

RMS NE Chapter 2009 Year End Summary

1) Member Survey - Although it was officially last year – our efforts this year were based on this member survey. Thanks to Risa Shimoda for her work on this.

The findings from the results of the RMS Northeast Chapter Member Survey are summarized below. The survey was taken during the month of October 2008. The purpose of the survey was to measure member satisfaction and obtain their preferences for member benefits or services in order to help us best serve their interests.

Background: Membership growth has been an annual priority for RMS, and there is tremendous level of attrition among those who are given this free membership. Retaining these members would provide an important new membership dynamic and perhaps, a model for chapters in 'post-symposium' chapter efforts.

A survey request was emailed to members three times between September 25 and October 6 that includes a link to an online survey. Over half of our members (58%) responded to the survey, over half (55%) of whom have been members for two years or less.

Results –

RMS Effectiveness: Survey respondents' level of satisfaction with their RMS membership at the time they took the survey is worth consideration.

Completely satisfied	24%
For the most part satisfied	58%
Slightly satisfied	18%
Not satisfied	0%

Respondents agree that RMS (no distinction was made between the chapter and national organization) is not very well-known. 40% feel RMS is well-respected and well-known within river-oriented organizations and otherwise not well known; 29% believe RMS is well-respected and not well-known; and over one quarter (26%) of the respondents feel RMS is little known both inside and outside of river-oriented organizations.

Two-thirds of the survey respondents attended the symposium. Among those who attended, 65% indicated they did so to see colleagues and network and were really interested in the program. 50% of those who attended indicated that a reason for their attendance was that this year's event was more convenient than past RMS conferences. Among the 34% of survey respondents who did not attend the symposium, two-thirds cited inconvenience. Of the non-attendees, one-third didn't think they would learn anything related to their field and 17% felt this conference would be pretty much the same as others and cited insufficient funding from their employer as the reason for not attending.

Member Interests: Survey respondents are clear about why they have joined RMS and what they would like to see us do for them. 71 % said they joined for the networking and 60% for professional development opportunities. Roughly one quarter indicated the free membership for their symposium attendance was a factor.

Of the activities and services offered the greatest number, 79% said they indicated they would definitely or most likely participate in (i.e., read) the quarterly newsletter. When prompted in a specific question about the newsletter 37% said they read it cover to cover, and 55% said they browse through it.

Regarding other RMS activities roughly three-quarters said they definitely or most likely will participate in professional networking activities and the RMS list serve. Two-thirds indicated interest in grant funding and job RFP opportunities. Half of the survey respondents indicated they would definitely or most likely participate in (i.e., take advantage of) river equipment discounts and research sharing.

Educational/social river trips, one-day educational workshops and 2-3 short courses were well behind in respondents' level of interest: 29%, 14% and 13% indicated they would 'definitely' or 'most likely' participate, respectively in these activities.

Survey respondents' preference for future services was consistent with their reasons for joining. An overwhelming majority of respondents viewed information about what RMS is doing in the Northeast (79%), professional development (79%) and (receiving) information about what RMS is doing nationally (74%) as "Extremely important" or "Very important." Other events that require no overnight stays (39%), face-to-face networking (39%) were also of interest, and few indicated reducing the membership price was an issue (11%).

2) Chapter Events –

January 15th - Washington, DC roundtable discussion about how the Federal Stimulus Program would affect members' businesses and programs. Representatives from the BLM, National Park Service, Hydropower Reform Coalition, and National Hydropower Association attended. Our invited guest Pope Barrow, Chief Legislative Counsel for the US House of Representatives, shared his perspectives on the process at that point in this ambitious process. Hosted by Risa Shimoda.

April 27 – 30 - Risa Shimoda and Brenda Adams-Weyant of the NE Chapter hosted a networking mixer at the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners annual conference. NARRP and RMS will be partnering the NARRP annual conference with RMS' biennial symposium in Portland in 2010. This get-together offered an opportunity to meet with and re-acquaint peers who we'll see at the combined event next year. The hospitality room opened early on the 30th complete with the RMS display!

May 1 – Boston MA - RMS – Northeast Spring Luncheon - Twenty eight folks (not all RMS members) came from four New England States came to Boston's historic North End to participate in the RMS-NE sponsored luncheon on May 1. We gathered at the Mariner House, right next door to Paul Revere's house from where his famous ride began. Following our lunch, the group engaged in a lively discussion of the re-emergence of hydropower as a renewable resource. Fred Ayer, Executive Director of the Low Impact Hydropower Institute and RMS-NE member led the discussion. A couple of renewals and new memberships resulted. Thanks to John Clarkeson, Lelia Mellen, and Liz Lacy for hosting.

November – Two activities are in the works – one up north and the other in DC. Likely to be networking gatherings for Chapter members and possibly linking with other organizations' events.

3) Chapter E-Newsletters –

Somewhat regular monthly e-newsletters have been going out to the NE Chapter membership this year. After each monthly NE Chapter Executive Committee meeting (conference call) secretary John Clarkeson (our hero) puts together notes and an e-newsletter based on our conversations. Although these newsletters have been well-received, next year we are planning quarterly editions to lessen the work load - and – an understanding that folks are getting bombarded by e-newsletters from many organizations.

4) State Stewards –

The NE Chapter was fortunate to enlist two state stewards – Brian Fitzgerald of Vermont and Paul Beaulieu of Massachusetts. Yay! Two others are being pursued as we speak.

5) Membership –

We focused a lot of our efforts on figuring out how to retain members and pull members back who have fallen away. Here are our approximate stats:

Total members as of October, 2009 – 42

New members – 14

Renewals – 28

Non-renewals – 19

(A special thanks to Risa Shimoda – outgoing NE Chapter Treasurer for her hard work and dedication!)