

GOMA Federal Working Group Call Notes

1.22.15

Participants:

Todd Davison
Marian Hanisko
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John Tirpak
Laura Bowie
Jerry Boos
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Jeane Allen
Doug Jacobson
Dwayne Armstrong
Cheryl Brodnax
Kristen Laursen
Dave Lance (?) – Air Force?
Alan Lewitus
Diane Altsman

Agenda:

GOMA Update – Laura Bowie

- Todd has been leading the FWG call for a long time. At a meeting this week, folks were impressed at ability to bring this many federal folks together to talk about regional issues.
- All Hands will be June 16-18 in Biloxi. Registration is open now. Will have exciting new ideas to share. The Governor may attend as well.

Coastal Aquaculture Planning and Environmental Sustainability – Ken Riley and Jim Morris

- Working over last 5-6 years to establish program on aquaculture planning and sustainability. Lots of conversation around Gulf of Mexico
- Located in NC on Outer Banks at Beaufort Lab.
- In NCCOS. Placed aquaculture in strategic plan. Mission is to develop tools for coastal managers. Work with them to understand the decisions they make regarding permitting/monitoring. Coastal zone = estuary to offshore
- Coastal planning, environment, innovative technology, and climate change = focus areas
- Work in all regions including Pacific Islands
- NOAA has policy pointing agency in direction of aquaculture expansion
- Have a wide range of diversity of aquaculture around US (shellfish, finfish, ornamental, etc.)

- NOAA has 3 line offices (OAR/Sea Grant focused on extension, NOS – coastal planning and environmental interactions from mitigation and pollution standpoint, NMFS – specializing in coordination with HQ on aquaculture) focused on aquaculture.
- Aquaculture is fastest growing food production sector in U.S. but we lag behind the rest of the world.
- Think of aquaculture in ecosystem context and specialize in environmental interactions.
- Thinking of sustainability, we released global synthesis on question of sustainability of coastal ocean aquaculture. Found that it's possible but we have to be smart about where and how we do it. Technology and science exist to do it sustainably.
- U.S. is underdeveloped when it comes to aquaculture production. Primary production comes out of Asia and S. America (Chile).
- US is designated as #1 ranked in aquaculture opportunity. We have largest economic exclusive zone in the world.
- Norway case study: Use .1% of coastal waters for aquaculture production. US produces 5 billion in commercial seafood landings, which is equivalent to what Norway produces in salmon aquaculture alone.
- Shifting to Gulf of Mexico, we have great opportunity here.
- Since 2009 Fish Mgt Council and others have been working to develop concept for reg framework for aquaculture production in the Gulf. Expect it to be finalized later this year.
- Fisheries Mgt. Plan caps production at 64 million pounds annually, cap production of 20% of 64 million pounds annually. Economic impact = 264 million \$\$
- Gulf FMT is first effort to develop reg frameworks to site aquaculture facility in fed waters. Often asked what the permitting landscape looks like?
 - Network of fed and state agencies down to parish councils, etc that have a role in permitting.
 - Many fed agencies have mandates. Others provide consultation.
 - Want to ID all agencies involved in aquaculture permitting
- Also asked what aquaculture industry looks like?
 - 12 cages (surface or submersible). Helps identify footprint of operations in Gulf. Could be 180 acres. While this is small, there's lots of equipment in the water and it all has to be taken into consideration
- Aquaculture planning tools
 - Tools for marine spatial planning (e.g., regional ocean mappers)
 - Env models (to look at impacts of farm at local or regional scales)
 - Tools/data for regulators and industry
- Working with OCM to develop a focus area in Digital Coast (Coastal Aquaculture Planning Portal). Can gather tools here.
- Some specific projects in Gulf and SE include
 - Support of policies and BPs for stewardship
 - Supporting FMP process by working with Fisheries to establish policy
 - Work with SA FMC on policy for essential fish habitat
 - Also developing national standards for this work in federal waters
- Spatial planning tools
 - Tools for site screening
 - Env. Modeling
 - Site selection

- Gulf AquaView = planning and siting guide for aquaculture in Gulf of Mexico. Helps ID areas of concern (e.g., oil/gas infrastructure, MPAs, etc.). Also maps hypoxic areas to identify risk/threat to operation. HABs, too.
- When we talk about modeling...been developing a modeling shop providing guidance in developing env monitoring program. Have been developing models for Gulf. Here's an example:
 - Site is off Pascagoula. Model is AquaModel – env impact model in GIS platform. Looks at growth of fish in cages, waste products and how it's transformed in water column and sediments. Users like the visual aspect of model (depth and time series plots). Can export data and analyze with traditional stats package
 - Another tool is an image library using CanVis. Doing this in So California. Shows how landscape and infrastructure will look with aquaculture gear. CanVis helps simulate what aquaculture will look like.
 - BMPs for marine cage culture in US and Caribbean. Looks at 10 different aspect (water quality, ecological effects, fish health, permitting, etc.) Developed BP to be codes for aquaculture practice.
- CAPES has been working to build nexus of partners to safeguard community and ecosystems.
- If you have ideas/data to contribute, please contact!

Questions/Discussion:

- This is an emerging issue in the Gulf. Perhaps could develop process on aquaculture..inject into PIT teams as a cross-cutting issue. Could be an agenda item for new wildlife and fisheries PIT.
- Most activity happens in fed waters. Correct?
 - A: Depends on region. What we presented today is offshore. Interested in restoration aquaculture as well as food production.

Land Trust Partnership – Julia Weaver

- Julia works for Partnership for Gulf Coast LC – coalition of 31 conservation organizations organized in 2010 and operating under Land Trust Alliance.
- Mission is to work across region to increase pace, quality, permanence of voluntary land and water conservation. This is important in restoration and can benefit water quality, habitat, recreation, connectivity, etc.
- Member orgs care about and focus on individual places as well as large landscapes. This has made it interesting to knit together the interests and capacities of these organizations.
- Have provided “glue” function for land conserve orgs....opps to weigh in on policy, funding, communication with bodies named in DWH. In last year, we accomplished key goal of developing a conservation vision from the nonprofit land conservation perspective.
- Goal of vision is to ID regional conserve opps; assist in strategy for efforts in Gulf conservation community and offer resource for d-ms to inform restoration and conservation
- Asked all members to show on map where their priorities are. Vision knits local values and priorities with
 - Started with priorities and added wetlands, migratory birds, longleaf pines, scenic rivers and developed a consensus map. Initial reaction is that it's a lot of land...much is urbanized already. But it represents an opportunity...places where more than 1 conservation organization is looking for opps and ready to work.

- Vision is a chief product and will be used to advocate for priorities in funding (DWH and others). There are 2 regional land conservation submissions that made into Bucket 2 priorities and these are compatible with Vision. Good opp to do strategic conservation in region.
- Also notable is our Project assistance Fund through grant of 500K from Knobloch. Used to provide due diligence funds to members for land conservation. Only available to members of Partnership who intend to apply for funds through DWH settlement funds.
 - In 1 year, have provided funds for 7 projects in FL, AL, MS, and LA. Upon completion will have protected 42K additional acres.
- Next steps for Partnership
 - Have additional \$\$ to allocate in PAF. Will work to implement Vision and increase capacity of members to participate in Gulf restoration initiatives.
- Have robust relations with fed agencies already and always looking to increase those. Although operating under LTA, have an executive committee of members in the Gulf (Marian, Chris Pease and John Bowie are on the exec committee as ex officio members).
- Go to www.gulfpartnership.org to read more about the vision.

Questions:

1. About Knobloch, how has it been used in Gulf so far? How did it come to be? What is future?

A: It was serendipity. Knobloch attended annual meeting, liked what they saw, and asked us to apply. \$\$ is used by land trusts to support baseline surveys, appraisals, etc so projects are ready for funding under NFWF, NAWCA, etc. We want to do strategic land conservation but we also have interest in management practices and funding for management. Land Trusts are great partners b/c they place land in conservation in perpetuity, have relations with private property owners, etc. Want to push for lands that are most important but also bring capacity to owner/holder to manage the land for ecosystem services.
2. This was no small feat for the group to do the vision. Just getting this group together was not easy. Julia and Liz put a lot of effort into this.
3. How LCCs play with partnership and how that fits in Gulf structure and how to drive this in northern Gulf:

A: This document is a first step. LCCs have looked at it as a way to improve and bring people together in positive dialog for conservation. It has prompted steps forward in TX in a number of areas where people were apprehensive to talk about conservation. This will be a framework for engagement of non-traditional partners in conservation.

A: Dept of Interior is interested in strategic conservation. We have a proposal to RESTORE Council to build on this type of work...highlighting connectivity and maximizing ecosystem services and targeting these areas. This is a big step forward in a Gulf-wide vision for land conservation.

A: Vision was a partnership of LTA, TNC, and Conservation Fund. Always looking for funding opps to support the work of the Partnership. Looking ahead to 2015 and 2015, the Partnership will launch from LTA, and we will be deciding what this looks like and how to continue as we move forward.

Next call February 26 at 10 a.m. central/11 eastern!