**Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment / Organizational Assessment**

**DRAFT Results from Facilitated Sessions at October 2014 Working Group Meeting**

**Background**

The Gulf of Maine Council is conducting an organizational assessment during the 2014-2015 Secretariat Year in an effort to streamline operations and promote efficiency. A Council Advisory Committee (CAC) was convened to provide direction for the organizational assessment. The CAC asked the Working Group to assist with evaluating the potential option of combining the Working Group and Council into one entity, and fleshing out four potential options for restructuring GOMC leadership. During the two day October 2014 Working Group meeting in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Working Group members participated in two facilitated sessions to evaluation these options.

**Session 1 – Evaluate Option of Combining Working Group and Council**

Working Group members participated in break-out sessions to discuss the advantages and disadvantages associated with the potential option of combining Working Group and Council into one entity.

*Key Recommendations:*

* WG does NOT support proposal to combine Working Group and Council into one entity
	+ Need to maintain Council or similar high level entity as separate body to ensure high level buy-in / support for GOMC work
	+ Goals of streamlining and promoting efficiency can be achieved by rethinking how and why the Council meets
	+ Council provides vision and high level priorities / Working Group does the work

*Summary from Breakout Session:*

Advantages of Combining WG / Council

* More efficient use of people’s time, especially WG members who sit in for Councilors
* Would allow opportunity for more relevant experts to sit at the table
* Streamlines and makes decision making easier
* Promotes continuity in conversations
* Empowering for persons at the table
* Allows one point person from the table to reach out to a broader audience
* One group should reduce the number of process and communication steps/actions
* If composed of high-level members from organizations/agencies, should see re-engagement
* Having Councilors and Working Group members together as a unit could increase ownership
* Opportunity to renew and expand membership in the Council
* One forum for meeting or engaging makes decision to attend or not attend much easier
* If restructured to focus on implementing action plan elements, will be an organization of doers
* Break the loop of Working Group asking Councilors for direction or approval, only to have Councilors toss back to Working Group, who then pass on recommendations to Councilors who are different composition who then ask Working group to study again or more or whatever … And on goes the loop

Constraints that would need to be addressed

* GOMC reps need buy-in from the top
	+ Participants may not have opportunity or authorization to make decisions
	+ Members need to have ability to make decisions about what resources they can bring to the table
	+ Need to determine who has the authority to represent or speak for the jurisdiction
	+ Need senior level involvement to ensure political support
* Councilors need to specify jurisdictional priorities
* Need to identify topics and regional priorities first in order to determine who the appropriate people at the table would be
* ‘Cookie cutter’ solution is tough because all of our agencies are different
* Combining would reduce the checks and balances of existing structure
* Challenge in determining what professional level members should be / how to ensure consistent level of leadership among members
* Combined entity doesn’t allow high level members to have staff support / or staff level members to have buy-in
* Need to figure out the appropriate size of the group - need to have appropriate number of representatives for each jurisdiction but ensure that group doesn’t get to large for effective meetings and decision making
* Resolving the function is needed to determine whether members should be high-level priority setters or mid-level managers tasked to do the work

Recommendations

* Keep Council in place but,
	+ Reduce meetings to one per year to focus on jurisdictional priorities and identify commonalities
	+ Make meetings more strategic and provide networking approach so Councilors can talk to each other
* If only high level managers at the table, they would need to be knowledgeable about department level
* Be creative, don’t just thinking about existing Council and Working Group vs. combining them into one entity, think instead about making the two work differently
* Consistency is key, cannot bounce topic to topic or the meetings are just workshops and not a true regional body with consistent membership
* Need balance of feds and states / provinces
	+ Feds bring regional, multi-jurisdictional view
	+ States / provinces bring desire to learn from others and intra-state priorities
* Need to have clearly defined roles for staff and / or contractors

**Session 2 – Evaluate Leadership Options**

Working Group participated in a facilitated session with break-out sessions to evaluate and provide feedback on the following four potential options for restructuring GOMC leadership.

Option 1 – No Action, Retain Existing Leadership

* Jurisdictional government members provide leadership of Council
	+ Leadership rotates – one jurisdiction per year
* Federal partners, scientific community members, NGOs, and tribal representative are active participants at the Council table
* Council membership
	+ Jurisdictions (2 government representatives each, + 2 non-government )
	+ Federal Agencies (1 representative each)
	+ Scientific community (2 representatives – 1 US / 1 Canadian)
	+ Tribal representative (1)

Option 2 – State / Provincial and Federal Partner Joint Leadership

* Jurisdictional and federal agencies would co-lead Council
* US / Canadian shared leadership
* Rotating leadership
	+ US State and Canadian Federal
	+ Canadian Provincial and US Federal
* Council membership remains the same

Option 3 – State/Provincial, Federal Partners, and NGOs Share Leadership

* Leadership shared amongst three entities
	+ US / Canadian balance (rotational basis)
	+ NGOs elect their own leadership
* Balance amongst NGOs (Canadian and US)
* Council membership remains the same

Option 4 – Network Approach

* GOMC would act as a network where all agencies could be at the table
* Members could include state / provincial reps, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, academia, and others

*Key Recommendations:*

* WG does NOT support the Network Approach
	+ This option is not a leadership model but rather an approach to be applied to other leadership models.
	+ Several valuable WG suggestions can be applied to other leadership models
* WG does NOT support Shared Leadership (Jurisdictional / State + Fed + NGOs)
	+ WG recommends that NGO role within GOMC should be assessed to maximize opportunities for working together.
* WG recommends further consideration of Shared Leadership (Jurisdictional / State + Fed)
	+ Several concerns and issues would need to be addressed
* WG recommends further consideration of maintaining Existing Structure (Jurisdictional / State leadership)
	+ Many opportunities for improvement can be pursued
* Regardless of leadership structure:
* Co-chaired, shared leadership is needed to lighten the load
* Leadership periods should be extended (and potentially overlap) to promote continuity
* Leadership period should coincide with action plans
* Involve NGOs and scientific advisors in committee and project work

*Summary from Breakout Session:*

**Leadership Option 1 - No Action, Retain Existing Leadership**

Opportunities

* Brand recognition has improved lately with CZC 2014 exposure
* Value of existing relationships that have been built up over time
* Given the longevity of GOMC – there is merit in existing form
* Led by states and provinces – allows federal needs to match state priorities instead of having federal mandates overwhelm state needs
* We need to think about how to engage NGOs. Maybe we need a separate group. Tricky to decide who NGO reps should be. Could form an advisory committee of NGO reps who would then choose 1 US / 1 Canadian rep to sit on the Council. We should have NGOs reps reflect the most significant groups focused on GOM (BoFEP, GMRI, RARGOM)
* Think of GOMC as more of an umbrella group that brings all appropriate partners in
* Need to better support each other’s needs going forward, i.e. identify and follow up on the next steps beyond what happens at the meeting
* Need to examine successes and determine why they are successful, and build on those successes
* Jack Schwartz – On record in support of maintaining existing structure. Era of $ is at an end, it’s time to contract to initial structure.

Constraints

* Focus is currently only on coastal portion of state. State / jurisdictional reps are only having coastal staff. Need to move to a watershed approach – beyond just coastal.
* GOMC name is constraining due ‘on the MARINE environment’
* We don’t hold committee roles accountable. Committee co-chairs don’t always participate in WG – accountability here is also lacking.
* Because structure is dysfunctional – there is a negative ‘cause and effect’ relationship loop between WG and Council
* Imbalance between US and Canada (3 states / 2 provinces). Can result in higher US focus. Doesn’t make sense for Maine to always have the Action Plan.
* Feds are considered equal partners but don’t have equal representation
* Current structure is too much of a burden for the chair
* NGOs can’t afford to participate – don’t have travel funds etc.
* Limited federal say (if you have 4 from each state that’s 20 people), then only 4 federal reps.
* Sheer size – if all seats were filled, it would be too big to get anything done.
* We have never articulated appropriate / useful role for the scientific advisors and NGOs. At least not since we had a lot of funds.
* On Canadian side, should have tribal / first nation (one Canadian / one US)
* Federal agencies are not able to provide leadership role.
* Federal priorities don’t get articulated in this model.
* Does not allow federal partners and non-profits to dig deep into their resources because they don’t have a leadership position
* Limiting state / provincial membership to 2 at the government level may not allow for all of the appropriate voices at the table
* NGOs may be at a disadvantage because they don’t have anyone on the Working Group level – this creates a disconnect between WG and Council meetings.
* Same issue applies the scientific advisors – when at Council meetings they don’t have any background because they are not engaged at WG level.
* State and provincial resources for chairing are limited

Other Issues

* It’s very rare that all of the seats possible are filled. If we filled the seats (with 10 NGOs) the dynamic would really change.
* Need to figure out what the appropriate level of membership is and how do we get there.
* Leadership terms should be extended to provide more continuity – at least 2 year. Would be good if it is tied to work plans.
* We don’t take advantage enough of committees vs. working at the working group level.
* We need to think about who this group is in relation to what we are focusing on
* All of the 4 options, need to be discussed among the states and the Governor – need to know what they want! We cannot restructure this without the buy in of those involved with the charter.
* Varying opinion – some believe need to go back to Governor’s and Premiers – others state that this is not possible politically.
* Once we decide what the function is, the Governors / Premiers can then appoint the right agency. Existing agency Councilors may not be the appropriate players.
* Cannot select a leadership option without knowing what we’ll be doing.
* In US, there are 3 first nations – so representation could be greater.
* GOMC should coordination / collaborate with other similar binational groups to focus on key issues.

**Leadership Option 2 - State / Provincial and Federal Partner Joint Leadership**

Opportunities

* Fosters more buy-in by the feds and possibly more money from the feds.
* Feds have more latitude to put in staff time. Could help alleviate pressure to have funds for contractors.
* Initial thinking behind this idea is that the feds would share the administrative burden of the chair. Better distribute the resources for the workload. Chairing the GOMC is a huge workload! Feds as co-chairs and lead with jurisdictions to share this responsibility.
* States and Provinces have even weighting as the chair. Bi-national balance. Also balances political extremities.
* Increase profile of the Council. Maybe easier to get approval to travel to attend meetings if can spin it as a co-chaired fed partnership.
* Opportunity to renew the commitment of the federal members to the Council and its mission and goals.
* Feds think regionally. Helps keeps the focus across all states and provinces. This model makes it a better steward of the environment overall.
* Increasing continuity to invite the feds into discussion.
* Feels right, like the right evolution.
* Makes it more palatable for provincial senior leadership to endorse the chairing role. Gives them a great networking opportunity for binational leadership. Could we potentially match states and fed Canada with similar interests? And vice versa? Flexible pairings and relationships.
* Better recognizes the federal role at the table so that they maintain their interest.
* Recognizes the common ground between feds/provinces/states.
* Feds could redesign fed programs with input from states. Work way up.

Constraints

* Following the money at the federal level doesn’t always support mission of GOMC.
* Depending on the political climate, a partner could get hamstrung.
* Feds’ leadership could be perceived as a conflict of interest. Federal leadership has to recuse themselves from grant opportunities.
* Perception each running their own agendas.
* Undue burden on the Canadian side (3 states, 2 provinces). Is there a way to make sure the Canadian voice is there but not the burden?

Other Issues

* What is the allowable relationship between federal partners and the state partners?
* Leadership and Chair have different meanings. Leadership is the vision and the mission. We’re talking about the functioning of how to get the work done.
* Do the states and jurisdictions and the governors have to decide to reorganize that? It’s a question of putting the feds into the leadership.
* It is unclear what Option #2 means. What will the federal agencies do? Do we need them?
* Does this change the composition of the membership?
* Does this format require binational agreements?
* Want to make sure that feds don’t dilute voices of the states. Not heavily fed mandated.
* Considerations for Chairs’ Rotation:
	+ Change criteria of selecting the chairs—more about compatibility and flexibility.
	+ Creatively think about our rotation. Explore all possibilities. Two year terms. Aligning with an operational work plan.

**Leadership Option 3 - State/Provincial, Federal Partners, and NGOs Share Leadership**

Opportunities

* Broadens umbrella for organization
* It would define roles better (e.g. for feds, NGOs)
* Spreads responsibility for leadership between three major groups
* NGOs would support what we’re doing because they’re at the table.
* NGOs have network for engagement/outreach that would be available to us.
* Different organizations could take the lead for different meetings, share responsibilities.
	+ This would work well with a longer term, could split up the meeting responsibilities (one partner could take the lead for certain meetings, the other partner for the others)
	+ Spread the workload
* Could match up the term of the leadership with a specific work plan.
* Guided by overall vision/goals/guiding principles/high level outcomes
* If feds and provinces/states shared leadership, there’d be a balance between national/regional/state and provincial interests

Constraints

* Issues/concerns about interactions between NGOs and government entities—could we have a really frank discussion with NGOs sitting at the table? (differences of opinion on this)
	+ Challenge with merging missions
	+ Most of the federal agencies do not support including NGOs on the Secretariat team (DFO, EC, USGS, NOAA); some of the provinces/states don’t support it either
* Do NGOs have the capacity to do this? Would we have to provide them with capacity?
	+ NGOs in Canada very unlikely to be able to fill this role without resources
	+ How can an NGO afford to participate even under the current model?
* Would it be more work coordinating between the leaders than it’s worth?
	+ Additional communication needs to occur
* Inclusion of NGOs in leadership is in violation of federal rules – US feds would have to leave the organization.
* Requires multiple mechanisms to avoid conflict and allow for division of responsible.
	+ In terms of funding, if there are NGOs in a leadership role, it could be a conflict of interest
	+ Could be conflict/confusion if a lead NGO is competing with GOMA for same resources.
* NGOs have to be nominated by the Governor/Premier from their jurisdiction and we have many vacant spots now.

Other Issues

* Many would like the NGOs treated differently than government and would like the current structure changed.
	+ Should work things out between states/provinces and feds before engaging NGOs
	+ Would be more attractive to senior people if NGOs were engaged at a later stage, once priorities are decided (i.e., “here are the three things that we’re working on this year, would you like to be involved”). NGOs may be able to raise money to effectively partner; be able to draw on resources government can’t.
	+ Will NGOs feel slighted if they aren’t at the table at the beginning?
	+ Current role for NGOs is not considered appropriate for some—should not be at WG or Council (WG members do not agree on this point).
		- Perhaps they should be a separate advisory body, or perhaps largely involved at the committee level – they are topically oriented and aligned.
* Could we rotate between all organizations (e.g., not a collaboration, but rotate through).
* What is the duration of leadership? One year is very short.
* Could we be flexible on the duration of the leadership, if it’s shared? E.g., 2 year terms?
* Should there be overlapping terms? Someone is the lead one year, helps out the next year (along the lines of current model or how current model should be working… past, present, future chair)
	+ Continuity with the chair having a focus area for their year
	+ However, if you want to champion an issue for a year, it should be in the action plan, should be of general interest for the organization
	+ Not all chairs have capacity to do this in current model
* Keep it simple and straight forward: if two jurisdictions want to co-lead, that’s good for continuity.
* Many (but not all) think that feds should be part of the leadership model.
	+ However, this is not why/how the organization was formed.
	+ Do we have to go back to the Governors/Premiers to do this?
* We could do a better job of leveraging NGOs in our projects/committees.
* If NGOs, why not academics? Industry?
	+ We need to engage industry/academics more in our committees and projects.
	+ Do not want them in a leadership role.
* NGOs are having more and more influence at the GOMA table.

**Leadership Option 4 - Network Approach**

Opportunities

* Shared accountability and more fluidity
* Free up resources tied up now to be more responsive to focus areas and emerging issues
* Distributed leadership around particular issue (2-3 yrs.)
* Could formally engage a wider group, more academia, industry
* Members may self-appoint instead of having set leadership
* Enables adaptive planning
* Emerging practices on networks and coalitions
* Promotes distance communication tools
* Implicitly network for certain topics
* Bring in the willing and the dollars, as opposed to appointed membership.
* Loosen constraints around appointments.
* Can be more inclusive, less of a club
* By bringing in more extensive network, bring in more effective, broader group -> make more progress
* Look for opportunities to share information to a broader audience
* Most people don’t want to come to these types of meetings (currently) – need to mix it up.
* Right now have this in committee approach (CMSP). Network approach. GOMC provides boundaries, validity.

Constraints

* What would it look like?
* What makes this different from topic-specific organizations like IJC and other groups doing transboundary work in northeast
* How does it operate?
* Who’s chairing and how much weight does that hold?
* Who gets work done?
* Consistency lost
* Personality driven
* Accountability lost?
* No action plan?
* Lose identity, community, visibility for GOM
* Risks duplication with groups like RARGOM (annual workshop)
* Could end up in favor of particular group or jurisdiction, loses balance.
* Over time would dissolve council and the support network is too important to have this happen.
* Diluted, no focus. Hurts relationships, continuity.
* Need some structure, not too free and easy.
* Allowing NGOs or industry to chair could polarize our work and hurt credibility.
* Need to strike balance representation on an issue.
* Networking is not an organization.
* Networking is how we do business, it’s not a leadership structure.
* Let’s be explicit about how we do it well.

Opportunities/Take-aways

* Networking should be an explicit part of Council but not its sole focus. It’s a characteristic of Council, not only function.
* Take elements of network approach (host summit in prep for priority setting ->action plan). Involving academia, industry, NGOs
* Cohesive approach with RARGOM: research-> management product line
* Good, but someone needs to run the network
* Committees should be a place for network approach – and have Council for validity. Capitalize on this.
* Council provides stamp of approval that enables progress with authority to back it up.
* Networked events, committees – we’re very effective at this. Way money flows.

GOMC

* Binational agreement, concrete effort.
* Only way US can get money to international region.
* Without leadership and formation of Council, entities like Gulfwatch would not have had mandate, solid contacts across borders, jurisdictions benefit. Networking stems from leadership associated with Council.