

Action Plan Mid-Term Review



About the Council

The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (the Council) is a collaboration of policy makers, resource managers, scientists, educators, businesses, communities, and citizens with a commitment to protect the Gulf of Maine. The governors and premiers of the states and provinces bordering the Gulf of Maine created the Council in 1989 as a regional entity with a mission to “maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine and to allow for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations.” Federal partners include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans, Canada.

The Council promotes ecologically sustainable development, ecosystem-based planning and management, environmental protection through precaution, and public information and participation. The Council fosters consensual decision-making and collaboration among a wide range of parties concerned with the Gulf of Maine and focuses on issues where regional collaboration is needed to solve or improve a situation. Since 1989, the Council has hosted more than 60 conferences, workshops, and symposia on research, education, and policy.

Action Plan 2001-2006

The Council’s Action Plan 2001-2006 outlined 51 critical actions for two primary goals: protecting and restoring coastal and marine habitats, and protecting human health and ecosystem integrity from toxic contaminants in the marine environment. The Action Plan also contains several sustainable maritime activities. The Action Plan complements the work of many local and regional projects and seeks to inspire new initiatives that support habitat protection and improve marine health. In drafting the Action Plan, the Council received input from organizations and individuals by gathering feedback at public forums, workshops, and an online survey that drew over 200 responses. Partnerships with National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Estuary Programs, and Canadian Atlantic Coastal Action Program communities were instrumental in the development and implementation of the Action Plan.

Action Plan Progress

The Council has made significant progress on 27 of the 51 Actions outlined in the Action Plan and will maintain its momentum in these areas. The Council plans to accelerate efforts on 12 additional activities, particularly in the following areas:

Improve Management

In 2004, the Council commenced a Web-based survey to determine important research and education tools for the region’s resource managers. Scientists and managers then collaborated in articulating these research needs. The Council is advancing these findings to the region’s government research programs. The Council will support a regional climate change network to assist with adaptation strategies, research, and information exchange.

Expedite Marine Mapping

In 2004, the Council and its partners produced *Gulf of Maine Mapping Initiative: A Framework for Ocean Management* that describes an ambitious goal to map the sea floor from the intertidal zone to the upper continental slope. The Council will implement this strategy by assisting with clearinghouse activities for ocean mapping data, articulating user needs, and promoting the development of emerging marine mapping technologies.

Expand Habitat Restoration

The Council and its restoration partners provide funding and technical assistance to government, non-government organizations, and businesses to increase the pace of habitat restoration. Restoration projects are now underway or completed at dozens of sites. All parties seek to sustain this momentum by expanding resources for planning, restoration, and post-restoration monitoring. The Council has produced a coastal marine habitat restoration strategy to guide restoration priorities and decisions.

Improve Citizen Stewardship and Education

The Council’s Web-based *Non-Government Organization Directory* is a powerful tool to disseminate information and promote networking among the over 600 organizations in the Directory. The Council is promoting the use of the Directory and improving its ability to meet user needs for networking. In addition, the Council is committed to expanding its 2004 pilot indicators series and “State of the Gulf” effort to new issues. The initial report focused on fisheries and aquaculture, contaminants, and coastal development.

The Council has not begun working on two activities—produce habitat publications and fact sheets, and develop a regional marine research plan—but plans to catalyze these projects as resources become available in the next two years. Ten activities are being postponed altogether until funding becomes available, partnerships and coordination established, and a clear plan of action developed. In June 2005, the Council will present its strategy to produce the 2006-2011 Action Plan.

Goal: Protect and Restore Coastal and Marine Habitats

Category 1: Action plan items underway and progress being achieved

STRATEGY/ACTION	MAINTAIN LEVEL OF EFFORT	ACCELERATE LEVEL OF EFFORT
Increase Awareness		
1 Publicize Gulf of Maine Times	x	
3 Maintain habitat page on GOMC website	x	
Improve Management		
4 Document research and educational tools		x
6 Translate research	x	
8 Convene partners re: climate change impacts		x
Develop a Marine Mapping Strategy		
11 Develop/implement Gulf-wide strategy		x
12 Establish clearinghouse to identify ocean mapping data		x
14 Assess the needs of potential map users		x
15 Establish partnership to promote development of mapping strategy		x
Increase Rate and Improve Effectiveness of Habitat Restoration		
16 Create/distribute habitat restoration plan	x	
17 Fund habitat restoration activities	x	
18 Seek increased funding		x
19 Maintain Gulf-wide database	x	
20 Implement restoration protocols	x	
Increase Awareness about Aquatic Invasive Species		
21 Convene awareness conference	x	
22 Create informative web page	x	
23 Cover ANS threat in GOM Times	x	
24 Identify/distribute existing ANS publications	x	
Improve Management		
26 Identify invasive species of concern	x	
27 Create regional database	x	
Enhance Local and Regional Capacity for Citizen Stewardship		
28 Administer competitive grants program	x	
30 Enhance NGO directory		x

Category 2: Limited or no movement by the Council

STRATEGY/ACTION	POSTPONE ACTION	CATALYZE EFFORT OVER 2 YEARS
Increase Awareness		
2 Distribute habitat publications and fact sheets		x
Increase Management		
5 Expand coastal training initiatives	x	
7 Disseminate best management practices information	x	
Increase Land Acquisition		
9 Survey land acquisition programs	x	
10 Advocate for increased acquisition funding	x	
Develop a Marine Mapping Strategy		
13 Develop classification framework	x	
Improve Management		
25 Assess selected habitat areas	x	

Goal: Protect Human Health and Ecosystem Integrity

Category 1: Action plan items underway and progress being achieved

STRATEGY/ACTION	MAINTAIN LEVEL OF EFFORT	ACCELERATE LEVEL OF EFFORT
Increase Awareness		
31 Publicize Gulfwatch findings and issues in GOM Times	x	
32 Create/distribute fact sheets on findings/issues	x	
33 Maintain contaminants page on website	x	
34 Analyze, interpret and distribute data and information	x	
35 Prepare State of the Gulf report		x
Increase Understanding		
37 Expand environmental quality monitoring strategy		x
38 Establish/maintain Gulfwatch "tissue bank"	x	
39 Synthesize information on sewage, nitrogen and mercury	x	
40 Gather contaminants information in invertebrate tissue	x	
Improve Management		
43 Translate research findings	x	
45 Formulating environmental health indicators		x
Implement Reduction Strategies for Priority Contaminants		
46 Convene workshop on impacts of sewage	x	
47 Address results of nitrogen workshop	x	
Enhance Local and Regional Capacity for Citizen Stewardship		
49 Administer competitive grants program	x	
51 Enhance links using NGO directory		x

Category 2: Limited or no movement by the Council

STRATEGY/ACTION	POSTPONE ACTION	CATALYZE EFFORT OVER 2 YEARS
Increase Understanding		
36 Develop/implement regional marine research plan		x
41 Compile information on contaminant sources	x	
Improve Management		
44 Review/disseminate knowledge of public health effects	x	
Implement Reduction Strategies for Priority Contaminants		
48* Continue tracking mercury and prepare reduction strategy	x	
50 Support stewardship training	x	

* An element of the tracking component of this action is underway



Fall Salmon (male), copyright Eithan Nededeau

Council Highlights: 2001-2004

Strategies and Summaries

- Gulf of Maine Habitat Restoration Strategy (October 2004)
- Gulf of Maine Mapping Initiative: A Framework for Ocean Management. Includes a needs assessment to document user priorities (May 2004)
- The Tides of Change. An Environmental Report on the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy (August 2004)
- Gulfwatch: Monitoring Chemical Contaminants in Gulf of Maine Coastal Waters (2003)
- Mapping the Undersea Landscape: Using Seafloor Maps to Improve Management of the Gulf of Maine (2003)
- Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment Action Plan 2001-2006
- Ocean Zoning for the Gulf of Maine: A Background Paper (January 2003)
- Improving Links Between Science and Coastal Management: A Survey to Assess Science and Technology Needs in the Gulf of Maine (May 2004)
- A Survey of Coastal Managers' Science and Technology Needs Prompts a Retrospective Look at Science-Based Management in the Gulf of Maine (August 2004)
- In Pursuit of Data: Populating the Coastal Development Indicators (August 2004)

Workshops and Workshop Reports

- Gulf of Maine Summit: Committing to Change (October 2004)
- Atlantic Northeast Coastal Monitoring Summit (January 2004)
- Northeast Coastal Indicators Workshop (January 2003)
- Council Public Forum on Coastal Development
- Sewage Management in the Gulf of Maine: Workshop Proceedings (April 2002)
- Managing Nitrogen Impacts in the Gulf of Maine: Workshop Report (November 2001)
- Gulf of Maine Marine Habitat Characterization and Mapping: A Workshop Report and Strategy for Ocean Mapping in the Gulf of Maine (October 2001)
- Aquaculture Remediation Workshop (September 2001)
- Environmental Quality Monitoring Workshop: Summary Report (April 2001)

Journal Articles

- Jones, S.H., L. White, P. Hennigar, P. Wells, C. Krahfurst, G. Harding, J. Aube, G. Brun, J. Schwartz, M. Chase, P. Vaas, N. Landry and J. Stahlnecker. In review. Spatial and temporal trends of toxic contaminants in tissues of blue mussel, *Mytilus edulis*, in the Gulf of Maine: 1993-2001.
- Jones, S.H., M. Chase, J. Sowles, P. Hennigar, N. Landry, P.G. Wells, G.C.H. Harding, C. Krahfurst and G.L. Brun. 2001. Monitoring for toxic contaminants in *Mytilus edulis* from New Hampshire and the Gulf of Maine. *Journal of Shellfish Research* 20: 1203-1214.
- Chase, M. E., S.H. Jones, P. Hennigar, J. Sowles, G.C.H. Harding, K. Freeman, P.G. Wells, C. Krahfurst, K. Coombs, R. Crawford, J. Pederson and D. Taylor. 2001. Gulfwatch:

Monitoring spatial and temporal patterns of trace metal and organic contaminants in the Gulf of Maine (1991-1997) with the blue mussel, *Mytilus edulis* L. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 42: 490-504.

Initiatives and Projects

- **Habitat Restoration Grants Program**, supported by the Gulf of Maine Council/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Partnership for Habitat Restoration
- **Action Plan Grants Program**: \$100,000 US was distributed in 2003-04 to community organizations throughout the Gulf of Maine for projects relating to the Action Plan 2001-2006
- **Gulfwatch Monitoring Program** assesses the fate and effects of chemical contaminants in Gulf of Maine coastal waters
- **Gulf of Maine Times** educates about social, environmental, and scientific issues that affect the Gulf of Maine
- **Science Translation Project** helps accelerate the transfer of scientific findings to coastal decision-makers
- **Gulf of Maine Council Web site** redesigned to facilitate information transfer and provide interactive tools such as online mapping of Gulfwatch data
- **Gulf of Maine Monitoring Program Inventory Database**, now with online access and search capabilities
- **Non-Government Organization Directory** of over 600 NGO's available on the Council's website



Select Council-sponsored publications, 2001-2004