

NEOSEC

New England
Ocean Science
Education Collaborative

Governing Council Meeting

May 17, 2011

Northeastern U. Marine Science Center, Nahant MA

MEETING MINUTES

Prepared by Pam DiBona, NEOSEC Coordinator

Attendees

Jenny Astrella (Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve), Ivar Babb (Northeast Underwater Research Technology and Education Center, COSEE TEK), Bob Chen (UMass Boston, COSEE OCEAN), Perrin Chick (Seacoast Science Center), Katie Cubina (Immersion Learning), Pam DiBona (NEOSEC), Cassie Durette (North East Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems), Kim Frashure (UMass Boston), Justine Glynn (Gulf of Maine Research Institute), Nick Haddad (TERC), Christy Herren (COSEE Ocean Systems), Kelly Matis (Mystic Aquarium), Carole McCauley (NEU Marine Science Center), Lauren Rader (Project Oceanology), Joan Muller (Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve), Diana Payne (NEOSEC Chair, CT Sea Grant), Billy Spitzer (New England Aquarium), Gail Scowcroft (URI, COSEE National Network), Nicole Scola (New England Aquarium), Abbey Spargo (Ocean Explorium at New Bedford Harbor), Mark Wiley (NH Sea Grant), Kate Yeomans (BOAT CAMP), Erik Zettler (Sea Education Association)

2011-2012 Meeting schedule

In addition to the dates below, Committees will meet via conference calls, and all members will receive an email update on project progress and other news in July 2011.

Conference calls

September 14, 2011, 10am
January 25, 2012, 10am
March 21, 2012, 10am

In-person meetings

October 20 & 21 2011, Portland ME
May 17 & 18 2012, Mystic/Groton CT

Welcome

The meeting was held in a WWII Bunker at the head of Nahant, just north of Boston on Broad Sound. After reviewing the meeting agenda and a warm-up focused on illustrating the Ocean Literacy Principles, Diana Payne referred the group to the draft Strategic Plan. Produced by Laura Roberts, a professional facilitator, the document is based on a working group meeting in December 2010, a two-day retreat in February 2011, responses to an online survey prior to the retreat, and discussion during conference calls by the Governing Council and Executive Committee following the in-person effort. Billy Spitzer highlighted some outcomes of this work, which will be central to decision-making regarding what we do, how we do it, where we do it, what we communicate and to whom, and why our work matters.

- NEOSEC is committed to promoting understanding of the ocean (via the OL Principles), not necessarily caring for or stewardship of the ocean. This is not to say that individual members are not committed to ocean stewardship. NEOSEC, however, must work at the intersection of all members' work, and will by necessity exclude components of member institutions' work. "We can collaborate, yet be true to our own organizations' missions."
- NEOSEC fills a strategic niche, connecting scientists and educators to each other, and not holding one discipline above the other.
- NEOSEC works via intermediaries – member institutions – to reach audiences, rather than communicating directly to public or other audiences.
- NEOSEC is focused on generating new approaches to ocean science education, and new means for collaboration.

Diana invited everyone to take a few minutes to read over the document, then facilitated discussion about the goals, objectives, and timeline for implementation. The following changes to the document and next steps in implementation were determined:

1. The plan should articulate our vision statement – pulled from our “future headlines” discussion at the retreat – and be listed as Objective 3.3.
2. Make it clear that this is an “in-stream” strategic planning document: NEOSEC is an ongoing effort, with no determined endpoint – unlike typical funded projects which have a finite duration. Our effort requires a different approach than other projects we may be a part of, in that we want to be talking about/evaluating what we’ve been doing, looking beyond that 3-year timeline.
3. Our continuing focus on the Ocean Literacy Principles provides a good platform for a variety of activities that bring many members to the table. This niche – as opposed to a more definite advocacy approach – gives us a broader audience among scientist-partners and funders.
4. Our governance documents should allow some of the flexibility we know now to continue into the future, especially around membership status.

Some work to be done:

1. Network analysis to evaluate our collaboration (Pam DiBona and Bob Chen reported that COSEE OCEAN is looking into supporting that.)
2. Serve as a model for other regions, e.g., California, where they are looking for a way to bring everyone together (Pam reported that our presentation at the NMEA Annual Conference would form the core of a publication to document successes and struggles for other regions.
3. Our meetings (and/or additional meetings) should include cross-training, gaining knowledge from each other, and professional development (PD) opportunities through NEOSEC for attendees. Many agreed that PD would be a benefit of membership.

Small group work

Membership

Katie Cubina summarized past work on this effort (during the working group meeting, the retreat, and various other discussions). Bringing that together with the Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats analysis developed by retreat attendees, it’s time to take stock and make some decisions around a member structure that includes tiers (including fluidity between levels, self-identification). We need to define who we are, what we do, how we serve our members, what we expect from members in return.

Report-out

This group suggested two membership tiers, with expectations of each. Roles, responsibilities, benefits. Clear letter of invitation with stronger language than current letter is needed. We should request two representatives from each member, primary & alternate. Only one representative must attend each meeting.

Tier 1 = Governing Council, attend one GC call, two in-person meetings/year. Benefits: voting rights, participate in grant-funded programs and/or proposal, travel support, eligible to chair a committee.

Tier 2 Affiliate member = serve as a resource, but not required to show up. Not taking part in NEOSEC funded programs. Benefits: part of NEOSEC, listed on website, exchange of resources with members.

Action items

1. Establish membership working group (Jenny Astrella, Kate Yeomans, Lauren Rader, Katie Cubina).
2. Establish tiered membership and membership criteria.
3. Conduct gap analysis of current membership.

4. Draft a letter of invitation for GC review, including priorities for the year, and dates/locations of meetings, prompting institutions to self-select a tier for that year. This letter should also include an invitation to contribute funding to sustain NEOSEC operations.¹
5. Distribute letter and link to membership survey (perhaps using a widget that would then populate NEOSEC's website with an "at-a-glance" matrix that shows who does what?)
6. Post an application on website.

Governance

Billy Spitzer led the small group discussion to set out some options around NEOSEC governance structure: Executive Committee v. Governing Council roles, host institution role, committee roles, etc., ensuring transparency. This group did not draft actual operating procedures onsite, but rather worked through some decision points.

Report-out

Kelly Matis provided an overview of the discussion by this group. Topics included roles of the Governing Council, Executive Committee, Host Institution, and Committees (including standing Nominating and Membership Committees, ad-hoc Summit Planning, Governance, Strategic Planning, etc.), terms of officers, and voting rules for members. Billy will incorporate the results into draft governance documents for distribution to the Governing Council.

Action items

1. In the Strategic Plan, Objective 4.1 (re: tiered membership) should be listed under Goal 1 (re: increasing capacity for institutional and joint work).
2. Establish Governance Committee (Perrin Chick, Billy Spitzer, Gail Scowcroft, Diana Payne, Kelly Matis, Carole McCauley, Abbey Spargo) to work on standard operating procedures and terms of reference.
3. The Committee will report back on progress during the next GC call.

The Governing Council then discussed the question of the extent of and audiences for communications efforts. Questions to be considered include: internal v. external communications, evaluating the value of broad v. deep communications efforts, assessing the need for additional funding to carry out communications efforts, determining the best means for learning from one another outside of the funded programs and Summit (i.e., sharing "what we do" with each other).

Action items

1. Pam DiBona and Billy Spitzer should communicate with long-time NEOSEC communications consultant Catherine Cramer regarding these questions, and whether it is feasible to solicit her help on those.
2. Establish a Communications Committee to determine what we need and want from communications with chosen audiences, both internal and external.

Broader impacts

Kim Frashure, as consultant to NEOSEC under the COSEE OS funding, is advancing our goal of engaging scientists in education and vice versa. This partnership with COSEE OS provides additional opportunities for NEOSEC member institutions to engage (NSF) ocean scientists on education projects. Parallel to NEOSEC's work, Mark Wiley is working with Steve Engstrom (SSC) to bring scientists to the table.

¹ The group discussed whether we should or will ask for membership dues, or at least encourage institutions to contribute as they can. Members should be encouraged to stay actively involved, which includes multiple aspects of keeping the collaboration alive – monetary and in-kind. We may want to state that dues are optional/suggested only, payable in-kind as well – but something that reps can point to for their institutions to respond to.

Report-out

Bob Chen reported that the group started with the question of “why engage scientists?” – and yet we don’t have a good answer to that ourselves, nor from the COSEE program. An opportunity to document impacts of having scientists involved might be to pool responses from common assessment questions among NEOSEC members.

Important to our ability to do this work is NEOSEC’s past role as a trusted connector between scientists and educators for robust programs. Other than developing a database (of questionable utility), how might we take advantage of this status to link scientists and member institutions? Speed dating or another lively way to facilitate networking?

The group discussion turned to the question of “what is in it for the scientist,” i.e., the effort expended working on education efforts. In one example, the Summer Science program, Tom Trott is receiving a lot of data. One benefit we offer is that NEOSEC can help lower the barriers of participation for both scientists and educators.

Action items

1. Establish an Advisory Committee to Kim Frashure: Nick Haddad, Gail Scowcroft, Cassie Durette, Christy Herren, Bob Chen, Joan Muller, Justine Glynn
2. Kim will follow through on planning a Broader Impacts workshop for NEOSEC members.
3. During that workshop we can develop criteria for an RFP soliciting small projects.

Chair Elect nominations

Perrin Chick reviewed the criteria we’re looking for on the agenda. People noted their nominations on a piece of paper, then forwarded those to Perrin.

Action items

1. Establish Nominating committee: Lauren Rader, Perrin Chick, Kelly Matis
2. Perrin will check in with each nominee to see if they are willing & able to serve.
3. Prior to June 1, Pam DiBona will distribute a link to a Survey Monkey poll for voting.
4. Announce winner in early June.

Member updates

Cassie Durette announced that NERACOOS has completed their strategic planning. One year ago our Governing Council meeting was dedicated to providing input to that; Cassie will send a summary of relevant sections out via email.

Perrin Chick reported on a small-group meeting held on May 16 about home schooling at member sites – current practices, needs, etc.. Six member organizations are considering seeking funding to gather information about ocean-oriented curricula and best practices for engagement of this audience.

Bob Chen announced a Facebook page sponsored by COSEE OCEAN: GrOE (Graduate Students for Ocean Education); become a friend!