**Annual Steering Committee Meeting – June 2014**

**Participants**

Heather Breeze (DFO), Marilyn ten Brink (EPA), Adria Elskus (USGS/U Maine), Al Hanson (CWS), Jim Latimer (EPA), Kathryn Parlee (EC), and Christine Tilburg (GOMC).

The annual Steering Committee meeting began with introductions around the room and some discussion of how Coastal Zone Canada has been over the past couple of days.

**1. ESIP 1.0**

The group began the day’s discussion with a refresher on where ESIP is with respect to the ESIP 1.0 subcommittees. Almost all subcommittees have produced their fact sheets. Coastal Development is drafted and will be sent to the subcommittee in July for review. The fisheries subcommittee is lagging but Christine Tilburg hopes that the fact sheet will be out in the spring. Heather Breeze wondered if there is any chance of an update to the Climate Change Fact Sheet. Christine stated that the Indicator Reporting Tool has been updated but it might be a good idea to do a revisit with the State of the Gulf Report. The group also discussed a possible update to the Eutrophication Fact Sheet after the EPA-ORD work is done.

The group also discussed the potential of the Eastern Charlotte Waterways project having a repeat sampling. Heather’s office may have funds to support this both within and outside of the associated Marine Protected Area; Heather will follow-up with the appropriate person. The group was hopeful that ESIP’s information prior to the mandated sewage treatment in the area will be comparable to sampling after compliance.

**2. Invasive Species**

Heather wondered if ESIP will start to discuss invasive species soon. Management of the area around Saint John is a priority for DFO (in general, not just for invasive species). The group also discussed green crabs and cycle of boom and bust seen in the past. Christine mentioned that the green crab kill the eelgrass by destroying the rhizomes. They also are devastating the salt marsh. The group then watched the green crab video and was disgusted as usual.

**3. ESIP 2.0**

Christine updated the Steering Committee on the first phone call held by the ESIP 2.0 Directional Committee. The committee is composed of seven individuals at this time. Jim Latimer shared some of the committee’s thoughts about super indicators and/or integrative indicators. Adria Elskus wondered if these indicators will address function and Jim thought so. Christine mentioned that she is concerned that there are no Canadians on the committee. Canadians have always played an important role in ESIP and she is not comfortable with having an all-U.S. Directional Committee. The following individuals were suggested ***(Action to be taken: Christine will follow up with these individuals):*** Kevin Garoway (Province of Nova Scotia), Robin Anderson (DFO in Newfoundland and suggested by Heather), Wayne Fairchild (toxicologist and recommended by Adria), John Brazner (Wetland Ecologist in Kentville, suggested by Al Hanson), Rob Stephenson (SABS), Tony Charles (St. Mary’s), Shannon Sterling (Dalhousie), Tim Vickers (ACAP, suggested by Al), and Abby Pond (St. Croix Waterways).

Adria wondered what the result of the Directional Committee might be. Jim thought that they might have recommendations or concepts that need to be applied. Adria wondered if the original subcommittees will be reconvened and Christine stated that she sees the subcommittees being completely shaken up. Jim agreed and thought that new subcommittees might be formed. As an example, Jim stated that for the Long Island Sound project they used to have groups working on hypoxia and flooding but now the groups work on waters and watershed or habitats and wildlife. Adria wondered if ESIP 2.0 will get into state of health. Christine stated that she believes it is time for ESIP to work on the “health” of the Gulf of Maine (something that was not addressed in ESIP 1.0 and the groups stayed away from thresholds and health (for the most part)). Jim stated that he agrees it is time to think about health and integrity. Structure is easier to work on but function is a harder question.

Al agreed and suggested that ESIP should keep the branding that has been established over the past seven years but change to discussing ecological integrity and health. Heather stated that land use and other functionality questions are becoming increasingly important. Al stated that the Canadian Wildlife Service is working on information about protected and conserved lands. They expect to have a database of federally protected lands (or lands protected by NGOs) in the next couple of years.

Adria wondered about information on threatened or endangered species that use these lands. Heather stated that there is a State of the Gulf Report on species at risk in the Gulf of Maine and that it was a very difficult paper to produce (more complicated than you might think). From the Canada side it becomes a political issue.

The group also discussed various indicators in indexes that might be of use. Specifically the group discussed the Ocean Health Index (both Christine and Heather were part of this BoFEP committee) and the difficulties that were encountered trying to use the Ocean Health Index for a relatively small area.

The group also discussed citizen scientist projects and ESIP 2.0. Al mentioned a project focused on setting up weather stations at schools (CoCoRAHs: Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network). Finally, the group decided on a Christmas date for the Directional Committee work to be completed ***(Action to be taken: Christine needs to note this due date on calendar).***

There was some discussion of letting the ESIP community know about upcoming changes. Christine suggested that an ESIP journal article might prove useful. Al suggested that we call the next phase the ESIP 2.0 “project”. Kathryn Parlee agreed and thought it might be easier to get money with a project than a phase. Marilyn ten Brink agreed and Adria pointed out that a project implies an “end.” ***(Action to be taken: Christine will let the ESIP community know about the ESIP 2.0 project before the changes to the ESIP subcommittee structure occurs).***

**4.0 ESIP Communication Plan**

After a lunch break the Steering Committee discussed ESIP’s need for a revised communication plan. The State of the Gulf Report’s communication plan was examined along with ESIP’s previous communication plan. Heather stated that she wishes that GOMC would have a communications plan for the entire Council. Adria mentioned that there should be several “lines of attack” and Social Media needs to be included. The group discussed bringing in Catherine Schmitt (Maine Seagrant) for some assistance with developing ESIP’s communications plan. The Nature Conservancy of Canada was also mentioned as a potential partner. Jim suggested that Catherine might be brought onto an August or September call (Adria pointed out that Catherine does a lot of field work in the summer). It was also suggested that Christine check with Abe Miller-Rushing and see if the Schoodic Institute has a communications plan that they would be willing to show the ESIP Steering Committee. ***(Action to be taken: Christine needs to follow up on these items).***

Adria thought that a mobile version of the ESIP webpage might be helpful. In addition the ESIP webpage as it is might need to be optimized. Individuals that might also have helpful ideas were Kathleen Martin (Sea Turtle Network) and Heather Goldstein (freeland writer).

Other ideas suggested for broadening the ESIP community included having a video available at parks (example the Voices of the Gulf of Maine video narrated by Susan Russell-Robinson which is available on the Nova Star ferry). Another idea was to leave ESIP bookmarks at the various geocaches. Christine also suggested having the GeoTour and ESIP bookmarks at area schools and libraries. ***(Action to be taken: Christine needs to follow up on these items).***

**5.0 ESIP Webtools**

The Steering Committee finished the afternoon talking about the two ESIP webtools. Adria suggested that everyone send Christine a webtool or visualization that they really like. Heather mentioned that she wishes the tool could build a map (ex: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=F7F5426B-1>). Marilyn stated that she wishes there were case studies of how the tools might be useful to smaller groups, municipalities, and non-governmental agencies. Adria mentioned that Ron Kozlowski might be a good contact. The group discussed how visitors might be directed to/through the webtools.

In the end, the Steering Committee made some significant progress at the meeting and expressed excitement over what the next year will bring to ESIP!