

Great Lakes Research Coordination Strategy Workshop Summary of Proceedings

The workshop was held at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Great Lakes National Program Office in Chicago from April 28 through the 30th, 2004. There were 33 attendees representing both U.S. and Canadian organizations throughout the Great Lakes basin. This included 14 members of the Council of Great Lakes Research Managers (CGLRM).

Purpose: To address the need for a binational Great Lakes research coordination strategy, defined as an overarching framework for Great Lakes research management; a mechanism for international cooperation that describes how the region will pull together to organize and coordinate large scale research projects. The workshop provided a basis for Council advice and recommendations to the International Joint Commission.

Context: The research coordination strategy workshop took place amidst an intense period of interest in improving overall coordination of Great Lakes, Coastal and Ocean activities. The CGLRM chose this issue as a priority activity for the 2003 -2005 reporting period, a review of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was imminent, the U.S. Government Accountability Office was completing its study of Great Lakes leadership and restoration goals, and the Pew Oceans Commission had released its recommendations for a new ocean policy. In addition, in April 2004 the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy had just released its preliminary report and shortly after the workshop in May 2004 a Presidential Executive Order created a cabinet-level interagency Task Force and a "Regional Collaboration of National Significance" in the United States. Many of the workshop participants were or are currently involved in the Regional Collaboration, the Canada – Ontario Agreement, the Great Lakes Action Plan, the U.S. Policy Committee Great Lakes Strategy 2002, Annex 2001 work and the State of the Lakes Ecosystem conference.

Organization: The workshop was organized in two sessions. The first day and a half public session consisted of U.S. and Canadian perspectives on regional coordination, presentations about lessons learned from regional or problem driven coordination efforts, lake-wide coordination efforts and collaborative approaches. During two half-day sessions that followed, members of the CGLRM and other advisors met to identify the elements of the research strategy and how to move forward with the initiative.

Findings: An effective research strategy would include the following attributes:

Goals: To promote effective collaboration Avoid duplication Applied holistic ecosystem approach Effectively communicate science with one common voice Seek joint funding Address all categories of research in a strategic, effective and flexible manner
Communication Key coordinating body Advisory groups with key players Public communications plan

Guiding principles will be included
All terms and processes will be defined
Address what is required to move research ahead, provide for a rapid response and pooling of resources. Three areas to address: Management driven research, Thematic issues (that the manager don't see yet); Emerging issues (the surprises)
Include a list of cooperating agencies and organizational chart(s).
Promote and facilitate collaborative research proposals
Include communications plan/sub-plan regarding communicating agency plans to all participating agencies around the basin and urgent issues/needs to the public and decision makers
Inform the decision making process related to research funding
Work from strengths, take advantage of existing organizations and avoid reinventing things that are working well
Address long term issues; include some very basic coordination strategies that would be common to any particular issue.
Priorities – Address the process of setting research priorities; provide some basic principles, structure, and mechanics of how priorities are looked at and set.

A structure very similar to what the Millennium Group does for Lake Erie was suggested as a process to employ throughout the basin. This process is defined by addressing a series of questions regarding the origin and fate of ideas about areas of research to be pursued in the Great Lakes basin.

Questions to address:

1. Where will the ideas come from?
2. Where will the issues come from?
3. Who will synthesize the ideas into a theme?
4. Who will promote the theme?
5. Who will advertise the theme and get participants?
6. Who will organize the logistics of the theme?
7. Who will coordinate the resources?
8. Who will coordinate the reporting/databases, etc?

1. Where will the ideas come from?

Three sources of research:

Management

Thematic

Emerging/Surprise

Political

Public

What structure do we need?

Science Advisory Groups

How do we make people aware we're here so they'll come to us with ideas?

Workshop with experts

Workshop for those who want to develop a theme

How do we get there?

Develop a Great Lakes funding source for scoping workshops

Thematic workshops

Cyber Seminars

Coordinate with an existing workshop

2. Where will the issues come from?

Managers
Researchers
A well know forum where people know they can bring an idea that will be discussed through the entire Great Lakes community

3. Who will synthesize the ideas into a theme?

Develop workshops, cyber seminars, teleconferences
Outcome of the workshops, cyber seminars, teleconferences would be a recommended theme

4. Who will promote the theme?

Possible role for the Council
Issue peer review
Media events
Public events to promote themes

5. Who will advertise the theme and get participants?

Request For Proposals (RFP's) from agencies; send to Council website
IAGLR website (for RFP's), GLIN, CGLRM, Others
Use the CGLRM List server to advertise when and how RFPs are going to be advertised; early pre-award planning information
Council
Great Lakes Commission
NGO's
Council of Great Lakes Governors
Individual Agencies

6. Who will organize the logistics of the theme?

Scientific community/Expertise
Separate coordinating entity at choice of partnering

agencies/agency able to receive funding (?)
Ships/Equipment/Stream Gauges
Organization's logistics personnel
Database people
Work plan
Timelines
Budget
Agency

7. Who will coordinate the resources?

Council to sponsor workshops in order to coordinate effort
Committee to coordinate Great Lakes Resources
A Coalition of agency heads
Consider the National Oceanographic Partnership Program Model
of an interagency working group

8. Who will coordinate the reporting/databases, . . etc.?

Provide a Portal for data housed at other agencies
Align with data management plan for the Regional Coastal Ocean
Observing System (i.e. GLOS plan)

It was suggested that the CGLRM or a reformulated research coordination council be established where issues & themes (for example from a workshop) could be reported. The council would discuss the pros and cons of what the workshop recommends; obtain a consensus; identify agencies that wish to contribute and funding sources establishing a truly coordinated research project that could be of substantial scale.

It was further suggested that the governments consider including a research coordination process as they proceed with their review and possible revision of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

It was decided to incorporate the attributes described above in a draft plan that would provide a framework strategy. A second workshop would then be organized to address the prioritization of research issues within the resulting framework from the first workshop.