

Discussion Paper – 15 May 2009

The Role of the ACZISC in Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management Policy Development and Implementation in Atlantic Canada

Purpose

The objective of this discussion paper is to provide a broad context for **Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management (ICOM)** in Atlantic Canada, and to illustrate how the **Atlantic Coastal Zone Information Steering Committee (ACZISC)** contributes to the ICOM community of practice. A brief history of ICOM in Canada is provided in the appendix.

ACZISC Overview

The ACZISC was established in January 1992 to foster cooperation in Atlantic Canada with regard to ICOM, coastal mapping and geomatics. Its membership includes the federal government, provincial governments, academia, community organizations and the private sector.

The ACZISC is actively:

- Networking and disseminating information via meetings and thematic workshops, the Coastal Update (monthly e-newsletter) and the website.
- Engaging stakeholders in the establishment of COINAtlantic – the Coastal and Ocean Information Network – in support of ICOM in Atlantic Canada.
- Participating in studies and projects to further our understanding of the coastal zone.

The ACZISC holds three meetings per year in the Atlantic provincial capitals by rotation. In addition it organizes thematic workshops as required. The meetings and workshops are attended by ACZISC members and by observers from all sectors, including community groups, the private sector, academia, etc.

The Role of the ACZISC

Because of the expanding role of the federal government (Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, etc) and provincial governments in ICOM, it is critical that knowledge, data and experience are shared amongst all concerned. This includes building upon best practices and policy development methodology that are used by all ICOM stakeholders. The challenge and importance of ACZISC is connecting these organizations that are either geographically or sectorally limited to a narrow group of participants (*i.e.* government, industry etc.)

This exemplifies the true strength of the ACZISC. The Committee provides a non-partisan, non-political and inclusive forum for the sharing of ideas, information

and data, as well as ensuring there is a minimum of duplication, all of which leads to a consistency of approach to policy development and implementation.

The ability of the ACZISC to provide this leadership is achieved in the following ways.

- The ACZISC mandate specifically deals with the sharing of both data and information which are critical to successful ICOM initiatives.
- The ACZISC can address the ‘problem’ that government-only organizations/ committee have whereby their policies and regulations may make them less responsive to current issues. In addition, political realities sometimes lessen government organizations’ ability to respond.
- The ACZISC can provide a long-term vision and commitment in relation to ICOM. Governments can not always provide this vision or commitment as they are always influenced by political timelines and shifting priorities.
- The ACZISC meetings and workshops provide a neutral opportunity for all participants to discuss new ideas, current issues and potential policy directions in an open forum.
- The ACZISC, being open to all interested parties, provides an opportunity for local initiatives to gain insight into current provincial, regional and national initiatives and to provide feedback on planned policies.
- The ACZISC facilitates integration through the concept of joint project funding, *i.e.* individual members provide a relatively small amount of funding which collectively can be used to address common objectives at a much larger scale.
- The ACZISC provides linkages to international initiatives and developments that many smaller organizations may not be aware of or have access to.
- The ACZISC strongly supports the idea of a community of practice. There currently exists no other such mechanism for ICOM policy practitioners. The ACZISC provides the added advantage of linking this community with the data providers and managers.
- The ACZISC minutes and records have institutionalized the long-term memory of ICOM initiatives and practices in the Atlantic Canadian region, that will serve the community well in the future.
- The ACZISC has been able to accomplish one of the more difficult aspects of ICOM by introducing many industry perspectives to the ongoing development and implementation of ICOM.

In Atlantic Canada there is a clear challenge to integrate coastal management practices with large ocean management initiatives. A second challenge is to achieve collaboration among governments and stakeholders with different capacities and goals. Connectivity is certainly needed between organizations that advance coastal and oceans issues, *e.g.*, the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (1989); the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition on Sustainability (1999); the Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Partnership (1995/97); the Atlantic Coastal Action Program (1991); and coastal management areas such as Placentia Bay (1997).

The ability to reach across and ‘link’ the numerous organizations which support ICOM in Atlantic Canada is a major strength of the ACZISC.

Current Situation

Of particular relevance to this discussion is the ICOM Working Group. It is composed of ACZISC members and others with an interest in, or responsibility for, ICOM policy development. The ICOM Working Group meets on a regular basis to discuss ICOM policy developments and best practices at a “sub-official” level.

This Working Group:

- provides a forum to share best practices and standards
- raises awareness of regional initiatives and research related to ICOM
- identifies information needs, and
- identifies potential collaborative policy and operational projects.

In order to achieve the multiple objectives associated with Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management, it is essential to have long term objectives and commitment and ensure open access to the process by all interested parties. The ACZISC has proven its ability on all of these counts.

The Future

The ACZISC can position itself to build on existing governance relationships across the Atlantic Provinces and in Québec. The ICOM Working Group would be an effective means of accomplishing this by providing the focus and linkages to integrated coastal and ocean planning initiatives.

Existing linkages between Gulf of St. Lawrence Integrated Management (GOSLIM), the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management (ESSIM) initiative and the Placentia Bay / Grand Bank Large Ocean Management Area (PB/GB LOMA) could be strengthened and expanded upon within the ICOM Working Group. The ICOM Working Group is in a position to further develop linkages among Provincial Governments as each Atlantic Province progress with their own coastal and ocean strategic planning initiatives.

The true success of ACZISC will be measured, not by the number of meetings and networks, but with evidence of revitalized and sustainable fisheries; the opening of closed nearshore shellfish areas; protected and/or restored critical habitats; the establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), integrated with other protected areas such as parks and wildlife refuges; and a marine ecosystem in Atlantic Canada that exhibits good health and ecological integrity.

It is important that the ACZISC and its ICOM working group build on their successes. The true value-added benefit will be when all ICOM stakeholders are able to share best practices and make more efficient decisions based on better information. The sharing of information is a key to success, hence the importance of COINAtlantic and the implementation of ICOM principles at all levels (*i.e.* international, national, regional and local).

A Brief History of ICOM in Canada

The concept of coastal zone management was first discussed in Canada in the early 1970s. Recognition of the deteriorating state of coastal and ocean resources and increasing use conflicts motivated a small group of individuals, primarily within government and academia, to address the issue. They suggested and began to explore the ways and means of taking a more coordinated and holistic approach to the planning and management of our coastal and ocean resources and environments.

Inspired by the passing of the United States of the Coastal Zone Management Act in 1972, and growing international support for integrated management (IM) approaches, a series of workshops were convened across Canada in the period of 1971-73 to explore the IM principle in the Canadian context. Various task forces were struck and legal and policy analyses undertaken in the following years. In 1978, the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers (CCREM) convened a national 'Shore Management' symposium in Victoria, BC. This represented a peak in the interest in and potential for an integrated approach to coastal (or shore) zone management. Many were convinced that governments were finally going to focus policy attention and resources on a more integrated approach to our coastal and ocean patrimony.

With a reasonable set of principles emerging from the Shore Management Symposium (the 'Victoria Principles') and a commitment by federal and provincial governments to pursue more integrated approaches together and within their own jurisdictions, momentum picked up, at least briefly. However, by the early 1980s, leadership positions established at the federal and provincial levels were lost, key institutions within government were reorganized or eliminated, and CZM lost support within government circles.

The federal government tried again in the mid-1980s, with the establishment of the Interdepartmental Committee on Oceans and the policy banner of 'Marine Environmental Quality' or 'MEQ'. For example, the MEQ program of Environment Canada was active from 1985-94, with a focus on land-based pollution, the health of oceans, and a comprehensive action plan. Supported by the release in 1987 of the Oceans Policy for Canada, amongst many documents, most federal departments and agencies with a mandate for and/or interest in the coastal and marine environment, came together and developed a Framework for the Management of MEQ within the federal government and a federal action plan, completed in the early 1990s. The next step was to engage the provinces, territories and others in a truly 'national' approach. By the mid-1990s, however, federal resources were reallocated and momentum on MEQ was lost. Individuals persisted, however, and with the passage of the *Canada Oceans Act* in 1997, Fisheries and Oceans Canada was assigned the federal lead and a new era was born. Provincially, it is reasonable to assume that coastal and ocean management remained a lower priority and occurred in much smaller scale activities than today. The imperative was pollution control through the Fisheries Act, and progress

was made with some industrial sectors, hence protecting nearshore water and sediment quality. In the 1980s there was certainly a focus on fisheries management as many commercial fisheries were a primary economic driver for most Atlantic Canadian Provinces. As well, in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia in the 1980s, aquaculture development showed its early beginnings.

Today's Interest

The passing of *Canada's Oceans Act* in 1997 renewed Canada's focus in coastal and ocean management. Through this legislation, the Government of Canada introduced a formal commitment to establish a more coordinated approach to the management of living resources and human activities in Canada's estuaries, coasts and open ocean environments, the foci in the Act being ICOM, MPAs and MEQ.

By 1999, the Inter-jurisdictional Working Group (IWG) recognized the need for provinces and territories to be engaged in the implementation of the Oceans Act. The IWG assigned the **Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers Federal-Provincial-Territorial Oceans Task Group** to be responsible for strategic planning for *Oceans Act* implementation and later the focus changed to Canada's Oceans Strategy implementation. This task group remains focussed on broad-level strategic planning with a view to enhancing collaboration among federal, provincial and territorial departments and agencies.

The commitment to ICOM, MPAs and MEQ was further demonstrated with the release of *Canada's Oceans Strategy* (COS) in 2002 (Question: what happened between 1997 and 2002?) and the accompanying *Policy and Operational Framework for Integrated Management of Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Environments in Canada*. The legislation, strategy and policy framework identified guiding principles of ***integrated management, sustainable development and the ecosystem-based approach*** to coastal and oceans resource use. It identified a clear need for inclusion, collaboration and integration with provinces and territories to implement this approach. Coastal Management Areas and Large Ocean Management Areas were identified as geographic areas in which to pilot scientific research and integrated management structures.

In 2005, the Government of Canada released the *Oceans Action Plan* which provided detail on several initiatives relating to the ongoing implementation of the *Oceans Act*. Initiatives were identified under four main themes; International Sovereignty and Security, Integrated Management, Health of the Oceans and Science and Technology. Initially in Atlantic Canada priority was given to three **large ocean management areas (LOMAs)**: the Eastern Scotian Shelf; the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Placentia Bay-Grand Banks. Given the complexity of authorities and interests that need to be included, there is a strong need for clear and accepted leadership, governance structures and information networks. In the Maritimes and in Newfoundland and Labrador, Regional Director General and Deputy Minister (Provincial) level committees have been established to provide strategic direction towards implementing Canada's Oceans Strategy.

In 2005, the governments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island began working to develop provincial strategies, policies, and plans that better define provincial roles and objectives in integrated coastal management. The Government of Nova Scotia released its Coastal Management Framework in 2008, to be followed by a Sustainable Coastal Development Strategy in 2010. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador are presently developing a coastal and ocean management strategy and policy framework to be completed in 2009. The Government of New Brunswick has committed to implementing its Coastal Areas Protection Policy and has initiated an integrated coastal and marine planning process in Southwest New Brunswick. Prince Edward Island has committed to develop and implement a coastal and ocean policy. To facilitate information exchange and policy development and implementation, each province has established interdepartmental networks composed of provincial departments and agencies with a mandate in coastal management issues.

Implementing the principle of ICOM is clearly seen in the establishment of **Coastal Management Areas** and **Marine Protected Areas**. It is in coastal areas that inland waters, rivers and estuaries connect with the coastal and offshore ocean environment and out to the global commons. Marine Protected Areas, or at least the ones that exist, protect and conserve unique species and or special places in the marine environment. When practicing ICOM in these areas, it is interesting to see the human component at work, as governments engage with industry, community stewards and non-government organizations to work towards common goals of a healthy marine environment and sustainable resource use.