

# Report on June 1, 2004 workshop on Regional Ocean Governance

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Overview. The workshop was held between 2 and 5 PM on June 1, 2004, in room 203 of the Fisheries Science Building on the University of Washington campus. The workshop was sponsored by the School of Marine Affairs, and assisted in part by the School of Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences. The overall objective was to initially explore the concept of regional ocean governance and how it relates to the Pacific NW as a first step in structuring a more comprehensive research activity which is scheduled to start later in the summer of 2004. The invited workshop participants were specialists in various aspects of ocean, coastal and environmental affairs primarily from the UW, but also including representatives of governmental, industrial and non-governmental organizations in Washington and Oregon.

Purpose and Objective: Both the PEW and US Ocean Commissions call for regional ocean councils as a new way to address ocean and coastal issues in the US. The new approach is loosely defined as promoting a shift toward ecosystem based environmental and resource management. The workshop introduced the regional ocean governance concept and began discussions about the concept among interested faculty and some practitioners. The goal was to outline a set of questions and observations that would assist in designing further research and information gathering efforts. There was no attempt to come up with workshop “conclusions”.

Participants: Twenty-seven people attended the workshop:

Dan Siemann, ESPA, UW  
Stephanie Harrington, EI, UW  
Ross Heath, Ocean, UW  
Ed Miles, SMA, UW  
Tom Leschine, SMA, UW  
Dan Huppert, SMA, UW  
Dave Fluharty, SMA, UW  
Peter May, PolSci, UW  
William Beyers, Geog., UW  
Bob Bailey, DLCD, Oregon  
George Galasso, NOAA OCNMS  
David Martin, APL, UW  
Paul Dye, TNC  
Mark Abbott, COAS, OSU

Steve Whitney, Bullitt Found.  
Eric Laschever, Stoel Rives, Seattle  
Greg McMurray, DLCD, Oregon  
Jan Newton, DOE, Washington  
Jacque White, TNC  
Jim Bergeron, Port of Astoria, Oregon  
Andrea Copping, Sea Grant, Washington  
Kevin Ranker, Surfrider Foundation  
Bob Goodwin, Sea Grant, Washington  
Summer Morlock, SMA, UW  
John Dwyer, SMA, UW  
Kim Engie, SMA, UW  
Marc Hershman, SMA, UW

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Structure: The workshop was divided into two segments. The first segment featured five speakers who presented on 1) the recommendations coming from the two Ocean Commissions; 2) resource management examples at the regional scale; 3) the design of information systems for management applications; 4) marine observing and regional applications; and, 5) building regional awareness. Short background papers were prepared outlining the regional governance concept of the two ocean commissions, the regional governance activities in the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes and Gulf of Maine, and a listing of regional governance activities already in existence in the Pacific NW. The second segment invited all participants to comment on the initial presentations or to offer other ideas about regional ocean governance. The discussion was facilitated by Prof Tom Leschine, Director of the School of Marine Affairs. The question presented for discussion was: What would eco-system based regional governance in the Pacific NW look like to you? Scientifically? Operationally? Politically? Notes were taken on the comments for future reference as the research proceeds.

Major observations and suggestions of the five speakers (in the order in which they were presented):

- The USCOP and the Pew reports differ. USCOP prefers a voluntary approach for Regional Councils, with information services a key objective. Pew suggests specific standards and management role. There are many existing efforts at regional ocean and coastal governance that we can learn from.
- There needs to be a compelling reason for regional ocean governance. Resource management at the regional scale will be very situational. A regional council could be a conduit for linking research and monitoring with management efforts on an ongoing basis.
- An eco-regional data system is needed which is based on physiographic and biological information, which is scalable up or down. With this and other information regional ocean councils can play an important planning function.
- Regional ocean observing systems are being developed now in the Pacific NW. The challenge is to get everyone on the same page in terms of the type, quality and format for information collection.
- Regions need to be defined in socio-economic as well as bio-physical terms. They must be characterized well, and effective communication launched with a broad range of stakeholders. Sustaining interest in a regional perspective is a key challenge.

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Major observations and suggestions from other participants (in the order presented):

- “Who” and “what” questions are central. Who is governing? Who is being governed? What are we governing for?
- A new regional governance structure must accommodate existing government authorities of states.
- Regional governance is needed but expectations need to be scaled back. We should emphasize planning rather than regulation and put together a real time superior information system.
- Regional councils can be anticipatory, and play a broker role with all levels of government.
- A Council does not have to be “top-down” but it does need some regulatory teeth.
- We already have some councils with regulatory functions that should not be forgotten.
- Design something small and manageable at the outset to establish credibility. Most councils end up as quasi-regulatory, and they take their shape through a process of adaptation over time.
- A regional structure could identify an issue and confer authority for it to be addressed – akin to “floating zones” in land use planning.
- Some councils can establish de facto authority through the trust they build among the members. Trust comes through small scale, tractable initiatives, and a trial/trust building period.
- Start a regional effort with information sharing, rather than plan development. Once members of the regional group are convinced on an issue, they can convince their agency and aid implementation.
- A goal of regional governance can be to help existing groups do their job better.
- Regions should be defined flexibly but management must realize that watershed, coastal and marine systems are interconnected.
- Information must be relevant to managers at multiple scales, and normally is measured through “indicators”. Without this the regional information system cannot be sustained.

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- Regional councils need quasi-stability to recognize problems emerging on different scales, a corporate memory, and the ability to establish ad hoc groups to deal with issues as they arise.
- It is important, but tricky, to strive for biophysical preservation as well as socio-economic health. The regional boundaries for the two might be quite different.
- PNCERS project found there was no common information base or set of understandings or shared priorities in the five estuaries studied, and very little regional identity. There is a large disconnect between the geographical and temporal scale at which information is collected and the needs of managers.
- A number of management issues could be improved through a better regional information system: oil spill response, ballast water issues, coastal development, weather/climate forecasting, HABs, migratory species.
- For regional coastal observing systems a key issue is who sets the priorities for information collection and how are socio-economic factors accounted for?
- Resource development issues such as alternative energy and offshore aquaculture should be factored into the information picture.
- Being incremental in approach may be shortsighted. We need to experiment with new ideas, especially with respect to the cumbersome and costly legal system that has evolved.
- Pursuing a regional response to ocean problems may be inadequate given the severity of problems. How can ocean development be improved and degradation stopped?
- The Shared Salmon Strategy has an external driver – the ESA. What is the driver for new regional councils?
- The NW Straits Commission can be a model because it acts as a bridge between local communities and a regional forum.
- State government does not have the capacity to deal with regional patterns, climate forcing and other similar “complex” phenomena. People need to think of nested systems and sub-systems.
- Thinking about ecosystem management requires a broad and comprehensive picture. USCOP should not be too timid.

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Conclusion. The workshop started the process of building a group of experts to assist in evaluating the regional governance concept. The ideas of this initial group, primarily from academia, will be combined with the views of others as future research is defined. Participants identified sources of information and experience about existing regional activities on which we can build. The report of the workshop and the background memos will assist in shaping the research questions and research design.