



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

SCHOOL OF MARINE AFFAIRS

April 5, 2010

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Room 6811
14th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

The NOAA Science Advisory Board's Ecosystem Sciences and Management Working Group [ESMWG] has focused its attention on review of NOAA's on-going and planned activities to implement an Ecosystem Approach to Management [EAM] across NOAA and its partners. The ESMWG identified several important issues about how NOAA is implementing EAM and how NOAA can take advantage of the opportunities presented by current developments in the federal budget and the President's Ocean Policy Task Force [OPTF] recommendations. At our March 2010 meeting the Science Advisory Board(SAB) reviewed these recommendations and accepted them in their entirety. On behalf of the SAB I am transmitting these recommendations for your consideration. In addition, the SAB continues to endorse a strong leadership and communication role for NOAA in planning for and portraying its role in EAM. We believe that NOAA's performance concerning EAM implementation could be enhanced by preparation of a short technical document primarily for internal consumption, a compelling communications document primarily for external consumption, and a website "ecosystem.gov" which would provide easy access to on-going implementation efforts.

Problem Identified

Over its last four meetings ESMWG has listened carefully to the presentations by the NOAA Ecosystem Goal Team [EGT] and others on the efforts underway within NOAA Fisheries, National Marine Sanctuaries and other components to implement EAM. We observe there is a distinct lack of consistent and comprehensive understanding of what NOAA is doing and planning to do with respect to EAM – especially the relationships between EAM, Integrated Ecosystem Assessments [IEA], and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning [CMSP]. These appear

to create problems of communication internally and particularly externally among NOAA's constituencies and stakeholders.

SAB Recommendations

It is imperative for NOAA to devote resources to ensuring that the NOAA EAM approach is identified within NOAA and is communicated consistently within NOAA and to external partners. To accomplish this NOAA should prepare a short technical document primarily for internal consumption, a compelling communications document primarily for external consumption, and a website "ecosystem.gov" which would provide easy access to on-going implementation efforts.

This NOAA-wide effort would:

1. Identify NOAA's progress in implementing EAM under its existing mandates and other responsibilities. This would include management and planning in National Marine Sanctuaries, for Coastal Zone Management and for Fisheries, e.g., fishery ecosystem plans, Essential Fish Habitat measures, etc.
2. Provide guidelines for the development of regional IEAs which provide a balance between consistency in approach and flexibility to regional differences. [See separate Memo with recommendations for IEAs].
3. Outline how NOAA intends to engage in the development and implementation of CMSP as recommended by the President's Ocean Policy Task Force and specifically how NOAA is integrating MSP into its EAM in conjunction with partners.
4. Address how each of these major efforts contributes to NOAA's EAM and indicate plans for actions to be taken short-term and longer-term. [See Addendum to this letter for details]. The ESMWG emphasizes that it is not looking for a "one size fits all" approach to implementation, rather an adaptive learning approach that encourages experimentation, pilot projects and institutional learning.
5. Address how NOAA's EAM is integral to NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan and how NOAA can engage with existing and potential new partners.

In closing, the SAB wants to emphasize that it has the utmost respect for those leading and working in the Ecosystem Goal Team across NOAA. Nothing in our comments should be construed as denigrating their herculean efforts to integrate NOAA's EAM across line offices and responsibilities. We want to emphasize that this is a difficult but important process from which to learn what works and what does not. The ESMWG will continue to work with NOAA on scientific issues of implementation.

The SAB believes that it is critical and timely that NOAA make every effort to consolidate and clarify the nature of its efforts to implement an Ecosystem Approach to Management and communicate this information to ensure internal and external understanding. The SAB believes these actions will garner support for NOAA's efforts and avoid possible confusion and unrealistic expectations about how quickly and comprehensively EAM can be implemented.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Fluharty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'F'.

David Fluharty, Chair
NOAA Science Advisory Board
University of Washington
3707 Brooklyn Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98105

206 685-2518
fluharty@uw.edu

Addendum

Cc: Mary Glackin
Paul Sandifer
Steve Murawski
David Conover, ESMWG Co-Chair
Jo-Ann Leong, ESMWG Co-Chair
Cynthia J. Decker

Addendum to the NOAA SAB Memo to the NOAA Administrator [April 2010] Conveying the Recommendations of the Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group.

The NOAA SAB has accepted the recommendations of Ecosystem Sciences and Management Working Group to offer advice with respect to the type of questions and issues to address in the internal short paper and material for external communications. These questions are not exhaustive. However we feel they are representative of the issues that NOAA is addressing internally in a constantly changing environment where external interests are eager to obtain information on what is being implemented. Given budget and other constraints on implementation of EAM through regional Integrated Ecosystem Assessments and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning it is important to characterize progress being made and lessons learned while moving toward a more comprehensive approach.

The SAB recognizes that NOAA has made substantial progress in all of the dimensions raised below. We are encouraging NOAA to make these efforts more apparent internally and externally.

Overview Questions

What are the existing mandates and responsibilities within NOAA that serve as building blocks toward EAM?

How does NOAA define EAM, IEA and CMSP?

What are the goals and expected benefits of EAM in contrast to more limited management objectives, e.g., for Ecosystem Based Management in different sectors?

How does NOAA conceive of the relationships/ linkages between EAM and IEA and CMSP?

How is NOAA developing capacity to integrate social science research and information in EAM with particular emphasis on its role in IEAs and CMSP?

Detailed Questions

How has NOAA worked to develop EAM concepts into action [what is already done on which NOAA is building]?

What adaptations in NOAA's organizations and programs have already been made to facilitate these initiatives? What more is planned or anticipated?

What foundations for EAM initiatives exist across NOAA organizations and programs and how do these link to complementary efforts by present and potential partners? [the SAB recognizes that these are dynamic and they should be so characterized].

How is NOAA changing its organization and processes to implement EAM?

What will be the **process** for evolving these concepts in the short and long term, acknowledging that they are in flux?

How are funds allocated or reallocated towards these efforts?

What are concrete actions planned and what is the timeline for EAM implementation taking into account existing efforts and use of the IEA and CMSP tools?

What kinds of products can be expected and on what timeline?

How is research planned in support of EAM?

How is NOAA developing performance measures for EAM, e.g., through evaluation and revision of IEAs?

How is the development of the Integrated Ocean Observing System seen as supporting EAM?

How does NOAA envision its role in the development of EAM with partners [federal /tribes/state/academic/industry/NGOs]?

How are stakeholders/constituencies engaged?

How is the EAM development represented in Next Generation Strategic Plan?

What is the relationship between the Climate Goal Team and the Ecosystem Goal Team when assessing ecosystem change?