

Event Summary:

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Community Involvement in Integrated Ocean and Coastal Management

May 14, 2010, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, NS

Please direct any comments or questions to:

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On May 14, 2010, Coastal CURA members met with federal and provincial government representatives to discuss barriers to community involvement in integrated ocean and coastal management. The goal of this meeting was to have a frank discussion with people who are involved in the implementation of Integrated Management, to look at what's working and what is not, and to determine our roles as academics, communities and government.

The format of the meeting was a round table discussion on the following questions:

1. What are the three most significant barriers to the participation of coastal communities in integrated coastal and ocean management?
2. What are the top three priorities to improve the role of coastal communities in integrated ocean and coastal management institutions?
3. What role should Government, Communities and Academics play in accomplishing this goal?

This brief will highlight some of the points made during the discussion.

Question 1: *What are the (three) most significant barriers to the participation of coastal communities in integrated coastal and ocean management? While each participant had a different list of three barriers, there was significant overlap.*

- **Definition & Language**
 - There is no clear definition for Integrated Management.
 - Sometimes there are language barriers around Integrated Management; terminology can exclude rather than include.
- **Capacity**
 - Capacity to become involved in IM is declining as small coastal communities are often in decline; it is a challenge to move ahead with the limited number of people available
 - There is only a certain amount of time/money/energy
 - There is a wide range of competing interests, and so many meetings – there are only so many things we can expect to get out of IM
- **Citizen Engagement**
 - Challenges exist for the engagement of active stakeholders – key users should be involved but often are not; thus engagement tactics need to be tailored for each group
 - The fallacy of the multi stakeholder round table is a problem. If you get everyone at the table, you can work to set consensus, which is good for setting a larger vision, but consensus based decision making presents challenges as one party can block progress. We need to find alternatives to consensus based decision making that remain democratic.
- **Regulations & Law**
 - Various government departments have legal mandates, based in federal and provincial statutes, to manage coastal resources and the activities that impact them.
 - Regulatory silos remain a problem – Integrated Management must work across these.
 - There are problems with a regulatory maze; we are governed by laws and need the legal authority to make changes; this can be a complicated process since groups trying to make changes have to deal with dozens of different departments, each with their own procedures and priorities.
- **Scale Issues (Affecting Government)**
 - There are many requests to get involved by many groups, each at a different scale and with a different agenda and varying needs.
 - The LOMA approach may have been misconceived as it takes a broad, large scale approach which takes a great deal of time to work out.
 - Some localized “messy” situations could effectively involve Integrated Management at a more localized scale.

- **Accountability & Responsibilities**
 - It is not always clear who is accountable for Integrated Management - who is responsible?
 - There are few effective processes for linking departments to further IM and lack of accountability for failing to do so.
- **Priorities**
 - Priorities are not aligned across departments (within government).
 - All management is value based; there needs to be more discussion about which values should get priority.
 - The federal government is in a time of deficit – there is a major focus on results right now; knowledge sharing within governments AND communities will be required to find successes that we can learn from, and other interested parties to engage with.
- **Communication**
 - How do you deal with the situation when there are so many players with so many communication issues?
 - There is a problem with burn-out at all levels; communication can break down when leadership changes.
 - Community representatives ‘at the table’ need to take messages back to the community – this has been a problem.
- **General**
 - Thinking in Integrated Management is meant to be proactive, but we are still living in a reactive world.

Question 2: *What are the top (three) priorities to improve the role of coastal communities in integrated ocean and coastal management institutions?*

- **Definition & Structure**
 - We need a better definition of the problem.
 - We need an enabling framework for local initiatives and for facilitating discussion. Communities don’t necessarily want a big government led process, but want the government to address smaller issues through an agreed upon process.
 - Citizen’s should define ‘better outcomes’
- **Communication**
 - Community leaders must communicate effectively with their community members.
 - Integrated management requires an effective communication strategy.
 - Communities need to use their government connections effectively.
- **Leadership**
 - There needs to be leadership from within coastal communities – specifically, there is a need for leadership at the community level that can draw everyone into the process.
 - Work is needed to build the community capacity for such leadership.
 - We need all levels of government to put more priority on community IM initiatives but governments have to take a leadership role without taking total control of the process.

Comments on Question 3 arose throughout the discussion and will be used as a foundation for the development of our next session.

General Conclusions

1. **Community people expect that governments should facilitate IM because they can make legal changes**

- While we might reasonably ask: “Why should the government be the ones to solve the problem,” communities cannot act alone. They don’t have the legal authority to make changes on the larger scale. Community members view the government as the regulatory authority and power.
- While government has the regulatory power and authority for specific things and for the large scale, small scale issues and messy situations may get too little attention.
- If you put science behind your issues and THEN present them to the government you get more attention for the problem.

2. **IM is about people – its about relationship building**

- Although continuity of relationships is important, increasingly there is high turnover of the participants, so we need a lasting structure or process – a formal process, a structure in place to facilitate continued relationship building.
- This process has to be focused on action now, not only on future planning scenarios.

The roundtable discussion was a productive and timely event. The general response from both Coastal CURA Partners and our Government Guests was positive. There is clearly a need for honest and open dialogue sessions such as this one in order to move forward for the effective implementation of Integrated Management strategies across the Maritimes.

Thus, Coastal CURA will be hosting several more dialogue sessions with government, biannually in the fall and spring. The next meeting is scheduled for fall 2010, where we hope to move forward with discussing how to overcome or work around the barriers identified in this first session.

We will be inviting government participants to join us from across the Maritimes, and anticipate another successful session.

For more information on these sessions, please contact:

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