

Alliance Coordination Team and Management Team Meeting
April 9-10, 2008
Mobile, AL
Meeting Summary

The Alliance Coordination Team (ACT) met for the first time on the morning of April 9, 2008. They discussed the role and membership of this new group. It was determined that the ACT will be made up of the Team lead for each of the six Priority Issue Teams (PITs) and the federal facilitators for each PIT. The role of the ACT will be to improve communication between the PITs and develop recommendations for the AMT to consider. The group elected four coordinators to represent the ACT. These coordinators will participate in Alliance Management Team (AMT) conference calls and meetings, facilitate communication between the ACT and the AMT and coordinate teleconferences and meetings of the ACT. The four coordinators are Phil Bass (EPA), Laurie Rounds (NOAA), Steve Wolfe (FL DEP) and Richard Ingram (MS DEQ).

The leads from each PIT presented preliminary proposals for issues to consider for inclusion in the Governors' Action Plan II. A number of teams also recommended name changes for the next plan. Team presentations to the AMT will be made available soon on the GOMA Working Website.

In the afternoon of the first day, the AMT and the ACT met to discuss developing the second action plan. The ACT reported on their first meeting and presented a draft Organizational Chart for the Alliance.

The following were decisions made by the AMT:

- 1) The ACT is now an official body of the Alliance.
- 2) The Resilience Priority Issue Team was approved as an official Alliance Issue Area.
- 3) The change of name for the restoration team and the Habitat ID team were approved.
- 4) The PITs should determine their own core team if they feel that the change is beneficial. The AMT does not need to be involved unless there are issues that can't be worked out at the PIT level.
- 5) The AMT was undecided about state-by-state workshops as the means to provide public input to Action Plan II. They would like the ACT to provide more details including a framework for the workshops. One suggestion was for the education team to host the workshops.
- 6) The AMT will finalize Alliance partnership agreement by the All Hands Meeting.
- 7) The AMT will discuss the possibility of including energy and living marine resources in the next action plan on future conference calls. LA has offered to take the lead on developing a proposal for energy, and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service has offered to follow up on the living marine resources issue.
- 8) In addition to drafting the second action plan, a close-out report should also be drafted for the first plan in 2009.

- 9) The PITs should submit their first draft of issues, goals, and actions to Bill Walker by June 30, 2008.

Feedback from Team Presentations:

Habitat ID:

- Need to identify gulf wide ecosystem data priorities
- Discussion of name change to Coastal Ecosystem Assessment and Integration

Water Quality

- Mercury in fish may be considered for the next action blueprint.
- AMT agrees with need to get public input on new issues and priorities for the next action blueprint; however, the report from the past stakeholders meetings and other regional needs assessment should be utilized by the teams.
- Discussion of using a Citizens Advisory Committee- GMPO already has one that may be better utilized by the teams.
- An integrated workshop in each state would provide a way to get public input for all the teams' in one public meeting.

Education:

- Increase regionalization by reaching out in each state and leveraging existing groups, especially National Estuarine Research Reserves and National Estuary Programs
- Increase economic considerations in education initiatives
- Integrate education issues and focus on GOMA message
- Use Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) education efforts and resources

Nutrients:

- Nutrient issue is an opportunity for federal workgroup members to apply their resources, including research grants, on team priorities that affect GOMA wide issues.
- Iowa is very interested in working with GOMA, especially on nutrient issues to reduce Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia.
- Would like to develop a strategy to get agriculture more involved; especially with increasing trend of field conversion for biofuels and its effects on nutrient loads
- Use Sea Grant and NRCS extension programs better
- Combine efforts to reach out to agriculture by working with USDA and NRCS as well as state secretaries of agriculture or state agriculture programs
- Need to get better synergy with the Hypoxia Task Force and up-basin activities
- Team could bring regional issues to other efforts like the Hypoxia Task Force
- Need for forecasts and models on the potential expansion of the dead zone and its impacts to states
- Need to identify areas impacted by hypoxia and data gaps for those areas
- USGS SPARROW effort can provide analysis they conducted and data

Resiliency:

- Discussion of progress since breaking off from Restoration team and need to identify this as a priority issue team

Restoration:

- There are many ongoing restoration programs, especially related to hurricane recovery that GOMA should tie into
- Need to identify region-wide needs and bundle existing restoration programs with a regional focus
- AMT can steer requests to each state's congressional delegation.

Overall AMT Comments on Action Plan II:

- Integration of teams and issues
- Identify public needs and use existing information while still reaching out and providing opportunities for public involvement
- Support non-governmental activities
- Work at the watershed level
- Value in face-to-face meetings even though budgets are tight
- Sensitivity to stakeholder and cultural values and gaining support of communities
- Need for decision support systems for decision makers to solve specific problems
- Need status and trends data and analysis
- Increase opportunities to involve senior management in each state, such as Governors' offices
- Improve communication and networking
- Stay action oriented with achievable goals
- Consider existing resources
- Consensus on goals is important
- Address up basin to leverage resources where stressors occur
- Need measurable goals, milestones, and endpoints
- Need to determine how to measure progress and outcomes
- Data should drive decisions so need good data standards, analysis, and gap identification
- Need to have public support for GOMA and more outreach
- The first Action Plan focused on low-hanging fruit, the second Action Blueprint can expect more and be more aggressive and forward thinking
- AMT will facilitate the flow of money to support teams and lobby for federal and state initiatives and should be kept informed of support needs
- Market GOMA to decision makers
- Governors need to let the federal administration know that support by federal workgroup agency employees is needed to support GOMA

Potential New Regional Issues:**Living Marine Resources**

- Buck Sutter, NOAA Fisheries, discussed GOMA awareness and opportunities for collaboration with the fisheries management community (councils and commissions).

- There is a need to better define outcomes for fisheries management community as GOMA participants- what's in it for them?
- There is a need for better understanding of Gulf-wide regional approaches and how to incorporate into their fisheries management missions. There is increasing attention to ecosystem based management approaches.
- A start may simply be to ask state fisheries staff to participate on GOMA teams.
- The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) is a good opportunities to incorporate fisheries into GOMA activities.

Energy

- Energy is an important national concern in the Gulf, both as a national supplier and provider through infrastructure, but also in alternative energy sources.
- The sustainability of energy, transportation, and fisheries are important concerns.
- The America's Energy Coast initiative for Texas to Alabama was mentioned.
- Need to identify what the common energy issues are for all states

Other Topics:

- Need to create a matrix of federal projects with team needs
- Need to make reports on stakeholder meetings, research priorities, and needs assessment available to the teams
- Need to discuss in more detail how to include international aspects for Mexico and Caribbean
 - First step may be putting together a support group to help them form an Alliance and identify capacity building opportunities. There is interest in wastewater management, wastewater to wetlands, and education learning centers
- Use Gulf of Mexico Program Office business and industry groups for GOMA support rather than form a new team
- Develop a strategy and timeline for integrated public workshops per state
- Request input on Partnership Agreement and add definition of terms
- Finalize the organizational chart

Action Plan II Timeline:

- Want to finalize Action Plan II by October-November timeline to allow time for printing.
- First draft from teams by June 30th to be reviewed for further discussion at annual meeting Aug 19-21 in Corpus Christi
- Need a template for teams to use in writing actions and presentations for annual meeting
- Teams should collect photographs and graphics now for inclusion in the final document
- Action Plan II will have a 5-year timeline, but teams should have milestones throughout with measurable outcomes for a steady stream of successes
- Need to begin planning for an event that can both be a successes celebration for the first action plan and a release for the Action Plan II.
- Mississippi will serve as overall editors for Action Plan II.

Follow-up Actions from the Meeting:

Follow up action: *The ACT will review and present a final recommendation of the organizational chart to the AMT*

Representatives from the federal agencies in attendance gave presentations on commitments to the Alliance included in their response letters to Governor Barbour. Sea Grant and NGI also presented on their research and projects that potentially intersect with upcoming Alliance efforts.

Follow up action: *Post agency letters and presentations on the working website.*

On day two of the workshop, the PIT leads presented their proposals for the next action plan to the AMT.

Follow up action: *Post all presentations on the working website.*

The AMT, ACT, and Federal Principals discussed issues and process for development of the second action plan. Many meeting participants noted the need for the next action plan to include milestones for actions and performance measures of success. There should be actionable statements of activity for the next five years. It is also important to market the Alliance to the Governors and the constituents of the Gulf of Mexico region, as well as Congress.

Additional follow up actions:

- 1) The ACT will draft an agenda for the All Hands meeting and present it to the AMT. [SHW-I missed this one. I thought we just had to provide input on what the PITs needed the All-Hands agenda to include to support PIT needs. Seems like the plenary portion of the agenda might be better from the AMT. I guess we can guess what they want and they can then correct.]
- 2) NOAA will continue to develop the public website for the Alliance and will work with the ACT as necessary for guidance.
- 3) Send out screen shot of website to ACT and AMT.

Other Announcements:

- Gulf of Mexico at a Glance document developed by NOAA SPO provides environmental and socio-economic facts and information for the region. This can be used for outreach by all teams. A web version will be available soon.
- A new GOMA public web site is under development to be released soon.
- A new GOMA web calendar of events will be released soon. Events can be emailed to Terry Teague for inclusion of the web calendar.