

NECAN Policy Working Group Meeting  
10/7/15

Present: Todd Capson, Beth Turner, Juliana Barrett (CT Sea Grant) Sarah Cooley (Ocean Conservancy), Julie Simpson (MIT Sea Grant), Susie Arnold and Nick Battista (Island Institute), Ralph Johnson (RI), Chris Williams (NH DES)

Summary:

Todd and Beth are looking at the results of the NECAN stakeholder workshops to pull out items related to policy. That will be circulated to PWG members. In general, states are finding it hard to make OCA a top priority with all the other pressures on fishing and shellfish industries. But tying to local interests is possible through linking to eutrophication, coastal economies in general.

Sarah provided an update on some actions that Ocean Conservancy has taken reaching out to policymakers at the Federal level. Outreach methods have to be tailored to particular state interests. Example: FL lawmakers much more interested in jobs and coastal economic impacts, preserving healthy oceans for coastal economies. ME delegation is more broadly environmental, link to other environmental issues. Ties to nutrient reduction are more appropriate for some states than others that have much more oceanic influences. It is important to emphasize double benefits of taking actions, whether mitigation efforts, nutrient reduction, etc.

Ralph noted that RI definitely had a focus on linking nutrient issues with OCA, because of Narr Bay eutrophication issues. This is also true in Long Island Sound; some legislators are considering an activity that would tie eutrophication and acidification in some way.

RI developing a shellfish management plan, which could benefit from some OA information. It is hard to decouple OA impacts from warming impacts, this affects many planning efforts (e.g. marine spatial planning).

Should the NECAN PWG make better connections to RGGI? This was mentioned at the MIT/NECAN stakeholder meeting, and there seemed to be some support for the idea. PWG might look to make those connections, although we also need to pursue separate activities and not wait for RGGI to act.

Sarah also gave a preview of a paper submitted for publication that looked at commonalities among efforts towards addressing OA. The co-authors tried to identify what has led to action, and provide some guidance for those who want to know how to begin. Several categories of actions were identified, each of which could be associated with legislative actions and non-legislative actions.

1. Education and outreach
2. Assess and address knowledge gaps
3. Provide strategies for industry
4. Managing for resilience in a broader sense
5. Cutting acidification

Most states' legislative actions are focused on 1 and 2 above. Fewer states are addressing 3, and those that do are non-legislative efforts. Items 4 and 5 are less addressed, and require larger coalitions to get moving. Need clusters of stakeholders, not just one interest group. But all actions count! If one state begins taking actions, it attracts other neighbors (e.g. Pacific Coast Collaborative).

Susie gave an overview of the ME efforts to date. This is an example where the focus has been on jobs and the economy more than environmental arguments. Efforts began with the 2013 Maine Fisherman's Forum, where Island Institute (II) brought together industry speakers to discuss how OA was or might impact their livelihood. This kicked off a ME working group on OA, which helps to maintain contact and share information related to OA impacts specific to ME. In June 2013, the ME legislature passed a "resolve" (non-binding) stating why OA was important to ME. That summer, II convened a workshop on climate change in general, where one of the sessions was on OA. Participants came away concerned but not empowered to do anything, which was not the intention. A meeting in Jan 2014 helped to prioritize key actions in ME. The latter meeting benefitted from having Shallin Busch provide an accessible science introduction, and the example of the WA state Blue Ribbon Panel.

Mick Devin introduced a bill to the ME legislature in fall 2013 for an OA commission. This was voted down, but a push to get industry reps and stakeholders to contact their legislators resulted in a successful appeal and passage of the bill in the next legislative session. The commission worked from July – Dec 2014 to produce their Jan 2015 report. Meanwhile, a paper ([Ekstrom et al., 2015](#)) came out identifying Maine as having high vulnerability to OA because of its bivalve shellfish industry. The commission recommended formation of an OA council and a \$3M bond for monitoring. These recommendations have been carried over to the Jan 2016 legislative session. The chances of the passing a bill to establish a OA Council do not look good, so the ME OA working group is thinking about non-legislative ways to provide the same benefits of maintaining connections among researchers, industry and regulators and providing impetus for action. The monitoring bond needs to be clarified re. what the funds will be used for specifically and who will be involved.

Action items from the meeting:

- Todd and Beth will circulate notes from the meeting and information gleaned from the NECAN stakeholder workshops
- Beth will circulate notes from a NH meeting she attended with the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
- PWG members will query local and state contacts about what materials from the PWG would be useful to them. Todd provided a template for this, if it is helpful.
- A doodle poll will be circulated for availability next month.