



**Gulf of Maine
Council on the
Marine Environment**

Industry Engagement with the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

Executive Summary

For the Final Report
to
The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

by

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Executive Summary

The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (the Council) recently released their 5-year strategic action plan (*Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment Action Plan 2007-2012*) outlining the Council's priorities and goals for maintaining and enhancing environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine and promoting sustainable resource use. Under Goal 3 of the Action Plan, the Council aims to ensure that Gulf of Maine coastal communities are vibrant and have marine dependent industries that are healthy and globally competitive. An integral aspect in achieving this goal is to encourage support from industry representatives on implementing the Council's Action Plan for sustainable resource use. The subsequent report details MRAG Americas' efforts to investigate opportunities for industry involvement with the Council and to gauge the interest of stakeholders in forging relationships with the Gulf of Maine Council. It should be noted that "industry" in this context refers to the subset of businesses the Council has identified: wild fisheries (commercial and recreational), aquaculture (finfish and shellfish), tourism, renewable energy generation (tidal, wave and wind), and transportation (shipping, ferries, etc.).

Our investigations on industry engagement were carried out in the following three segments, each segment is discussed further below a discussion of recommendations provided at the end:

1. Interviews with Gulf of Maine Councilors to understand how the Council works, what individual Council members perceive as the most important issues facing marine industries and what they feel could be done to better engage industry. Information gathered from these interviews (along with other sources) was used to develop a PowerPoint delivered at the consultation meetings;
2. Surveys of and internet research about organizations similar to the Council to investigate the success of different methods of engaging industries, gather ideas for potential benefits of engagement and learn about incentives that resonate with the industry; and
3. Industry consultations to learn about the needs and wants of industry stakeholders and to discuss interest and opportunities for participation with the Council. These consultations took the shape of in-person consultation meetings, web forum events and one-on-one phone calls.

On the whole, this project provided a unique opportunity to consult stakeholders regarding their concerns as they relate to the Gulf of Maine and their knowledge of the Council along with their overall interest of participating and communicating with organizations. MRAG Americas was able to develop some sound recommendations that will aid the Council in this endeavor, though the project faced certain obstacles. Firstly, the timeline of the project was limited with the majority of the interviews and consultations occurring during the summer, the busiest season for Gulf of Maine industries; secondly, the very goal of the project, to engage industry, served as its foremost obstacle. We found it difficult to reach many stakeholders, as they were skeptical of involvement, not convinced that the Council's activities would have a direct affect on their livelihood and did not see the immediate value in having their voices heard. The subsequent sections of this summary outline our efforts over the course of the project and summarize recommendations for the Council on how to proceed if they should chose to pursue industry engagement.

Gulf of Maine Councilor Interviews

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the how the Council operates and its mission, goals, projects and relevance in the greater GOM, we conducted informal interviews with eight members of the Council. Interview questions were geared at providing information on the Council's structure and function, how and why the Council came into development, the need that was satisfied, how the Council's role has/hasn't changed, industry related questions regarding the potential benefits for both the Council and industry, and issues that are relevant to Gulf of Maine industries.

Interviews revealed that industries appeared to have little to no knowledge of the Council, their mission, programs or activities. It would be beneficial for the Council to consider investigating opportunities to increase their visibility to industry members and attract their involvement. As such, the Council may choose to serve as a forum for the discussion of issues facing industry up and down the Coast or utilize incentives to entice industry groups to participate in the Council. The Council has traditionally been scientific and environmentally based and, if industry involvement remains a priority, the Council should consider adjusting to accommodate the economic and societal needs of coastal communities. No matter what route the Council chooses on their quest to engage industry, unarguably the larger challenge will be the buy-in, the mechanism that keeps them interested. Both recognition for industry efforts and a feedback mechanism should be in place, so that active participants can see the results of their efforts. The Council must demonstrate to industry the value of their time and opinions. The success of engagement will be measured by maintaining involvement. In general, people stay involved when the issues are relevant. The Council would need to consider the needs of the coastal industries and pursue activities relating to their needs.

Similar Organization Surveys and Research

MRAG Americas interviewed and surveyed key personnel from nine organizations similar in scope and mission to the Gulf of Maine Council, and with some level of industry involvement. The interviews were tailored to gather information that would highlight an organization's successes and failures in their efforts to engage industry stakeholders; these lessons learned will be useful to the Council as they develop activities related to engaging the industry and furthering the Action Plan.

Organizations that have been successful with industry engagement, measured by sustained involvement, bring industry in from the beginning, identify the issues important to the industries involved, develop programs and other methods to address those issues (involving industry in the process), and have a feedback mechanism for industry to see the results of their efforts. In most cases, the successful organizations have simplified their efforts by addressing a few key issues involving a small subset of industry sectors and organizations. The Council may encounter challenges if they choose to engage all of the identified coastal and marine industries as there will likely be disparate priorities among them. Unsuccessful organizations have typically required a financial contribution from industry or not provided rewards for participation.

In addition, MRAG Americas conducted internet research on selected environmentally driven, industry-related organizations. These organizations differ from the Gulf of Maine Council in that they are first and foremost organized around their industry members, but also have a focus on the environment. The impetus behind this research was to determine what these organizations advertise as benefits of membership, with potential application to the Gulf of Maine Council. A list of benefits and services selected by MRAG Americas that the Council could potentially offer to industry are included in the Conclusions and Recommendations. We feel that the recommended services would resonate the most with industry and further the Council's goal of implementing the Action Plan.

Industry Consultations

Following the Council member interviews, similar organization interviews and the industry organization research, MRAG Americas conducted in-person industry consultations. A PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Council's organization and Action Plan, along with benefits for industry involvement and potential avenues to pursue the involvement was delivered to invited industry members at three meetings. Two consultation meetings were held in Canada (Yarmouth, NS and St. Andrews, NB) and one in the United States (Rye, NH). MRAG Americas made a concerted effort to invite industry members to participate in the consultations; advertisements and meeting announcements were posted in industry related publications, distributed over email on list serves and posted on both the MRAG and the Council websites. Additionally, several dozen industry representatives were personally contacted and invited to the

meetings. Unfortunately participation was not as we had hoped for and industry representation was limited, but the ensuing discussions were productive nonetheless. Following the consultations, two live web forum events were held, one during the day and one in the evening, to further explore topics that were discussed during the meetings. Only a handful of participants signed up to use the web forum, and unfortunately no one outside of MRAG Americas logged on during the live discussions or made any posts in response to our queries and comments. Despite the apparent lack of interest in our web-forum discussions, MRAG Americas believes that web forums could be useful for engaging industry in other settings, though it should not be used as a point of first contact. Web forums might be an appropriate follow-up to panel discussions or summits where industry members are already engaged and interested.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the course of the consultations and related discussions that evolved during this project, it became apparent that there are two avenues that the Council can follow to engage industry: for the Council to serve as a resource for industry by acting as a coordination body and center for communication among industry and other groups in the region, or actively seek industry involvement in the Council by adjusting aspects of Council operations. It is important to recognize that these options are not mutually exclusive. The activities performed under the first option will aid in gaining the respect and trust of industry, and form the foundation for performing tasks related to the second option, should the Council choose to pursue it. Given that the Council is relatively unknown among industry and coastal communities groups, the primary goal of the Council should be to increase its visibility. There are undoubtedly benefits for both the Council and industries should they forge a relationship, but it will be important for the Council to decide specifically which benefits they want to provide to industry members and work to achieve those successfully. Industry tends to hesitate when approached for involvement as many are largely overcommitted and will need to see the immediate value of involvement with the Council. Engagement is likely to be more successful if the Council is deliberate in their path and has clear goals in mind that have been thoroughly planned out.

Our recommendations presented here are based on the culmination of information collected during the course of this project, and not solely from the sub-sample of industry contacts we consulted with. They are provided below and are three-fold. Firstly, we recommend specific benefits that the Council could choose to provide that might entice industry to engage in Council programs. Secondly, we list out specific recommendations for actions the Council could take to increase coordination and communication and build their visibility within the Gulf of Maine region. Thirdly, we recommend actions for the Council should they choose to actively engage with industry. The recommendations provided in our full report are tiered with broad actions that could be taken and more particular actions aimed at specific campaigns. This executive summary is limited to the first tier of recommendations. These include more overarching items that the Council should consider in order to initiate the efforts necessary to involve industry. These efforts will lay the tracks for open communication that will be essential between the Council and various industry groups, as well as among industry groups. In every instance, when embarking on a new endeavor or project, the Council will need to effectively communicate with the industry and others what their intended outcome of each project is, and there must be follow through for industry members to take the Council's intentions as serious. Only with clear goals established up front will the Council's efforts be appropriately guided. The Council may want to initiate their efforts with a focused approach aimed at a subset of industries, and then broaden from there.

Potential Council Services for Industry

We have reviewed a number of other organizations with similarities to the Council. Some of these have been able to successfully engage industry by providing a service, either through regulatory authority or providing benefits to membership. Based on some successful tactics employed elsewhere, we provide a list of benefits that the Council could potentially offer to industry members.

1. Searchable web-based Environmental (or other) Best Practices Database.

2. Programs and activities to translate management such as legislative and regulatory updates, technical workshops, seminars and/or luncheons designed to keep industry abreast of regulatory and policy issues and emerging practices and trends.
3. Code of Conduct and Ethics created with input from the industry.
4. Use of Council-sponsored logo and affiliation materials; exclusive marketing opportunities.
5. Small grants for industry organizations.
6. Local product promotion (for economic and environmental purposes).

Recommendations for Coordination and Communication

This section of recommendations is perhaps the most important for the Gulf of Maine Council. These are actions that would help build visibility and awareness and be beneficial for the Council to implement even if they choose to not directly involve industry in Council programs. During the course of the project, we repeatedly addressed issues of importance to the different industries. The list was long and included marine pollution, water quality, native issues, governance, air quality, climate change, environmental impacts of whale watching, open ocean aquaculture, species-at-risk, coastal planning, the creation of LNG terminals, data use and the translation of science and management, land development pressure/decrease in public access and the costs of environmental compliance. Clearly the Council could not effectively address all these issues, and it will be important to further acknowledge the issues which are most prominent across sectors (as chosen by the Council to work with) and focus future efforts on those.

Our broad recommendations for the Council to pursue for increasing communications between groups and coordination of efforts in the Gulf of Maine include:

1. *Act as a Convener* – Given their position and the original goals of the Council, it has an opportunity to serve coastal communities by acting as a convener to bring together various user groups on common issues. The Council could host summit meetings on specific issues as well as a Coordination Summit of similar organizations within the Gulf of Maine and create a Gulf of Maine Directory of Marine Organizations.
2. *Increase the Council's Profile and Improve Dialogue* – There should be a concerted effort on the Council's part to introduce themselves to industries and coastal communities by attending meetings and events of industry groups. The Council should consider developing an informational booth to provide information at such meetings and events. The preparation of an events calendar could also prove useful for the Council and other organizations and communities..
3. *Prepare Educational Materials* – The Council should develop some educational materials and launch an outreach campaign directed at the appropriate audience of coastal community citizens and industry members. These should include printed materials, often requested by industry members, and other promotional items. To assess the effectiveness of such materials and outreach programs, it would be useful to develop metrics of success that would evaluate results at yearly intervals. In this manner, outreach methods could evolve along with the demand for information.
4. *Translation of Science* – Given the Council's unique position and their ability to build transboundary dialogues and relationships, they are in a prime position to promote science and management aimed at conserving the resources of the Gulf of Maine. There is a need to translate management on the whole and for a better translation of science and methods into appropriate management. Methods to achieve this should be further explored on the whole.

Recommendations Concerning Industry Engagement

We provide additional recommendations, should the Council choose to pursue more direct industry involvement. It should be considered that involving industry is only a step in engagement (second to obtaining the initial interest of the industry), and the ultimate goal is sustained participation. It is worthwhile to reiterate that generally people stay involved when the issues are relevant; the Council must consider the needs of the coastal industries and pursue activities

relating to their needs. Additionally, successful engagement should have a feedback mechanism in place to provide recognition for participants and a means to view the effects of their efforts. The following items are actions that could be taken by the Council to more directly involve industry: these include inviting industry members to participate as panel members to develop a Code of Conduct, and as members of the Council itself.

1. *Address Stakeholder Concerns* – In order to begin a productive dialogue with industry members, the Council will need to acknowledge their issues of concern and make some concerted efforts to address them. The area of greatest concern that we found among sectors was that of marine pollution. Developing a Code of Conduct in coordination with industry to address the main issues could be one method of engaging industry while addressing their concerns.
2. *Reconsider Levels of Council Membership* – Should the Council choose to invite industry members to participate in Council meetings and on decisions regarding Council activities, it would be beneficial for the Council to explore additional levels of membership for industry involvement within the Council. Creating an Industry Advisory Subcommittee to the SICC could be a viable option.

Wider Context of the Study

In the present study concerning industry involvement in Council initiatives, it is important not to lose sight of the bigger picture. In this respect, there are a few observations we find important to make.

Firstly, despite the lack of industry interest in Council programs, the Council plays a very important role contributing to sound management of the ecosystem of the Gulf of Maine. To effectively manage such valuable marine resources in an area of common interest, regulators must develop a common set of objectives since the movement of resources is not restricted by the artificial political boundaries drawn through the heart of the ecosystem. The Council provides this essential dialogue by bringing together regulators of federal governments, provinces and states surrounding the Gulf of Maine in a regular forum. The result is that, although there is no formal international agreement between Canada and the United States concerning the Gulf of Maine, senior government officials in federal, state and provincial governments have prepared a common set of objectives through an Action Plan. This is no small feat given the challenges of jurisdiction, history and diplomacy.

Secondly, the Council could take a broader view of its Action Plan and concentrate efforts in areas where it can be effective. For example, the Action Plan for the Gulf of Maine Council contains three targets: coastal and marine habitats, ecosystem health, and vibrant coastal communities. In some respect these targets are all related to promoting ecosystem health in the broadest sense which includes human activity in vibrant communities. It is very difficult for the Council to make direct impact on the third target of vibrant communities since there are many other social and economic factors beyond the control of the Council that make major contributions to community health. However, the GOMC *is* able to make a contribution in this area by focusing its attention on the other targets of habitat and ecosystem health. Progress in these two areas will contribute to vibrant communities through:

- healthy living environment for citizens;
- increased economic returns from healthy resources managed in a sustainable manner; and
- providing an ocean-focus in peoples lives in coastal communities through educational programs and forums.

Thirdly, the direct impact of the Council on the marine industry is constrained by the non-regulatory nature of the organization. Industry members find themselves so busy dealing with regulatory issues, it is difficult for them to justify much attention to the non-regulatory issues of the GOMC. Other organizations, such as the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition on

Sustainability, have experienced the same difficulties in their attempts to engage the marine industry directly. It may be more advantageous therefore to play to the Council's strengths of dialogue and coordination of cross-border environmental initiatives rather than trying to engage directly with industry where it is difficult to be effective.

In this respect, therefore, it may not be necessary to engage industry directly in programs of the Council in order to be effective in contributing to vibrant communities in the Gulf of Maine. The marine industries of tourism, fisheries, energy and shipping will all be positively impacted if the Council is able to continue making contributions to ecosystem and habitat issues in the coastal and marine areas of the Gulf of Maine.

Above all, the Council has an opportunity to serve a role for both education among industry stakeholders and coordination between user groups and organizations. It seems clear that this particular avenue has not been explored and there is a real need for open communication that will be the most successful path to environmental conservation and sustainable development.