

NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY:

Great Day in the Great Lakes, NOAA 200th Anniversary

Opening Remarks

As part of the NOAA 200th Anniversary, [NOAA's Great Lakes Regional Team](#) hosted a stakeholder roundtable. Stakeholders that represented many Great Lakes interests attended the roundtable. NOAA attendees included Mr. Timothy Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere; Ms. Mary Glackin, Assistant Administrator of the Office of Program Planning and Integration; Dr. Richard Spinrad, Assistant Administrator for Ocean and Atmospheric Research (OAR) and chair of the NOAA Research Council; and Dr. Stephen Brandt, Director of NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory.

Dr. Brandt welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating. He then introduced Dr. Spinrad who moderated the session. Mr. Keeney, Ms. Glackin, and Dr. Spinrad each gave opening remarks with respect to NOAA's programs and budgets:

Mr. Keeney explained that NOAA is well represented in the Great Lakes by over 65 physical offices and 140 major active programs. He emphasized that NOAA is committed to strengthening its products and services to the Great Lakes by both advancing NOAA's priorities through Regional Collaboration and getting feedback from the stakeholders. Mr. Keeney concluded that this roundtable can serve as a venue for stakeholders' input into the type and quality of services NOAA will provide to the Great Lakes.

Dr. Spinrad began by addressing issues related to both NOAA's budget and legislative updates; additionally, he stated that NOAA has a number of authorizations dealing with Great Lakes issues. He then explained that NOAA's key areas of focus in the Great Lakes included: 1) observations; 2) hazard resiliency; 3) regional approaches; 4) invasive species; and, 5) partnerships. He highlighted that NOAA's research is at the center of NOAA services and technologies. He also stated that NOAA will be starting up a climate service. He then listed the overarching themes that guide NOAA's research: 1) preeminence; 2) societal relevance; and 3) culture of transparency. Dr. Spinrad concluded with explaining the challenges that NOAA faces: 1) keeping up with the explosion of science and technology; and, 2) public demand for new and more advanced products and service.

Ms. Glackin's comments focused on NOAA's Regional Collaboration efforts and the value of regional stakeholders input on NOAA's strategic plan. Ms. Glackin said that through NOAA's existing structure and authorities, NOAA is working to better integrate its regional activities to: 1) be more responsive to regional needs; 2) better articulate regional priorities at the national level; and, 3) tailor implementation of NOAA's mission at the regional level. Ms. Glackin concluded that NOAA's commitments in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy continue to be a significant part of NOAA's long-term strategic outlook, and that we look forward to continued partnerships that will advance the priorities identified for the Great Lakes.

Next, each stakeholder spoke for about 5 minutes on NOAA services and their needs.

Constituent Observations

Governance

Some participants highlighted that the federal governments programs are largely

uncoordinated (mob rule) especially regarding Habitat Restoration efforts and Aquatic Invasive Species. They feel that there is a need for stronger collaboration among federal agencies.

The participants emphasized that the Great Lakes are in a biological crisis and that elimination of this crisis depends on coordinated efforts. They stressed a collective disappointment that the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes (December 2005) has not seen any significant follow-through. Several participants strongly suggested that NOAA take the lead in the regional collaboration; to apply a program such as NOAA's Programs Planning and Integration (PPI) process across the other federal agencies to work more collaboratively to restore the Great Lakes.

There was a request by the tribal representative that NOAA should better supplement tribal needs. NOAA must maintain relationships with the tribes especially with respect to fisheries and habitat. It was strongly recommended that NOAA create a tribal liaison position to foster this collaboration.

Partnerships

Participants were very supportive of the existing partnerships they developed with NOAA. The binational agencies particularly appreciated NOAA's participation and/or leadership on their various committees with respect to science. They strongly want NOAA's continued participation on various policy, research, and fisheries committees to deliver strong science and continued active collaboration.

Budget

Participants noted that NOAA's budget allocation is miniscule in the Great Lakes. . Water quality is a tremendous issue in the Great Lakes. Just in the Chicago area, there are 12 million people who drink water. While participants were happy with NOAA's newly created Center of Excellence for Great Lakes and Human Health, they strongly agreed that NOAA's budget allocated for the Great Lakes is minor compared to what NOAA spends on the other coastal regions. Participants agreed that NOAA needs to focus more of its budget on the Great Lakes. It was suggested that NOAA has a tremendous opportunity to build on its regional presence. Specifically, NOAA's science and monitoring can play a strong role in water quality. Participants expressed disappointment that funds for the Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) did not compete well with respect to other regional bodies and one participant suggested that review panels include people familiar with Great Lakes issues.

Programs

Participants strongly agreed that NOAA's programs and offices bring "value added" to the Great Lakes. Offices such as the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL), National Weather Service (NWS), and Great Lakes Sea Grant Network provide a strong physical presence in the Great Lakes. And, programs such as the water level monitoring and forecasting, the Center of Excellence for Great Lakes and Human Health, Coastal Zone Management (CZM), Great Lakes Wind and Wave Forecasting System, Weather Forecasting and Habitat Restoration (to name a few) have tremendously benefited the Great Lakes.

Participants recommended that NOAA not create new programs in the Great Lakes but strongly increase support for existing programs. It was also recommended that an element of climate be added to the Great Lakes. Participants identified four major priority issue areas that can be better strengthened through better coordination and funding: 1) Great Lakes Human Health; 2) Aquatic Invasive Species; 3) Habitat Restoration; and, 4) Great Lakes Observing Systems.

1. **Great Lakes and Human Health**

Beach closures, drinking water quality and harmful algal blooms are important to the Great Lakes community. Cities want to revitalize their beach fronts because this is great for tourism. Problems with beach closures, combined sewer overflow, and drinking water quality keep people from the lake front. The interplay between land use, recreation, economics, coastal development and water quality must be better understood and monitored.

2. **Aquatic Invasive Species**

Participants stressed that the Great Lakes are at a biological tipping point. Aquatic Invasive Species are at the heart of this problem. There needs to be a strong federal law for ballast water management. Federal agencies must coordinate their efforts with respect to invasive species. The participants felt that the federal government needs to: 1) coordinate a rapid response to prevent more invasive species from entering the Great Lakes; and, 2) develop a quicker understanding of the potential impacts of new invaders. The Great Lakes led this effort nationally.

3. **Habitat Restoration**

Participants strongly recommend that NOAA take the lead in Habitat Restoration. They pointed out that the 2005 strategy to restore the Great Lakes is not moving forward. They recognized the \$1.5M that NOAA has in its budget for Habitat Restoration related to the Areas of Concern (AOC) and are supportive of the Habitat Restoration Office that will be created in the Great Lakes. While the participants understand that Habitat Restoration is a shared effort among cities, states and the federal government, they noted that \$1.5M will not address the "tip of the iceberg."

4. **Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS)**

Participants emphasized the importance of developing a strong Great Lakes Observing System. It has been underscored in the regional collaboration strategy. Participants stressed that protecting delicate habitats is critical. GLOS can help with monitoring these sensitive areas that face pressures. While participants strongly support the monitoring and inventory that NOAA is already providing through automated data collection with meteorological stations, water level monitoring, coast-watch satellite data, and in-lake buoy systems, they want these programs strongly enhanced and they need more ship-based monitoring.

Participants would also like more data synthesis and analysis. While collecting and archiving data is important, data must be interpreted into products and services that resource managers can understand to make informed decisions. It was suggested that a center that could translate these data be created especially with respect to translating how Great Lakes resources are affected by Climate Change.

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