

New England Ocean Science Education Collaborative Governing Council Meeting

May 15, 2009, 10 am – 4 pm
Great Bay Discovery Center, Greenland NH

Meeting Notes

Attendees: Perrin Chick (Chair-elect, Seacoast Science Center), Carla Companion (Seacoast Science Center), **Lou-Anne Conroy (Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies)**, Catherine Cramer (COSEE New England), Annette deCharon (Darling Marine Center, COSEE Ocean Systems), Pam DiBona (New England Aquarium), Kelle Loughlin (Great Bay NERR), Scott Mercer (BOATCAMP), Jayshree Oberoi (New England Aquarium), Suzy Ryan (Chair, Census of Marine Life - Gulf of Maine Area), Maryann Scholl (University of Rhode Island), Gail Scowcroft (Past chair, University of Rhode Island), **Robin Hadlock Seeley (Shoals Marine Laboratory)**, Billy Spitzer (New England Aquarium), **Natalie Wicklund (Harvard Center for Health and Global Environment)**, Mark Wiley (New Hampshire Sea Grant)

Introductions

New members were introduced and welcomed into the group (in bold). Brief presentations about the new member institutions were given by our new members, and Annette DeCharon (regarding a new COSEE-Ocean Systems workshop for informal educators) and Gail Scowcroft (regarding URI's new Inner Space Center).

NEOSEC Mission

Existing mission & vision

Our mission and collective purpose are to leverage New England's extraordinary assets, to engage the public in understanding the vital connections between people and the ocean. In our vision of the future:

- ♦ Ocean scientists and educators are forging powerful partnerships to create and deliver relevant, exciting products and services that inform the public and may inspire people to pursue careers in ocean science.
- ♦ Easily accessible materials and programs are enabling diverse people of all ages to learn about the ocean.
- ♦ Science centers, schools, teachers, students, and the public seek out our ocean science education products and services.
- ♦ Scientific discoveries are communicated in a way that makes them relevant to people and their understanding of the ocean.

Billy Spitzer provided the history behind NEOSEC's mission: our current mission and vision were developed in 2005, over the course of a two-day meeting with funding from NSF to the Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) in New England. Representatives from ocean science institutions and organizations around the region gathered to work with a strategic planning consultant to explore opportunities for collaboration. The results are a mission and straightforward commitments asked of members. He suggested that we are now coming to a point where we should look again, and ask the question, "what do we want to do?" This is especially important given the uncertainty around funding after December 2009.

All agreed that maintaining essential operations, with everyone contributing resources and expertise, has been a successful model. In past discussions, members have said that they don't want NEOSEC to get too structured. While we have not asked for membership dues, it does take money to keep the effort viable (COSEE NE currently contributes NSF monies to fund Pam DiBona and Catherine Cramer at 1d/week each and maintain online subscriptions at an annual cost of about \$50,000). All agreed that we want to generate funds for our joint effort without competing with individual member institutions for grant monies. Pam suggested we focus on regional and national funding mechanisms to which

smaller/individual organizations generally do not have access. Catherine and Gail pointed out that NEOSEC is unique and strong in many ways, which should translate into national-level funding.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Suzy reported on a December 2008 retreat which focused specifically on outlining options for funding based on our strengths. As a result, the New England Aquarium served as lead and fiscal agent on a NOAA BWET (Bay Watershed Education and Training) grant. We solicited participation from the membership, and developed a proposal that would provide administrative support to the overall project, and also fund NEOSEC ongoing operations and the 2010 Summit. [update: We received word on May 27th that we did not receive BWET funding, but were strongly encouraged to submit again under a July 2009 BWET solicitation.]

Because of the demands of NEOSEC chair position, Suzy and Perrin proposed a co-chair model for NEOSEC, avoiding the start-up time needed when a new chair steps in cold. In this model, the Suzy would co-chair with Perrin (currently chair-elect) for 2009-2010, then Perrin would co-chair with the next chair-elect in 2010-2011, etc. After some discussion, and the need for a single point person, *we decided: keep the current structure, initiate bimonthly calls for the executive committee, and invite other committees' chairpersons to join those calls.* Under the current structure, the staff person (Pam) and the immediate past chair keeps the institutional knowledge, directly in communication with the NSF PI (Billy). The Chair serves as the facilitator for the group. Perrin begins as chair in July 2009.

Discussion turned next to nominations of the next chair-elect. By way of encouraging self-nominations, Billy said NEOSEC is the "most delightful" organization he's chaired, lots gets done, people are willing to do things. *Decision: Suzy and Perrin will work with Pam to initiate a SurveyMonkey-based election.*

Outreach Committee

Theresa Torrent-Ellis is the chair of this committee. The Committee has two goals for outreach: colleagues should know NEOSEC and the OL Principles; the general public should be aware of and understand the Principles (though not necessarily as such).

Theresa discussed the current effort the "Ocean7 Voyage of Discovery." The goal is to provide a presence for the OL Principles in our visitor centers, and encourage visits to our multiple sites. Based on much discussion about how to make this work, the Committee decided that a single banner with all 7 principles would be most effective. Carla Companion, an intern at SSC, is working with the Committee to design the banner, with stipend support from SSC and the Maine Coastal Program. *Decision: Pam will send an offer of the banner to the NEOSEC listserv: NEOSEC can purchase one to install in your institution, and/or institutions can purchase one (branded with their own logo) for traveling display.*

Suzy suggested that we might want "Ocean7" to be our public name, rather than NEOSEC, which is not a memorable "brand." *Decision: the name "Ocean7" will be incorporated into the banner design and future public outreach materials.*

Networking Committee

This committee is chaired by Tracy Hadjuk, from Northeastern University's Marine Science Center. She is seeking a co-chair!

Catherine provided an overview of NEOSEC communications and products. *NEwswave* is now branded as a NEOSEC + COSEE NE product; we have more than 1000 subscribers and a 27% open rate (compared to 19% industry [private nonprofit] standard). Based on reports (Sept 2008 to present) from our e-news service, most people are not looking at items from outside of New England, and only a few people click through to the student opportunities or calendar items. We have focused the newsletter on NE items as a result, providing more of what people have indicated they want from our communications. Catherine presented NEOSEC's new *NEwswave* blog www.neosec.wordpress.com, where all of the content from *NEwswave* will reside from now on. This allows instant updating of all information; *NEwswave* will

highlight new items and remind people to visit the blog. *Decision: all approved announcing the blog to NEWSwave readers; NEWSwave should now be monthly.*

[reminder: NEOSEC also has a wiki (<http://ocean7.wikispaces.com/>), where everyone is encouraged to post funding opportunities. Institutions are welcome to take language from the wiki regarding NEOSEC and its value as a collaboration for their own purposes; contact the current NEOSEC chair (sryan@maine.usm.edu) for a letter of support for your own proposals]

Summit Planning Committee

Kate Yeomans of BOAT CAMP has volunteered to co-chair with a representative from the host institution. *Decision: Pam will organize a conference call for this committee in June.*

The next Ocean Literacy Summit will be in October or November 2010. On the March Governing Council call, we agreed that the theme will be OL Principle #5, The ocean supports a diversity of life and ecosystems. This theme aligns with the current hot topic for researchers, as several diversity and ecosystem-related initiatives come to a head, especially the regional ecosystem-based Management/ecosystem health efforts, and the Census of Marine Life's 10-year synthesis. Some specific ideas regarding the next Summit included:

- ♦ Coordinating the timing with COML's events to bring some prominent scientists to the Summit as presenters.
- ♦ Scheduling the Summit to a chosen keynote speaker's schedule.
- ♦ Expanding the program to 2 or 3 days, given that the format (scientist-educator presenter teams) works well and attendees commented that time was too short.
- ♦ Increase the fee, and continue to offer reimbursement for substitute teachers. (NSF grants discourage charging fees at all, unfortunately, because even nominal fees force people to commit to attending.)

Decision: location, timing, etc. will be determined by the committee. Some discussion re: Boston as the site – some benefits are that it is central, public transit is available, and it's easier to get the bigger-name speakers to participate. (Though Scott gets a migraine thinking about driving into Boston.)

[Proceedings from the November 2008 Summit are on NEOSEC's website at: <http://neosec.org/Summit2008Proceedings.htm>]

Context for NEOSEC's work

Suzy reviewed data from a 2008 membership survey. *Decision: Pam should post data from that survey on the NEOSEC website.*

The group discussed NEOSEC's place in the New England seascape – other networks, for example the Sea Grant programs and National Marine Educators Association chapters are represented in NEOSEC; is there a way to strengthen those ties to work more effectively, i.e., how do we promote synergy? Suzy pointed out that we have complementary mission to the NMEA chapters, and overlapping leadership. Gail emphasized that the strength of NEOSEC is that members represent institutions and networks, not themselves as individuals. Suzy agreed, and pointed out that at the Summit and elsewhere, we direct individuals to their local NMEA chapter. Mark sees NEOSEC as another of his professional networks, and recommends that we continue to distinguish what we do from other networks' activities, and work on making it meaningful and significant to the broader community. Theresa commented that keeping a link to the OL Principles is important to her, keeps her at the NEOSEC table, and provides her with resources for her own work. Lou-Anne encouraged the group to look for simple ways to share the richness of NEOSEC with educators, bringing OS to students.

Discussion turned to whether NEOSEC could be a model for the National COSEE Network, and whether NE can tap into that network for energy and ideas in return. All agree that it is important for NEOSEC to be governed by its members, not any one funder. Billy points out that, although he is the PI for the NSF

monies, decisions about NEOSEC are not made unilaterally, they are made by the NEOSEC Governing Council.

Billy offered five unique/descriptive aspects of NEOSEC. NEOSEC is:

- Ocean Science Literacy
- Excellence
- Scientists+ Educators
- Network of Networks
- Collaborative governance and resources
- Regional

Strategic direction, goals, and actions

Participants, first individually, then as a group, carried out brainstorming around NEOSEC's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities going forward. The following lists resulted; when each attendee voted for their three "favorites," the top three were highlighted (the remainder are in italics).

Strengths

1. Diversity of membership = broad experience, education toward a single goal
2. Geographic representation, regional interest and buy-in
3. Collaborative nature
4. *Energy*
5. *Collectiveness*
6. *Narrow focus*
7. *Membership = network of networks*
8. *Synergy among individual institutions*
9. *Passion*
10. *history, science-education leadership*
11. *Resource-sharing*
12. *OL gaining recognition for its importance*
13. *"Cream of the crop"*
14. *not dependent on vagaries of funding world*

Weaknesses

1. Sustainability, funding issues – keeping staff to maintain connections – especially for 2010. ^
2. Goals clearer than objectives and strategies, difficulty maintaining focus and attention on goals**
3. Low visibility*
4. *Internal communications*
5. *Possible conflicts with other NE groups, drawing people away from other goals and networks*

We then shared opportunities and threats, finally relating the opportunities to our perceived weaknesses, and converting some of those into action items (the red symbols below link the opportunities with weaknesses above).

Opportunities

1. *Variety of venues to support Ocean7 campaign
2. *Open to employing new/different media
3. **Ability to distribute materials across the region
4. ^Climate change, ocean health are subjects of increased investment
5. ^National model for other, larger networks (within COSEE OS renewal proposal)
6. Partnerships among member institutions
7. *More visible products/accomplishments
8. ^Joint proposals (e.g., BWET, NOAA OL, smaller NE-based family foundations)
9. ^Newsletter/blog funding via ads or sponsorship
10. ^Membership dues (sliding scale)
11. National model for network communications
12. Helping smaller institutions with fundraising, etc.

13. ^Co-sponsorship model with other regional groups that can use our expertise and resources (summit, broader impacts)
14. **Engage ocean scientists and researchers
15. **Connections with national OL efforts
16. ^Upcoming Federal opportunities e.g., No Child Left Inside mandate to states to develop plans
17. ^NEOSEC as a broader impacts partner

Threats

1. Funding
2. Time
3. Competition for time and resources
4. Fit/competition with other organizations
5. Change in national priorities for outreach

Action items

Before adjourning, the group listed short- and longer-term action items for the Collaborative. *Action Item: Names in brackets indicate volunteers for a first-level investigation into the opportunity.*

Short-term (next 3 months)

1. Approach Sea Grants for \$5K toward OL Summit from their mini-grant budgets. Do some reconnaissance with insiders to determine best approach [Catherine will start at WHOI]. Bring Theresa to make the case? SSC Board member?
2. Investigate actions in each state re: No Child Left Behind Act [Lou-Anne]
3. Identify private funding sources [Natalie, Suzy, Pam] (perhaps via associations – Maine Ass'n of Foundations, Associated Grantmakers of Mass., sell idea of hands-on ocean science education programs in NE raises our profile, increase efficiency, etc.)
4. Look into NOAA Environmental Literacy grant & EPA deadlines
5. Look toward corporate funding/sponsorship of the Summit.
6. "sell" the OL banners to offset budgeted funds. [Perrin with Carla, Pam]
7. Develop an impact report – how did the Summit promote success for programs/institutions that participated? Collect testimonials. Write boilerplate that describes how their funds support an ongoing program, impact, not just a one-time event, it's a network product that requires operations & communications funding.
8. Prepare for and examine the potential for members' co-sponsorship of Summit, to prepare for early 2010. Each should go back to their institution, look at what/whether they could put into the pot. Sliding scale, suggested dues – though maybe pay some fees via Summit registration
9. Survey of membership re: audiences, programming (continue existing)
10. Talk with RARGOM, NERACOOS [Suzy, Perrin, Annette], MOP insiders re: NEOSEC as education and outreach partner, especially via Summit. – maybe they want a banner, ad on the blog?
11. Check with COML, HMAP re: funding for 2010 Summit [Suzy]

Long-term (next 6 to 12 months)

1. Monitoring grant options, pulling proposals together
2. Develop boilerplate for scientists to insert into their proposals re: NEOSEC contributions, including fee schedule – then approach them prior to grant due dates. [Carla will draft under a seasonal agreement, Gail & Annette will review]
3. Identify and approach regional funders, especially Region 1 EPA's \$25K grant programs.
4. Individual members build NEOSEC's outreach into their own grant proposals
5. NSF conference grants? Primarily education research, but worth looking into...[Gail]
6. consider holding the Summit yearly

Next steps

Perrin invited everyone to ponder their own next steps, recall something they'll be thinking about, taking home from this meeting. *Decision: Suzy, Perrin and Pam will schedule this year's meetings/calls: 3rd Thursday morning of every month is a good slot.*