

Theme Session G

Observation and monitoring needs to support ecosystem-based management – preparing to serve the current of data coming upon us

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"There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. But omitted, and the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves -- or lose the ventures before us." -- William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar".

Ecosystem-based management is a central paradigm in the effort to rebuild and keep a sustainable ecosystem. The legislation of MSFD and other worldwide strategic initiatives enshrines the need for covering relevant elements of the marine environment, some already monitored and operational but others perhaps not addressed to full extent in sampling programmes.

The tenet of EBM includes the synthesis and quantitative analysis of various parameters specified to management objectives. The integrated ecosystem assessment (IEA) work in ICES is an approach where scientific understanding of the ecosystem can feed into the management choices and decisions. This approach is dependent on continuous and effective monitoring. Such monitoring is costly but will be even more expensive if it is done inefficiently and poorly documented and delivered to the expert fora.

The conclusion is that we stand before a large shift in data needs to fulfil the commitment of EBM and continue the IEAs. Do we have the framework and resources needed to serve the current of data coming in our direction? Important monitoring programmes are run in short-term projects and on a national or regional basis. A future of sustainable data collection scheme needs a long-term strategy and support by setting up networks and logistic coordination.

How do we assure accuracy, credibility and above all availability of data? Can we through harmonization of monitoring and data storage increase our value for money spent on data collection?

In this theme session we would like to invite presentations on the data need, storage, and presentation in relation to EBM and IEA. Examples of topics:

- Data, products, and services made available by national and regional coastal and ocean observing systems;
- Harmonizing data from heterogenous sources, turning data into information using new media and visualization techniques;

- Optimizing data collection by collaboration and new design of sampling programmes;
- Inventory of existing data collection programmes.

The session is a joint initiative from WGDIM and SSGRSP and intended as a follow up the Open Session on Integrated Ecosystem Assessments – observation capacities, integration tools and ICES EG portfolio held in ASC Bergen, 2012.