

GOMA Federal Working Group – 10.23.14

GOMA Update from Laura Bowie

The 2015 All Hands meeting will be June 8-10 in Biloxi, MS. Will have plenary session and then time for each of the Priority Issue Teams to meet. Hotel will be the Golden Nugget – finalizing the contract now. The annual GoMRI Oil Spill Ecosystem Science Conference is coming up in February in Houston, TX. Registration is open, and early registration ends on December 5th.

Bays & Bayous is coming up in December in Mobile. This is the annual conference hosted by MS/AL SeaGrant and the Mobile Bay NEP.

Restore America's Estuaries is in November in D.C.

The GOMA Alliance Management Team meeting is Nov. 12-13 in Pensacola. Will be talking about the teams, and the ACT has some recommendations for the AMT to consider about future structure and direction.

Wes Shaw, Blue Urchin Inc.

Wes provided an overview and update on Storm Smart Coast, Storm Smart Connect, and My Coast, as well as discussing the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System Task Force.

Storm Smart

Storm Smart got started up in Massachusetts when Wes was a NOAA Coastal Fellow with the State. Massachusetts wanted to think big about hazard resilience, but had some limitations on what could do (e.g. home-rule state.) Wanted to help coastal communities address storms, floods, coastal erosion, and SLR, and wanted to target people working at the local level and provide actionable information (e.g. practical information about how to elevate structures, plan development, etc.) Harvested information from FEMA and other sources and made it both accessible and digestible. Provided information on a no-impact approach to development, as well as information on what to do before, during, and after a storm.

After the start in Massachusetts, began working with GOMA, and developed a site for each Gulf State, following the template developed in MA. Added legal information, and set up special sites for a number of groups (e.g. a Community Rating System Users Group in MS called C-HOST.)

Storm Reporter is a newer tool that allows people to submit pictures and information about storm impacts.

Over time saw the need for a professional networking site for sharing lessons and examples. This led to the development of StormSmartConnect. There are over 100 groups that have formed on StormSmartConnect at this point. It's a tool that's familiar to many of us now, but focused on coastal communities.

Regarding the future direction of StormSmart, because we haven't seen as much cross-fertilization as might like between States, are thinking about perhaps making a StormSmart site for the entire Gulf, and then state-specific information and information from federal entities would be collected in one place.

NFIP Community Rating System (CRS)

This program has proven to be a great incentive for coastal communities. It rewards communities that go above and beyond the minimal requirements in the NFIP. For example, communities in the NFIP

have to commit to requiring one foot of elevation above the base flood elevation for new development, and they can get CRS points for requiring even more “freeboard.” The points get communities into various classes within the program, and then they receive an insurance discount based on their class.

Different types of activities receive points: Mapping and regulation. Preserving open space. Regulatory work. Managing stormwater flows. Flood damage reduction for existing development. Warning and response to protect people and property. About 1300 communities across the country participate, and in the wake of Biggert Waters and the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act there is growing interest in participation. More information on floodsmart.org.

Kevin Claridge, Director of the Florida Coastal Office and GOMA AMT member

Kevin provided an update on the State's efforts across a number of program fronts including Coastal Management, National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs), Coral Reef Conservation, Aquatic Preserves, and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Overview of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

DEP is a Governor's agency. There's a Secretary and three Deputies: 1) regulatory side re: waste, water, etc., 2) State lands and parks activities, and 3) water quality and restoration, which is where the FCO lives. Mission re: ecological and economic.

Overview of Florida Coastal Office (FCO)

Main office is in Tallahassee. Kevin is the Director, and Becky Prado is the new Assistant Director. The program includes Aquatic Preserves, the Keys Sanctuary, the Research Reserves, the Coastal Program, the Offshore Program, and the Coral Program. A little over 200 employees, covering diverse aspects of coastal management. Multiple funding sources / streams, and multiple partners. Work with EPA on water sampling for example. Very community-based, and a lot of work with volunteers. Progress with “friends” groups in recent years, and recently added an Aquatic Preserves Society similar to the Friends of the State Parks group; hope these groups can grow and help with funding.

Strong commitment to place-based management, with managed areas all along the coastline, and offices across the State.

Are playing an important role in DWH Restoration. This complements a lot of what's happening in our other programs.

There are 41 Aquatic Preserves in Florida. These areas receive an extra layer of protection (e.g. no further development of submerged lands, additional criteria for docks/structures, etc.) There are a couple of fresh-water preserves, but most are coastal.

Florida is lucky to have three NERRs – GTM, Rookery Bay, and Apalachicola. They have outstanding learning centers as well as managed natural areas that are used for both research and education. There are good synergies between the Aquatic Preserves and the NERRs.

The Coral Reef Conservation Program works with the reef track from Martin County to Miami-Dade County. The Southeast Coral Reef Initiative is a great example of community-based coastal management. Over 70 partners working together. Recently launched the Our Florida Reefs process to explore the best way to manage the reef track off of South Florida, complementary with the many uses of the area. Also looking at Everglades Restoration through a corals lens.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is a federal-state partnership.

Florida Coastal Management Program – many are probably familiar, but a cooperative agreement provides funding from NOAA, and a variety of state statutes make up the program. Federal consistency component. Beach safety flag program.

Offshore program is also part of the FCO. Coordinates state review for OCS activity. Work with federal partners to manage offshore resources appropriately.

DWH Restoration work includes the MOEX project, dollars already flowing through Early Restoration, longer-term work on NRDA, and NFWF funding.

Coastal Office Business Plan for 2013-15

In the 2013-14 fiscal year have worked to integrate across programs; launch internship programs, support/build Citizen Support Organizations, update Management Plans, integrate across restoration, education, and monitoring. Also reorganized into four regions.

Some goals for the 2014-15 fiscal year are to grow citizen support organizations, find new funding sources, identifying top restoration goals and identifying funding sources for those, understanding status of our resources better, and publicizing progress.

Kevin closed by sharing some of the interactions, synergies, and successes from the FCO's various programs. Efforts have grown, and there are new collaborations and integrations across programs and funding streams to maximize impacts.

Kayleigh Michaelides, the new Florida Coastal Fellow working as the regional ocean partnership coordinator, touched briefly on regional efforts (GOMA, Governors' South Atlantic Alliance, Florida Institute of Oceanography, and the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council.)