GOMINFOEX Action Committee Meeting Minutes
December 14/15th, 2000
Casco Bay Ferry Terminals, Portland, Maine

Attendees:
Seth Barker
Paul Boudreau
Chris Brehme
Courtney Coles
James Essex
Ben Haskell
Ron Huber
Wil Hopkins
Craig MacDonald
Joe Pelczarski
Richard Perritt
Aviva Rahmani
Paul Schroeder

Attachments:

1)   GeoData   Alliance   Principles   -   7/10/00   -   for   discussion

2)   Draft Editorial for Gulf of Maine Times

1)   Welcome, introductions, announcements and acceptance of agenda:

   1.1. Due to the flexible nature of the meeting, participants joined in on the discussions according to their availability. Participants introduced themselves as they arrived. Boudreau, Brehme, Pelczarski and Schroeder attended all sessions. To respond to the coming and going of participants, agenda items were revisited often depending on those sitting at the table. This gave for a thorough review of all issues.

2. ### *Technical Session:*

   2.1. A proposal to establish a Gulf of Maine Marine Protected Area List service was presented by Haskell. A number of comments and suggestions were made that are believed to improve the chance of success for this effort. The site will be launched in early 2001. Appropriate GOMINFOEX participants are asked to contribute as they see fit.
   2.2. The Participants Map function will become incorporated into a dynamic link between the zip codes of the PeopleFinder and the e-Atlas.
   2.3. The existing function of the Gulf of Maine Council's PeopleFinder was presented by Boudreau: http://www.gulfofmaine.org/cdb/index.html. It presently consists of a compilation of around 10,000 mailing addresses used by the Gulf of Maine Times for its mailout. A portion of these people are also available on-line as the PeopleFinder that can be electronically searched by name, organisation and mailing address. Search results present mailing address, phone, fax, e-mail and URL for those participating. All entries are password protected and editable by the person and by a select group of administrators. There is a need to provide a list of suggested keywords to assist people in identifying themselves and in carrying out productive searches. The Data and Information Management Committee (DIMC) will work on this task in the coming months.
      2.3.1. Boudreau proposed that this on-line function be used to register GOMINFOEX participants by adding the word "GOMINFOEX" in one of the keyword fields.

2.3.2. Also under development within the PeopleFinder is an on-the-fly mailing groups function. A mailing group entitled: "Gulf of Maine Environmental Information Exchange (GOMINFOEX) Open" mailing group has been setup at: http://www.gulfofmaine.org/cdb/index.html. All Interested participants are invited to subscribe to this mailing group for future e-mail distributions. It was proposed that if under tests this function is shown to be robust, easy and accurate, GOMINFOEX should use it to replace the existing listserver at the New England Aquarium (ootf@neaq.org).

2.3.3. It was pointed out that a better description and disclaimer was needed for the PeopleFinder web page so that everyone is aware of its intended purposes.

2.4. It was proposed that GOMINFOEX purchase and establish a directed indexing function, such as Phantom, to identify and maintain lists of related documents.

2.5. The proposed editorial on GOMINFOEX for the Gulf of Maine Times, Attachment 2, was accepted for publication.

2.6. Coles announced that she is now a member of the Gulf of Maine Marine Educators Association. (GOMEA) and agreed to continue to promote links with GOMINFOEX. In particular she will consider the state of the GOMEA Users Survey and a possible survey of existing curriculum that has been developed within the region.

2.7. Coles also announced the pending launch of fishresearch.org web site that is being developed to promote linkages between fishers with boats and scientists in need of boats. Once up and running, all appropriate GOMINFOEX participants should consider possible outreach efforts to gain contributions to the effort.

2.8. GeoData Alliance is continuing to develop. It is anticipated that memberships will be possible in February 2001. It was agreed that GOMINFOEX should continue to consider possible actions.

2.9. The geographic extent of the area of interest under GOMINFOEX was clarified to extend down to the southern border of the state of Massachusetts. It was recognised that the thematic area of interest may extend far beyond the geographic bounds. For now, the eastern limit will correspond with that of the Gulf of Maine watershed as defined by the Gulf of Maine Council's map: http://www.gulfofmaine.org/watershed/watershed.htm.

3. ### *GOMINFOEX Organisation:*

3.1. The bulk of the meeting was consisted of discussions on potential GOMINFOEX organisation in response to the outcome of the Out of the Fog II workshop. The discussions were not linear. They resulted in a number of commitments and agreements.

3.2. We need to better document our process. The GeoData Alliance model of: Vision, Principles, Participants, Concept:, Practise and Constitution was considered as one way to structure the documentation of existing GOMINFOEX organisational descriptions.

3.3. The GeoData Alliance principles as applicable to GOMINFOEX were discussed. Some problems were identified that might arise out of the interpretation of some of the principles. If within the general philosophy of the GeoData Alliance that local groups have the right to self organise, then it continues to be a possibility that these principles may be accepted at a future meeting. It was recognised that GOMINFOEX has some additional principles that may be more important for this work.

3.4. It was proposed that GOMINFOEX consider itself the equivalent of the registry of deeds. By analogue, GOMINFOEX is a registry of exchanges that identifies who is doing what and what is begin done. This would be consistent with a "registry " of letters of commitments among parties. An important role that GOMINFOEX might serve would be to explore the range of formal and informal commitments already present among known partner projects in the Gulf Region. Knowing how projects and their project leaders have entered into committed relations may help projects who want to explore new avenues with others in achieving their mutual goals. Through the registry, partner projects may learn to increase the range and depth of the commitments that they are able to make to others.

3.5. Another analogue for GOMINFOEX is an Information Ecology that focuses on the people content required for information.

3.6. The question of whether GOMINFOEX is or should be a "representative" organisation was raised? Several different meanings for "representation" were discussed, and alternatives were discussed, including "inclusive." This question will have to be answered through the documentation/discussion and revision process of the organisational structure.

3.7. A "key project" may be helpful in organising GOMINFOEX. Proposed existing projects are the e-Atlas, the Participants Map and a digital library.

3.8. Smaller, rotating quarterly meetings in association with biennial Out of the Fog meetings was considered a very good mechanism for GOMINFOEX communications. All meetings are open to all interested participants. Voting on-line as was done to select the themes for the Out of the Fog II workshop was effective and should be pursued in future efforts to get input from GOMINFOEX participants.

3.9. It was agreed that efforts should be made to finance and establish a part time paid position in support of GOMINFOEX in the coming two years. Boudreau and Hopkins accepted to work on this task with the strong recommendation that Schroeder be considered for this position.

4. *Other Issues*

4.1. There is continued interest in pursuing a Gulf of Maine Virtual/Digital library. At least two specific functions were identified for the Digital Library: 1) coming up with keyword list to be used for people and project identification; and, 2) establishing a "digital reference librarian" network to handle questions posted to GOMINFOEX.

4.2. Related meeting announcements - Fishermen and Scientists Research Society (FSRS), 8th Conference, Halifax, N.S., February 23-24th, 2001. Contact: Patty King at pattyfsrs@auracom.com.

5. *Next meeting dates*

1st week of March 2001 in Gloucester Massachusetts.

6. *Action Items:*

6.1. Need to document existing and proposed GOMINFOEX organisation - **Boudreau and Schroeder**;

6.2. Need to hire staff - **Boudreau and Hopkins**;

6.3. Need to work on structure - possibly within 6 GeoData steps - **Boudreau and Schroeder**;

6.4. Continue to work on information sharing - **all**

6.5. Need to revise web page to reflect changes - **Brehme, Hopkins, Schroeder and Rahmani**;

6.6. Need to test registration of GOMINFOEX participants and use of on-the-fly mailing groups for communications - **all**;

6.7. Consider and document practices that balance web input and face-to-face meetings - **Boudreau and Schroeder with input from all**;

6.8. Develop a one-page document describing GOMINFOEX "matchmaking" role - **Rahmani;**

6.9. Develop a one-page document describing the GOMINFOEX neutrality role - **Scroeder;**

6.10.   Write up minutes from meeting - **Boudreau and Schroeder.**

Attachment 1. GeoData Alliance Principles (as published Nov. 2000)-

#1. GeoData Alliance is open to any individual or institution subscribing to the purpose and principles in conducting GeoData Alliance activities.

#2. Members have the right to self-organize at any time, on any scale and around any activity consistent with the Purpose and Principles.

#3. Authority shall be vested in, functions performed at, and resources used by the smallest or most local part that includes all relevant and affected parties.

#4. Deliberations and decisions of the GeoData Alliance shall be made by bodies and methods that reasonably represent all relevant and affected parties and are dominated by none.

#5. Deliberations and decisions of the GeoData Alliance shall use knowledge and information derived from scientific method, practical experience and intuition.

#6. Diversity of people, perspectives and approaches is desirable and shall be encouraged.

#7. Conflict shall be resolved creatively, cooperatively and constructively.

#8. To the maximum degree possible, results shall be achieved by persuasion rather than compulsion.

#9. Geographic information has inherent value and the creators of the value should be equitably compensated.

#10. Public inspection of data used for governance is a fundamental right and access to these data should be provided.

#11. Geographic information and technologies shall be used to improve the health of our communities, our economies and the Earth.

#12. Geographic information and technologies shall be used to improve decision making and productivity consistent with the purposes and principles.

#13. Geospatial data shall be treated as an infrastructure asset and creative investment of public and private resources to achieve the purpose shall be encouraged.

#14. Standards essential to achieve the Purpose in accord with the Principles shall be established and implemented.

#15. Innovation is essential to achieve the Purpose, shall be encouraged and should be fairly rewarded.

#16. Each and every part of the Geodata Alliance shall protect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information and sensitive geographic information.

#17. Knowledge related to achieving the Purpose of the GeoData Alliance in accord with the Principles shall be openly and fully exchanged unless it violates confidentiality or materially diminishes competitive advantage.

#18. Each and every part of the GeoData Alliance shall pursue greater coherence in the creation and flow of geographic information.

Attachment 1. Editorial for Gulf of Maine Times - Winter 2001

By: GOMINFOEX Action Committee

In a perfect world with complete, up-to-date and accurate information, good decisions and good management is easy. In our world we must work hard to make best use of existing information on our coastal and marine environment to maximize our long-term benefits. Although our information base may never achieve perfection, the Gulf of Maine fortunately, has a long history of scientific studies, a well-educated and interested population and excellent communications infrastructure.

Within this milieu, the Gulf of Maine Environmental Information Exchange (GOMINFOEX) has evolved. Building on numerous efforts at data management and information access, a group of people have coalesced around the challenge of effective information exchange. For some it is the development of a clearinghouse web function. For others it involves pilot projects in GIS mapping. For still others, it is more an opportunity to meet people with a shared interest and a commitment to co-operate. For all it has been an effort. An effort to listen to new ideas, hear new words and to try to look at thinks from a new perspective.

Recognising that good information, best management practices and responsible stewardship is not the purview of any one class of Gulf residents, GOMINFOEX has benefited from the participation and contribution of researchers, K-12 students and teachers, managers, resource users, NGO's and others. No one person or type of person has all the answers and so the best chance for long term success results from allowing all to contribute. Our success will be measured by the level of involvement and commitment.

In the Internet world, contributions can be made with minimal cost. Innovative use of e-mails, list servers, on-line voting help to democratize the process and include people unable to travel regularly from one end of the Region to the other. This is a great advantage - but one that has not been used to its fullest potential. People complain of inboxes overflowing with irrelevant e-mails. The Internet tools will never replace people meeting people, sharing ideas and working together. The Internet is just another tool that we must make use of, just like our libraries, our newspapers, our classrooms, our museums, etc.

So, what is the goal of GOMINFOEX? It is for people to become more active and effective. If you are on the web, don't just point and click; read, find an expert, write a friend, start a discussion, ask a question. You can always begin at www.gulfofmaine.org. If you are not on the web, read the Times, call someone mentioned in this edition of the Times to ask a question, attend a meeting in your area, find out more about that local swamp. In closing, get active and exchange!