Council Strategic Initiative Maritime Transatlantic Cooperation

NOAA/DFO/ICES Trilateral Meeting summary and follow-up

Council delegates are invited to take note of efforts and ongoing discussion to strengthen transatlantic cooperation.

Attached is the report on the high-level joint NOAA DFO ICES meeting in Halifax, Canada.

The NOAA/DFO bilateral meeting the day before concluded that US and Canada should use ICES more as a mechanism for facilitating bilateral work. They also highlighted the need to create/invest in expert groups to achieve bilateral objectives which overlap with broader ICES objectives. Alain Vezina (CA) and Jon Hare (US) will work on a suite (up to three) proposed expert groups that they will encourage their SCICOM and ACOM representatives to champion. ICES representatives welcomed this approach, especially relative to shared interests in increasing transatlantic scientific cooperation in areas such as monitoring, data, stock assessment and capacity building.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – International Council for the Exploration of the Seas Trilateral Meeting Summary and Action Items

On August 7th, 2019 senior representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ecosystems and Oceans Science Sector (DFO Science) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) met with two ICES high level representatives at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. The goal of the meeting was to explore and identify existing and potential future opportunities for collaboration among Canadian and US government and academic scientists with ICES on common strategic priorities

Meeting Participants:

Leads Alain Vézina (Regional Director of Science, Maritimes Region, DFO),

Jon Hare (Director, Northeast Fisheries Center; NOAA ICES Delegate)

Bill Karp, United States International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Delegate, ICES First Vice President

Attendees Cisco Werner (Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor, NOAA Fisheries), Yves de Lafontaine (Regional Director of Science, Quebec Region, DFO), Rowena Orok (A/DG Ecosystem Science Directorate, DFO), Ben Davis (A/Regional Director of Science, Newfoundland and Labrador Region, DFO), Matthew Hardy (A/Regional Director of Science, Gulf Region, DFO) Neill Gilbride (National Head Quarters, DFO), Edward Gorecki (NOAA Fisheries), Roger Griffis (NOAA Fisheries) Marla Valentine (NOAA Fisheries), Adrian Mahoney (NOAA Research), Mark Dickey-Collas (ICES, ACOM Chair)

Discussion Highlights

Exchange of high-level strategic priorities

Alain Vézina and Rowena Orok presented high level DFO priorities, emphasizing important review processes for the sector and the department: Review of science funding programs; Review of Canadian Science Advice Secretariat (CSAS), Fisheries Act renewal (Bill C-68) for modernizing protections for fish habitat and rebuilding fish stocks; and renewal of aquaculture programs.

Jon Hare presented an overview for NOAA Fisheries, emphasizing continuity in their programs on protected species, climate and habitat assessments, and fisheries and aquaculture. Emphasis was placed on the emerging issues of wind energy development. NOAA is trying to link science to socio-economics, with increased emphasis on proactive communications and partnerships.

Mark and Bill presented ICES' strategic plan.

Much of the discussion was on how ICES WGs are created and monitored and also on ICES' role in new technology (for ex. Protocols for industry sampling, video monitoring, VMS and automated ageing).

Summarize current ICES engagement

Alain Vézina provided context on the current engagement of DFO in ICES and future plans to engage more strategically to foster a better alignment between Canada's and ICES' priorities. Jon Hare shared a similar overview for NOAA, emphasizing that half of the US members are NOAA employees and a desire to shift from passive to active engagement in ICES. The discussion focused on differences between the Canadian and US approaches and how Canada and U.S. can adjust their engagement in a way that would precipitate north American-relevant ICES products.

Opportunities for Organizational Linkages

Based on the discussion above, we agreed on a strategy whereby NOAA and DFO work together to identify priority areas that they would like ICES to address, either through fostering the creation of new WGs aligned with these priorities, influencing the TORs of existing WGs, or proposing Workshops on specific issues. The process and timelines for driving this through SCICOM / ACOM leadership were clarified. The intent would be to get a few new or revised WGs/WKs going (3-5) and monitor the outcomes. Potential priorities identified include: Atlantic mackerel, coordination of research surveys and integration of trawl data, coordination of ocean observing activities, genomics / e-DNA and offshore wind and other marine renewables.

ACTION: Jon Hare and Alain Vézina to talk in advance of the ASC to firm up a list of priorities for discussion with ACOM and SCICOM Chairs on the margins of the ASC.

Canada and US participation in ACOM (advisory services) was discussed and ICES was complimentary towards our efforts. It was noted that U.S. academics participate in rolling assessments of ICES' advisory processes, and could look into increase participation.

Aquaculture

Mike Rust of NOAA was on the phone and led this item. He described the U.S. context for aquaculture, their priority issues and interactions with Canada (Regulatory Coordination Committee). We also discussed the international context (AORA, ICES, Quadrilat) and tried to pinpoint their respective roles, although this can be hard to do. It was proposed that ICES may be the place to coordinate the science and that AORA was better suited to identify research needs and bring them to funding agencies. AORA's various working groups were noted and the question was raised of what happens to these groups when AORA concludes. The discussion led to the need for DFO and NOAA to follow up to better define their bilateral relationship and coordinate their international engagement on aquaculture science.

Providing science advice

ICES made a presentation on its advice services (attached).

DFO explained its CSAS system and the ongoing review. ICES was invited to contribute to the review. One important objective of the review is to move from process-based to outcome-based indicators of success and better define and operationalize the principle of inclusiveness. ICES experience in those areas and others would be valuable. ICES expressed that they would like to be more involved in CSAS processes as they are with the U.S. Council of Independent Experts (CIE) system.

NOAA Fisheries described its advisory process. The process varies to some degree among NOAA Science Centers and specific details refer to the Northeast US. Stock assessments are prioritized over a 5-year planning horizon. Every review meeting is open to public but the assessment is done only by designated experts. The CIE is used for research assessments which are the rough equivalent of framework assessments for DFO and benchmarks for ICES. NOAA Fisheries proposed that they consider using ICES as part of their independent peer-review process. This possibility will be considered more by NOAA.

There was also a discussion of ICES providing advice to Canada or U.S. or both. We reviewed the current situation where ICES provides advice to international organizations or member states and agreed that this is something that can be looked at internally in DFO and/or NOAA Fisheries.

UN Decade of Ocean Science Preparation

Cisco Werner debriefed on the North Pacific Regional Workshop and presented lessons learned for the North Atlantic Ocean Regional Workshop that is being planned for January 2020. One main take away is that the meeting may have been too short at 3 days given the scope of the agenda (1/2 day plenary, 6 hours for developing reports for each break out group, 3 hours closing plenary). Also, careful pre-planning is critical as well as much advanced work is needed to gain broad participation (gender balance, NGOs, industry). Testimonials at the end produced few firm commitments, except possibly for China who committed to establishing a "National UN Ocean Decade Committee", access to ship-time, and personnel support to Ocean Decade priorities and hosting meetings. The key organizing role of PICES is noted. ICES has produced a paper on its participation in the UN Decade and discussions have occurred between Arran McPherson and Anne Christine Brusendorff regarding ICES role in this workshop and will be ongoing.

Training and Education

ICES presented their current focus on short-term training to meet skill development needs. That program is productive (8-12 courses per year) and receives good feedback from member states. It is noted that some courses already are held in North America and more can be done to bring ICES training to these shores.

ICES is now turning its attention to long-term capacity building to support member states and ICES' future needs for experts.

The NOAA QUEST (Quantitative Ecology and Socioeconomics Training) Program – (NOAA) may be an example to emulate and there was considerable interest in the recently initiated Graduate School on stock assessments at Memorial University. To complement and link these initiatives, ICES is looking to develop graduate education opportunities through collaboration among universities in ICES member countries. ICES is planning a workshop to bring together interested education institutions, possibly during the first half of 2020, to develop virtual education offerings. There would be funding from U.S. Department of State and ICES. DFO may be able to help as well.

Data management and data exchange

DFO indicated that they just started a working group under its national data management governance looking to identify a long term solution to share its fishery survey data. ICES' fishery survey database (DATRAS) is among the possibilities being investigated. NOAA has not looked at this yet and is interested in the results of the Canadian exercise.

ICES indicated that their data center is seeking accreditation through Core Trust Seal (CTS). They looked at the IODE but decided against it for the time being, although accreditation through CTS does not preclude IODE accreditation in the future.

ICES is also looking at the global sharing platform Creative commons as a foundation for its data policy.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The participants agreed that this meeting was useful and that it should be repeated on an annual frequency at least.