

Benthic Ecology Meeting 2019 Special Workshop:

Integration of Science and Policy in Benthic Marine Monitoring

April 5th, 2019 - 12:30 -15:00 h - at the Sheraton Hotel St. John's

How do we as a community that studies, monitors and report aspects of benthic ecology move towards a process that is more efficient and standardized across a broader array of stakeholder applications including industry monitoring and reporting, assessing the condition of conservation and protected areas, and prescribing a practical regulatory framework?

The goal of this workshop is to promote cross-fertilization among stakeholders who apply and study aspects of benthic ecology. During which, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) will summarize some of the programs and policies it implements in support of Canada's scientific, ecological, social, and economic interests in oceans. We are particularly encouraging members of industry and regulators to participate to highlight what existing monitoring programs consist of to inform the following potential topics of discussion including:

1. Identifying key indicators for benthic monitoring, what is informative vs. frivolous?
 - a. e.g.; functional group assemblages, sulphide levels, sediment toxicity assays, sediment chemistry parameters... which ones really tell us something?
2. Can key indicators be better aligned among industries?
 - a. Which of the indicators discussed above could be applicable to a more consistent monitoring standard?
 - b. How could these facilitate evaluation and monitoring transparency if these methods and metrics had greater overlap among user groups?
3. How are we determining how much benthic impact is occurring and is allowable?
 - a. Should our goal be to define a set of indicators that can be broadly applicable to many industries (such as a threshold for reduction in number of functional groups over time)?
 - b. Who should determine what conservation objectives are (e.g.; regulators with the help of scientists)?
 - c. Are we able and distinguishing potential industry/project-associated impact from regional scale variation;
→ Do we need regional 'control' monitoring sites (such as MPAs) to track/assess potential larger scale changes?
4. Potential for coordinated assessment of existing and new technologies among industries?
→ remote/autonomous sampling, eDNA, anything else being considered that could be applicable and in the best interest of all parties to examine as a collective instead of parallel independent programs?
5. Which of the above to address, and how?
→ e.g.; is this something DFO could seek feedback for to so programs could become more standardized/prescribed?

We invite all BEM participants who would like to contribute to this discussion to attend, depending on the number of registrants, attendees may also be invited to contribute to a panel discussion format.