**BOOK REVIEW**


For a child, the road can seem endless. Are we there yet? Milestones pass by; we make progress, and the adult knows we will get there, even if there is a risk of getting lost on the way. But will we get there? Get where? Remember how Alice in Wonderland asks, “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” and the Cheshire cat answers, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

Well, there are many of us who want to get to ecosystem-based management (EBM) of our marine and freshwater resources. I, for one, have seen milestones fly by, knowing we will get there, and have also wondered why we aren’t there yet. Do we actually know how to get there? There has been progress in the United States: the Ecosystem-Based Management Tools Network has been humming along for years developing methodologies; the National Ecosystem Modeling Workshops have provided some milestones; and the federal Comparative Analysis of Marine Ecosystem Organization Program was designed to strengthen science for an ecosystem approach. It also moved us ahead, though it faded prematurely as funding dried up. Still, the inclusion of marine spatial planning as one of the major objectives of the 2010 U.S. National Oceans Policy makes it clear that EBM is where we’re heading.

In Canada, the Oceans Act calls for conservation based on an ecosystem approach, and the Oceans Strategy for Canada has introduced integrated spatial management, leading to a series of ecosystem research initiatives to introduce ecosystem-based management. The funding for this, however, has been of a shoestring character, making the overall initiative resemble lip service rather than concerted action. Can we get there without paying for fuel?

To make progress and to better understand what we experience en route, we also need travel guides, and the American Fisheries Society has published one such as an outcome of the Gulf of Maine Symposium: Advancing Ecosystem Research for the Future of the Gulf,” which was organized in 2009 by the Regional Association for Research on the Gulf of Maine and based on research conducted at numerous organizations in Canada and the United States. The resulting volume, *Advancing an Ecosystem Approach in the Gulf of Maine*, weighs in at 415 pages and constitutes a major source of information not just about the Gulf of Maine but also about what is required for implementing EBM.

The editors have gone beyond merely compiling a set of conference papers, however. Considerable thought and planning have gone into the presentation of the material, with helpful introductions, reviews, and summaries throughout; the contributions have also been carefully edited for language, consistency, and presentation. The editors can indeed be lauded for what has clearly been a major effort.

The volume’s 28 chapters are organized into three sections: (1) “How Far Have We Come? What Have We Learned?,” which has subsections on the development and implementation of EBM, climate change, and the impact of large-scale perturbations; (2) “Advances in Knowledge of Gulf of Maine Structure and Function,” (which really should have the word “Ecosystem” in the title); and (3) “Looking Forward: What is Needed to Implement EBM?,” which has subsections on the need for an overall vision for EBM in the Gulf as well as a framework for implementing it, the need to link ecosystem form and function with ecosystem services, the need for interdisciplinarity, the need for new data collection, and communication.

An interesting aspect of the volume is the number of regional reviews and workshop summaries about components of EBM, including ecosystem services, indicators and health, zooplankton, ecosystem modeling, “regime shifts,” the role of humans, integrated management, legislation and policy, spatial patterns and planning, reporting systems, and science communication.

So what does *Advancing an Ecosystem Approach in the Gulf of Maine* tell us about the road to EBM? The editors summarize the key points as follows: (1) EBM has to be place based and include integrated management plans; (2) it needs to consider humans as integral parts of ecosystems; and (3) it should build on our understanding of how the different parts of ecosystems interact with each other and the environment. With this I can only agree, and I conclude that this contribution represents a major step forward.

But are we there yet? Well, not fully, but we have a much better idea of how it will look when we eventually get there and, indeed, our senior tour guide, Rob Stephenson, concludes the volume with a perspective on advancing EBM in which he outlines the priorities for implementation. This is a great book, and even if its size is overwhelming it contains a lot of information for us as we pursue our journey.

VILLY CHRISTENSEN

*Fisheries Centre*,
*University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1Z4, Canada*