

NERACOOS Board of Directors August 21, 2013 Minutes

Approved by the Board: December 4, 2013

Malcolm Spaulding called the webinar meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Board Participants: Christine Tilburg, Jon Pennock, Malcolm Spaulding, Fei Chai, Cheryl Zimmerman, Steve Lohrenz, Al Hanson, Linda Mercer, Matt Lyman, Jim O'Donnell, Bob Stankelis, Marianne Molchan
Other Participants: Matt Liebman, Ru Morrison, Cassie Stymiest, Jackie Ball, Tom Shyka, Josie Quintrell

Christine Tilburg motioned to approve the May 8, 2013 board meeting minutes, seconded by Matt Lyman, and unanimously approved.

Jackie Ball noted that we now have everyone's conflict of interest forms for 2013.

Christine Tilburg provided the **nominating committee** report. There are six individuals whose terms will expire in December. Three of these individuals wish to return: Anthony Kirincich for his first term, Steve Lohrenz for his second term, and Malcolm Spaulding for his third term to finish his presidency. Steve Withrow has been recommended to replace Cheryl Zimmerman's seat and Steve Couture to replace Chris Nash. A replacement for Marianne Molchan's seat has not yet been identified. Cassie was asked if we require a formal letter from the nominating entities and she replied that it's not required according to our by-laws, just something we've done to date. Jon Hare has stepped down from the board and he recommended he be replaced by his alternate Betsy Nicholson, who's alternate would be Paula Fratantoni. We also have four vacant seats currently on the board, we are open to suggestions. Ru added that when considering a potential new board member to keep in mind their capacity to open up new revenue streams or to bring in other expertise. Malcolm also noted that a benefit of membership is being able to be considered for board seats. Ru agreed and stated that currently the membership is the board, but this is something we'll need to consider in the future. Malcolm stated that NERACOOS is a maturing organization and the next board generation needs to evolve with NERACOOS and broaden the base support. Marianne wanted to reiterate the agreement between Marine Ocean Tracking Network (MOTN) and NERACOOS, that MOTN will join NERACOOS and NERACOOS will join MOTN. Ru, Marianne and Cheryl will discuss membership details offline.

Linda Mercer provided an update on the **finance committee** who held a call on August 13, 2013. Jim Chase is leaving the Seacoast Science Center, although he will help with the audit. We are hoping to continue our relationship with the Science Center, but no replacement has been hired yet. The end of our fiscal year is September 30 and work is underway to prepare for the audit. We are now considered a high risk recipient, which means we now need to fill out a form prior to withdrawing funds. The company that completed this rating needs to be contacted since they thought our business is lithographic printing and sculpture. Until next year there is nothing we can do about this. We are working closely with our accountants and CPA's to have a clean audit this year. We have received the FY13 funds. Some of the sub-awards are not spending as much as they can, but it's suspected this is because of the no cost extension of the previous award. All sub-award amendments have been issued except for the University of Rhode Island. The sub-award agreement will be sent out once invoicing issues are resolved. After Chris Nash steps down in December we need to identify another board member in the New Hampshire area to sign checks over \$10k. Steve Couture has been suggested, but he's out of the country until next year. In the interim Ted Diers and Jon Pennock have been suggested. Linda added that the indirect rate has not yet been approved, and is currently being estimated.

Josie Quintrell gave the board an **IOOS association** update. In FY13 there's continuing resolution for \$18m, which a portion comes to NERACOOS. Currently working on FY14, fiscal year ends in September. New sensor technology money is up for approval that was moved from the NOAA line to the IOOS, which was cut last year. The house passed \$35m for this year, but the senate numbers matched the increase in the president's request. There is likely to be another continuing resolution. The IOOS act is also up for reauthorization. We've had several congressional hearings where IOOS was recognized prominently. Kathy Sullivan has been selected for Administrator of NOAA, congressional hearing is in September. We will be working to create IOOS questions at the hearing, the more we can show delegates they care about IOOS the better for the administrator. Kathy is very engaged in IOOS.

Ru is leading an effort with other RA's to compile this year's hill requests. Staff are working on pulling together a document to show what's currently being supported and what additional funds would be used for. This will show a more complete story. There have also been two new FFO's released. One is related to biodiversity, which might relate to issues in the Northeast. The other is sensor money and trying to take sensors into operational use. Ru will share these opportunities with the group. The annual meeting is coming up in November. Trying to coordinate and share product development within the RA's. Many regions have developed products to meet regional constituent's needs, but many are similar throughout the nation. The NERACOOS climatologies is an example that was developed regionally, but could be used by all the other RA's.

Matt Liebman asked Josie about CR and sequester and how it's affected if the CR goes through. Josie stated that as she understands it, if nothing is done with sequester there will be another 8% cut for the next eight years. Matt asked if they would use pre-sequester or sequester numbers? Josie replied that it's up to congress. Jim O'Donnell then asked Josie why IOOS didn't see more funds from Sandy or the Gulf oil spill. Josie replied that most of the oil spill money is going out to grant products, the two RA's in the gulf have positioning themselves for this money. For the Sandy Supplemental some funds have come to IOOS for repairs, but the larger check went OAR and the Co-operative institutions. There was a lot of congressional support for the money to go to IOOS, not sure what happened. Josie has a meeting with Holly Bamford in September, at this meeting she will discuss with Holly on how the broader NOAA effort can work more effectively with IOOS.

Ru then provided the board with an **IOOS program office** update as supplied by Gabrielle. There is a new marine sensor opportunity, Ru will forward to the board and SPI team. We've benefited from this program already with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and the ESP sensor. There's also a marine biodiversity opportunity, which has been forwarded to the SPI team. There has been some discussion about how to move on this opportunity with the sentinel monitoring project. Zdenka has kicked off an inventory of marine technology industries in the nation. The program office has been working on a partnership in the three east coast regions to kick off a project called "gliderpalooza". The project headed by MARACOOS will have coordinated deployments throughout the regions. Neal from the University of Maine will be participating in this effort. Ru asked if there are any questions he can forward to Gabrielle. Malcolm asked how the RA's and IOOS community are working to coordinate with the North Atlantic study being conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers, since they received majority of Sandy funding. Ru replied that he's tried to insert us into the process. Josie also added that this needs to be brought up to Zdenka. There is an inter-agency committee that's supposed to look out for things like this. Malcolm is surprised since we already have forecasting systems that do what they want to do with storm surge predictions, there's a serious disconnect. Jim added that they're also unaware that the buoys in Long Island Sound are not NOAA's. Ru responded that he's heard the concerns and will try something differently and will reach out to them once again. Malcolm added that they're hosting a series of webinars, he will send to the board.

Ru provided an **operations** update to the board. Thy FY13 funds have been released. The board was given the high level spend plan for the Sandy Supplemental funds. These funds will be used to replace damaged infrastructure, create a cloud based NECOFS, and to harden the observational data streams based on the data management framework.

Ru then gave the board a **SPI** team update. The NERACOOS data policy will be finalized at the next SPI meeting. Once finalized, sub-awardees will be expected to follow the policy as stated in the recent sub-award amendments. Matt was then asked to provide an update on the Sentinel Monitoring Project. The project hosted a 50 person workshop at the Seacoast Science Center on June 27th. At the meeting we had plenary presentations from Christine Tilburg, Jen Pagach, and Paul Stacey. Currently we are working on a regional database to house an inventory of existing monitoring efforts. NERACOOS is working on this database with the help of the folks from the Long Island Sound Study. We will be having our next meeting in October when others are in town for the RARGOM meeting. Ru added that the effort has received funding from a proposal NROC submitted with NOAA.

Ru announced that the NERACOOS office has outgrown the current space at the Science Center and will be relocating. With Malcolm's consultation we're currently exploring our options. As Linda mentioned Jim Chase is leaving the Seacoast Science Center. The Science Center is very keen on maintaining the fiscal relationship. The first round of interviews has been completed for Jim's

replacement. Ru will be involved in the final interview to make sure candidate can meet NERACOOS' needs. We've explored all options with our CPA and she agreed this was a responsible decision.

Tom provided the board with a **communications update**. There have been two delegation visits this summer. Cassie then informed the board of a recent trip to the buoy barn at the University of Maine with two of Senator Angus King's staff members, the regional and D.C. representatives. They now have a greater understanding of what our work entails. Senator King is very interested in long term climate change data and our Climatologies product. Other delegates expressed interest in going as well, but were unavailable at the time. We will continue to work with them for another visit. Ru then informed the board of his recent visit with Congresswomen Shea Porter, and Nancy Sutley, Chair of Council of Environmental Quality, where they highlighted the Hampton tide gauge and inundation work. It was a great way to show collaboration. We are working on developing a delegation engagement plan for other states. Ru then asked the board that if they are aware of any opportunities to let us know. Malcolm suggested reaching out to the Ocean Conservancy and added that we should consider adding a representative to the board. Ru agreed with Malcolm and added that Senator King and Whitehouse will be testifying on the floor in the coming months and have asked us for some long term observing data.

Tom then continued with his **communications** update, listing some of the ways we reach out to our constituents. Overall we have above average open rates of our newsletters, although we're seeing a slight decline so we will be reaching out to figure out why. Typically the IOOS office takes our stories and forwards them on nationally. To increase NERACOOS awareness we're also working on search engine optimization. Tom then noted some of the meetings NERACOOS has recently participated in including a climate change workshop hosted by the Island Institute. There was a high level of interest in our data and Tom will be following up with participants. Fei added that there may be opportunities within Ocean Acidification.

Ru then discussed the plan for the December meeting, noting that Rick Spinrad has agreed to be our keynote. At our last board meeting an awards committee was composed of the executive committee and Jim O'Donnell, this group will need to meet soon. The award committee will make a recommendation to the board to approve or deny requests. Ru suggested Mel also be involved, Jim will email him. Fei also added he'd like to participate.

The NERACOOS website mobile version has been launched and all NERACOOS buoys now have Twitter accounts. The Narragansett fixed sites are also now available on the NERACOOS page, thanks to AI and GMRI. All three tide gauges are now online: Scituate, Gloucester, and Hampton. We are working with NOAA Co-Ops to get the tide gauge data into the national data stream. The new model viewer and framework are being worked on and satellite data streams are under way with the University of Maine.

Ru provided an update on **membership**. Ru first thanked the board for everyone who has signed up or promised to do so. We have 64% of the board signed up. We hope to wrap up phase one in the next two weeks which is the board. For phase two of membership Ru asked the board to supply NERACOOS with two prospective member organizations. Any introductions that the board can provide would be great. Christine mentioned that she knows a couple of candidates for membership, but not at high levels, including the University of New England. Ru and Christine will continue this conversation offline.

The next piece is to plan for the future. Historically approximately \$50m is needed nationally to have the system we require. To date we've only reached ~\$26m. Individually NERACOOS has seen \$1.7m to \$2.4m per year. Although federal funding has increased yearly, it's going to other directed efforts. Data returns are in excess of 90%, but has been declining due to aging equipment. Next year we will be running out of our LNG funding for buoy A. Our current business plan is to manage and distribute federal funds, although we have begun to expand this with our membership plan. Ru then presented four scenarios with approximate costs to the board. In our current model we need \$2m to continue operations, but this does not include maintenance. To maintain and replace current equipment in the water we need \$2.4m. If we want to regain more capacity including gliders, we need \$3.7m. If we then want to take it to next level and increase our observing capacity to what's needed in the region it will cost \$7m a year. We need a sustainable organization that's not completely dependent on federal

funding. Ru suggested to the board that the next board meeting we have a planning retreat to work through the details of this more.

Malcolm stated that one way to look at this is to consider what goods and services NERACOOS provides and to whom. From here we can determine our client base and make them purchase our data based on their needs. Jon Pennock agreed with Malcolm, but stated the U.S. isn't used to paying for these types of services. Jon suggested applying a fee for states that need the data. Steve Lohrenz agrees that we need a new business plan but we need to be strategically thinking about research opportunities. Seeking funding opportunities and partners make NERACOOS stronger. Jim O'Donnell stated that this is the current model and it's not working. Fei suggested that partner organizations write in some of NERACOOS required costs into their proposals. NERACOOS plays a leadership role within the region. Including NERACOOS in the proposal makes the proposal stronger. Ru thanked Fei for his input and agreed we need to do some things differently. We need to need to develop a vision to increase the observations. Malcolm agreed and stated that a better distribution of funding is needed to move forward. An example of an opportunity is with the off-shore wind development. These companies are hiring consultants to conduct site feasibility assessments. These consultants are scrambling to collect the data. Instead NERACOOS could come forward with the opportunity to grow the observing network. This is a solution that everyone would benefit from. The data could be shared through NERACOOS to the community and the companies get the data they need. Al added that this seems like a great idea and asked Ru if any of the other RA's have explored something like this. Ru replied no not that he's aware. Malcolm then replied that another example of an opportunity is with visibility data. This is something that's not collected often and people are unaware we collect it on our buoys.

Malcolm suggested to Ru that before we bring in outside help he should review these examples and make some decisions. What's unique is that there are competitors within our own group for the funds, which creates tension. Steve replied that we need to bring people to the table for the opportunity, capitalizing on the expertise of the various organizations and collaborating in a coordinated fashion. There is an opportunity with issues such as storm surge, sea level rise and storm intensity. To create the products to address these issues we need to find the funds. To do this we need to be more proactive as a regional organization and bring the right players to the table. It was suggested that a committee be formed to come up with a plan and process to get us somewhere before the next board meeting. This will allow for a more in depth discussion in December. Volunteers for the committee were Malcolm Spaulding, Al Hanson, Steve Lohrenz, and Fei Chai. Fei then suggested NERACOOS also explore ocean acidification issues. Ru agreed and stated that NERACOOS has been working with the NOAA Ocean Acidification office to stand up NECAN, the Northeast Coastal Acidification Network. This group will be modeled after CCAN, the California Coastal Acidification Network. Ru will send around a one-pager to the board. At the annual meeting we will host a retreat to develop a vision for NERACOOS.

Malcolm entertained a motion to adjourn, Steve Lohrenz motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jim O'Donnell, unanimously agreed to adjourn at 12:01 p.m.