



Major Report on Increasing Capacity for Ocean and Coastal Stewardship

The U.S. National Research Council has released a major report entitled “Increasing Capacity for the Stewardship of Oceans and Coasts”. Stephen B. Olsen, LOICZ SSC Member and Priority Topic 3 Leader, was a major contributor to this report. It assesses past and current capacity building efforts to identify barriers to the effective management of coastal and marine resources, particularly in the developing world. The report recommends ways that governments and organizations can help strengthen marine and coastal protection and management capacity, including periodic program assessments, sustained funding, and the development of leadership and political will.

The report finds that most capacity building activities have been initiated to address particular issues such as overfishing or coral reef degradation, or they target a particular region or country facing threats to their marine resources. Unfortunately, there is little coordination among efforts with similar goals or overlapping geographic coverage—resulting in programs that are isolated in time and space. This fragmentation inhibits the sharing of information and experience and makes it more difficult to design and implement management approaches at appropriate scales.

The report makes a number of sweeping recommendations. It begins by recommending that capacity building programs should instill the tools, knowledge and skills and attitudes that address:

- How ecosystems function and change;
- How the processes of governance can influence societal and ecosystem change;
- How strategies can be tailored to the history and culture of the place; and
- How to assemble and manage interdisciplinary teams.

One of the central recommendations of the report is that regular, regional assessments should be undertaken to help programs adapt to changing needs in long-term capacity building efforts. These assessments should examine environmental, social, and economic conditions, as well as the existing governance structure, to document changes in societal and environmental benefits resulting from ecosystem-based management practices. Some common criteria for assessments will be needed to facilitate comparisons through time and across programs, but each assessment will also need to be tailored to fit the circumstances and characteristics of specific programs. The findings of program assessments should form the basis for regional capacity building needs and associated action plans that guide further investments in capacity and set realistic



LOICZ REPORTS

milestones and performance measures. Such regional action plans should include concrete agreements on roles and responsibilities of donors and doers to strengthening capacity. LOICZ is responding to this recommendation by piloting methods for assembling such regional assessments through an ongoing effort in Latin America.

Stephen Olsen, LOICZ SSC Member

http://www.loicz.org/about_us/ssc/003066/index_0003066.html.en
