

History of Ecosystem-Based Management Discussions in APEC

Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Workshop – “Beyond Biodiversity – Sustainable Management and Conservation of the Oceans Using EBM

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Thank you chair.

I have been asked to present a history of ecosystem based management discussions in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

I can report to you that the term “ecosystem based management”, has a rather short history – consisting really of the deliberations that took place at APEC’s first oceans ministerial meeting in Seoul in April 2002. However, events leading up to that meeting, beginning in 1996, laid the foundation for the agreements reached in Seoul.

The terms used during this period illustrate the evolution of APEC thinking. The key terms include: integrated management; integrated coastal zone management; cross sectoral approach and ecosystem function.

1996 was a turning point for oceans and environment in APEC. That year, APEC Leaders decided that APEC should address environment and sustainable development. It was recognized that their economies are united by their oceans and seas, and that the health of the marine environment is critical to their continuing economic well-being. At their meeting at Subic Bay in 1996, APEC Leaders committed to achieve dramatic progress towards clean oceans and seas in the APEC region.

That same year, the Philippine government hosted the first APEC Sustainable Development Ministerial meeting. The Ministers directed APEC to focus on three issues: sustainability of the marine environment, sustainable cities, and cleaner production. Central to this decision was the recognition that oceans transcend the sectoral APEC working groups, and must be addressed in a cross-sectoral, integrated manner.

The meeting also commissioned the development of a Strategy for the Sustainability of the Marine Environment, looking across the activities of all APEC working groups, and focusing APEC’s broader goals.

This Strategy, completed in 1997, identifies three key objectives:

- Integrated approaches to coastal management
- Prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution and

Sustainable management of marine resources

The Strategy also identifies three central tools that provide the means to achieve these objectives:

- First, research, and exchange of information, technology and expertise
- Second, capacity building, training and education and
- Third, public and private sector participation and partnership.

Bringing together the activities of the various APEC working groups has not been easy. A variety of mechanisms have been attempted – including putting oceans on the agenda of the APEC senior officials meetings, convening meetings of the heads of all the APEC working groups on an annual basis, and continuing attempts at the working group level.

Perhaps the most successful mechanism for getting the attention necessary to promote cross-sectoral efforts is convening a high-level or Ministerial-level meeting.

In 1998, the United States convened the APEC high-level Oceans Conference in Honolulu Hawaii – In part, this was to take advantage of 1998's designation as the International Year of the Ocean, and in part, it was to keep APEC's momentum going and to focus attention at the Ministerial and Leaders' level on oceans as an element of the region's economic well-being.

The Hawaii Declaration does tie APEC efforts to ecosystems in referring to "... the economic, social, and environmental value of healthy marine, coastal and Small Island ecosystems". The Declaration also clearly identifies areas for APEC attention, all of them cross-sectoral. It does not however specifically identify ecosystem-based management as an APEC objective.

In 2002, Korea hosted the First APEC Oceans-related Ministerial Meeting. This was the first high-level attention given to the idea of ecosystem based management as a paradigm for APEC action.

The Seoul Declaration refers to ecosystem-based management several times, both in preambular and operative paragraphs.

Ministers expressed their understanding of the value of an ecosystem-based approach to coastal and marine management and of the need to implement this approach in an integrated and cross-sectoral manner –the notions of "integrated" and "cross-sectoral" echoing earlier APEC oceans pronouncements.

The Declaration calls for an ecosystem-based approach to management at both the domestic and regional levels. The text notes the linkages between coastal and oceans management and river basins and watersheds. It also mentions the need to strengthen our knowledge and, hence, our decision-making ability through expanding the scientific basis for ecosystem-based management.

Thus, the stage is set in APEC to move this concept ahead. As we know, many of the ecosystem ideas contained in the Seoul Declaration are reflected in the WSSD Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. There now exists a global recognition of the need to pursue marine ecosystem-based management. APEC can claim to be one of progenitors of this global consensus.

Thank you for your attention.