

MEETING MINUTES

SWNB Marine Advisory Committee: Reflections and Next Steps

October 26, 2017, 1-4 pm

St. George Community Centre (Magaguadavic Place)
10 J.O. Spinney Street, St George, NB

Committee Members Present

Greg Thompson
Matt Abbott
Mike Rouse
Mark Kesselring
Lois Mitchell

Absent

Bob Sweeney
Patricia Saulis
Jessie Davies (input provided separately and included here as an annex)
Ken Hirtle
Wendy Wetteland
Heather Chase
Curtis Malloch
Nicole Leavitt

Government Co-chairs

Kathy Brewer-Dalton, Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, NB DAAF
Harvey Millar, SWNB Area Director, DFO Maritimes

Government Secretariat Present

Terry Hatt (NB DAAF)
Ariel Demerchant (NB ELG)
Erica Stuart (DFO)
Jason Naug (DFO)
Rob Stephenson (DFO)
Tanya Koropatnick (DFO)

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Harvey Millar and Kathy Brewer-Dalton welcomed everyone and provided some opening remarks along with roundtable introductions. Both Harvey and Kathy acknowledged the hard

work, time commitment, and valuable input from all who have been involved in the various phases of engagement on marine issues in SW New Brunswick over the years. Both chairs also acknowledged the on-going need for both levels of government to continue to engage with the community, and the need to learn from past experience as we think about next steps.

Discussion

The agenda included a roundtable to provide participants the opportunity to share their initial perspectives, followed by a more focused discussion on: 1) what worked, 2) what didn't work, and 3) ideas for next steps. The summary presented here organizes the feedback from both the roundtable component and the focused discussion into the three discussion topics along with sections that capture general comments and comments specific to MPAs.

General Comments

- Kathy and Harvey clarified that the decision to sunset the MAC was made jointly by DFO and NB, because it was thought to not be functional in its current form. Both governments are still interested in this type of initiative going forward, but there is a need to review/refine the mandate, purpose, and operating procedures. As well, there is interest from DFO to potentially expand the scope to include a larger geographic area.
- Several MAC members expressed their strong belief that citizens have an important role to play in decisions that affect their community. Governments need to talk to the people who will be affected by the decisions they make.
- The MAC presented a unique opportunity for community engagement and input into decision making, but its full potential was never realized.
- The SWNB area is special not just ecologically but in the way different groups with very different interests and perspectives have been able to work collaboratively together.
- There is no question that governments have a mandate and need for this kind of group. MAC members also recognize an on-going need for an avenue like the MAC. The challenge is to figure out effective implementation.
- Government is faced with complex challenges, such as the need to address ecosystem change, trade-offs, overlapping interests and standards, integrated management of multiple activities, and increasingly diverse ecological, social and economic objectives. Even though the MRP/MAC did not solve everything, they were a good place to start looking at some of these challenges through a community lens.

MPAs

- Several participants identified MPAs as a great topic to discuss at the MAC table, and expressed frustration that the MAC was disbanding when this issue still needs further attention.
- One big challenge for the MPA discussion was that MAC members were reluctant to represent the community on the topic. From a government perspective, this reduced the value of the MAC as a forum for discussion about MPAs.
- Several MAC members agreed that they were not comfortable engaging the community on this highly controversial topic in order to bring community views back to the table. (“None of us want to walk in to Tim Horton’s with a target on our backs!”)

- Harvey clarified that the MAC's role was to bring the community values to the table - not to consult for government. The MAC was a venue to tell government what members are hearing in the community.
- Part of the issue from one members' perspective was that the conversation on MPAs seemed to change from the government asking "give us advice on how to consult" into "do you agree with an MPA in this area?"
- It was observed by several participants that it was hard to have a discussion without a map of proposed MPAs on the table. It was difficult to provide feedback when the potential impacts to the community were not clear. It was also noted that government needs to begin consultations prior to developing a plan or it will be perceived as not having consulted early enough. The public release of the draft MPA network design (which will include a map of proposed sites) is scheduled for December, and will initiate a further year of consultation on proposed sites.
- While it was acknowledged that the MAC would not likely have ever reached consensus on the topic of MPAs, several participants pointed out ways that this advisory body could have provided a constructive contribution to the MPA discussion. For example, MAC members could have helped by articulating community values on the issue and identifying areas of expected conflict. If the MAC were presented with an MPA scenario they would have been able to help identify pros and cons, and/or even provide advice on placement with consideration for the community values criteria.
- It was observed by several government participants that the opportunity has not been lost to engage on MPAs; the former MAC membership remain key community contacts for engagement on that topic going forward.

What Worked?

- The value of both the MRP and MAC was in the relationships built through on-going engagement. Groups that were originally in conflict changed their approach to become more constructive in their interactions and contributions – conversations went from adversarial to more of a dialogue.
- The MAC provided a forum for community members to discuss important issues, exchange information and views, and for all participants to gain a better understanding of key issues from many different perspectives.
- The Terms of Reference were well written and did a good job of capturing the intent of the committee (e.g., to examine marine issues from a community perspective; opportunity to provide advice to various levels of government). The vision and purpose are still valid.
- The secretariat worked well, especially with the community co-chair involvement.
- The marine debris work was a good, locally relevant topic that everyone could support (low conflict). There was a clear problem to address, so recommendations for a solution could be developed.

What Didn't Work?

- MAC was not used as it should have been. The group was here to do what was best for the community but they weren't given a chance to do it.

- Meetings were spent discussing what the MAC should talk about rather than actually engaging on the issues.
- Government did not bring issues to the table that required advice – for example, during consultations for the Aquaculture Regulations, DFO chose to use other tables and venues rather than bring the topic to the MAC for input. Because there are other processes and mechanisms for consultation and engagement to occur, the Government did not always understand the value of the MAC as a place to bring issues that needed to be addressed.
- Several participants observed that meeting agendas were controlled by the secretariat and suggestions for topics from community members were not always added to the agenda; others commented that there was a need for more community recommendations for topics to discuss at the table.
- Meetings were full of presentations without much opportunity to engage and provide input.
- Government control over appointments to the MAC was seen as too restrictive and caused tension.
- Unclear to MAC members how input would be used if it was provided; likewise from the government perspective, it was not always clear what to do when advice was received, and how to ensure it would be considered in decision making.
- Government requests for input came in too late for the MAC to provide timely advice, or meeting scheduling did not correspond with government timeline requirements for input on issues that could have been discussed at the MAC table.
- Citizen co-chair was a good idea in principal but in practice it did not seem like he/she had an equal role when compared to the government co-chair.
- Sense of the government lacking commitment; staff turnover, including at senior executive level, may have been part of the problem.
- Meeting scheduling was a challenge, especially for participants with employers that did not support meeting attendance during work hours. Meeting dates were provided without providing participants with an opportunity to select from a list of options.
- Very difficult to accomplish anything meaningful with just 2-3 meetings a year; if a member missed even one meeting they would be very out of touch with the discussions.
- Part of the challenge with meeting scheduling was the requirement for participation by senior officials. While it is good to have the decision-makers at the table when there is advice to deliver, having them present at other times makes less sense.
- Lack of a workable method to routinely implement the community values criteria (CVC); a lot of work went into the development of the CVC but they were never really used.
- Topics that matter for the Marine Resource Planning Area are often much bigger in scope (Atlantic Canada or nation-wide) than just SW New Brunswick. For example, pesticide regulations for aquaculture is a topic that is national in scope, so input from the SWNB MAC table on that topic would have little impact compared to more community-specific issues. Conversely, some topics that may be important to the local community may not be seen as priorities at the provincial level or DFO Maritimes Region scale.
- Confusion about the purpose/use/role of the MAC - while the MAC was intended to serve as an advisory body, there was some sense that government would like to use the MAC as a focus group; at other times the government seemed to want to use the MAC as an avenue for consultation (e.g., MPAs). With the hats off at the door policy, some thought the MAC was not an appropriate venue for consultation.

- Several participants commented that the “hats off at the door” policy was difficult to achieve and did not make much sense. The idea was to take people away from the positions of their respective sectors so that interests and perspectives could be discussed and consensus could be reached. However, some members work for organizations that supported their participation in the MAC – meetings were attended during work hours and members did not take vacation time to attend so there was a sense that their hat should really remain on. As well, in many cases, the expertise and experience that members brought to the table came from the work they do in their sectors so it was difficult to separate themselves from those roles.
- The government secretariat role was confusing and questionable to some. Government participants could have provided important perspectives and contributed in a valuable way to discussions if they had been fully ‘at the table’ rather than just there to facilitate and provide administrative support. True collaboration requires everyone to be at the table. However, public servants are required to support the priorities and commitments of the elected government of the day, and must work within the mandate of their departments – there are limits to what government representatives can say and do in their role as public servants.
- The MAC has been evaluated and reviewed on a number of occasions, but recommendations, including from the most recent 3-year external review (2012-2015) prepared for the MAC secretariat, were not implemented.

What Do You Want to See Next?

- Government needs to be accountable and receptive to advice provided; government needs to show how the advice is communicated, and how it is considered and used; requirement in legislation for government to consult with an advisory body might be helpful as a way to ensure the commitment is there.
- The Terms of Reference should include more detail on how recommendations are delivered to senior management, and how follow-up will occur.
- Everyone’s time is valuable. No need to waste time and make work by meeting when there is nothing to discuss or get feedback on. One suggestion was to keep a contact list in reserve and meet only when there is a topic (i.e., as identified by either government representatives or community members) that requires deliberation and advice.
- It is unrealistic to think a topic can be presented, discussed, and advice generated at a single meeting- if advice on an issue is required, it is important to take into account the time and effort needed for a body like the MAC to provide meaningful input.
- One of the things that was great about the MAC was that it offered the opportunity to hear from a lot of different perspectives in a safe environment where there were established relationships and trust. Going forward a similar forum would be of use as way to continue conversations on important/controversial issues (like MPAs). Several participants supported the idea that the next iteration of a MAC-like body should focus more on the process of information and perspective-sharing through deliberation, with less of a requirement to come to consensus for the provision of advice.
- With respect to the suggestion that a MAC-like engagement body should be broadened to a regional scale, it was observed that given the difficulty in making such a body work even at the local community level, a regionally-focused body would be unlikely to succeed. Others

suggested that for regional issues, a regional engagement body might make sense, but for more local issues a local group is needed.

- One idea put forward for consideration was to use a MAC-like group to provide a community lens for evaluations and advice with respect to interactions of activities, cumulative effects and trade-offs.
- Given the scheduling limitations imposed by the inclusion of senior officials at meetings, one suggestion that had support from many participants was the idea of having operational government staff (e.g., area office staff) at the table for the regular meetings and to bring in senior officials less often, such as when advice has been developed and is ready to be considered for decision-making. At other times, the operational staff can report up to the senior officials to keep them apprised of progress.
- There is a need for government involvement so that the discussions and engagement have a purpose. There was not much interest in the idea of community members meeting on their own without government present.
- The Fisheries Resource Conservation Council was identified as a model for engagement and generation of advice that worked well. This advisory body was in place to answer questions about key issues. Membership included industry people from harvesting and processing along with academics. Topics included quota allocation, and suggestions for improving economic viability of the crab fishery. Meetings were 3 days in length and were held 4 times per year over a span of 2 years. Recommendations were provided and delivered directly to the Minister for consideration. The FRCC wrote the report (no secretariat support). The reason it worked well was the problem was clear, the issue was focused, relevant, and not being addressed elsewhere, and the council was focused on developing advice. There was also ample opportunity for good discussion and deliberation. The fishing community also respected the members of the council – it was important to have the right people at the table so that the outputs were valued and used.
- Participants were reminded that Maree Fudge has generated a report on results from her recent review of the MAC. The understanding was that this document would be circulated to interview subjects (including many MAC and secretariat members) shortly. This report, along with the work from Courtenay Parlee’s dissertation, should be reviewed for additional recommendations for consideration in terms of what should come next.

Wrap up

- Kathy and Harvey thanked participants for their openness and honesty. Participants were encouraged to send along any additional suggestions to Harvey and Kathy.
- Actions:
 - A draft meeting report will be prepared and circulated to participants for review to ensure key points were adequately captured. Outcomes will be reported up to senior staff at NB DAAF and DFO.
 - Once the meeting report is shared, a follow up meeting may be required to present and discuss options for next steps.

Annex: Summary from Oct 16th 2017 interview with Jessie Davies:

What worked?

- The forum (MRP and MAC) provided opportunities for people to make connections, build relationships, and identify common interests. Some of the best work was done over coffee break!

What didn't work?

- Perceived lack of interest and commitment from government (compared to MRP days) – examples provided included funding cut, lack of availability of senior officials, reduced number of meetings per year.
- Unclear purpose, unclear what problems needed to be solved (compared to MRP days)
- The government never clearly articulated the reason why the MAC was chosen as the model-never clear to her why the proposed model wasn't accepted.
- Meetings were too infrequent, and full of presentations with little time for discussion or input
- Objectionable that the secretariat controlled the agenda (e.g., would not allow the St Andrews library closure to be on the agenda) and the membership.
- There was a disconnect between what the MAC membership understood it to be for and what the MAC actually did.
- An important role for the MRP/MAC was to promote information sharing and public input into marine planning within the southwest New Brunswick area. However a communications strategy was never developed or implemented.
- A lot of work went into the development of the Community Values Criteria, but there was never an opportunity to try them.

What do you want to see next?

- Need a structure like the MAC for when there are problems that need to be addressed – we don't need to talk all the time, but when we do talk we want to be listened to. Don't want to meet for the sake of meeting, but when a problem must be tackled, you'll need more than 2-3 meetings in a year to solve it.
- While it is important to have the decision makers involved, no one realistically expects them to be there all the time. Need to establish trust/respect, including by providing feedback to the committee to show that input was heard and to explain how it was acted on. If this was done right, operational staff could attend the majority of the meetings and RDGs/DMs need only attend once or twice per year.