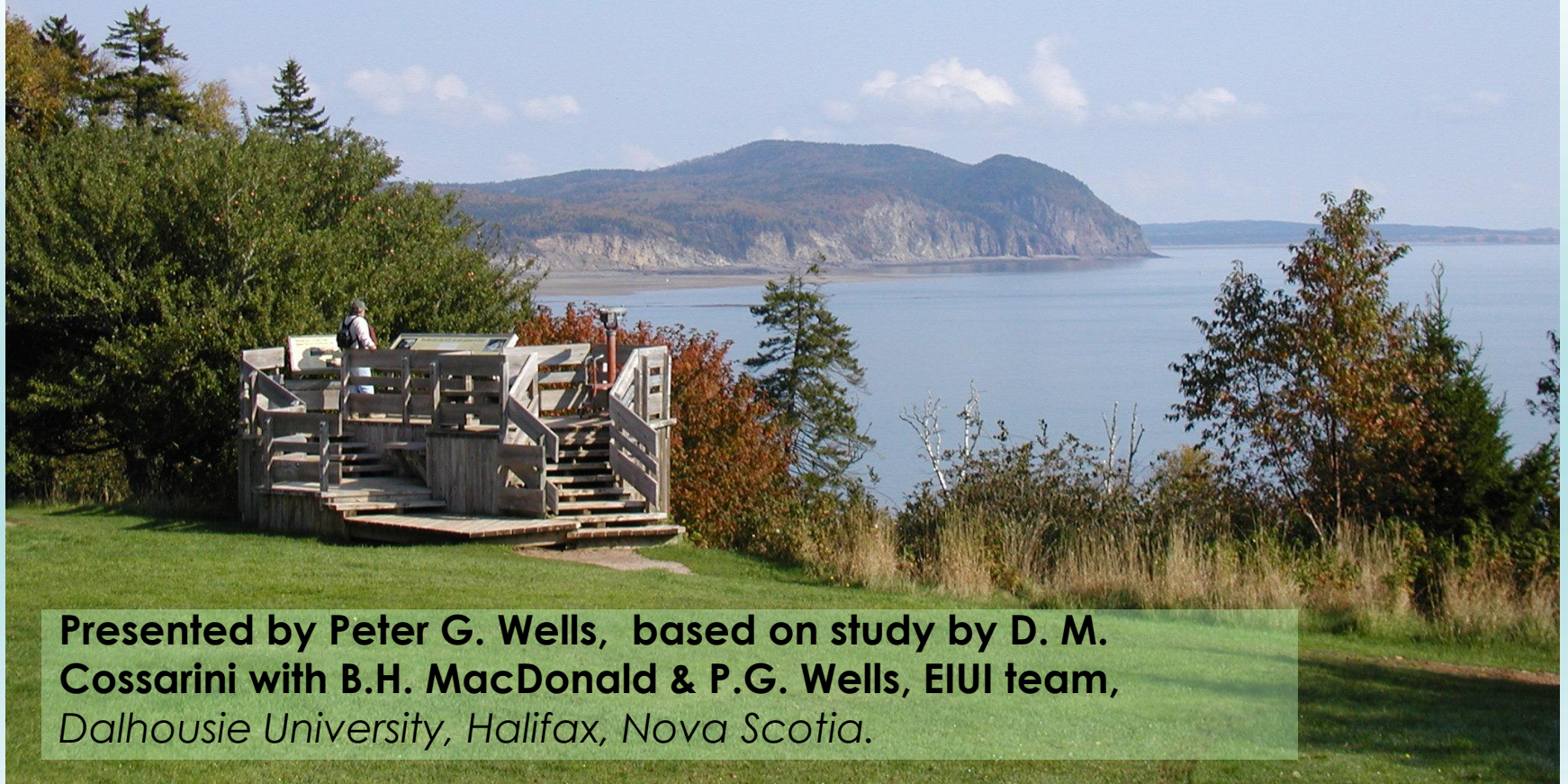


# **Understanding the Use and Influence of Publications of GOMC – a Research Update March 2011**

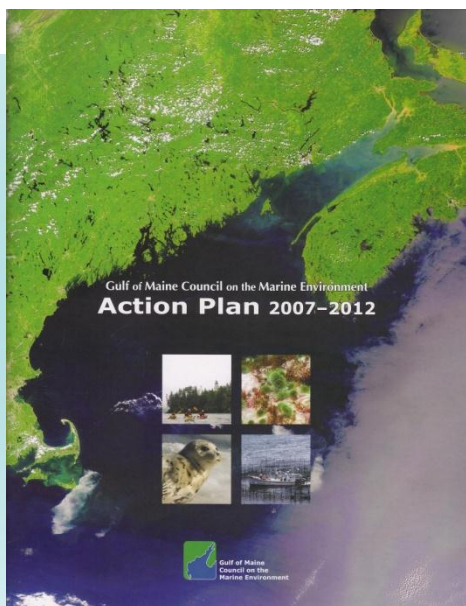


**Presented by Peter G. Wells, based on study by D. M. Cossarini with B.H. MacDonald & P.G. Wells, EIUI team, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.**

# Why This Research Is Important to the Council's Mandate

**Communication about all of GOMC's activities has been important from its beginning in 1989**

Publications have been a key element of the communication strategy. Their role needs to be determined and possibly strengthened

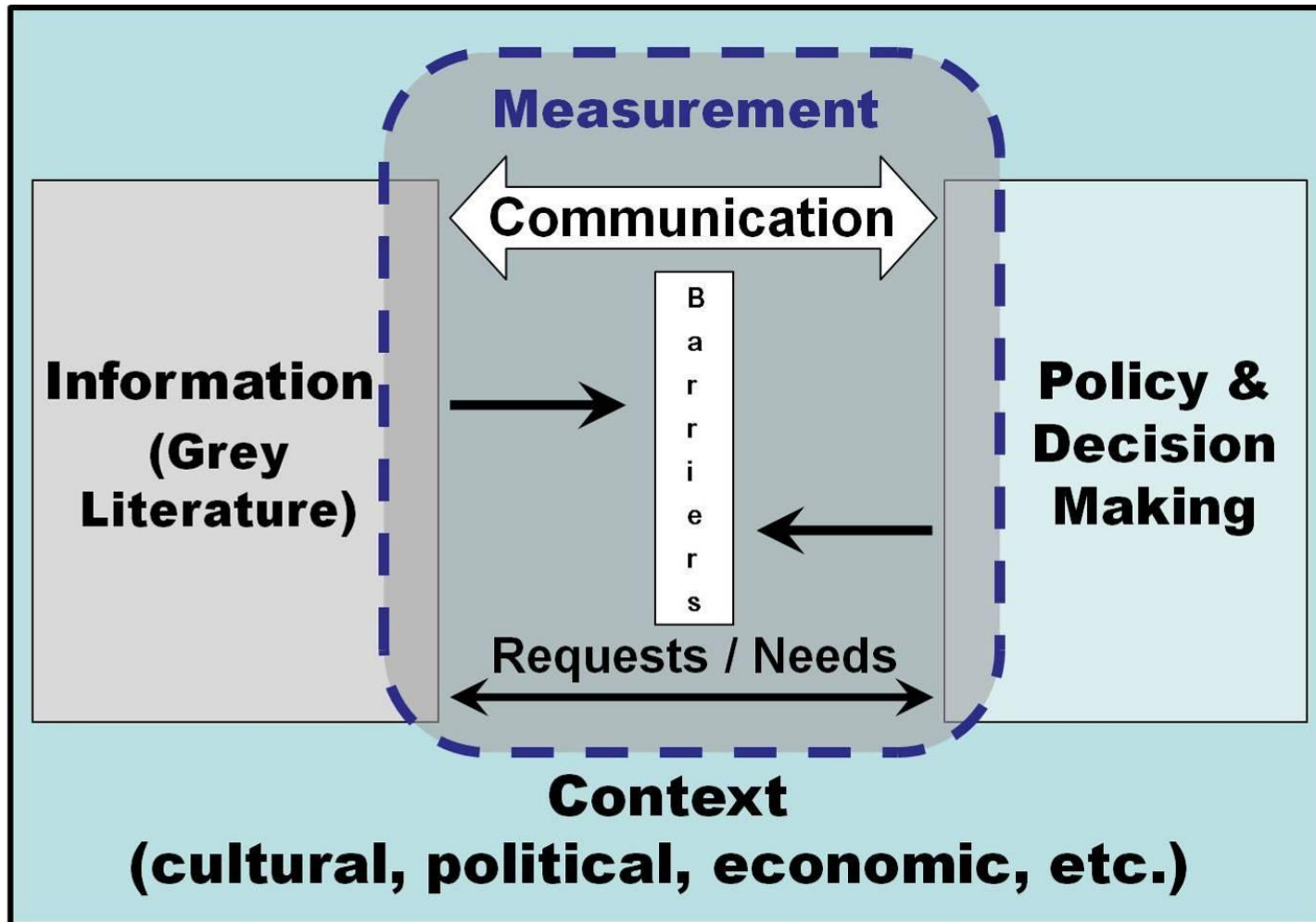


## **2012-2017 Action Plan**

Communication is an integral part of components of the Action Plan, and the value of investment in State of the Environment reporting (use and influence) for the Gulf needs to be assessed



# Research Guiding Framework



# Program Research Questions (2007-2010)

- 1) What is the impact of literature produced by governmental environmental organizations?
- 2) How should the impact of this grey literature be measured and assessed?
- 3) In public policy decision-making contexts, are research reports published as grey literature perceived differently than research papers published in primary journals ?
- 4) Given developments in digital publications and search technologies, how should publications be designed for effective discovery and impact?

# Research Questions for Program 2011-

- 1) What roles do scientific information play in informing policy decisions on marine environmental issues?
- 2) Does such information produced by governmental and non-governmental organizations reach decision makers in an efficient and timely manner? If not, why not?
- 3) Given the vast and growing volume of such scientific information, what qualities / standards / filters do policy-makers use in determining which forms and/or authoring bodies to rely on for information sources?
- 4) What role do the media and/or social networks and other web-based information dissemination pathways play in the generation of marine environmental policy?
- 5) What are the institutional enablers and barriers to the use of marine environmental information at the science/policy interface. What role(s) do grey literature play as drivers, enablers, and barriers?

# GOMC Case Study – Projects

- Create Bibliographic Database of GOMC Publications and Conduct Citation study
- Interview of Working Group members
- Conduct Assessment of Awareness and Use of the State of the Gulf Theme Papers



# GOMC Publications — (Total 312)\*

<b>Council Publications</b>	
Reports and fact sheets	122
Background documents	38
Action plans and annual reports	29
Brochures and posters	10
Serials	4
Miscellaneous	9
<b>Council-supported publications</b>	
Reports and background documents	24
Miscellaneous documents	25
<b>Reprints of Council authored documents</b>	14
<b>Conference papers, journal articles and abstracts</b>	37

\* As of November 2006

# Citations & locations of users

	Online	Print
Gulf of Maine Region	151	164
United States (outside Gulf region)	61	30
Canada (outside of Gulf region)	24	35
Europe	23	1
Rest of world	13	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>237</b>



# Research Questions – Interview Study

1. How are publications produced by GOMC?
2. What is the understanding of GOMC Working Group members about publication practices of the organization?
3. How are the publications disseminated?
  - a. Do the interviewees consider distribution / dissemination to be important?
4. What evidence of use of the publications do the interviewees provide?
5. What factors promote / inhibit production, use, and influence of the publications?

# Interview Study – Methodology

**Instrument** – Two interview protocols were used

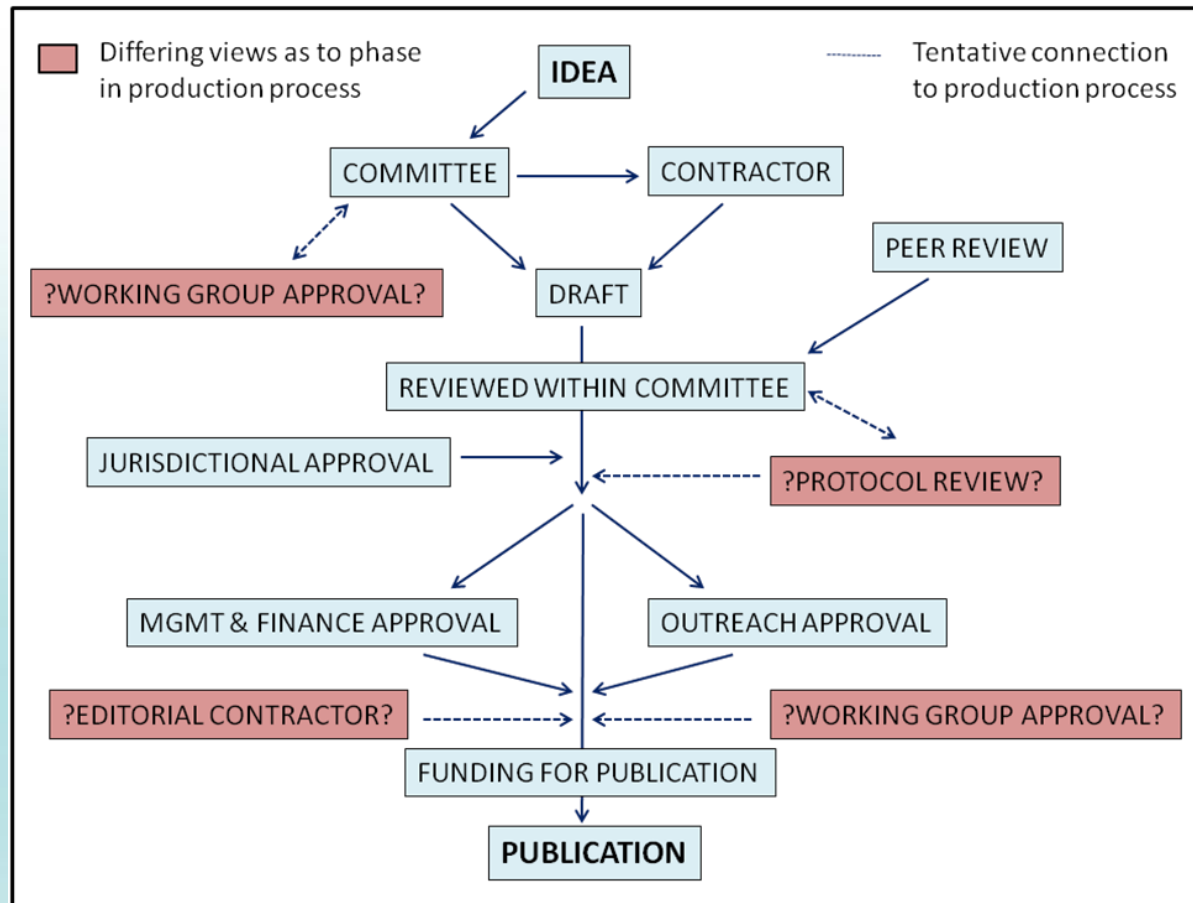
**Selection** – Interviewees were selected from the list of Working Group members on GOMC's website

**Interviews** – Participants were interviewed in person or by telephone

**Data Analysis** – Interview transcripts were coded for data analysis using NVivo, qualitative data analysis software

	United States			Canada		Total
Federal	4			6		10
State/ province	Maine 1	Massachusetts	New Hampshire 2	New Brunswick 2	Nova Scotia 2	7
Other	2					2
Total	9			10		19

# Interview Analysis – Production



“... There’s a review process that’s currently hard to figure out.” (Working Group Member Q).

# The Production Process is ...

## Iterative

“... You know there was a lot of back and forth in getting that approved.” (*Working Group Member N*).

## Highly collaborative

“.....there was .....lots of input from lots of people...who helped to provide content...that’s true of almost all of the publications that I’ve been familiar with ...” (*Working Group Member D*).

## Subject to multilevel approval

“A publication will be referred to ... the Management and Finance Committee ... and to the Outreach Committee ...” (*Working Group Member R*).



# The Production Process is ... (cont.)

## Inefficient

“ .....I’m not completely convinced that all the mechanisms that we’re trying to use ...are working the way they should” (*Working Group Member M*).

## Inconsistent

“ ..... like most organizations it’s serendipity. It is the individual who helps put a report together, thinks of ways to disseminate it, in creative ways in ways that might be responsive to the target audience.” (*Working Group Member L*).

# Types of Distribution Conducted by WG Members

Types of Distribution	% of WG
By agencies within each Jurisdiction (print copies only)	52.6%
Emailing or forwarding a publication	52.6%
At meetings or conferences	42.1%
Based on an interest in the subject of a publication	42.1%
By members of the producing Committee	36.8%
Word of mouth (talking about information in documents)	31.6%
Person-to-person (handing a document to another person)	26.3%
Putting a publication on the Web site	26.3%
Using internal and external marketing or advertising	21.1%
By members of the Working Group	10.5%
Via a library (using a library as a point of access)	10.5%
By GOMC Councilors	5.3%
By members of the Secretariat	5.3%
By serendipity	5.3%
Using the postal system (mail)	5.3%

# Informal Distribution Process Encourages Creativity

“I put together email lists of colleagues by interest or geographic area. If I were told that a new publication came out on ..... shellfish contamination, I would have a group of people that I would send that out to...” (*Working Group Member Q*).

“I’m an aggressive forwarder ” (*Working Group Member I*).

# Use of the GOMC Publications

## Difficult to provide explicit example of use

“.....It's really hard for me to answer the question just because I don't remember how many times somebody has said to me [that they used a publication]...” *(Working Group member D)*

“...normally it's just off [the publication] goes, it could have been deleted, it could have been read, it could have been valued, I don't know ... we all push a lot of information out there and hope it ... sticks or it is relevant or used” *(Working Group Member I).*



# Types of Use, based on interviews

## Difficult to provide explicit example of use

Types of Use	% of WG Members
Cited by Other Publications	26.3%
By Professors at Nearby Universities	15.8%
Industry/Government (i.e., Meramec Dam Removal on the Skowhegan River)	15.8%
Regulations or guidelines (e.g. Salt Marsh Restoration Protocols in New Hampshire)	15.8%
Word of Mouth from Colleagues Outside of GOMC	15.8%
GOMC Affiliated Agency of Publishing Author or Committee	5.3%
Not-for-Profit Organizations	5.3%

# Examples of Evidence of Use

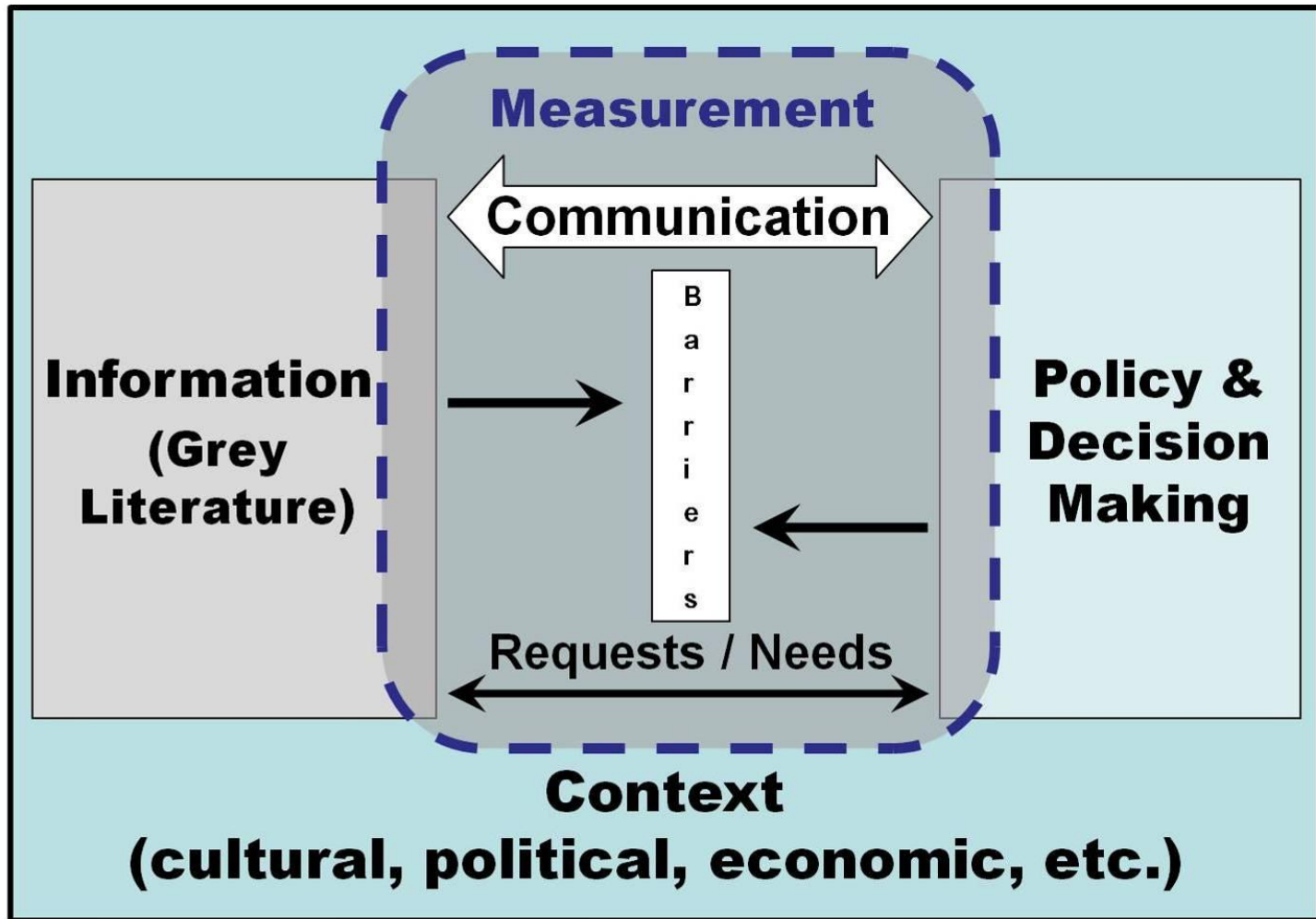
## Cited by Other Publications

I have seen a number of reports that have been done by the US Geological Survey on aquatic habitats... which quote the Gulf of Maine Council reports, like *Eel Grass...and the Salt Marsh one and...Tides of Change...* they are part of a scientific discourse about restoration and conservation efforts” (Working Group Member Q).

## Evidence of use, but not of influence

“We have a five or six page handout on [the] American Eel ... and its status in the Gulf of Maine. So, I gave that to our pelagics advisor and he found it very informative ... now he never told me ... that changed how [he] recommended to the minister what our position is on it ...” (Working Group Member K).

# Understanding Enablers & Barriers

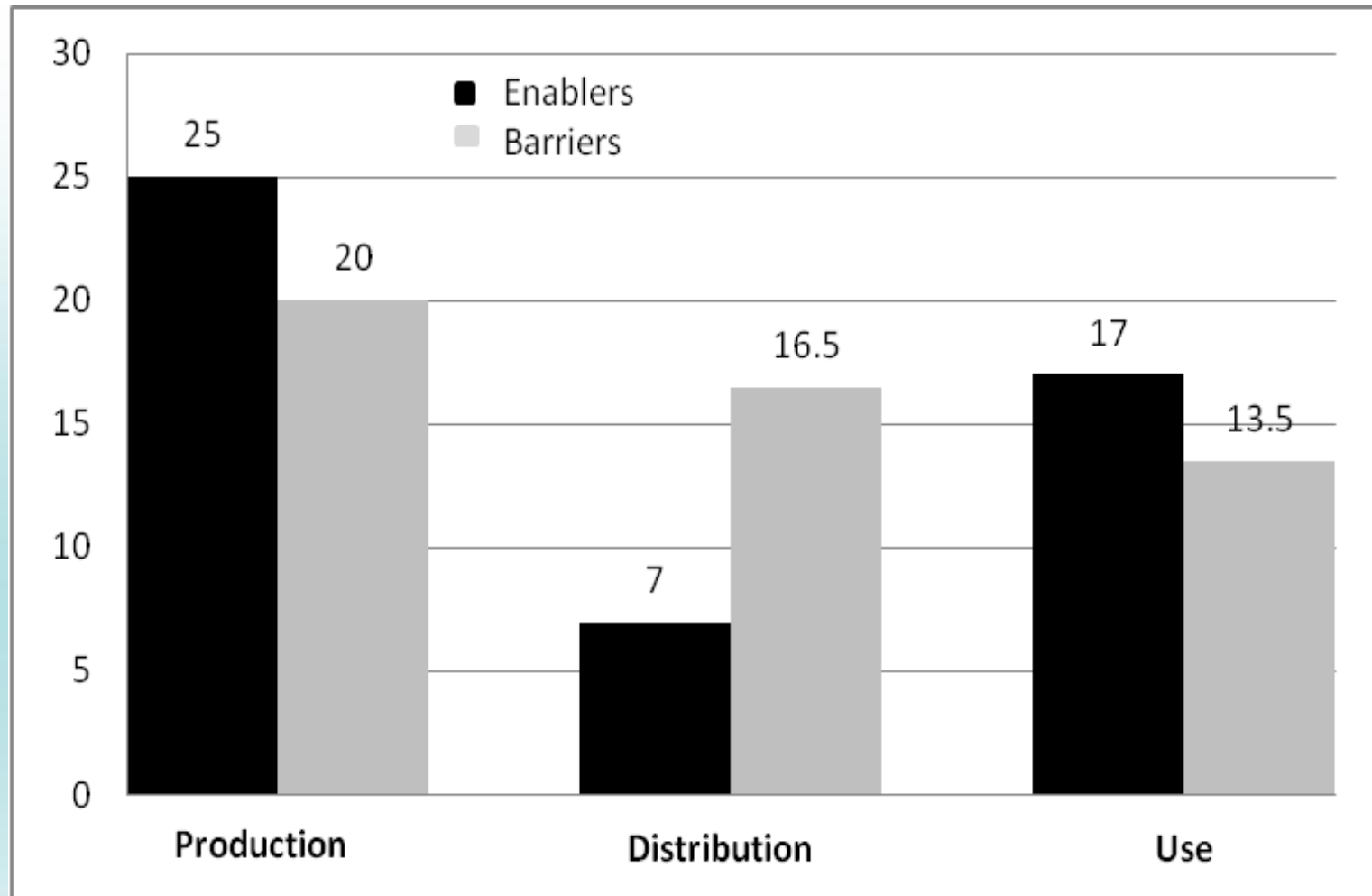


	Enablers-highlights	Barriers-highlights
<b>Production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Publications Protocol is in place</i></li> <li>• Identification of an audience and need for information</li> <li>• Commitment and involvement by GOMC Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate over an identified audience for each publication</li> <li>• Unclear production criteria/unaware of standards/practices set out in the <i>Publications Protocol</i></li> <li>• Unclear review process</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse means of dissemination, i.e., postcards, CDs, email, Web site</li> <li>• Adoption of information technology, e.g., RSS feeds</li> <li>• Good contacts with stakeholders</li> <li>• Identification of a target audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of promotion of publications</li> <li>• Reluctance to adopt new technologies, e.g., wikis</li> <li>• Publications not placed in central repositories, i.e., libraries</li> <li>• No distribution strategy (lack of accountability for where and how publications are distributed) or records of distribution</li> </ul>
<b>Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOMC Members encourage internal use</li> <li>• Readability of publications</li> <li>• Briefing note attached to document</li> <li>• Web site use tracked</li> <li>• GOMC reports considered in work towards state/province legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications page on website is ineffectively organized for retrieval</li> <li>• Grey literature has “tainted” credibility</li> <li>• Information is not well translated for general users</li> </ul>



# Enablers & Barriers

(as a Percent of Respondents for each Attribute)



# Some Key Findings (Cossarini 2010)

## **Production**

Publishing in the grey genre is not a matter of concern and does not influence the promotion of publications for distribution and use.

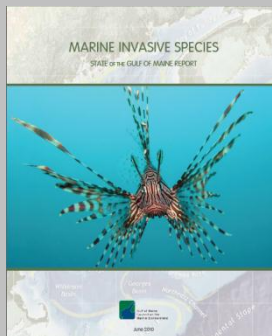
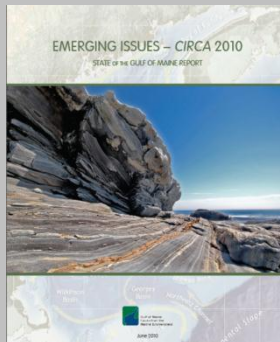
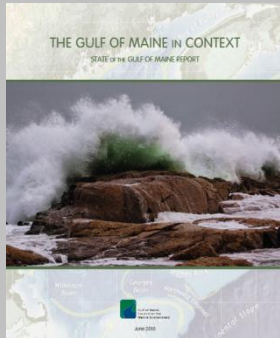
## **Distribution**

It is a dynamic process, showing that no single approach to distribution is as effective as multiple and varied means.

## **Use**

Use and influence of GOMC information is under-evaluated as it has been outside the capacity of the organization.

# State of the Gulf Report (Theme Papers) Study, 2011



## ***To determine awareness & use of the six theme papers to date(2010)***

- ★ Survey of Council Members.
- ★ Survey of Working Group Members.
- ★ Online survey of readers of the *Gulf of Maine Times*.

Your questions are welcomed. Decision needed – approval to give a talk on this study to Council in June 2011. Thank-you.

