthesis will be needed.

Ms. Nicholson suggested proceeding with building out a roster of experts and being transparent about who they are and keeping them as informed as possible, while preserving the right for the standing technical advisory committee option further down the road.

Ms. Cantral suggested that the group think about how they would like to move forward on the options and that they postpone making a decision until after receiving public comments. She then moved the agenda forward to the session on updates and progress since the last NE RPB meeting.

Updates and Progress Since Last RPB Meeting

During this session, NE RPB members and staff provided brief updates on progress since the January 2014 NE RPB meeting in carrying out the activities identified in the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States*. The NE RPB updates can be found on slides 5-10 in Appendix B. Highlights include:

Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

- Progress –Objective 1: Characterize the ecosystem, economy, and cultural resources
 - A team led by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute's Marine Policy Center is conducting a baseline assessment, including an assessment of the region's marine economy.
 - Commercial fishing characterization and mapping activities continue.
 - Early stages of characterizing recreational activities and engaging those communities are underway.
 - Continuous characterization of maritime commerce is occurring; meetings will be taking place in fall 2014.
- Upcoming activities:
 - Supporting any needs emerging from regulatory discussions.
 - Supporting tribes draft consultation and data prioritization efforts.

Goal: Effective Decision-making

- Enhance inter-agency coordination
 - One focus of these discussions is on augmenting existing federal pre-application processes, particularly those related to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leasing for sand and gravel and energy.
- Implement specific measures to enhance public participation

- Develop a guide to public input on offshore wind, sand/gravel mining, and offshore aquaculture.
 - Identify challenges and best practices and recommendations for improvement.
 - Discuss potential specific tasks at public meetings in the fall.
- Incorporate products into existing decision-making
 - Use of ocean planning data in scoping, pre-application, early stages of required consultations.
 - Regional implementation of national study guidance.
 - States' application of federal consistency under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA).
- Improve respect for tribal customs and traditions in decision-making
 - A tribal work group will present best practices for consultation at the November 2014 NE RPB meeting.
 - Work to identify existing tribal data and priority themes to incorporate into the data portal.

Interagency Coordination Update: Discussion About Key Themes and Next Steps

During this session, NE RPB staff provided an update about emerging opportunities and challenges for enhancing interagency coordination, as articulated in the *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States*, as well as next steps. This presentation was followed by NE RPB discussion.

Mr. Weber began by giving an overview of the objectives under the *Effective Decision Making* Goal. Under Objective 1 on enhancing interagency coordination and Objective 3 on incorporating products into existing decision making, the NE RPB has been in discussions with federal and state agencies about potential opportunities. This topic also relates to the work discussed at the June 25 workshop. The NE RPB hopes to maximize the utility of the natural resource-based products being developed and has identified federal agencies that have existing regulatory decision making authority to engage. The NE RPB is making meaningful progress in these discussions.

Mr. Weber stated that the NE RPB is also engaged in conversations aimed at better understanding the opportunities available at the state level. In addition to meeting with state agency staff who are currently engaged in the NE RPB's work, Mr. Weber noted that outreach is being conducted to stakeholders in relevant industries and non-governmental organizations to assist the NE RPB in further specifying areas of focus. Significant progress on federal and state outreach is expected to be made by the November 2014 NE RPB meeting.

Mr. Weber then discussed the topics being explored under Objectives 1 and 3. The NE RPB plans to review existing interagency practices in order to build upon what works. Regarding NEPA-related opportunities, federal agencies could enhance interagency coordination early in a process as they identify lead and cooperating agencies. Another topic being discussed is how

the NE RPB can assist BOEM with coordinating activities in federal waters. Mr. Weber stated that the NE RPB will be meeting with BOEM to discuss this matter in the coming weeks. He shared that another potential topic with BOEM focuses on the study guidelines they sometimes issue regarding development of the information required to make decisions on a permit. In the past, those study guidelines have been very broad and national in scope and have not fully captured all the relevant topics. There may be an opportunity for the NE RPB to have an in-depth conversation with BOEM about guidelines for topics that are relevant to the region.

Lastly, Mr. Weber discussed the need for data products. While engaging in discussions with federal agencies, the NE RPB has been asking what types of data products would be helpful to regulators. He stated that their input will inform the development of the data products, to whatever extent possible. Through NEPA, there may be benefits to looking at current information to help better inform considerations regarding existing projects. Mr. Weber stated that the NE RPB has also been talking to states about how to incorporate their perspectives into the potential application of CZMA federal consistency provisions.

Ms. Nicholson called the group's attention to objective 2, which came into existence because of public comments regarding specific measures to enhance public participation and increase transparency and participation in ocean management decisions. The U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, BOEM, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources are committed to exploring options for moving this objective forward. This is an area where the NE RPB will need substantial stakeholder input. She noted that the NE RPB would like to develop a guide for stakeholder input that can serve as a public education tool to help the public better understand these processes, and to identify these best practices to possibly expand in the future. She noted that convening a stakeholder forum in conjunction with the November 2014 NE RPB meeting may be a good opportunity to solicit input on this objective.

Mr. Weber then updated the group on the projected timeline for the interagency coordination work. The NE RPB will be conducting stakeholder meetings with various individuals and groups throughout the summer 2014. In addition to these meetings, the NE RPB hopes to convene a public workshop in the fall 2014 to further examine specific options for interagency coordination.

Ms. Cantral opened up the discussion to the NE RPB. Bob LaBelle expressed his appreciation for the effort and its timeliness, particularly in relation to progress on offshore wind energy leasing. He stated that bringing a regional lens to this work is important and thanked the NE RPB for its good work. Ms. Massaua informed the group that the U.S. Department of Energy has recently launched education and outreach programs to ensure that regional decisions around wind energy development are made based on the most up-to-date information. Ms. Nicholson emphasized that this workflow of the NE RPB is critically important and can have an important and positive impact on the region.

Public Comments

During the second public comment period, seven individuals provided comments. Click [here](#)⁸ for the meeting transcript, which provides a complete record of the public comments. Major themes of the comments during this session included:

- Requests that the broader public be involved more proactively in the NE RPB decision making processes. A suggestion was made for the NE RPB to serve as uninformed facilitators and to bring in experts to help provide guidance around a specific topic or goal to ensure that the NE RPB has a full grasp on all it needs to accomplish by 2016.
- Concerns about the meeting room setup, which made it difficult for members of the public to hear or see who was speaking.
- Appreciation of the NE RPB's commitments to filling data gaps and requests to form a technical advisory committee soon to assist in synthesizing the information from the various NE RPB work streams.
- A caution against forming another advisory body and a reflection that these advisory bodies work best for a single agency, not broader collaborative efforts like the NE RPB.
- A suggestion to proactively solicit stakeholder input on how to proceed on *the Effective Decision Making* goal.
- Appreciation to the NE RPB for providing the public with the opportunity to comment on its deliberations.

In addition to comment provided during this session, letters sent in advance of the meeting are compiled in Appendix D.

Following public comment, Ms. Cantral asked the NE RPB to decide how to proceed with the technical and stakeholder advisory options. The NE RPB reached consensus to proceed with establishing a stakeholder forum that draws from participants in state-based advisory group as well as other perspectives. This forum will be considered part of the agenda for the November 2014 NE RPB meeting. Ms. Cantral stated that the details and location of that meeting have yet to be confirmed and additional information will be circulated as soon as possible.

Ms. Cantral observed that the technical advisory function requires further deliberation by the NE RPB, as the group was unable to reach consensus about whether an ad hoc or standing committee would best suit its needs. Mr. Grout offered to form a small group to further explore the option of a standing technical committee and report its findings during the November 2014 NE RPB meeting. This small group will outline options for a standing committee including pros and cons, size, and function. Ms. Cantral summarized by stating that the group appears

⁸ http://neoplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Transcript_June2014_RPB_Meeting.pdf

comfortable moving forward with the first option's flexible technical advisory approach for now, while establishing a small group to explore the prospect of creating a standing technical advisory committee.

Summary of Meeting Outcomes and Review of Next Steps

Ms. Cantral summarized the outcomes of the meeting, noting that the NE RPB had met its meeting objectives by discussing the outcomes from the June 25 Natural Resources Workshop and identifying next steps for interagency coordination and technical and stakeholder advisory options. Next steps include the establishment of topic-specific technical committees to work on the specific items outlined at the June 25 workshop, development of a stakeholder forum as part of the November 2014 NE RPB meeting, proceeding with the flexible ad hoc technical advisory option for now, and the establishment of a small group to explore options for a future possible standing technical advisory committee.

Closing remarks

Mr. Fugate, Mr. Getchell, and Ms. Nicholson offered brief closing remarks. Ms. Cantral adjourned the meeting.

Appendix A

Northeast Regional Planning Body Meeting Participant List

June 26, 2014 • The Charles Hotel, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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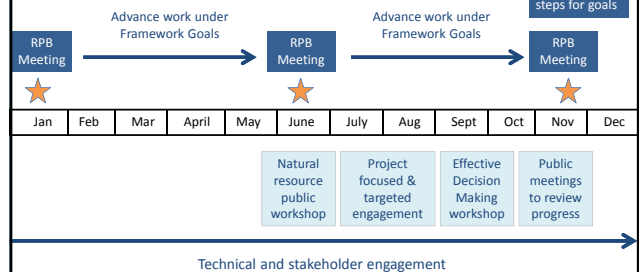
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Appendix B Northeast Regional Planning Body Meeting

June 26, 2014
Cambridge, Massachusetts



2014 Timeline



Natural Resources Workshop

1. Data and methods for marine life distribution and abundance

- Tier I: observations
- Tier II: observations + habitat

2A. Identify areas of ecological importance

- Species hotspots, biodiversity and/or habitat hotspots
- Ecologically important areas

2B. Measure ocean health

- Single-species, single-impact models
- Cumulative impacts
- Ocean Health Index, or other indices

2C. Tradeoffs



June 26 Update

NE RPB
Cambridge, MA



The Framework

NE RPB approved “Framework” document in January

- Goals - aspirational high level statements
- Objectives - “how to meet goals”
- Outcomes - results
- Specific tasks, products and capacity that will achieve objectives
- Stakeholder engagement strategy
- Principles - key elements to guide process and outcomes
- Timeline



Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Objectives:

- Characterize the ecosystem, economy and cultural resources
 - Baseline data/maps, report, other info
 - Maximize utility of tools/info for management applications
- Support existing restoration and conservation programs
 - Enhanced coordination of such programs to achieve regional goals
- Develop regional ocean science plan
 - Priority data and science needs identified and measures taken to meet those needs



Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Progress – Objective I: Characterize the ecosystem, economy and cultural resources

- Baseline assessment:
 - Team led by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (Hauke Kite-Powell), includes New England Aquarium (Brooke Wikgren) and University of Southern Maine (Charlie Colgan)
 - Tasks will include:
 - » Developing economic assessment and looking at economic indicators, summarizing non-market valuation studies
 - » Compiling information on human activities + infrastructure, natural resources, trends + future scenarios
 - » Draft and final (camera-ready) baseline assessment for use as decision making tool.



Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Progress - Objective I: Characterize the ecosystem, economy and cultural resources

- Commercial fisheries characterization and mapping
 - Characterize lobster fishery and consider opportunities to pilot new data collection
 - GMRI to compile information on existing climate change-related science and ways to assess trends
 - Additional mapping based on Vessel Monitoring System, Vessel Trip Report analysis (speed; update with 2011-2013 data)
 - Charter boat pilot-partner with states, SeaPlan, industry
 - Additional engagement into 2015— scope work, review draft products.



Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Progress - Objective I:

Characterize the ecosystem, economy and cultural resources

- Characterize recreational activities
 - E.g., diving, kayaking, wildlife viewing, marine events
 - Engage those communities
 - Need to move forward quickly (this summer)
- Continue characterization of maritime commerce
 - Additional AIS data
 - Engage specific shipping companies, business development interests to characterize very dynamic industry (relates to Compatible Uses goal) — fall 2014 meetings



Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Progress - Objective II:

Support existing restoration and conservation programs

- Subcommittee completed inventory of restoration and conservation opportunities.
- Funding programs applicable to restoration consolidated in one document.
- RPB provide comments on above from each organization by 28 July (documents being sent after today's meeting).
- September Subcommittee meeting: Identify opportunities to strengthen ocean/coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation.



NORTHEAST OCEAN DATA
Maps and data for ocean planning in the northeastern United States

HOME MAPS DATA ABOUT

MARITIME COMMERCE	ENERGY	RECREATION
COMMERCIAL FISHING	AQUACULTURE	FISH & SHELLFISH
MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES	OTHER MARINE LIFE	WATER QUALITY

DATA EXPLORER
Use the Data Explorer to view any dataset or to select a combination of datasets to view on a single map.

MAP OF THE MONTH
Shellfish Management Areas June 2014
Shellfish growing and classification areas in the northeastern states

NEWS
New Interactive Maps of Water Quality in the Northeast June 23, 2014
Video: Guided Tour of Northeast Ocean Data Website and Maps June 12, 2014
New and Updated Data on Shipping Activity and Shellfish Habitat Mar 12, 2014

Upcoming Activities

- **Engagement**
 - Commercial fishing
 - Maritime commerce
 - Recreation: Coastal recreation sites
 - Aquaculture: Regular updates on permits/leased areas
 - Energy & infrastructure: Regular updates on energy permitting/planning; transmission; submarine cables
- **Natural resources**
 - New products: water quality; protected lands; bathymetry
 - Integrate marine life products when ready



Upcoming Activities

- **Supporting needs emerging from regulatory discussions**
 - Data: Eelgrass; coastal wetlands; critical habitat and range maps for protected species
 - Functionality
- **Cultural/Historic Data**
 - Supporting tribes
 - National & State Parks, historic sites and landmarks

Tribal workplan and progress

- Convene tribal work group to:
 - Draft best practices for consultation - present at Nov RPB meeting
 - Identify existing tribal data and priority themes to incorporate into the data portal

General Timeline - 2014

- **June 25** - public workshop to discuss marine life work (habitat/species)
- **June 26** - RPB meeting (status update)
- **Summer**: implementing next steps for projects described above, including targeted/focused engagement
- **Sep/Oct**: Effective decision-making goal-focused workshop
- **Oct**: Public meetings (each state) to review progress + inform November decisions
- **Nov**: RPB meeting to decide on next steps for each goal

Goal: Effective Decision-making

Objectives:

- Enhance inter-agency coordination
- Implement specific actions to enhance public participation
- Incorporate products into existing decision-making
 - data, maps, data portal
- Improve respect for tribal customs and traditions in decision-making
- Improve coordination with local communities in decision-making

Goal: Effective Decision-making

Progress - Objectives:

- I. Enhance inter-agency coordination
 - Augment existing Federal pre-application processes, particularly USACE, NEPA, BOEM
- II. Implement specific measures to enhance public participation
 - Develop guide to public input on offshore wind, sand /gravel mining, offshore aquaculture
 - Identify challenges and best practices/recommendations for improvement
 - Public meetings in Fall key time for development and feedback
- III. Incorporate products into existing decision-making
 - Use of data in scoping, pre-application, early stages of required consultations
 - Regional implementation of national study guidance
 - States' application of federal consistency under CZMA
- IV. Improve respect for tribal customs and traditions in decision-making
 - Tribal work group draft best practices for consultation - present at fall RPB meeting
 - Identify existing tribal data and priority themes to incorporate into the data portal

Goal: Effective Decision-making

- Timing
 - Additional individual agency and stakeholder meetings through summer
 - Public workshops to discuss/review options in early fall
 - Review at public meetings
 - RPB meeting in November to decide on specific options, path forward.

Appendix C

Northeast Regional Planning Body

Options for Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Functions

DRAFT Prepared for June 26, 2014 RPB Discussion and Public Comment

Overview

The Northeast Regional Planning Body (NE RPB) has discussed internally, and received feedback from the public on, options for obtaining appropriately designed input from scientific and other communities with relevant expertise and interest. This document summarizes available scenarios and will assist the NE RPB in deciding how to fulfill the advisory functions.

Legal Guidance

The NE RPB solicited the U.S. Department of Commerce General Counsel (pursuant to the National Ocean Council Handbook with a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration representative as Federal Co-lead) and the National Ocean Council for guidance on these options to ensure appropriate interpretation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The NE RPB consists entirely of federal officials and elected officers of state, local, and tribal governments, and therefore qualifies for a statutory exemption from FACA under the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA). Subcommittees established by and reporting to the NE RPB would not be subject to FACA given that the NE RPB is a government committee and not a single federal agency. The options below reflect this legal guidance.

Technical Advisory Function

The intent is to access expert opinions from a group of government and non-government colleagues on a variety of subjects. Immediate topics will focus on characterizing marine life and habitats, with other topics discussed as needed in the future.

Assumptions

- These groups would include both government and non-government members.
- The general purpose is to provide an appropriate, effective, and efficient means of obtaining technical expertise for Ocean Planning in the Northeast.
- For the protection of the RPB and the planning effort, the advisory function would be designed to comply with legal requirements.

Option 1: Convene expert panel

An expert panel would provide individual opinions on specific topics as they arise. This panel would not meet regularly as a standing body, but rather, individuals with relevant technical expertise would be invited to participate in topical workshops or other public meetings. Their participation and the discussion at such public events would contribute to issues deliberated by the full NE RPB. The workshops would not be designed to arrive at consensus opinions from the attendees. The precise nature and format of public events will be determined by the specific topics discussed. The nimble approach of this option allows for flexibility to involve individuals in particular subjects where expertise is needed to inform NE RPB decisions and provide for public discussion of these subjects, while recognizing the need to bring disciplines together to reflect an ecosystem approach.

An immediate example of this approach in action is the work related to the Healthy Coastal and Ocean Ecosystem goal, particularly the tasks related to characterizing the region's marine life and habitats and assessing approaches to using such information in more complex models. The next step in this work is to convene the June 25, 2014 natural resource workshop immediately prior to the June 26, 2014 NE RPB meeting. This workshop will include focused input from experts in marine mammals, fish, and birds, and will also be facilitated to ensure discussion from all attendees. This input will create an information base that the NE RPB will use when it decides how to move forward with characterizing marine life and habitats. Further opportunities beyond June 25 will include: a discussion at the June 26 NE RPB meeting, periodic updates (e.g., through webinars) to enable additional discussion throughout the coming months, public meetings in fall 2014 to review progress, and other events as needed.

Option 1 would not create a standing technical committee of the NE RPB and there would not be a set roster. Rather, participants would evolve as workshop topics necessitate. All workshop agenda announcements and results would be posted and broadcasted with ample lead time; workshops would be open to the public and provide opportunities for public input.

Pros

- Would be nimble in the ability to plug expertise into relevant discussions and workshops, therefore using resources strategically and efficiently.

Cons

- Does not satisfy desire of some to have standing, formal technical advisory committee.

Option 2: Establish standing Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) would be a subcommittee of the NE RPB with experts in a variety of subjects that will meet regularly and provide advice on process and products to the NE RPB for their deliberation. The NE RPB would select committee members, which could include government and non-government colleagues, and include at least one non-federal member of the NE RPB to serve as a liaison. The TAC would present preliminary

products to the NE RPB for deliberation in public at an NE RPB meeting. The TAC would not be privy to NE RPB documents that were not also disclosed to the public.

Pros

- Creates a standing, formal advisory body to provide NE RPB guidance.
- Institutionalizes support for technical direction of NE RPB.
- Satisfies preference for formal TAC raised by some stakeholders.

Cons

- General timing considerations: would take time to convene formal body initially and for subsequent meetings, resulting in possible delay of the 2016 planning timeline established by the NE RPB.
- Difficult to choose set membership: over the next two years, the NE RPB may request technical input on a variety of topics with a cumulative effect of a large number of members. Reconstituting the group could cause delay.
- Lacks flexibility needed for dynamic planning process over the next 1-2 years.

Stakeholder Advisory Function

The intent is to provide stakeholders with opportunities for meaningful feedback on NE RPB process and products outside of public comment periods during NE RPB meetings.

Assumptions

- There are ongoing efforts by existing stakeholder groups to help communicate information and gather input to inform the planning process and products. The diversity of viewpoints these self-organized groups provide have direct impact on NE RPB member decisions and deliberations. Their input is acknowledged, appreciated and will continue being considered as one of the suite of engagement options.
- The general intent of the NE RPB is to provide appropriate, transparent, legal, effective, and efficient means of obtaining stakeholder input for Ocean Planning in the Northeast.
- Capacity will continue to be a challenge and should be considered in choice of approach.
- A variety of methods are required to meet stakeholder engagement needs and are further articulated in the NE RPB's [Framework for Ocean Planning](#).
- Existing mechanisms for stakeholder input will continue, including:
 - State-specific advisory groups reporting to NE RPB via state member
 - Project-specific outreach and stakeholder input (e.g., through the recreational use characterization effort)
 - Periodic public meetings and workshops
 - Public meetings of the selected option above (re: the technical advisory function)
 - Meetings with individuals

Option 1: Continue with suite of existing stakeholder activities

While continuing with existing stakeholder engagement activities stated in assumptions above and in the [Framework for Ocean Planning](#), this approach would also continue exploring ways to maximize functionality, improve regional dialog, and adapt current practices to future needs (e.g., working to ensure that state advisory bodies are functioning well and possibly convene these bodies periodically for a cross-regional dialog).

Pros

- Continued ability to be nimble to address needs as they arise.
- Maximizes utility of existing groups/functions; addresses “meeting fatigue”.
- Reduces administrative staffing need.

Cons

- Does not satisfy desire of some to have standing, formal stakeholder advisory committee.

Option 2: Establish standing Stakeholder Advisory Body

The Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) would act as a subcommittee that will meet regularly and provide advice to the NE RPB for their deliberation. The NE RPB would select committee members, which could include government and non-government colleagues, and include at least one non-federal member of the RPB to serve as a liaison. The SAB would not be privy to NE RPB documents that were not also disclosed to the public.

Pros

- Creates a formal advisory body providing guidance to NE RPB.
- Meets the need of regional/cross-state discussion.

Cons

- General timing considerations: would take time to convene formal body initially and for subsequent meetings, resulting in possible delay of the 2016 NE RPB planning timeline.
- Difficult to choose set membership: over the next two years, the NE RPB may request input on a variety of topics with a cumulative effect of a large number of members.

Appendix D



June 19, 2014

To the Northeast Regional Planning Body:

Surfrider Foundation appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) regarding options for technical and stakeholder advisory functions. Surfrider Foundation is a global ocean user group that engages a vast volunteer network to protect oceans, waves and beaches through activism, education, research, and conservation. We have a strong presence in New England with regional and local representation in each coastal state, and are comprised of non-consumptive, low impact ocean recreation enthusiasts, such as kayakers, surfers, swimmers, divers, wildlife watchers, sailors, folks who enjoy sitting along the shore, who take action to help protect the ocean, waves and beaches.

Surfrider Foundation commends the RPB for its dynamic and evolving attentions to stakeholder involvement in the public process for regional ocean planning. We have witnessed your public outreach efforts continually improve and we applaud your responsiveness to stakeholder input.

Surfrider Foundation encourages the RPB to continue to develop its outreach strategies with the help of stakeholder groups, to ensure an open and transparent process as well as comprehensive involvement from ocean and coastal user groups. We urge the RPB to develop regional standards for notifying the public about meetings, accommodating public attendance, and receiving and incorporating public and stakeholder comments on a predictable and foreseeable timeline. We further urge the RPB to ensure that any formal advisory board invitations and selection processes be transparent and inclusive.

Recognizing the vital importance of comprehensive, regionally crosscutting, ongoing, meaningful stakeholder involvement in the successful development of a Regional Ocean Plan and the subsequent implementation of that Plan, Surfrider Foundation recommends the formation of two formal advisory bodies, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB), with ad hoc components, such as public workshops organized by experts.

The establishment of a TAC and a SAB would provide ongoing guidance to the RPB while also establishing a formal mechanism for regional stakeholder dialogue. This is a vital function that could help avoid serious conflicts down the road.

Surfrider Foundation recommends that the RPB move forward with a hybrid approach

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to advisory, which we feel would provide the widest swath of expert opinions to help inform ocean planning, without limiting expertise to scientists.

Surfrider Foundation urges you to establish a standing TAC, as a subcommittee of the RPB, consisting of scientists as well as others working with data. The TAC would ensure that the Regional Ocean Plan is built upon the best available data, as well as help to increase the credibility of the ocean planning process with various stakeholders.

The TAC would provide expert guidance throughout the ocean planning process, thereby providing continuity and institutionalizing support for the technical direction of the RPB. The TAC would also provide the opportunity for ongoing crosscutting regional dialogue and information sharing among technical experts and stakeholders necessary to the successful implementation of the Plan.

To address the concern that multiple topics need to be addressed in a limited timeframe, Surfrider Foundation recommends the TAC would assist the RPB by helping to convene expert panels on specific topics as they arise, in order to create an information base that the RPB could use at its discretion.

Surfrider Foundation also urges you to establish a standing SAB, using the same hybrid approach as the TAC, to provide stakeholders with opportunities for meaningful involvement in the public process for Northeast ocean planning.

The SAB could also be a subcommittee of the RPB that consists of a diverse representation from the full spectrum of regional coastal and ocean user groups. The SAB will inform the ocean planning process and provide the opportunity for ongoing and crosscutting regional dialogue and information sharing among a variety of stakeholders, which we feel is necessary to the successful development and implementation of our Regional Ocean Plan.

Surfrider Foundation acknowledges the opportunity for state-based stakeholder dialogue that state advisory committees can provide, and appreciates that state RPB members are seeking advice from ocean users to help inform their participation in regional ocean planning. **We would like these boards to continue conditionally:** if they are feasible to orchestrate alongside formal regional advisory boards and if they formally recognize recreational interests. State-specific bodies do not provide adequate scope and information to serve as the sole mechanism for ensuring stakeholder input in a regional dialogue, nor do existing advisory bodies for state-based ocean plans have the proper orientation to double in a regional advisory capacity. We further recognize that the existing and forming state advisory groups do not adequately represent the full

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spectrum of ocean users, and often fail to formally include certain vital user groups, like recreational interests. Given that in some cases this is a matter of law, whereby state ocean management advisory bodies are mandated with specific advisory functions and user groups, we reassert our request for separate state advisory bodies that are oriented specifically to the regional ocean planning process and not the state ocean planning process, in order to provide for a formal seat for all ocean users and proper focus on regional ocean planning.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. Surfrider Foundation is a proud member of the New England Ocean Action Network, and we look forward to working with the RPB to advance a Northeast Regional Ocean Plan that benefits ocean and coastal ecosystems and all sustainable ocean uses.

Sincerely,

Melissa Gates
Northeast Regional Coordinator
Surfrider Foundation

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Comments on Draft Options

The Technical Advisory Committee should include some experts with expertise in social sciences (including ecological economics). Even though many technical panels include natural resource economics (cost benefit analysis; economic multiplier effect; etc), they ignore the value of ecosystem services and natural capital that underlie our socioeconomic system. The Resilience Alliance has included a number of specialists in ecological economics that might be considered.

When I headed a Fisheries & Aquaculture Working Group for the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, the elected officials and state/federal managers wanted to know the impacts of the economic multiplier effect (ratio of investment to direct, indirect and induced economic benefits) for commercial fishing and saltwater angling. Our WG received support from an economist to develop these indicators by County for all of the states in New England. Since ocean climate change (warming temperatures and increased acidity) and eutrophication effect the productive capacity of essential fish habitat in state/federal jurisdictional waters, we need some type of economic tools to evaluate the importance of ecosystem services and natural capital to support fisheries management and the other compatible uses of the ocean being considered by the NE RPB SAP. This will be especially important as we move towards an Ecosystems-based Management Approach which utilizes adaptive management to balanced science/monitoring information to policy concerns of interest to planners/managers at the tribal/federal/state levels. On the science side we often face the challenge of being data rich, but information poor. On the policy side there is a need for science translation and revisions of the plans if they are not working in the real world.

General Comments on Process

There are numerous ocean planning and management dialogs going on simultaneously from local endeavors (Cape Cod Commission Clean Water Act section 208 waterbed planning report) to state projects (Coastal Erosion Commission report) to the NEFMC/NOAA Fisheries Omnibus Habitat Amendment to the federal/state/tribal NE RPB SAP. Each of these planning, permitting and regulatory enforcement endeavors is carried out by separate agencies under different legislative mandates which creates a nightmare for town/county governments which are focused on protecting the environment, while promoting compatible uses amongst diverse constituents of public resources and bottomlands that support our socioeconomic systems/future sustainability (triple bottom line). The CC&I Group submitted these comments to NOAA OCRM Office for the Ma. CZM section 312 review under the CZMA. We need a more holistic planning process that promotes cost effective solutions at the grassroots level where the public will have to pay for these unfunded government mandates. It appears very unlikely that Cape Cod will receive significant state/federal grants for wastewater mitigation (\$3-6 billion over the next 20-30 years) or climate adaptation/resilience at the town/county level to ameliorate relative sea level rise and floods/coastal erosion from extreme weather events.

There needs to be more financial reality in the ocean planning and management dialog on the consequences to the public of financing these solutions. I am sure that you experience resource constraints (people and \$) from the Department of Commerce in adequately supporting the NE RPB SAP process. The Cape Cod & the Islands Group receives no financial support from the national Sierra Club or Massachusetts Chapter and we are not eligible for Club Activist Team grants. Thus we have first hand experience in the constraints imposed on unfunded, volunteer activists in protecting wild places, wild things in the marine environment. Most of the Sierra Club Chapter grant funds in New England support the Sierra

Club's Beyond Coal Climate Change campaigns (which includes ocean wind energy). When I was the NMFS Recreational Fisheries Coordinator in the Northeast many of the saltwater angling organizations complained that they lacked the staff and financial resources to compete with the mainstream marine ENGOs or business sector interests (which partly explains why we are losing our working waterfronts in New England).

Dr. David Dow
Treasurer, Cape Cod & the Islands Group, Sierra Club



June 23, 2014

Submitted electronically to klund@northeastoceancouncil.org

Re: Options for Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Functions

Dear Northeast Regional Planning Body:

The New England Ocean Action Network (NEOAN) is pleased to provide comments to the Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) regarding its options for technical and stakeholder advisory functions. NEOAN is a diverse group of ocean users and stakeholders that was created in 2011 to ensure that all ocean user groups have the opportunity to be fully involved in the development of a Regional Ocean Plan in New England, a component we believe is essential to the successful implementation of the goals and priorities envisioned by the *National Ocean Policy*¹ and the *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*². NEOAN continues to strongly support the development of a comprehensive, ecosystem-based regional ocean plan as an essential tool for ensuring that Northeast decision-makers have the knowledge they need to make sound, stakeholder-informed decisions to keep our ocean, coasts, and economies healthy and strong.

NEOAN thanks the RPB for its public outreach and responsiveness to stakeholder feedback in this process thus far, evidenced by the suite of public/individual meetings, improved outreach tools, and data collection from a variety of sources within New England. NEOAN would also like to commend the members of the RPB for their demonstrated willingness to respond to stakeholder feedback on the draft goals and ocean planning framework during the RPB's January 22-23, 2014 meeting.

Pursuant to the findings of the U.S. Department of Commerce General Counsel, as outlined in the options paper, subcommittees established by and reporting to the NE RPB would not be subject to FACA, given that the NE RPB is a government committee and not a single federal agency. This letter addresses the two options that reflect this legal guidance presented by the RPB for technical and stakeholder advisory functions found in the document released by the RPB to the public Friday, June 6, 2014, and proposes a hybrid approach that combines both options and creates formal advisory bodies that are complemented by additional stakeholder and science outreach, which can be tailored to

¹ Executive Order 13547, Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts and the Great Lakes. Fed. Reg. 43023. Thursday, July 22, 2010.

² White House Council on Environmental Quality, Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (July 19, 2010), available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF_FinalRecs.pdf.

particular issues and/or geographic regions. Combining the options will ensure the successful development and implementation of a Regional Ocean Plan for New England.

Recognizing the vital importance of comprehensive, ongoing, meaningful stakeholder involvement in the successful development of a Regional Ocean Plan and the subsequent implementation of that Plan, NEOAN respectfully refers the RPB to the detailed recommendations submitted to the executive committee of the RPB by NEOAN on Friday, June 13, 2013, and we reassert our recommendations for the RPB to establish two formal bodies to obtain input from stakeholder communities with relevant expertise and interest in the ocean planning process. We will refer to these entities as you have in the options paper: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB).

The establishment of a TAC and a SAB will not only provide much needed and ongoing guidance to the RPB but will also provide a formal mechanism for continuous cross sectoral regional dialogue about ocean planning- a component that NEOAN believes is imperative to the success of the planning process and could help avoid serious conflicts down the road. NEOAN recommends that the TAC and SAB be formed and operate in a manner that provides the opportunity for meaningful interaction and information exchange between the two bodies. A construct that fosters cooperation between these two bodies would improve our collective understanding of the ocean and coastal environment in New England and greatly enhance the information supporting the RPBs decisions.

We provide the following comments regarding the options:

Technical Advisory Function:

NEOAN recommends that in lieu of choosing one option over the other as outlined in the document, that the RPB move forward with a hybrid approach to access expert opinion on a variety of subjects in the ocean planning process. Therefore, NEOAN proposes that the NE RPB:

Establish a standing Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) as a subcommittee of the NE RPB, consisting of scientists from academic and government institutions across New England, as well as individuals or representatives of certain entities who have particular expertise in experiential, local or traditional knowledge. The TAC will ensure that the Regional Ocean Plan is built upon the best available scientific data and understanding of New England's ocean, as well as help to increase the credibility of the ocean planning process with the public and various stakeholders.

As outlined in the options paper the TAC would provide expert guidance throughout the ocean planning process, thereby providing continuity and institutionalizing support for the technical direction of the NE RPB. The TAC would also provide the opportunity for ongoing crosscutting regional dialogue and information sharing among technical experts and stakeholders necessary to the successful implementation of the Plan.

NEOAN recognizes that the NE RPB may request technical input on a variety of topics and needs to remain flexible and sensitive to time constraints. To address that concern the TAC would assist the RPB by helping to:

Convene expert panels on specific topics as they arise to create an information base and specific proposals that the NE RPB could use when it decides how to move forward on a variety of topics. This would provide the RPB with the flexibility necessary to involve individuals in particular subjects where expertise is needed. NEOAN looks forward to the June 25, 2014, natural resources workshop and beyond to assess the outcomes and utility of this approach.

Stakeholder Advisory Function:

NEOAN recommends that in lieu of choosing one option over the other as outlined in the document, that the RPB move forward with a hybrid approach to provide stakeholders with opportunities for meaningful involvement in the NE RPB process and thereby proposes the NE RPB:

Establish a standing Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB) – as a subcommittee of the RPB that consists of a diverse representation from the range of traditional, current and nascent ocean user groups in New England. The SAB will inform the ocean planning process and provide the opportunity for ongoing crosscutting regional dialogue and information sharing among a variety of stakeholders necessary to the successful development and implementation of our Regional Ocean Plan. We further recommend making the process for initial SAB member selection transparent and open.

This formal advisory body should be complemented by additional stakeholder and science outreach, which can be tailored to particular issues and/or geographic regions. NEOAN recommends that the NE RPB establish the SAB in addition to the continuation of ongoing efforts outlined in the options paper to engage stakeholders in the ocean planning process including:

State- specific advisory groups: We appreciate the opportunity for stakeholder dialogue that state advisory committees can provide, and appreciate that state RPB members are seeking advice from ocean users in their states. We would like these boards to continue but we do not believe that state-specific bodies provide adequate scope and information for ensuring stakeholder input in this regional dialogue. We further recognize that the existing and forming state advisory groups do not adequately represent the full spectrum of ocean uses and request that all existing state advisory groups open advisory participation to all interested ocean uses and users.

To ensure a comprehensive and robust stakeholder engagement process NEOAN recommends that in addition to the SAB and the state advisory groups the RPB continue the additional ongoing efforts outlined in the paper including:

Project- specific outreach and stakeholder input

Periodic public meetings and workshops

Project specific public meetings

Meetings with Individuals

NEOAN encourages the RPB to continue to develop its outreach strategies with stakeholder groups to ensure an open and transparent process and comprehensive involvement from the public and diverse ocean user groups. The RPB should develop regional standards for notifying the public about meetings, accommodating public attendance, and receiving and incorporating public and stakeholder comments on a predictable and foreseeable timeline.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://newenglandoceanaction.org/> to learn more about the New England Ocean Action Network and we look forward to working with you to advance a Regional Ocean Plan for New England that benefits ocean and coastal ecosystems and all sustainable ocean uses.

Sincerely,
NEOAN

Priscilla Brooks, PhD
Vice President and Director of Ocean Conservation
Conservation Law Foundation
Boston, Massachusetts

Wendy W. Lull
President
Seacoast Science Center
Rye, New Hampshire

Megan Amsler
Executive Director
Cape & Island Self-Reliance
Cataumet, Massachusetts

Richard Delaney
President and C.E.O.
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Provincetown, Massachusetts

Brianne D. Callahan
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Watertown, Massachusetts

Meghan Jeans
Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Programs
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Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Eugenia Marks
Senior Director of Policy
Audubon Society of Rhode Island
Smithfield, Rhode Island

Chris Hike
Program Manager- Climate Adaptation Program
National Wildlife Federation
Montpelier, Vermont

Jamie Rhodes
State Director
Clean Water Action - Rhode Island
Providence, Rhode Island



June 23, 2014

Dear Northeast Regional Planning Body:

The Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA) is an industry based non-profit which identifies and fosters ways to restore the fisheries of the Gulf of Maine and sustain Maine's historic fishing communities for future generations. Established and run by Maine community-based fishermen, MCFA works to enhance the ecological and financial sustainability of the fishery through balancing the needs of the current generation of fishermen with the long-term environmental restoration of the Gulf of Maine. With members living in Maine communities ranging from Kittery to Mount Desert Island, our fishermen represent diverse fishing practices, but they have come together to form a cohesive voice as stewards of the Gulf of Maine to weigh in on important management issues facing the Maine fishermen.

Maine Coast Fishermen's Association is pleased to provide comments to the Northeast Regional Planning Body (NE RPB) regarding its options for technical and stakeholder advisory functions. Maine Coast Fishermen's Association represents groundfish fishermen who are active ocean users invested in rebuilding the natural resources of the ocean. Thus, despite some concerns about the loss of fishing grounds to new and emerging industry, MCFA continues to participate in the development of a regional ocean plan to ensure that fishermen have a voice in developing a sustainable future for New England's ocean, coasts and the communities that depend on them.

This letter addresses the two options that reflect this legal guidance presented by the RPB for technical and stakeholder advisory functions found in the document released by the RPB to the public Friday, June 6, 2014, and proposes a hybrid approach that combines both options and creates formal advisory bodies that are complemented by additional stakeholder and science outreach, which can be tailored to particular issues and/or geographic regions. Combining the options will ensure the successful development and implementation of a Regional Ocean Plan for New England.

These would be a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB).

The establishment of a TAC and a SAB will provide much needed and ongoing guidance to the RPB. MCFA recommends that the TAC and SAB be formed and operate in a manner that provide the opportunity for meaningful interaction and information exchange between the two bodies but also recognizes those who are not able to dedicate time to participate through these committees due to their need to be on the water.

We provide the following comments regarding the options:

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB):

MCFA recommends that instead of choosing one option over the other as outlined in the document, that the RPB move forward with a hybrid approach to access expert opinion on a variety of ocean planning subjects. Therefore, MCFA proposes that the NE RPB establish a standing Technical Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Body.

- Establish a standing Technical Advisory Committee with the intent to access expert opinions from a group of government and non-government colleagues from academic and government institutions throughout New England on a variety of ocean planning subjects. This exists in fisheries management in the form of a Science and Statistical Committee which vets all research and data being used in the process but also can analyze data questions and provide answers for those developing policy. The TAC will ensure that the Regional Ocean Plan is built upon the best available data and understanding of New England's ocean. In addition to a standing committee, we believe it would be important to have the ability to convene expert panels on specific topics as they arise to create an information base and specific proposals that the NE RBP could use when it decides how to move forward on a variety of topics.
- Establish a standing Stakeholder Advisory Body (SAB), a subcommittee of the RPB that consists of a diverse representation from the range of traditional, current and nascent ocean user groups in New England. The SAB will inform the ocean planning process and provide the opportunity for ongoing crosscutting regional dialogue and information sharing among a variety of stakeholders necessary to the successful development and implementation of our Regional Ocean Plan.

This formal advisory body should be complemented by additional stakeholder and science outreach, which can be tailored to particular issues and/or geographic regions.

To ensure a comprehensive and robust stakeholder engagement process, we would suggest finding funding to pay for those who sit on the SAB to attend meetings with a stipend for meals and travel. If additional stipends can be attained for their time spent in meetings that would help ensure that stakeholders feel that they can miss a day of work and be compensated while participating in this process.

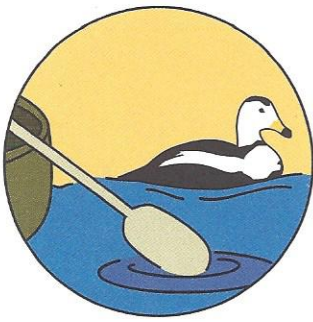
State specific advisory groups: We appreciate the opportunity for stakeholder dialogue that state advisory committees can provide, and appreciate that state RPB members are seeking advice from ocean users in their states. We would like these boards to continue and also believe that there could be a more official role for such groups to participate in the process. These groups allow individuals who are involved in numerous marine issues to be updated on what is taking place in the NE RPB and get their input heard even if they are not able to attend meetings or sit on additional committees.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to working with you to advance a Regional Ocean Plan for New England that benefits not only the ocean, but also the coastal communities and economies that depend on it. Maine fishermen work to sustain struggling coastal communities by continuing to responsibly fish, and it is essential that a Regional Ocean Plan to protect our ocean and still allow groundfish fishermen to earn a living.

Sincerely,



Ben Martens
Executive Director



Ocean River
INSTITUTE

Protecting the Commons

"All at last return
to the sea—to Oceanus,
the ocean river, like the
ever-flowing stream of
time, the beginning
and the end."

— Rachel Carson,
The Sea Around Us

June 23, 2014

Dear NE Regional Ocean Planning Board,

My fellow colleagues on the North East Ocean Action Network (NEOAN) correctly point out that an advisory subcommittee to the NE RPB would not be subject to FACA, given that the NE RPB is a government committee and not a single federal agency. I'd like to explain why I differ from my NEOAN colleagues in the belief that an advisory subcommittee would not work for the reason that RPB's are government committees of really epic proportions complete with tribal nations and more than a few nongovernment participants. More frustrating than attempting to herd a clowder of cats is to be a member of a council advising cats. I've learned this the hard way.

I am a member of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council. This advisory council works very well with the Superintendent coordinating communications between advisors and Sanctuary staff. Four meetings a year are full of presentations, reports and discussions. Reports at the last meeting were on the voyage of the refurbished whaling ship Charles W. Morgan, wildlife surveying in the Sanctuary with a borrowed drone, and a report on how fishermen interact with a few hundred windmills off the south coast of Great Britain.

I am also a member of the Boston Harbor Islands National Park Advisory Council. This advisory council is composed of seven interest groups including municipalities, conservation, and Native American tribal nations. When one or two interest groups needed to have more than 3 representatives, all seven interest groups were increased to 4 resulting in a 28 member advisory council. An advisory council should be a meritocracy based on the quality of advice not an adversarial democracy where voting shares are parsed out to interest groups. The Advisors have been given a mistaken sense of power wielding to direct the NPS, as if the 100 year old needs it.

On the Stellwagen Bank AC there is competition to serve on the council, no vacant seats. Not so the Boston Harbor Islands AC. This AC has gone from 28 to 14 members, sort of. Some of those 14 continue to serve because the NPS has yet to appoint successors. Three of the 14 are serving before receiving formal recognition to serve as council members. Fortunately, they need only vote on who is chair and vice chair. This AC like the Stellwagen Bank AC expects the Superintendent to bring to their attention projects and programs benefitting from their advice.

However the Boston Harbor Islands AC fails because this park is not an agency but a committee of "Owners 11." The park is governed by a 13 member Partnership. Two seats are held by members of the Advisory Council, appointed by the NPS. The rest of the Partners are island owners. The NPS is just one and owns nearly no land in the park. For this park all the action and projects of interest are in the interaction of the various island owners. To participate in the decision-making, one must be more active than attending quarterly AC meetings. AC meetings rarely include reports on what's happening in the work of the park. Instead of debriefing on decisions being made, the Superintendent calls on the faithful few attending to go out and bring friends and neighbors to serve on the Advisory Council. Much attention is paid to the quantity of people in the room, number of empty seats, instead of the quality of advice. This discourages participation.

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Regional Planning Boards are even bigger, more complex committees than is the Boston Harbor Islands park. All the more reason not to get mired in technical and stakeholder advisory groups. The most interesting work of the RPB is in the interstitial spaces between groups, for example at the RI meeting dialogue between the NMFS and the Mashpee. The greatest challenge for the RPG is for groups with very different ways of doing business to work successfully together. It takes time to learn each other's perspective and practices. These multi-meeting processes take much time that cannot be sped up by advice from stakeholders or technicians sitting off on councils. Each group participating in RPBs has its own technical competencies and specified ways for meaningful and appropriate stakeholder involvement. After all, the decision-making buck stops and responsibility rests with each autonomous group (agency, tribal group, ngo) and not with a regional group of planners and stakeholders. Further, a disrespectful, overly directive AC could offend an RPB member resulting in the lost of a member opting out.

The NE-RPB is path-breaking open meetings to foster ongoing planning work between diverse entities who have never before worked together. This is not the time to layer on hierarchical representative advisory groups. I don't see how this could work. For example if Commerce, the Coast Guard and the Navy were collaborating on planning ocean transport routes would this process or the resulting agreements be reviewed by the RPB Advisory Council?

Would not members of "the two bodies" (Technical and Stakeholder) improve their collective understanding of the ocean and coastal environment in New England and greatly enhance the information supporting the RPBs decisions by participating directly in the sausage-making of meetings between RPB participants? Must those dialogues be paused to be vetted with an Advisory Council before reaching agreements?

That said, Massachusetts ocean planners have an advisory group that I am told works well. State appears to be the largest feasible scale for an ocean advisory group. Perhaps ACs are not for all states. I think this state excels because it is a more urban state where representative governance is well understood. A less urban state, one more familiar with town meeting style governance, might forgo a formal council because the actors already know who to talk to about what and don't need representation.

Finally, I prefer the Northeast Ocean Action Network (NEOAN) to RPB Advisory Councils precisely because it is independent of government. NEOAN is more an alliance, a loose affiliation, than a council. Individuals may participate in NEOAN issues without committing their employer or interest group to specific actions. Being separate enables NEOAN to be a more publicly legitimate watch dog of the RPB. An RPB Advisory Council would have government holding fiscal leash, membership appointments and meeting-calendar collar. That dog can't hunt; NEOAN can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Moir', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rob Moir