**Steering Committee Conference Call: January 28, 2014**

**Participants**

Heather Breeze (DFO), Adria Elskus (UMaine and USGS), Jim Latimer (EPA), Matt Liebman (EPA), Abe Miller-Rushing (NPS), Marilyn ten Brink (EPA), and Christine Tilburg (GOMC)

**1. Ocean Health Index**

Christine Tilburg and Heather Breeze updated the Steering Committee on the current efforts by BoFEP to develop portions of the Ocean Health Index (OHI) for Southwest New Brunswick. Christine mentioned at this time that they are locating datasets for use with OHI’s formulas. ESIP is providing some of the datasets currently in use by various subcommittees. Heather stated that the committee is focusing on four of the goals and bringing together the information for present status. Christine mentioned the issue with the “nutrient plume” information. Jim Latimer suggested she connect with him. ***(Action to be taken: Connect with Jim regarding eutrophication information for possible use with the OHI).***

**2. Coastal Zone Canada**

ESIP will participate in three presentations at the upcoming Coastal Zone Canada meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia (June 15-19, 2014). ESIP has a poster presentation (presenter: Jim Latimer) focused on ESIP’s webtools and indicator information. ESIP also has an oral presentation (presenter: Christine Tilburg) focused on climate change. A final abstract is being drafted for a joint presentation with the Status of the Gulf of Maine team (presenters: Heather Breeze and Christine Tilburg) in the Gulf of Maine session. Individuals on the call discussed potential dates for the ESIP Annual Meeting during this week. Christine agreed to send out a Doodle calendar to determine the best date and time for this meeting. ***(Action to be taken: Send out Doodle calendar).***

**3. Communication Plan**

During the last Steering Committee call the group discussed revising the current ESIP communication plan (dated 2008). The group discussed bringing in resources from around the region. Christine stated that the ESIP-ALSI (American Lobster Settlement Index) project will be utilizing resources from the Maine Seagrant office. The group discussed whether other Seagrant offices in the area might be able to assist ESIP (ex: Mass. Office at MIT). Abe stated that he works quite a bit with Catherine Schmitt (Maine Seagrant). He suggested that Paul Anderson or Catherine might be good beginning points.

Jim wondered if the group felt that the current communication plan could be revised or would the group like to start fresh. The group felt that it would be more efficient to start with the current communication plan. Christine agreed to revise the current plan and put a place holder for the plan on the Annual Meeting agenda. ***(Action to be taken: Revise current plan and save a place on the Annual Meeting agenda).*** Heather liked this idea and stated that it might be easier to work on the plan face to face. Christine wondered if the EC Outreach staff might be able to join the Steering Committee for a ½ hour – 1 hour during the meeting. ***(Action to be taken: Christine needs to connect with Kathryn Parlee on this item).***

The group then discussed various topics that the new plan might bring in. Marilyn ten Brink stated that it might be a good idea to outreach to high schools and colleges. Abe Miller-Rushing stated that he thinks the natural audiences for ESIP’s products are managers and academics. He stated that keeping these two user types in mind would be important and the communications plan should strengthen these relationships. Adria Elskus stated that she thinks the ability to skip the Indicator Reporting Tool and just download the data should be more obvious ***(Action to be taken: Link the “data” tab to the “about site data” in the Indicator Reporting Tool).*** Jim stated that it appears ESIP’s audience has been revised to now be 1) professional individuals/decision makers, 2) educators, 3) people new to the area.

Jim stated that he still feels that state groups have a regular need to obtain data for status reports. Matt Liebman agreed but stated that they probably need the information at a finer scale. Matt stated that the Indicator Reporting Tool provides value added to the original datasets. As an example he brought up the potential use of the ESIP climate change indicators by EPA (http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/).

Abe stated that the webtools are very helpful for individuals not familiar with the Gulf of Maine to find information. Christine stated that she has been wanting to create a video tutorial for the ESIP webpage to walk people to the Monitoring Map, Indicator Reporting Tool and fact sheets. She has been waiting for some funds to become available for this project. Everyone on the call liked this idea (Adria’s been campaigning for a video for years!).

Christine mentioned that phone interviews and surveys have shown that the tools are too complicated. Most individuals visiting the ESIP webpage look at the monthly journals and fact sheets. She also mentioned that she has heard from various ESIP members that the subcommittee interactions are one of the most important parts of ESIP.