

**Great Lakes Observing System  
Steering Committee Conference Call Minutes  
Thursday, July 15, 2004**

**Participants:**

Catherine Cunningham Ballard, Michigan Coastal Management Program  
Samuel Batzli, University of Wisconsin  
Mark Bobal, U.S. Coast Guard District 9  
Norm Grannemann, U.S. Geological Survey  
Brian Huberty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Thomas Landon, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Lorelle Meadows, University of Michigan  
Jeffrey Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant  
Dave Schwab, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Harvey Shear, Environment Canada  
Eric Tauranian, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Richard Wagenmaker, National Weather Service  
Roger Gauthier, Great Lakes Commission  
Christine Manninen, Great Lakes Commission  
Thomas Rayburn, Great Lakes Commission  
Jon MacDonagh-Dumler, Great Lakes Commission

**Legislative Update:**

Jon MacDonagh-Dumler, Great Lakes Commission (GLC)  
Two hearing were held in Washington, DC on July 13 on the status of the Ocean Observing Systems in the US. Primarily, testimony was from the administrative perspective and not the technical logistics. Rep. Kurt Weldon's (R-PA) House Bill was the impetus for these hearings. In addition, the House Committee on Resources reviewed the existing language in Senate Bill 1400.

On July 15, the House Science Committee took up review of Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) bill, HR 4546. No specific details on this hearing were available at the time of the Steering Committee (SC) conference call. The House will take up legislative debate in early September to reconcile Ehlers' and Weldon's bills.

The Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) is scheduled for a hearing with the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation on Friday, September 10 in Washington, DC. The Northeast/Midwest Institute (NEMW) is calling and coordinating activities for the hearing.

Relating to the Interagency Great Lakes Task Force, outlined in the May 12, 2004 Executive Order, Roger Gauthier, GLC, stated that so far there has been no "cross-fertilization" between this federal group and GLOS, but hopes that in the future GLOS will be a key component of decision-making on the lakes.

## **Governance:**

Key questions on the governance of GLOS were distributed in advance of the conference call and include:

1. The GLOS Regional Association will report to and interact with the National Federation of Regional Associations (NFRA). The NFRA will have a strong focus on lobbying for the Regional Coastal Ocean Observing System (RCOOS) network, of which GLOS is a part, at the federal level. Given this perspective, how should the GLOS Board be comprised to effectively incorporate the important federal agency partnerships and balance their inability to participate in lobbying activities?
2. What do you envision as the role of the Regional Association relative to agencies operating the IOOS backbone (NOAA, USGS, EPA, COE, etc.) and what is the appropriate governance structure for this role?
3. If the governance structure is like GoMOOS where the membership elects the board of directors and the board of directors appoints a paid executive director, what will be the qualifications for membership, how will the board of directors be selected and what authority will reside with membership, board of directors and executive director?
4. Given that GLOS is currently a U.S. federally-financed initiative, that the open waters and coastal dynamic of the Great Lakes system in particular require input from both U.S. and Canadian sources to effectively assess, and that the original impetus for development of the Global Ocean Observing System comes from the United Nations Environmental Program, what level of Canadian involvement should be pursued for effective representation and integration with GLOS?
5. It may be determined that contributions of Canadian data can and should be pursued by individual U.S. or bi-national agencies participating in GLOS. If, however, it is determined that Canadian involvement should be pursued in direct conjunction with the establishment of GLOS as a certified RCOOS, what channels should be used?
6. At this time, are there any known preferences among the agencies and organizations related to GLOS staffing requirements or where the GLOS should be housed?

Dave Schwab, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Great Lakes Environmental Research laboratory (GLERL) said that it looked as if GLOS would most likely be best governed under the model of independent non-profit organization, (*i.e.*, 501(c)(3)). The Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS), in their corporate by-laws, only accepts organizational membership and not individual.

In reference to the role of federal agencies in the Regional Association (RA), Jeff Ruetter, Ohio Sea Grant, said the one of the elected board's roles is to appoint a director. There may be an encumbrance to participation on GLOS if there are fees to participate. Schwab stated that composition of membership is up to the SC. The GoMOOS fee structure was designed to heighten membership participation and is pro-rated to organization type. It was asked how the

revenue from dues is utilized by GoMOOS. That is unknown but probably goes into their general operating fund. The Business Plan needs to delineate funding streams. How is the definition of “membership” in GLOS derived? What is their role beyond electing a board who then appoints a director?

Mike Helmsley, Ocean.US, in conversation with Schwab reminded him of the limitations of lobbying with federal funds. Schwab noted that at least initially, NOAA will be providing the majority of funding to the RAs. Federal agencies could participate as non-voting members or as observers as one model or as full members recusing themselves on issues related to lobbying efforts. All-in-all, the Business Plan may not need to be that specific on membership and this can be addressed in the by-laws following legal direction.

Sam Batzli, University of Wisconsin, said one potential model is to identify a membership level with the ability to apply for funding through the non-profit. Perhaps an annual meeting and conference could help offset funds. Batzli will forward the by-laws of AmericaView that pertain to this model: <http://www.americaview.org/Bylaws.html>. IMAGINE is also partially funded through their annual conference.

Schwab noted that the International Association of Great Lakes Researchers (IAGLR) also charges membership fees. Organizational dues are relatively high compared to individual dues. Norm Grannemann, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), said that he will look into USGS’ ability to participate and at what level. Also relevant is the July 13<sup>th</sup> letter from Helmsley that implies there should be full federal involvement but the by-laws must state that there will be no federal participation in lobbying and the RA can not have lobbying as a substantial fraction of activity. MacDonagh-Dumler noted that the Lobbying Disclosure Act sets \$22,500 per year as the ceiling before the entity needs to register as a lobbyist.

Thomas Rayburn, GLC, said that it was his understanding that the primary lobbying group will be the NFRA and no the individual RAs, which may make a large portion of the discussion mute. The MFRA will be addressing this at their annual meeting at the end of August.

The Business Plan should be set up to have lobbying as a small portion of its overall focus. Schwab suggested, however, that it be left out of the Governance section. The SC agreed. GLC staff will draft the tentative language.

### **Regional Association Membership:**

As far as individual versus organizational membership in the GLOS RA, the organizations themselves will have to define their level of involvement (*i.e.*, is NOAA a member or is it GLERL, National Weather Service (NWS), or CSC?). Gauthier stressed that the Business Plan and by-laws should keep the membership delineation simple. Grannemann noted that the hierarchy within each organization will most likely define its own participatory membership level.

The GLOS RA Board will be allocating funding and resources, so defining the membership that elects the board make-up is crucial. Dues, however, may be irrelevant if GLOS becomes largely supported by federal appropriations. Membership could also be based upon the support and data

provided by their organization to GLOS and dues charged to organizations want membership access but having no data to transfer.

Schwab asked if we want to have membership elect the board and appoint ex-officio member, etc.? Or do we delineate a percentage of seats on the board to a broad category of membership. Maybe we could have a “board within a board”, such as an executive committee or working group of the board. Reuter said the by-laws need to state that the board will represent GLOS RA membership.

The SC decided that a tentative board size could be 12 members, with the addition of “immediate past chair” and the executive director of GLOS.

As far as representation from and in Canada, IAGLR has separate organizations legally set up in each country. It was noted that Canadian participation still needs to be handled carefully. Also, in light of the current review period for the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA), can GLOS or the idea of GLOS be incorporated into the update? The SC should provide comment off line.

#### **GLOS Administration and Housing:**

Two key positions that need to be filled from the beginning to staff the GLOS are Executive Director and an individual responsible for education and outreach. The board will appoint the Executive Director and the Executive Director will hire the staff to fulfill the mandates of the board.

Housing of the GLOS can be discussed at a later time and broached within the context of the Business Plan. It is most likely that the physical location of the GLOS will change in the early years, mostly likely attached to an existing organization that will provide space and some infrastructure needs.

#### **Next Steps:**

Notes from this conference call will be posted on the project web site: <http://www.glc.org/glos/>

An initial secretarial draft of the Business Plan will be developed. Following secretarial review a new version will be revised for SC review and comment. A final draft version of the Business Plan should be ready for wide release in September.

August 24 and 25, 2004 will be the next meeting of the GLOS SC. It will be an in-person meeting at GLC focusing on Governance and the Business Plan.