

# **Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network Steering Committee**

**Wednesday, April 16, 2008**

## **Steering Committee Attendees**

Gaye Farris, USGS National Wetlands Research Center  
Linda Broussard for Gaye Farris, USGS National Wetlands Research Center  
Tara Schultz, Texas State Aquarium  
Tabitha Stadler for Gary Lytton, Rookery Bay NERR  
Alison Hammer for Ann Weaver, NOAA  
Lee Yokel, GOMA/DISL

## **Others**

LaKeshia Robertson, Gulf of Mexico Program  
Joseph Grant, NASA  
Greg Ira, FLDEP GOMA UUP Working Group  
Sharon Hodge, Northern Gulf Institute

## **Current Homework**

- EEC to finish compiling Blueprint meeting notes - Notes will be used to create Blueprint goals
- EEC will solicit volunteers to develop goals
- EEC will poll volunteers regarding meeting option in July

## **Acronyms**

AMT = Alliance Management Team  
ACT = Alliance Coordination Team  
EPA = Environmental Protection Agency  
GOMA = Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
EEN = Environmental Education Network  
EEC = Environmental Education Coordinator  
EOC = Education and Outreach Council  
GCOOS = Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System  
JOCI = Joint Ocean Commission Initiative  
NOAA = National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
PITs = Priority Issue Teams  
UUP = Underserved and Underrepresented Populations

## **Agenda General Notes**

During roll call the EEC noted that the new Alliance Educators, Bridget Washburn and Robyn Schoessel were currently on travel but would be back for the next monthly call. The EEC also announced that Tara Schultz and Scott Jones are official co-state leads for Texas.

## 1. Funding Update

- a. BWET – the EEC noted that the deadline for applications was Friday, April 18, 2008. The EEC was soliciting reviewers without conflicts to applicants from the Gulf region. Those potential reviewers would be supplied to NOAA’s Office of Education.
- b. Lee Yokel reported that the NOAA Coastal Services Center had recommended their grant application for GOMA Environmental Education be funded. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab had made the application at the request of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. If funded, the grant would provide for some EEN travel as well as Gulf-wide competitive grants. If the funding comes through, the anticipated start date is October 2008.
- c. LaKeshia Robertston reported that the Gulf of Mexico Program had received 11 education related proposals to their recent GOMA RFP. They were in the process of reviewing all applications and had an optimistic notification date of July 2008 targeted.

## 2. Alliance Blueprint Planning Update

- a. On April 9 & 10, 2008 at the Five Rivers Delta Center in Spanish Fort, Alabama the Alliance Management Team kicked off the next phase of planning for GOMA. While discussion had taken place for months regarding a new, five-year plan, this activity served as formal initiation of the activity. Lakeshia Robertson reported on some of the results from the meeting.

During the meeting an Alliance Coordination Team (ACT) was developed to act as an intermediate group to report to the Alliance Management Team (AMT). Representatives in this group include Laurie Rounds (NOAA) and Phil Bass (EPA) representing federal interests and Steve Wolfe (Florida) and ? (?) representing state interests. Priority Issue Teams should bring issues to the ACT for presentation to the AMT. The goal is to improve communications.

At the meeting Priority Issue Teams (PITs) reported what some of their possible goals for the next action plan information are. The August 2008 “All-Hands” GOMA meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas is the goal for having consolidated information. At that meeting agenda items will include things we’ve accomplished to date and things for the next action plan. It was noted it would be beneficial to consolidate our information to date for the August meeting.

Tabitha Stadler asked if there had been discussion regarding PITs consolidating or working issues together. Discussion at Rookery Bay NERR noted the potential for working across teams on particular issues. Partnerships have been discussed broadly and some PITs are doing this but the issue is left up to the PITs at the moment. Up to us to figure how to make these collaborations work. The AMT really appreciates everyone working across teams.

How can we incorporate this into education? It was suggested that the EEN could recommend for the next action plan projects across teams in addition to individual pit actions. Tabitha Stadler mentioned the idea of a model Gulf Alliance community as an on the ground action in pilot communities across each states.

Someone asked if the site coordinators had been identified for the Public Awareness Campaign funded through DISL. Lee Yokel reported yes and they are: Tara Schultz, Corpus Christi, TX.; Melissa Schneider, Jennifer Buchanan and Marian Dicas in Mississippi; Amy King and Lee Yokel in Alabama; Charles Kovach, Chris Simoniello in Tampa, FL.; and Tabitha Stadler in Naples, FL. A site host was in review for Louisiana. *Update: Karen Gautreaux, TNC is the LA contact*

- b. EEN Blueprint Meeting Completion – the EEC Lee Yokel reported that all the seven Blueprint meetings were complete with the last ones in Texas the previous week. She noted that some topics were mentioned, albeit in different ways, around all the five states. She also had received volunteers from each of the locations to help with the refinement the notes, prioritize the states decisions, and work with the other states for the final goals of the next action plan.
- c. Next Steps –

It was noted that the AMT wants draft goals by June 30<sup>th</sup>. It was initially decided that some consolidated information could be circulated via email to achieve the general goals of the plan. The next discussion involved whether a face to face meeting would be held to refine actions. Three options were presented by call participants:

- a) conducting a series of conference calls and emails
- b) extending the length of the GOMA August meeting
- c) holding a face to face meeting in June or July

The EEC made a request for help with each states results and reviewed the options for revising draft material for the next action plan. Most of the discussion focused on a face to face meeting. Several expressed the value of working in person. The Rookery Bay Alliance Educators were noted as having the ability to host a meeting somewhere in Florida. They could not support efforts in other states as their grant has to be spent within the state. Others noted problems that included busy summer schedules, existing meetings and workshops, inability to travel, and funding problems. After much discussion the two steps were chosen:

- (1) Step One – pull information from notes for potential goals; review existing goals and work with a group via email and conference call to refine.
- (2) Email and query participants for a meeting either the week of July 14 or July 28. The location would be somewhere in Florida, hosted/coordinated by the Florida Alliance Educators, and the purpose would be to refine the action from the state blueprint meetings.

*Update: After the survey was sent out the EEC learned that not Goals but also actions were due to the AMT on June 30. The EEC reverted working with each state via email and conference calls.*

### 3. Future Steering Committee and Other Meetings

- a. June or July 2008? *See previous discussion*
  - b. GCOOS EOC June 5-6, 2008 Pensacola, Florida The EEC reported that this meeting was planned and that GOMA EEN participants were invited to attend if they wanted to but their travel would not be supported. If people were interested in this meeting to contact Lee Yokel and she would connect the person to the meeting facilitators.
  - c. August 20-21, 2008 All-Hands Meeting Corpus Christi, TX – the EEC reported that the next GOMA meeting would be at the date indicated and all Priority Issue Teams would be present at the meeting.
4. Action Plan Status
- a. Website Update - Sharon Hodge with NGI noted their web developer was on board. A very small group was being organized for web storyboarding with NOAA headquarters and their NOS office. This activity would take place in June. The new layout of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance website would also be available to the designers to use should they choose it. The GOMA EEN site will be its own identity separate from NGI. The results of the informal survey that Lee Yokel conducted were being reviewed by a graduate student at the University of Arizona and would be available for use at the June meeting. It is anticipated this project will be up and running this year 2008.
  - b. Clearinghouse Update - Linda Broussard and Gaye Farris noted that the Clearinghouse was working well and they were receiving feedback. They had a backlog on updating new information but noted this was a good thing.
  - c. Underserved and Underrepresented Populations Update Greg Ira
    - i. List of 32 people who expressed information on the calls – regular 8 or 9 people
    - ii. First Tuesday of every month at 11am EDT
    - iii. New format: getting someone to present about project or work – informative;
    - iv. Updates – sent out through listserv sometimes
    - v. Funding opportunities, looking for collaborations conference workshops
    - vi. Initial review of survey that we put out – available from Greg Ira to see responses of organizations – look for most important thing; student reviewing this in more detailed fashion
    - vii. Pilot program through FLDEP LIFE with EPA GMP – Gulf of Mexico Ocean Literacy Project – TX, LA, FL – implementing with about 100 students, in third quarter of project and will be examining results at end of year to see lessons learned. Are documenting education strategies used by others and seeing how they are working with our programs. The results will be commensurable among sites and other programs.
    - viii. Science and Spanish Club Network in Texas with GMF – expanding to other states and countries
    - ix. Five Rivers meeting – guest Hilda Castillo presented from NAAEE – regarding diversity and environmental education
    - x. BTNEP project under way and will have results conference in 2009; asking environmental groups to partner with community groups to work together with mini grant; will discuss how to implement their program.

6. Other Comments

Gaye Farris said the gomaen listserv is good and useful. She noted she forwarded appropriate information to the Government Communicators.

7. Next Meeting – Wednesday, May 14, 2008 1:00PM CDT  
Calls scheduled for the second Wednesday of the month at 1PM CDT.

8. Adjourn

To view other Priority Issue Team Activities: <http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/>

- MORE BELOW -

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network  
2008 Meeting Options**

**Option I**

- Hold a workshop meeting in June or July for all participating or interested in the EEN.
- Coordination through Alliance Educators Washburn & Schoessel
- Location somewhere in Florida
- Purposes to include networking, best management practices and blueprint refinement
- Reconvene for business meeting at All Hands meeting in August

**Option II**

- Hold a workshop meeting in June or July for only select EEN participants
- Coordination through Alliance Educators Washburn & Schoessel
- Location somewhere in Florida
- Purpose to refine blueprint actions
- Reconvene for business meeting at All Hands meeting in August

**Option III**

- Hold a business meeting at the All-Hands meeting in August
- Coordination through Alliance efforts with the Gulf of Mexico Program
- Location Corpus Christi, Texas August 20-21, 2008
- Attendees would be interested EEN participants (steering committee, etc.)
- Purpose to polish blueprint actions, restructure the education network

**Background Information**

Initially, I decided not to hold an annual EEN meeting this year due to 1) the blueprint meeting schedule established; 2) lack of funding support; 3) lack of host; 4) number of meetings already being

held; and 5) need for attendance at the late summer GOMA All Hands meeting. The GCOOS EOC had asked us when our meeting would be and told them we were not having one but that they could partner with us at the then scheduled July GOMA meeting (which has now been rescheduled to August). Bridget Washburn and Robyn Schoessel are two new Alliance Educators at the Rookery Bay NERR. They are available and have the funding to coordinate a meeting in Florida thus the topic has re-emerged.

Regarding Blueprint development, at each of the seven meetings I have requested volunteers to help in the prioritization and refinement of the actions. This activity can be done:

- a. via email and conference call then convening in August
- b. via a meeting in June or July then reconvening in August
- c. via email, conference call, and then June/July meeting – reconvening in August

Two results are possible from the meetings and action refinement/prioritization:

- a. one large document which reflects all the actions received around the Gulf, the individual state priorities, and connections to pertinent plans.
- b. Smaller document, subset of the larger one, reflecting the prioritized actions for the Blueprint