

## Results of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Environment Phone Survey

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Background and Methods. The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment is seeking recommendations on ways to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and the content of their activities. Funding was granted to the interviewer for the purpose of contacting each Council member to conduct a 15-minute phone conversation/interview in November, 2005, to obtain the insights of each council member by asking nine questions drafted by representatives of the Council's working group.

The interviewer phoned and emailed each of the Council members. Appointments were made for phone interviews. A one-page briefing item explaining the background and purpose of the interview was emailed to each participant in advance of the interview. The briefing item also set for the nine questions that would be asked each participant.

Each interview commenced with a brief review of the purpose of the interview. It was explained to each participant that the answers to the questions would remain anonymous and all answers would be aggregated. Further, each participant was advised that their answers could not be written *verbatim* and that all written summary answers would be read back to the participant to insure that the answers as recorded accurately summarized the intent and substance of the participant's response. All participants agreed with this process. Phone calls were placed to the Council members directly in eleven cases or to individuals designated by the council members in six cases. Interview answers were recorded on individual interview forms. The answers were then combined so that all answers appear in aggregate for every question.

The purpose of the survey, as set forth in the briefing item emailed in advance to each participant, was to:

- Begin a dialogue about continuous improvement;
- Document Councilor's views on current conditions; and
- Learn of possible organizational and content improvements.

The questions and resulting answers are set forth below.

### Survey Results

#### **I. Opening**

##### **1. Please offer your general perceptions of the Council and its work.**

My overall perception is that the Council really does represent a fascinating vision for how to communicate across boundaries to deal with common resources. It's really visionary in that broad way and like all organizations that involve people that are geographically diverse there is probably also a healthy degree of dysfunction that arises from the inevitable competition for time that arises among all the participants. At times during my involvement over the last ten years I feel like the plate has been so full of possibilities that it has been hard for people to focus on priorities.

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Ambitious and well attended group that does a lot of good work but suffers from poor coordination. Central staffing is needed and a need for more focus and accountability in its structure.

I think the Council from my experience of 7 years is a very good forum to discuss and identify issues that are of common or mutual concern for the environment in the jurisdictions that surround the Gulf of Maine. In recent years the Council's activities have become more focused and aligned mostly because of their five year plans. The mission goal to maintain and enhance environmental quality for sustainable use has made a difference. Prior to this mission the Council would do things but the things they did, though useful, were all over the board. They have come a long way. The most recent 2001 – 2006 plan has been helpful. The three major theme areas in the last plan have lead to better logic and train of thought. GOMC has therefore become a more useful forum in the past few years.

I've been involved for about 6 years and have generally been very supportive of their mission. I find it an effective cross border group but also believe that it's not afraid to get its hands dirty and accomplish things.

It is a hugely valuable resource. It is principally driven by its ability to act as a convening agent amongst the various public sector players. The practical outcome of its day-to day work is, while important, certainly secondary to that principle focus. To expand a little bit, it is also a convening agent for multiple geographies as well as multiple functions within the various constituencies. It allows the various environmental disciplines that may have something to bear and come together. It allows, for instance, salt marsh restoration interests and wildlife interests to come together with equal stature. Initially I was hugely frustrated being a private sector player coming to the table. The pace required to reach consensus can be frustrating. That said, it turns out that change that is slow to happen is likely better for making a long term difference.

I think that the Council is a successful organization. It is one of the leaders in the region. It creates linkages between different jurisdictions related to the health of the Gulf of Maine.

We're pretty pleased with the council. We've had opportunity for involvement at WG level and at Council level. In general the main thing we get is the interaction and based on that our perception is positive. It also gives us a chance to work across boundaries and jurisdictions and do some things we wouldn't ordinarily be able to do. Finally, its work is generally relevant to New Brunswick regardless of where its carried out and ultimately has implications for our province.

I've been on the Council a long time and would say that the GOMC is an excellent arena for information exchange on the GoM. This information occurs across a variety of disciplines; economic, science, government and policy and that's great. It's a very good venue particularly to pull together the government sides. It's useful to have NGO's on there but I'm not sure the Council has figured out what they want from NGO's and how to get it.

The Council does lots with what it has to work with in an awkward jurisdictional setting.

The Council is an excellent collaborative mechanism for governments around the Gulf of Maine. It pioneered the notion of "borderless cooperation" as exemplified by the borderless Gulf of Maine map. At times, however, the Council gets a little too focused on trying to be an entity that tries to deliver things instead of an entity with a mission of providing a collaborative forum.

My general perceptions are that the Council is a group of like-minded people who enjoy getting together and are very concerned about the health of the Gulf of Maine but mostly talk among themselves. They do good work but in terms of the work I do which is policy work I don't see the Gulf of Maine Council work touching much upon our policy making decisions.

Because of the transboundary nature of the Council it aligns itself well with what we are trying to do. Its informal nature is a strength.

My general perceptions are that it was set up to provide a forum for discussion involving all states and provinces and federal governments in the Gulf of Maine.

It's an organization that is still searching for its core mission. It's worked with communication and coordination role in the Gulf of Maine region and that has been valuable.

I inherited being co chair of the Gulf of Maine by virtue of my appointment. I have noticed that much of the work gets done by the working group after the politicians are out of the way. I realize now that it's the meetings after that get some work done. The politicians are necessary to make sure the work gets implemented. I guess I would say that we could be more efficient.

I have a favorable impression. The Council is an international organization that has a broad view of environmental problems.

I've been in and out of the GOMC over the last several years. I think it's a great opportunity but I don't think it's being used as effectively as it might be. The opportunity is great but it needs to be more effective.

## **II. Gauging the status quo**

### **1. Please describe what you think the purpose of the Gulf of Maine Council is.**

The purpose is to provide a forum primarily for representatives of our state, provincial and federal governments to focus on common resources and issues that affect the common body of water that we all reside on.

Coordinate regionally on issues of transboundary importance that we can't attack on our own and to work to improve environmental quality in the region.

I always go back to the original cooperative agreement that the states and provinces signed. The GoM is a consortium of state and provincial jurisdictions that creates a dialogue to discuss issues that impact the Gulf of Maine environment and that may resonate because they are of mutual concern between two or more of the jurisdictions. Those issues can be discussed in a forum that is not driven by some of the things as the individual jurisdictions, i.e. it is less encumbered by the issue of the day. It is more prescriptive and broader in its focus on the overall health of the GoM. In a sense they have their organizational entities able to participate openly without the jurisdictions being put on the spot. The Council has done a good job of getting those ideas out in the open and discussed.

I see it as an entity that tries to balance the environmental and economic interests in the region. For me it is an action oriented body that does both analysis and research on Gulf issues but also accomplishes practical initiatives that look to the health of the Gulf.

Again, my sense is that it a convening authority that gathers a divergent community together for dialogue.

I think the purpose is information exchange about protecting the environment.

I think the purpose is expressed in the goals and objectives in the action plan. The Mission Statement of the council is a good representation of what we want to do. I also think of three areas when I think of the council. The first is the interaction/collaboration aspect and the opportunity to collaborate. The second thing is the ecosystem – it is the ecosystem that drives the GoM and healthy ecosystem means healthy coastal communities, healthy environment and good economies. Third thing is the ability to gain knowledge and expertise that we wouldn't be able to get on our own.

The purpose of the GOMC is to facilitate cross-border dialogue on the Gulf of Maine marine environment.

It has a number of purposes. The first is to make others aware and informed about the Gulf. It helps to coordinate research and information. It also helps to advise and encourage management. It can't *do* management but has a valuable role in facilitating. The GOMC serves as a common ground for people to get together and work on things and as a switchboard for communication and action.

The purpose is to establish collaboration and cooperation amongst the governments that have management and regulatory responsibilities for the Gulf of Maine.

I think they are primarily focused on the environmental quality of the Gulf of Maine.

The Council's exists to influence the management of the Gulf of Maine as a single ecosystem. With 17 people at the table we are all trying to achieve similar goals and objectives.

I think the Council is designed to get the states and provinces and governmental jurisdictions together to provide a forum for communication on common issues.

Sustainable maritime activities.

It's a great forum for discussion. I really need the face to face meetings to feel comfortable with people and issues. It's a great forum for networking and it has been very helpful in educating me about the issues. It's the only opportunity that I have to talk about cross border issues with my counterparts. The GOM allows for some discussion back and forth and foster understanding of the issues. Coming up with sustainable management for the Gulf of Maine is the main purpose.

Supporting the sustainable use of the GoM watershed. It serves as a forum for resource managers, scientists and other participants involved in managing aspects of the GoM ecosystem at an international level at the same table talking about issues of mutual concern. The focal points fisheries, land use and contaminants are appropriate for the scale that we're dealing with.

From my perspective it's a multinational effort to do some coordinated environmental and conservation work across national lines.

## **2. What do you think is the Council's primary strength and weakness?**

One of the clear strengths is the identification and compiling of all the myriad issues that affect the Gulf of Maine and ultimately all of these things spill out in five year plans. I am still impressed at the collective knowledge of the group about the issues that face us all. The weakness is the Council's hesitancy to trim the list of possibilities and prioritize them.

Primary strength is that we do have a history of cooperative governance and planning. There are good people at the table with lots of experience and who are well intentioned and the GOMC has a track record of achievement. Primary weakness is poor coordination. The GOMC is too ambitious for a small organization and we never say no any project that anyone brings up even if it limps along for years. We need greater depth and not as much breadth until such time as we get greater funding or staffing.

Primary strength is as a bellwether for issues that are various cross organizational and cross stakeholder. The things they say and develop have been of good use to the greater public who made have interest in the Gulf of Maine as well as the agencies. Primary weakness is related to the fact that the Council has enjoyed some growth in the last few years. There has been Congressional funding that has a lot of things they haven't done in the past. There are growing pains and I think there is something of an identity crisis. There are questions about where they are going and what the jurisdictions want from the growth. The dialogue that has been difficult and the difficulty is the determination of future direction and selling the direction to the individual jurisdictions.

Primary strength is that it is a body that encompasses all the governance jurisdictions that have an interest in the Gulf of Maine. Thus all the bodies need to be there are around the table. The weakness is that it probably needs a stronger balance of NGO's and business interests. Its membership, in other words, may be too limited.

Primary strength is the actual plan that is adopted every five years focusing on measurable outcomes. Primary weakness is that those outcomes are frequently difficult to measure and have very little applicability to folks outside the environmental community.

Primary strength is to foster communication that wouldn't normally happen both at high level and working level. This applies to content as well. There aren't a lot of opportunities to discuss issues at these levels. The track record is also a strength. The primary weakness relates to the varying level of interest by the different participants. What I mean is the weakness is that the Council has focused on issues that appeal to some more than others. For example we focus on water quality which is fine. We now know the quality of water but how can we use that knowledge to sustainably use the water and activities?

Primary strength is the fact that we can come to the Council with the backing of the province. Our participation is sanctioned and empowered by the individual province. That level of commitment is a positive influence. The primary weakness is that the commitment, if not paid attention to, can be weakened over time. For example there has been talk of making the deputy commissioners or deputy ministers become the actual members of the council. I think it's important that we keep the highest levels involved so that we do not lose the empowerment we receive from those levels.

Primary strength is the information exchange capability particularly across particular government agencies with jurisdiction around the GoM and providing a venue for discussion among a range of stakeholders through forums, workshops, etc. One of the Council's primary strengths is its ability to recognize the Gulf of Maine ecosystem as bioregion; that is, an ecosystem defined by its natural characteristics rather than purely geographic and jurisdictional boundaries. The primary weakness is effecting change in policy. They provide a lot of information but it's not often that information gets translated into policy. Because of the variety of jurisdictions involved the information exchange is not always looped back to policy change. The GoM Council has been relegated to a networking/information sharing body only because of their reluctance to get involved in policy change.

Primary strength is the commitment of the people and the organizations involved. The primary weakness is the inter-jurisdictional setting. This setting makes it difficult to do things.

Primary strength is on the communication side; both the communication that is fostered at the meetings and that which is fostered by things like the Gulf of Maine Times. The primary weakness is trying to be something that it's not. It is not an institution in itself in the sense that the Council is not a regulatory body or a specific management body and should not try to be.

The primary strength is that it is a multi-jurisdictional group talking about a multi-jurisdictional resource so both the scope and organization mirror the ecological system with which it's concerned. The Council and its organization is sort of an environmental system itself. Its weakness is that I think that it is kind of an inward looking group and doesn't work much at making their discussions, work, plans etc. relevant to immediate issues and multidimensional issues. Economic issues should be more a part of work. Their work should inform economic issues and economic concerns should be dealt with in their work.

Primary strength is the informal and collegial nature of the Council and promotes the networking required to move toward common goals. It places jurisdictional issues into the background. The five year action plan provides a results-based management approach. Participation of high level representation from various jurisdictions needs to be strengthened. Primary weaknesses include the budgeting process. The process of relying on year to year funding is a problem. Because the Council has been in existence for a number of years interest tends to wane from time to time. Responsibility is often delegated to subordinates and if the Council is to function in the manner intended it needs higher level officials at the

table capable of making decisions. The five year action plan provides direction but fails to provide adequate reporting or measurable indicators.

Primary strength is its purpose and in communication among the jurisdictions. Its greatest weaknesses are that in trying to achieve the role in being useful I think it is probably operating on too many projects at one time producing a rather scattered approach. One of its biggest weaknesses is that it seems to be doing mission creep – it's always looking for new things to do because people don't think communication is strong enough. Another weakness is that a good amount of its energy is in promotion of the organization itself as opposed to providing communication function to the member jurisdictions.

Primary strength is the communication and cross pollination between states, provinces and federal governments on both sides of the border. The primary weakness is the lack of clear definition of a constituency. There is a lack of identification of a constituency at which action plans etc. are aimed.

The main strength is that it provides a forum to discuss issues with counterparts. It also is a priority for my department's leadership. The main weakness is that you have so many different points of view and there are so many complexities. Individual agencies often have their hands tied and they are therefore unable to enter into regional commitments. Another weakness is our public relations program. Only people in the scientific community or agencies of government know what the GOMC is or does. We need to get the word out to a broader constituency.

Sound science is an important strength. Weakness – the scale of the watershed and the magnitude of the issues makes it difficult to tackle from our perspective. It is difficult to bring the disparate parties together to deal with the problems of the entire watershed. Sometimes, perhaps because of the number of interests and issues involved, we sometimes get bogged down in process. There seems to be a lack of discrete outcomes. Process heavy – output light.

The strength of the Council is the level of leadership that gets involved. The Canadian side tends to send more senior management and agency leadership with the US side tending to send lower level representatives. The primary weakness is that there seems to be a whole lot of talking and not enough action. Things are spread a little too thin. Instead of trying to pick a couple of things and do them well the Council tries to take on too much and they don't have the resources to do it.

### **3. What motivates you to participate in the GOMC? Please describe the benefits you get from participating.**

What motivates me is the opportunity provided to the general public to participate in this deliberative process. I think that the Council is a rare example of where non-elected non-appointed people are offered a seat at the table to participate in a meaningful way in shared governance of the region. The benefit that I get really is the benefit of the organization that I work for. The organization has a broad environmental education emphasis and working with so many people with such broad knowledge it provides a way for my institution to stay on top of the issues in the region.

It links my jurisdiction to the region in an effective way. We get a very good feel about what is going on in other jurisdictions and get a good idea of regional issues and lessons learned in individual jurisdictions. Advantage also in meeting individuals who do the same work you're doing which makes it very easy to follow up. Also provides an opportunity to visit other areas and see first hand what is going on. Another benefit that I personally get is that the council provides a good avenue to expand initiatives or interests. Thus if my jurisdiction has an issue and can get it examined or adopted by the council it provides more influence or authority.

The GOMC is a forum where we can represent our institutional interests and integrate them into the collaborative discussion. It's a two way street. We need to maintain our agency's interests while looking for opportunities to work with others in a collaborative fashion. For example, a jurisdiction may well learn from others some lessons that are valuable while at the same time there are opportunities to assist others

with problems they are facing. You can step out a little but you still must be careful where you step. Everyone at the table probably feels the same thing.

Where I am right now my mission is to look at the development of fisheries and aquaculture in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine. My goal is to make sure that the Council balances economic and sustainability issues with their environmental agenda. As for benefits, I find that when you work with people outside your own jurisdiction you learn a lot and can bring those lessons home to your own agency.

My motivation is multiple. First I want to try to improve the effectiveness of a public sector process. Another reason is the intellectual stimulation associated with the issues. A third reason is the ability to dialogue with multiple geographies and interests as represented on the Council. An indirect fourth benefit and it is an important issue for my employer who does business in the region.

The ability to talk with colleagues in an informal setting about issues that I normally would not hear about is my principle motivation. Also there is the ability to potentially get a lot more “bang for the buck” by working collaboratively.

I have a commitment to the environment in general and I believe that our department has the same commitment. If we don't protect the GoM we could lose it as a resource. We see the GoM council as a kind of steward of the GoM and the Council can do things collectively that we can't on our own. By working together with other jurisdictions we have a chance at managing the system as whole. The benefits we receive include the collaboration aspect of the Council. The people we meet have their own strengths that contribute to a common effort. It is a common effort because there are five jurisdictions performing these types of activities and it can become like a support network. Successful programs in other jurisdictions can serve as a model for our province and vice versa.

The networking opportunities motivate me – to meet a variety of people with interests in the GoM. I'm also motivated by an interest in bringing a different perspective to the GoM council. The benefits include networking, information exchange etc.

I believe in inter-jurisdictional process and I believe in what the Council is trying to do. I can't think of direct benefits other than the opportunity to learn what others are doing.

In particular it is because I have a mandate to work collaboratively with the US on ocean related matters. Thus the Council is a mechanism that has great potential for me. The benefits are the contacts, networking and better understanding of how the American system works. I also receive a better understanding of how policy is made at both the federal and state levels in the United States.

My participation is delegated to the Coastal Program. What motivates me to support their involvement is that I care deeply about Maine and the issues that affect the health and well being of our coast and its people. I trust the people in the Maine coastal Program to do the right thing and they will continue to address the apparent disconnect between the rather insular work of the council and the issues of the day.

I believe in the ecosystem based approach personally and professionally. It provides an opportunity to work in a seamless fashion. It also provides a tremendous learning experience and networking opportunities. My experience with the Council has influenced me to incorporate EBM in other areas both regionally and nationally. As a federal representative I am now championing this at national levels. The fundamental building blocks of the Council influence me in my decision making in all arenas in which I now function.

I'm not the biggest fan of the Gulf of Maine Council although I'm a member. I do believe the communication function is worthwhile. In addition, because of mission creep I participate to make sure I know what the actions the organization is taking.

Biggest benefit is the understanding of what's going on in the various areas in coastal and marine management from a regional gulfwide point of view. The differing points of view between the Canadian and US side are stimulating and interesting to see the views shared.

It's part of the mandate of the office of the premier to participate. The motivation comes from my love of the ocean and my prior involvement with individuals who are striving to protect the Gulf of Maine. Thus there is a need for good information and the GOMC provides good information and reliable science that we can use in the department.

It is clear that this is a priority for our agency and for our states. It is a priority for our leadership from both an environmental standpoint and from the personal agenda of our leadership. A benefit is to establish personal relationships with various agencies and governments and the opportunity to network in general and on specific technical issues.

From my perspective and the reason I've been pushing the agency to be involved is because the only way we're going to deal with the broad scale of issues is to work collectively. None of our individual agencies can effectively deal with these issues alone. The scale and complexity of the environmental issues we have today requires innovation and partnerships. We have been recipient of some funding for field activities but I'm looking for a broader return in the future when we can all work together on some of these problems.

#### **4. Can you provide some examples of how GOMC products/services have influenced decision-making at home?**

I am reminded of a project that we did for the Gulf of Maine Council with the FWS a few years ago. We compiled an almanac of educational resources in the region mainly for the use of teachers. Much of what we created is now embedded in the website, but doing that job introduced me to all the GOMC resources, including fact sheets, benthic studies, etc. Most of those products that are generated by the GOMC end up on the walls and desks of the folks that work here.

I don't know about "influenced" but certainly helped. The habitat restoration grant program has helped MA in material ways. It has helped with project reviews and other matters related habitat restoration. Also it has had the effect of putting my state's work into a regional context so that regional perspective is at least considered in local decisions.

For one thing the products in general from the GOMC all are welcome but some are maybe more relevant than others to the stakeholders. In some cases Council support helps sell a program at home. The Council in the recent past there has been good work on nutrients and N enrichment. The studies were illuminating and helped us give some good advice on conservation measures. The Council has also done an excellent job with emerging issues. The Council can provide a valuable forum for discussion of the kinds of things and issues that we have to think about in the future.

There have certainly been experiences that we've learned from other jurisdictions that we've brought home, for example indicator work, work on wetlands, etc. The council had done a good job of assessing regionally where the Gulf is on a that basis. The summit last year produced a presentation on the overall health of the gulf that was helpful as well. Funding provided to specific practitioners is also helpful because we can see examples of best management practices at work on the ground and learn from that.

In my own venue, the biggest benefit is the networking available through the process dealing with all the interests that exist.

Not really. It may subtly influence how we act in the department but in terms of products and services I can't think of much. The fact that we're working on the Council probably does more to influence our decision making than any particular product or service.



The first thing that comes to mind is the communication/education tools. We don't have the ability to do much of that on our own so we rely on those developed by the GoM Council to help educate the public and our decision makers. The Habitat Primer has been used to educate decision makers and others to persuade them of the importance of the GoM. Also the summit has brought a lot of folks together and convinced some that there needs to be increased collaboration with industry as well as other NGO's in order to successfully manage the human activities that impact that system.

No

Not really. Mostly it's been the other way around. We tend to try things and help to develop things here.

Probably the best example is the Habitat Primer. This was a useful product and seems to have been picked up with interest by people. Whether it has been influential in decisions, however, I couldn't say.

No, I can't really say that the action plans and other products have influenced decision-making. When you look at the action plans and other on-paper items often there is a lack of follow through in terms of real world activities.

Not really applicable as the products and services provided do not necessarily influence the department directly.

No.

I can't think of any direct decisions that have been influenced. Looking forward I think that the experience that others have had with aquaculture will be helpful in the future.

I believe that products and services have influenced decision making. Information on chemical contamination in the bay is helpful. Water quality and sewage treatment with regards to enforcement, in other words, information has been obtained via GOMC that has caused us to take action in some cases. Also the internal grant programs have promoted some good work being done. Finally, Visionary Awards also provide important recognition to those who have helped with GoM issues.

There are three national estuaries that are part of the GoM. These estuaries drew from the indicator work that the GOMC did.

I've circulated the stuff around but I can't tell you how any of it has been used. If I could get more people to participate from our office I could get more buy-in from our region.

### **III. Making improvements**

#### **1. How can we make the Council's agenda more relevant to your agencies needs?**

I'm not sure that our institution depends upon the agenda of the GOMC, however I would say that by prioritizing projects on an annual basis would be good for the GOMC and good for educators as well. It would help educators figure out how best we can assist if there were a more focused agenda. As the Council refines its work plan it will actually facilitate our role with the public making it easier to see how we can help.

Goes back to the focusing of regional priorities in greater depth. One example is habitat protection – marine habitat protection is a priority issue in MA and should be for the GOMC and if dealt with in more depth it would make the Council more relevant to our agency. I also think that we need to get some more political support for the Council. More people would pay more attention if the profile of the Council was lifted by increased funding, more articles, etc. Another example is climate change. We can't do anything on our own and need encouragement to buttress local efforts.

They've been responsive and they listen. We (the working group) raise issues and they listen. It's working as is. If I had some advice it would be that the Council needs to continue to relate back to grounding itself in its jurisdictions. I wonder if it and the respective members get back to their institutional leadership. How well can the working group, for instance, communicate back to leadership at home?

By insuring that the needs of the Gulf are on the public's agenda. If it's on the public agenda then it supports the kind of things that we're doing. The more the public understands, the more the public supports the work we do in our individual jurisdictions. The summit was helpful in this way. Also, on the Canadian side the extent of involvement of federal authorities has not been as strong as on the US side. The DFO and Environment Canada need to make the GoM more of a priority.

Create better linkage between the environmental community and economic vitality. One easy example might be the impact that the recreational community has on both the environment and the economic viability of the coast.

For our agency, we would like to see (we often deal with the same issues as the Council has in its Action Plan) more emphasis on how the information gathered by the Council might allow us to more effectively use the resources. Our mandate is to promote industry but in a sustainable fashion. Therefore we would like more focus on the sustainable development, for example economic issues, and technology sharing.

The Council's third goal of sustainable maritime activities would be relevant to us. While we are an environmental agency we are interested in increased participation and opportunities with stakeholders and industry. We need to talk and think more on the social side and think in terms of governance. This will come back to economics and how decisions impact the people. We need to talk about issues in an integrated fashion.

Council activities should loop back to identify policy changes within the jurisdictions that are necessary to restore and protect the ecosystem of the GoM. The action plan should identify policy change action necessary to achieve the vision or mission of the action plan/GOM Council.

I don't really know. The Council tends to work at a different scale than I do here.

I think that I'd like to see a lot more about what the individual jurisdictions are doing. What programs are they doing that focus on marine issues and how well are they interlacing. We tend to spend a lot of time on the action plan development and it would be good to focus some time on what individual jurisdictions are doing and what successes and problems they've been having. We can all build on these experiences.

I think on paper I see issues identified that are important issues to be considered and dealt with by all jurisdictions. It's hard, however, to translate those issues into operational activity. There seems to be a real problem in getting the various interests to focus on action. My wish is that the Council would pick one issue and try and make it tangible; i.e. stop talking and start acting.

We are developing a framework to promote sustainability. If you look at a lot of intermediate outcomes the current action plan does not look at some of social and economic issues. There needs to be an expansion of action plan to include these factors. The action plan needs to be structured to accommodate more front line activities and measurable outcomes. Higher level outcomes need to incorporate more of a logic model and from that what can be developed is a results based management framework. Everything you do should be linked to a short, intermediate or long range outcome. Results should be measured and reported in a timely fashion against the desired outcomes. This would promote accountability and better demonstrate a degree of accomplishment.

From my perspective there is value in getting decision makers together to talk. I don't need a lot of show and tell time, however. I think that we end up with so much structure that we are ignoring the real issues that are impacting the Gulf of Maine ecosystem, for example issues related to LNG citing. For example we spend so much time revising the action plan that we lose opportunities to provide a forum for leaders

to discuss the threats in our Gulf of Maine region and talk about our common interests and how to face challenges. That shouldn't all be public meetings with reporters present. There should be time or a way to have executive sessions to discuss sensitive issues.

We need to do a better job of focusing the action plan so that it has items that feed directly into state and provincial decision making.

By developing partnerships. We're kind of by ourselves unless we're involved with other agencies. We don't have the resources to go it alone. We could use specific scientific work that the council could promote or challenge. We do air and water quality testing and research, for example, but if we looked at the end product as something that could benefit the Gulf of Maine it might help give a more complete picture. With additional GoMC funding we might be able to provide better science and perhaps fill in some of the gaps that exist in the existing research.

The Ocean Action Plan from USCOP makes a recommendation for regional councils. Because the GoM council has been up and running for 15 years it is well positioned to serve in the capacity suggested by the USCOP and Ocean Action Plan. Ocean Zoning, for example, and the demand of competing uses are increasingly being discussed and it would be great if the Council could take a more active role in making meaningful recommendations pertinent to the decisions made by governments.

We have to become integrated in the overall council process and we're not there yet. Making it more relevant would mean that if there were some activities that our fisheries or wildlife people could see something in it for their work it would help. Council members should receive relevant materials 2 or 3 weeks ahead of meetings.

**2. If the Council were to have 1-2 signature activities that the Council was particularly known for what should they be?**

One would be the ongoing ecosystem restoration work done with NOAA assistance. A second might be focusing on the impact of land-based human activities have on marine ecosystems, with a subset of that continuing to be the management of human and industrial wastes, sewage, etc.

Increasing effort on marine habitat protection and climate change. What management measures can we take as a region to recognize, get the word out, and adapt to a changing climate?

Communication has been its forte. They have been very good communicators of issues. Stewardship issues in the Gulf of Maine are another signature issue. In other words, stewardship in general and at the local level has been good and has enabled the stakeholders and interested public to learn and take action.

The public communication – this should be an entity that is an umbrella organization that includes NGO and industry initiatives and brings issues to public attention in a neutral way. The work of the Council on a regional basis is a critical component and is an advantage over other organizations. I also like their ability to support local projects as examples of practices that demonstrate best practices or model approaches to problems.

I value the ongoing or longer-term projects where there is some relevance to sustainability and can be monitored. The water quality project is an example of a practical outcome. There are a lot of scientific projects done by scientists that have not been rendered very practical, but there is useful practicality and value in gulf-wide water quality monitoring. Another signature activity is the meetings themselves even if sparsely attended by decision makers. The fact that regular meetings occur is important and there is value in regular working group meetings as well as Council meetings.

Our department would be interested in having the Council known as an organization that is able to take the concept of sustainable development and translate it into reality.

I don't think we need signature activities. We need to find a place at the table for all jurisdictional entities. Each council member should be able to find their own place. There are lots of diverse issues and none should be ignored for the sake of signature activities.

One signature activity would be the every-two-year biannual publication of a GoM report card, an indicator report that gives a snapshot of the status of the health of the Gulf of Maine. The No. 2 activity would be to issue a biannual challenge to the Council of Governors and Premiers regarding actions they could take to restore and protect the Gulf ecosystem. Another signature activity should be the development and implementation of an ecosystem based management plan for the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. The Council is uniquely situated to do this as it is the only transboundary body working to protect and restore the Gulf of Maine ecosystem that extends from Canada and into the US.

When I think of signature activities I think of being visible. The Visionary Awards are a good example and I think they need to be promoted more. I think their grant programs are very valuable but they need more follow-up publicity after the grant is awarded to demonstrate how the grant funds have made a difference. Another signature activity might be the development of a regional score card (e.g. Fraser River score card), but the work on indicators may signal that this could be hard to develop.

One of the signature activities is for the Council to have fostered a common language because language can hold us all up. We need to have common understanding of the meaning of common terms and definitions for the words we use to describe the region and its management. It should also be important for the Council to be known for its model of collaboration. We should be able to clearly show how programs in the various jurisdictions have been brought to bear on common resource problems.

The signature activity might be nature based activities. Through that you could really engage a lot of interests around the Gulf of Maine including business, energy, fishing, lobster, retirement industry, tourism, primary Maine residents and second home owners. You could really engage and galvanize these interests into a holistic discussion of the future of the Gulf of Maine through this issue.

First of all develop and adopt a consistent set of indicators for monitoring and reporting which should result in a "State of the Ecosystem" report accessible to citizens.

I'm not sure.

The Council needs to get involved in fisheries and aquatic resource management in the Gulf from a collaborative decision-making perspective. I don't mean regulatory I mean "what do we do in the long run?" issues. Another issue should be development of data sharing capabilities, e.g. Gomoos and Ocean Data Partnership out of USM. In this area the Council could develop and discuss ways of using the data to assist and inform decision making with the idea of continuing work on indicators. One more signatory issue should be further understanding of the impact of land based activities on the near shore marine ecosystem i.e. sources and loads.

Better and more transparent public communication of the issues of the concern. Everyone who lives around the Gulf of Maine should know what the issues and threats are in the region. The other thing would be to show noticeable improvement of the environment and ecosystem of the Gulf itself.

The Council should consider positioning itself as a body that could understand competing uses for the future and make timely recommendations to governments and agencies that could better inform and influence the uses. The siting of energy facilities is one example.

I would have a very strong habitat restoration initiative that would involve both coastal wetlands and fish passage. A second signature activity, and the Council might be able to do this, but somehow we have to get a handle on how land-based development impacts natural resources and ecosystem function.

### **3. Do you have suggestions to improve the Council's structure and organization?**

I think that we need to figure out how to add or maintain a comparable support system on the Canadian side of the border as we have on the U.S. side of the border. For instance we have a staff US Gulf of Maine Association and we need to figure out how to have an equivalent staff on the Canadian side. It appears to me that the staffing of the GOMC is heavily weighted on the US side and that this may introduce problems. Perhaps less important but still significant – the annual rotation of secretariat produces some “spinning of the wheels” that would be improved if the secretariat had a two year duration. The people in the state or province are just getting their feet on the ground and understanding the issues when the baton gets passed. A second year might allow for significant institutional growth by allowing managers to work with increased knowledge in a second year.

No cure-all solutions. I think somebody needs to have responsibility to provide coordination for committees. Spending needs to be tied to accomplishment. Finally, there is a need for a strong executive director – we need a leader.

The Council is going through some pensive growing pains concerning what it should be. It's not a regulatory agency nor should it be. The need is to establish regional goals and objectives that have to be taken back by members to their local jurisdictions for consistent implementation.

My first suggestion would be to look at the membership and whether there is a better structure. We may have too many governance people and not enough private and NGO participants. I would argue that perhaps all jurisdictions should have a private and NGO representative. Further, it is also typical and Canada that Ministers do not participate and deputy Ministers attend meetings. It is important to keep the membership engaged and participating if it is possible. It might be better to have the deputy Ministers be assigned as Council members.

A have a couple of observations. Potentially fewer “Council” meetings and during those Council meeting have some kind of additional entertaining and educational activity in which the Council members can participate. An example of this is the year we went to the sardine factory in Black Harbor. The setting and venue is also important because in order to attract decision makers you have to hold meetings at locations where they want to go. The agendas for the Council meetings need to be very big picture. In Canada, the people that are sitting as decision makers are elected representatives and may not have knowledge of the underlying interests. The same applies to non-environmentalists from the private sector. So agendas that talk about how many ppm in a mussel is too detailed, but trends about water quality are relevant. I also like the consistent support and infrastructure that supports the council and the rotating secretariat.

One of the things we're striving for in the provinces on the Canadian side is to designate deputy Ministers as Council members rather than the Ministers. The Council members that come to the table from the provincial side serve a different function at home than their federal or U.S. counterparts. The Ministers are elected and are a sort of a figure head. The Minister of our department, for instance, wanted nothing to do with this interview so he delegated the task. Our provincial elected council members come to the table with different skill sets and abilities than their counterparts in the United States or at the Canadian federal level. The Deputy Ministers would be more appropriate as council members. They are our highest level civil servants and typically have the background and experience on issues of concern and might be better able to bring relevant ideas to the table.

I've only been with the working group (“WG”) for a couple of years. I like the fact that the WG meets for a couple of days followed by the Council meetings where Council members comment and debate the issues. I don't know that I like the idea of the Consent Agenda. It frequently gains consent without a full understanding of what's being consented to. I would be in favor of getting rid of the consent agenda in favor of a briefer summary approach to covering a large number of topics. I also think that the four meetings per year format works well. Two council meetings during the year also seem to work.

The Council might want to revisit structure and the composition of Council members. This should be put on a council agenda to look at composition and look at whether it should be altered, including the NGO/business involvement and what is expected of these participants. The GOMC should be structured

to identify needed policy change and to promote and support policy change that is necessary at local jurisdictional levels. That's not to say that the Council should be a governing body, but I think they can work together to assure that policies for managing the GoM are as consistent and effective as possible around the Gulf.

There needs to be better communication between the working group and the Council itself. Right now a lot of the decision making is made by the working group and the Council is asked to rubber stamp the decisions in a 24 hour time period. The other thing that is difficult for the Council is that the working groups and different committees are made up of government people from various jurisdictions that are using their personal time to accomplish GoMC work. They're few of them and they are pressed to the limit. It would be helpful if the jurisdictions could identify more resources and staff time to allow their staff to work on broader issues.

I don't think that changing the structure and organization is necessary. The changes that have to be made have to do with the philosophy and ethos of the Council. The model that exists is perfectly fine from the standpoint of carrying out collaboration; it is a more a matter of the direction it takes.

There needs to be some organization that engages more people more readily including the folks that live in and around the Gulf of Maine region, including policy makers. The Council meetings and agenda and the places where they're held seem to serve the Council's needs rather than the needs of policy makers and people.

The participation of NGO's and industry needs to be rationalized and their functions made clear. In addition the roles of all players need to be set forth and understood. If all players understand their roles with respect to the organization increased recognition by government leadership could result.

I think that organizations have an inherent habit of spending time on their own care and feeding. I want to keep a structure that provides a service to member jurisdictions without creating make work. Keep a minimum staff and provide services. I am concerned about the tension between the organization's care and feeding and the needs of the member jurisdictions. A number of people go to the Council meetings because we want to make sure it doesn't do bad things to us. Others feel similarly so we need to do some souls searching so that we can find ways to make people want to attend, not feel they have to attend.

The way it is structured right now it doesn't function too badly. We need to find a way to keep the minister/commissioner levels informed.

More participation with NGO's. We sometimes seem to be on both sides of an issue when we should be on the same page. We could work together more cohesively.

A lot of discussion at the Council level has involved discussion and process. Some of this is certainly necessary due to the positions of the various interests involved. The working group is doing a good job of ironing out some of this process but advanced materials should be sent out to the agency heads. Further, time spent on grant proposals could be better spent if agencies were targeted and grant proposals and technical contributions tailored to individual agencies.

The council members aren't going to do the nuts and bolts. There has to be a working group. My exposure to that level leads me to think that there is too much talk about process. Maybe we need less structure and more direct involvement.