



New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council

UPDATE ON COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

December 10, 2007

The New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act established the Council to conserve, maintain, and restore New York's coastal ecosystems through the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM).

The Council is charged with charting a course for New York State to achieve healthy, productive, and resilient coastal ecosystems by coordinating State agencies and programs in implementing EBM. This course will be laid out in a report required by the Act to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by November 2008.

The following progress report is the second edition in a series of newsletter-style updates aimed at informing New York State's coastal constituents of the Council's accomplishments and engaging all interested stakeholders in developing a visionary approach to EBM in New York State.

Forming Strong Council Infrastructure and Partnerships

The Council held its first meeting, chaired by Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis, on September 19, 2007 in Albany. At this meeting, the Council adopted the 15 recommendations in the Staff Report to the Council, titled *Transitioning the Ocean and Great Lakes to a Sustainable Future: Implementation of Ecosystem-based Management in New York State* (available online at <http://www.nyoglecc.org/>) and chartered four advisory/working groups to the Council. At the meeting, the Honorable Leon Panetta, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Co-Chair, addressed the Council and lauded New York State for its leadership in coastal conservation and the visionary work of the Council in implementing ecosystem-based management.

- ***Science Advisory Group.*** The Science Advisory Group to the Council has been constituted, and their first meeting was held on November 27, 2007 in Albany.
- ***Ocean and Great Lakes Working Groups.*** Representatives of the nine Council agencies

have been identified for each working group. It is anticipated that the working groups will meet next month to initiate the work identified in their respective charters.

- ***Partnerships with Regional Programs.*** Council Executive Director George Stafford has traveled to a number of regional programs throughout the State, including the Long Island Sound Study Management Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee, the Hudson River Estuary Program Advisory Committee, and the New York State Association of Regional Councils, to forge partnerships between the Council and these important place-based programs.

Integrating EBM into the State Agencies

The nine agencies represented on the Council have initiated work to integrate EBM into their programs that affect the health of coastal ecosystems.

- ***EBM Implementation Projects.*** The Council agencies are undertaking a variety of implementation projects to pilot different EBM approaches (See section III.D in the September 2007 Staff Report to the Council for details).
- ***EBM Guidelines.*** Council agencies are developing guidelines to incorporate EBM principles into key agency programs. In addition, Council staff are obtaining consultant services to coordinate the development of EBM guidelines.

Taking Action in Demonstration Projects

In addition to the restoration and implementation projects reported in the last newsletter, work in the Council's demonstration areas has focused on engaging stakeholders in EBM planning for the region.

- ***Great South Bay, Long Island.*** A series of stakeholder workshops was held this Fall to identify the community's priorities for improving the Great South Bay ecosystem and gather input on The Nature Conservancy's proposed goals and objectives outlined in a document titled *Summary of Progress to Date* (available online at <http://www.estuary.cog.ny.us/>).
- ***Sandy Creeks Watershed, Lake Ontario.*** Stakeholder workshops are complete and community priorities identified through this process are currently being integrated into the Draft Sandy Creeks EBM Strategy, planned for release early next year.

Increasing Access to Data through the Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas

Key milestones achieved this Fall in developing a New York Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas include:

- ***Beta Testing.*** Installation of the web infrastructure needed to make the Atlas accessible to the public and decision makers (internet connectivity, servers, and host) is scheduled for later this month. Beta testing of the Atlas will commence about a month after the web infrastructure is in place.
- ***Expanding the Database.*** Through a new partnership with NOAA, the Council now has a funding mechanism in place to start data collection on the top priority gaps identified in the database. An additional 200 existing datasets have been added to the Atlas database, increasing the total to over 400 data sets that will be immediately accessible to the public when the Atlas is launched. Planning has commenced to hold a workshop to identify priority data needs in Spring 2008.

Establishing Science Priorities in the Research and Monitoring Agenda

The Council has assembled a team of 17 top scientists, co-chaired by Dr. David Conover at the State University of New York (SUNY) Stony Brook and Dr. Greg Boyer at SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, with expertise in physical, biological, chemical, economic, and social science and NYS's ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems to guide the development of the Research and Monitoring Agenda. At their first meeting last month, the Science Advisory Group (SAG) strategized on how to most effectively apply science to management of New York State's coast. In order to ensure that the SAG's work builds on previous efforts and remains focused on management needs, SUNY has compiled a summary report of research and monitoring priorities currently identified by the Council agencies and regional programs.

Engaging New York State's Coastal Constituents

The Council is encouraging public participation at Council meetings by sending announcements to an email list-serve of over a thousand members and encouraging constituents to interact with the Council during public comment periods. A Stakeholder Advisory Group will be formed early in 2008 to provide more extensive input on the Council's work. In addition to these ongoing efforts, a series of public dialogues are being planned for next summer to gather stakeholder input on a draft of the Council's report to the Governor and Legislature.



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**MEMBERSHIP OF THE
SCIENCE ADVISORY GROUP
TO THE COUNCIL**

Co- Chair: David Conover, SUNY Stony Brook

Co- Chair: Greg Boyer, SUNY ESF

Henry Bokuniewicz, SUNY Stony Brook

Robert Cerrato, SUNY Stony Brook

Jon Conrad, Cornell University

Stuart Findlay, Institute of Ecosystem Studies

Karin Limburg, SUNY ESF

Thomas Noji, NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Dennis Suszkowski, Hudson River Foundation

Larry Swanson, SUNY Stony Brook

Joe Atkinson, SUNY Buffalo

Mark Bain, Cornell University

Art DeGaetano, Cornell University

Barbara Knuth, Cornell University

Joe Makarewicz, SUNY Brockport

Jack Manno, SUNY ESF

Ed Mills, Cornell University