

## **SWOT Analysis - Background**

At the June 2014 Council meeting, Council members took part in a strategic planning session and approved plans for an organizational assessment of Gulf of Maine Council to be implemented during the 2014-2015 NH Secretariat Year. To support this effort, Working Group members conducted a facilitated SWOT Analysis of the GOMC during the June meeting. Working Group members were asked to identify internal Strengths to build upon, internal Weaknesses to address, external Opportunities to explore, and external Threats to consider. Results of the SWOT analysis are summarized in this document.

## **Strengths (Internal)**

### **Bi-National Regional Approach / Collaboration**

- Regional approach focused on the whole Gulf of Maine ecosystem
- Cross-jurisdictional perspective
- Bi-national collaboration and cooperation
- Mechanisms for transferring funds
- Access to leaders implementing national priorities (at federal level)
- Internationally recognized program

### **Expertise**

- High level of expertise at table
- Multi-disciplinary problem-solving, topical expertise across many relevant topics (flexibility/agility across topics of interest to jurisdictions)

### **Significant Accomplishments**

- Significant record of accomplishments for US-Canadian group with limited resources
- Excellent content (400 publications, variety of tools and products)

### **Jurisdictional Benefits**

- Brings added value to agency mandates
- Regional benefit to major federal initiatives
- Shared finances across jurisdictions allows greater leveraging opportunities

### **Commitment**

- Provincial-state entities established Council and continued participation for 25 years
- 25 years of commitment, passion of individuals involved

### **Information Synthesis / Synergy**

- Success in bringing together multiple sources of data/info and compiling for synthesis and distribution

### **Resources**

GOMC has built up a rich and unique set of resources to address regional ecosystem protection

- Existing relationships (including work outside the council)

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- Committed people who dedicate their time
- Well-established network
- Access to additional expertise and resources
- Passion of the Working Group participants
- Visionary members at the Council and Working Group table

**Other Strengths**

While not selected by multiple Working Group members as ‘key strengths’ to build upon, the following additional strengths were identified by one or more Working Group members during the SWOT.

- Historical knowledge
- Structure that involves high level leadership and managers at the Working Group level
- Shared decision making
- Diverse set of clients, customers, markets, audiences, partners, stakeholders
- Good track record of finding contractors to fill work needs
- Cultural and historical connection between US and Canada
- New participants provide an opportunity for fresh ideas and input
- Region is rich in knowledge and research institutions

<b>Weaknesses (Internal)</b>
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**Lack of Focus (unclear, inconsistent, limited)**

- Confusion about organization purpose / role (decision making vs. information sharing)
- Lack of clarity and process to seek consensus on jurisdictional priorities
- Working Group does not hear about the Council and jurisdictional priorities
- Councilors tend to bring their departmental agenda to table - this usually does not represent full jurisdictional priorities
- Watershed / inland areas (vs. just the coast) are not adequately represented

**Leadership / Management Issues**

- GOMC lacks consistent leadership due to shifting Secretariat, member turnover, and reliance on contractors
- No consistent point of contact for external groups, media, etc.
- Too few visionary leaders
- Councilors are not engaged
- Even without turnover, Council and WG member priorities are constantly shifting

**Too Much Process / Bureaucracy**

- Lack of organizational adaptability limits ability to respond to opportunities
- Can't get out of planning to implementation stage
- Too much process vs. policy decisions/discussions
- GOMC members resistant to change – want to hang onto non-priority projects
- 25 years of bureaucracy and internal structure have never been streamlined
- Too many layers of management

### **Limited Capacity**

- Overall lack of resources (time, money, staff) limits GOMC capacity
- Enthusiastic members volunteer but often lack follow-through due to competing agency priorities
- Current funding structure limits the marketing of our products, efforts, and the GOMC as an entity
- Uneven work load for individual WG members (too much work for WG chair while those without a committee chair role don't have as much responsibility)

### **Other Weaknesses**

While not selected by multiple Working Group members as 'key weaknesses' to address, the following additional weaknesses were identified by one or more Working Group members during the SWOT.

- No voice at GOMC table for local government at the level of implementation
- Committees operate in silos
- Committee co-chairs are primarily federal – need both scales of government running committees
- Success depends upon individual commitment
- Dichotomy within GOMC regarding how broad or narrow our mission should be
- Not using instruments like the Secretariat Team to promote continuity
- Poor use of contractors
- Too dependent upon contractors to drive agenda and implement project work
- Jurisdictions not committed to base funding
- Lack of understanding about different rules and regulations that need to be accounted for in truly regional strategic plans and efforts
- Difficulty in funding existing programs vs. next new 'shiny issue'

## **Opportunities (External)**

### **Leadership on Priorities**

- Regional ecosystem priority setting
- Identify cross-jurisdictional priorities for collective and collaborative action
- Make sure Council as a whole knows about / understands regional and national initiatives (opportunity to align to those)

### **Formal Designation**

- Nation to nation
  - (How formal? May limit involvement of some players)
- Special Body of Water

### **Linking to Bilateral and International Policies/Treaties/Conventions**

- Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS)
- North American Climate Services Partnership (NACSP)
- North American Bird Treaty

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- Law of the Sea
- Global Ocean Commission

**Binational Focus on Climate**

- Multi-stakeholder interest
- Utilize Gulf of Maine ecosystem as a model for tracking and responding to climate change
- Provide regional leadership around resilient, sustainable communities

**Put the Economic Lens on the Issues**

- Value of ecosystem services
- Quantify vulnerability related to climate change – not just ecosystem but human infrastructure and human costs
- Economic opportunity linkages to issues...e.g., green crab invasive species can also offer economic benefits
- Regional leadership on sustainable communities (economic focus)

**Leverage Resources**

- Utilize GOMC partnerships to assist jurisdictions with growing capacity for delivering programs
- Leverage existing resources – people, money, time

**Expand GOMC**

- Broaden Gulf of Maine Council leadership, membership and voice to include all key government and non-government interests. Avoid becoming huge and cumbersome by utilizing opportunities for short-term committees or working groups.
- Ensure membership / leadership and focus encompass all key sectors – forests, rivers, coastal, infrastructure, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, marine renewable energy, tourism, transportation, marine life (e.g., whales, invasive species...)
- Strategically broaden non-government involvement by NGOs, academia, local communities, businesses, and GOMC award winners

**Engage movers and shakers (influential people) who love the Gulf of Maine**

- Philanthropists (e.g., Martha Stewart)
- Authors (e.g., Harry Thurston)
- Artists
- Actors (e.g., Glenn Close, John Travolta – see Ann's list)
- Political leaders/retired political leaders (e.g., Paul Martin)

**Connect Residents to Gulf of Maine**

- Education and awareness
- Sense of Place
- Capitalize on rich literature on GOM

**Other Opportunities**

While not selected by multiple Working Group members as 'key opportunities' to explore, the following additional opportunities were identified by one or more Working Group members

during the SWOT.

- Bi-national environmental response
- Leadership for hazard mitigation
- Take advantage of natural and human-caused disasters as an opportunity for leadership and education
- Engage and collaborate with national disaster relief bodies (FEMA / Canadian counterpart)
- Fly the GOMC flag in front of international bodies such as UN
- Tie GOMC work with national efforts such as US executive orders, ocean planning, preparations for national climate impacts / Canadian National Conservation Plan
- Promote binational stewardship through education and outreach about GOM value
- Leverage other regional organizations (St. Croix, IJC) that map to sectors of interest
- Protect (not restore) a relatively pristine ecosystem of critical importance
- Expose Council members to GOMC successes via workshops, field practitioner tours, etc.

### **Threats (External)**

#### **Multiple Regional Organizations**

- Regional organizations with competing agendas compete for limited resources
- Lack of coordination and cooperation among regional organizations

#### **Lack of Transparency**

- Hidden agendas
- Potential conflicts of interest (institutional and personal)

#### **Lack of Formal Agreement / Designation**

- Lack of a formal federal agreement between two countries
  - Important to understand specifics; consider the benefit/challenges associated with levels of formality (Treaty, MOU, Letter of Cooperation)
  - Type of agreement or lack of certain agreements can also be a strength
- Lack of formal or official designation for the Gulf of Maine

#### **Disconnect Regarding Jurisdictional Priorities**

- Disconnect between jurisdictional priorities and what's expressed at Council (different management levels at table)
- Different priorities expressed at WG vs Council
- Level of representation and organizational influence has been lowered and/or shifted over the past 25 years

#### **Lack of Consistent Funding**

- Causes focus on short term products and issues rather than being more strategic
- Too much focus on trying to find funding
- Could lead to 'flavour of the month' funding which in turn could shift the focus of the Council so that projects / programs may not reflect Council priorities
- Exacerbated by limited staff capacity to make GOMC work a priority

- GOMC ends up competing with other member agency priorities

#### **Other Threats**

While not selected by multiple Working Group members as ‘key threats’ to address, the following additional threats were identified by one or more Working Group members during the SWOT.

- Competing priorities at executive levels (need to address supervisor priorities)
- Lack of altruism
- Economic downturn has limited funding opportunities
- Lack of and constantly shifting policy direction
- Changes in national and regional political leadership affect GOMC membership and support
- GOM is less of a priority because it is not as impaired as other ecosystems
- Perception of GOMC as competing for already limited jurisdictional funds
- Perception of GOMC as an additional layer of bureaucracy
- Pace of environmental change is increasing
- Cost of future crises on environmental and public health

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#### ***About this Document***

Initial summaries of key points were prepared by Working Group members during ‘report out’ portion of the SWOT session. Council Coordinator Joan LeBlanc edited these initial summaries for consistency / organization, and then added additional information from the more detailed poster boards filled out during the SWOT session.