

Community Forum: Coastal Communities & Coastal Management
Coastal Zone Canada Conference, PEI
Tuesday July 27 3:30-5:00pm

Moderators: Hubert Saulnier (*Coastal CURA & Fundy Fixed Gear Council*) and Melanie Wiber (*Coastal CURA & the University of New Brunswick, Anthropology Dept*)

Guest Speakers: Jennifer Graham (*Coastal Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre*), Karen Traversy (*Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia*), Chantelle Gagnon (*Executive Director, Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition on Sustainability*).

Questions for Discussion:

1. **Barriers:** What are the most significant barriers to the participation of coastal communities in integrated ocean and coastal management?
2. **Priorities:** What are the top three priorities to improve the role of coastal communities in integrated ocean and coastal management institutions?
3. **Next Steps:** What role should governments, research organizations, coastal communities, NGO's, and others play in overcoming the barriers and tackling the above priorities

On Tuesday July 27th in sunny PEI, Coastal CURA partners moderated a Community Forum on *Coastal Communities and Coastal Management* during the Coastal Zone Canada Conference. Our three guest speakers were invited to address the barriers to, and priorities for, community involvement in coastal management. This was followed up by comments from the larger group of students, academics, government representatives, community representatives, and both local and international attendees. The following is a brief summary of some of the key points brought up during our discussion.

Question 1: What are the most significant barriers to the participation of coastal communities in integrated ocean and coastal management?

1. A lack of transparency creates conflict, usually in a situation where government and development interests surprise communities with no advanced notice.
2. There is a legacy of distrust and failed relationships between coastal communities and government departments.
3. The capacity for community participation is low in terms of resources, time, and energy.
4. Many events or projects are inaccessible to interested citizens (e.g. due to lack of notification, literacy issues, lack of childcare opportunities, time constraints, etc.)

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

- 1. There should be early provision of information in an accessible and understandable format, far in advance of any concrete decision making at the government level.**

Comments from the Group:

- Conversations between communities and government should happen early on in the debate, instead of at the tail end.
- Acceptance in the community is vital for the success of any initiative, to avoid problems down the road.
- Conversations take time - Let communities consider their options, and don't make hasty decisions.
- Private investment and interest in projects can lead to a 'fast tracking' of decision making at the government level, which can be dangerous to effective communication with the community that is the site of the proposed project.
- Communities have to fight very hard to have these debates earlier in the decision making process.

- 2. Prevent harming delicate relationships by fixing some of the problems brought forward by community groups - We need people to help us navigate the maze that is government.**

Comments from the Group:

- Divided communities can paralyze government processes - If the community is divided, then it gets pushed up to a ministerial decision after the bounds of the legal process have been followed through to the end. In the end we elect government representatives; at the end of the day it's the minister who makes the decision.
- If there is a legal requirement for assessments (or the like), these need to be followed through by the government; these legal requirements were put in place for a reason.
- The government needs to bring the public along, and current processes leave a lot to be desired.

- 3. Get to know your community**

Comments from the Group:

- Know the expectations of your community
- Recognize the work of those in government and in communities who are involved in making change.
- There are many solutions to getting citizens more involved (e.g., education, curriculum etc...)
- View citizens as resources rather than burdens

Other Issues

As the discussion continued, the group identified other key issues that are hindering community involvement in integrated ocean and coastal management.

- **Scale Issues**
 - Although there have been some pilot projects on small ocean management areas, there is a clear government focus on large ocean management planning. Such large scale projects make it difficult for communities to make changes “on the ground”.
- **Changing language Issues**
 - Integrated ocean and coastal management, ecosystem-based management, and ICZM are now referred to as *marine spatial planning* in relevant government departments. Changing the ‘name’ of the issue doesn’t address the issue. We spend too much time redefining things rather than moving forward.
- **Over-categorization of initiatives**
 - Many community initiatives are being established for IM, with big efforts to categorize them - why not accept the existing ones, and try to work together?
- **Difference in Provincial coastal and ocean regulation**
 - Jurisdictional lines are found on maps, not in the real world; it is the structures of human management that create solid lines. This is a key barrier to successful Integrated Management.
- **Inflexible Government and Authority Clusters**
 - There is clear frustration in communities over the inflexibility of government and its lack of support, but indeed those within government also experience frustration over the difficulty of working within their own institutions to make things better... “We are as flexible as a steel rod in government”
 - Regional authority is disappearing in government (all decisions made in Ottawa) - it is a lack of efficiency in government priorities.
 - “If you reach that point where the water meets the land, you suddenly have no authority”

Coastal CURA would like to thank the organizing committee at Coastal Zone Canada for the opportunity to lead this session. We appreciate the time provided for discussion on coastal and ocean management from the community perspective.

For more information on this, and other Coastal CURA discussion sessions, please contact Madelaine Patterson at coastalcura@smu.ca

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