

Marine Habitat Committee (E)

Chair: Paul Keizer (Canada)
Rapporteur: Livingston Marshall, Jr. (USA)

The Marine Habitat Committee met on Tuesday 25 September from 14:00 to 18:00 hours, and on Friday 28 September from 16:00 to 18:00 hours. 31 participants from 16 ICES Member Countries were present, the vast majority attending both sessions. The group included 17 members of the Marine Habitat Committee and 5 Chairs of Working/Study Groups reporting to the Marine Habitat Committee.

Opening

The Chair welcomed the participants, and the rapporteur was appointed.

The Chair drew attention to the sharp reduction in meeting time due to timetabling constraints. This means that there will be reduced opportunity for discussion. He indicated that the primary goals of the meeting will be to review the reports of the Working and Study Groups and consideration of the Committee's draft Action Plan.

The Committee adopted the draft agenda with the inclusion of an item on the Census of Marine Life.

ICES Strategic Plan

It is expected that the Delegates will formally adopt the ICES Strategic Plan at this Statutory Meeting. A draft Action Plan for the Committee was prepared in response to the Strategic Plan. This initial draft plan and a revised draft received some discussion during this meeting on both days. However, because of the anticipated time limitations these discussions were not lengthy or comprehensive. It was agreed that the Committee members would continue to work on this document prior to a planned Consultative Committee meeting in January 2002 where it will be presented for approval. Significant issues that were raised included:

- it is important that the work required by the various Working and Study Groups is readily apparent. The level of detail required needs further discussion. Too much detail could potentially inhibit useful input from the groups. Too little detail could provide vague or insufficient direction.
- there is a place for basic science in ICES. The Working/Study Groups need to discuss basic science in order to ensure that the necessary scientific expertise is attracted to the meetings and that the assessments of the Groups are based on current scientific knowledge and a peer review within the Group. The review conducted by the Committee is not a peer-review; it is a review of the workings of the group.
- there is need for direction on the role of the Working/Study Groups in determining Ecosystem Quality Objectives (EcoQOs).

- the issue of integrated coastal zone management needs to be given more attention in ICES. Specifically what is ICES role and how can it best respond to requests for scientific advice and how should it be involved in the incorporation or consideration of socio-economic issues?

Review of relevant Theme Sessions at the 2001 ASC

Sustainable Development and Conservation of Natural Resources of the Coastal Zone" (Session Y)

Jonathan Side (UK) reported that there was a great scope of work presented during the session. There were three presentations on fisheries management; two on mapping and predictive models, one on genetics, and another on nutrient modelling. It was remarked that most of these papers would have fit into other Theme Sessions. So it was encouraging that they were submitted to this session to be considered in the context of sustainable development. It raises the question as to how to deal with this issue in ICES.

What Information Does Ecosystem Management Need from Ecologists and Gear Technologists to Assess Ecosystem Effects of Fishing and Implement Policies? (Session R)

Karel Essink (Netherlands), reported that there were a large number of papers presented of good quality and that the session was well attended.

Eutrophication: For Better or For Worse: Can It Be Controlled?

This session was held after the last meeting of the Committee.

Review of progress during 2001 and Work Plan for 2002

The reports of the Working and Study Groups that report to the Marine Habitat Committee were reviewed by one of the committee members using the format recommended by the Consultative Committee. This resulted in a much more uniform review of the reports. However, problems were still apparent, especially with regard to the clarity of some of the information requested. These will be corrected prior to the next review. In addition steps were taken during the meeting to ensure the review of all reports for the coming year.

Benthos Ecology Working Group (BEWG). Chair – Karel Essink (Netherlands), Reviewer – Jean Boucher (France). Doc. E:08

The reviewer noted that all terms of reference were addressed. Many important and difficult questions are being referred to this Group. The Working Group Chair

noted that the ability to address some terms of reference was affected by the low participation. He considered that the inclusion of terms of reference that are more general in nature and that address an issue of scientific interest may attract more scientists to future meetings. The draft terms of reference were edited to include a request from the Working Group on Beam Trawl Surveys (Living Resources Committee) and another from ACME in order to respond to a request from OSPAR.

Marine Chemistry Working Group (MCWG). Chair – Robin Law (UK), Reviewer – Stig Carlberg (Sweden). Doc. E:02

The reviewer noted that this is a very large Working Group with many terms of reference. Attendance this year was only about 50% of normal, probably due to the remote location of the meeting. This reduced level of participation made it difficult for two of the sub groups to complete all of their work. The work quality of this group remains very high and many of its recommendations have been included in the ACME report. For the coming year it was agreed that items (a) and (b) in the draft terms of reference should be dropped since the Working Group does not feel that they can possibly address these. It was further agreed that the Chair will discuss with the Working Group Chair, who was not present at the meeting, possible ways of addressing these two items.

Working Group on Marine Sediments in Relation to Pollution (WGMS). Chair – Steven Rowlatt (UK), Reviewer – Heye Rumohr (Germany). Doc. E:04

The reviewer noted that this Working Group was encountering considerable difficulty with membership and finding a Chair. Dr Rowlatt had filled in for 2001 in order to permit the Working Group to remain active. There were only 9 participants from 7 countries at the meeting. Organizational matters consumed a lot of time at the meeting. During the period of this conference it was determined that the potential chair, nominated by the Working Group was willing to do the work. However, the approval of his management had not yet been received. The draft terms of reference identified a large workload and the requirement for a large amount of inter-sessional work. A revised draft terms of reference was prepared. It was also agreed that Committee members, through their Delegates, should seek and encourage participation in the Working Group.

Working Group on Biological Effects of Contaminants (WGBEC). Chair – Ketil Hylland (Norway), Reviewer – Maria de Fatima Borges. Doc. E:03

The reviewer noted that organization of the report made it difficult to find information. The terms of reference were not included in the report and therefore it was difficult to determine whether or not they were addressed. Furthermore, there were no apparent conclusions reached during the meeting. The Chair acknowledged the difficulties with the organization of

the report, but due to the technical nature of much of the discussion it was difficult to present the information for a wider audience. This Working Group makes significant contributions to ICES publications. Participation in the Working Group needs to be increased in order for the group to adequately address the work given to it.

Study Group on Environmental Assessment and Monitoring Strategies (SGEAMS). Chair – Lars Føyn (Norway), Reviewers – Adriaan Rijnsdorp (Netherlands) and Eugene Andruliewicz (Poland). Doc. E:09

The reviewers noted the the Group is contributing to a difficult discussion within ICES as to how to provide an ecosystem-based approach to conducting assessments and providing advice. However, the Group only superficially addressed its terms of references. This was because the reports that the group was to review were not available on time. Furthermore, participation in the Group was low and did not have the expertise to adequately address the terms of reference. Discussions among relevant Chairs resulted in revised terms of reference being prepared and requesting that the Study Group report directly to ACE.

Working Group on the Effects of Extraction of Marine Sediments on the Ecosystem (WGEXT). Chair – Jon Side (UK), Reviewer – Jacqueline Doyle (Ireland). Doc. E:06

On the recommendation of the reviewer it was agreed that the detailed country reports that comprise most of the document, should be replaced by a summary of the information. The detailed reports should be included as an annex. It was noted that there is an ongoing initiative to capture in electronic format the information in the country reports. It was noted that the Group was planning to prepare an ICES *Cooperative Research Report* on fisheries issues in relation to sediment extraction. Revised terms of reference for 2002 was discussed and accepted.

Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping (WGMHM). Chair – Eric Jagtman (Netherlands), Reviewer – Josianne Støttrup (Denmark). Doc. E:07

The report of the Working Group was often difficult to read because of the wide range of subject matter. Because of this the report appears patchy. Some subjects are dealt with very broadly while others are dealt with in great depth. The work of this Group is considered to be very important. Participation is strong, although it was noted that this year there had been no participant from the USA. With respect to the proposed terms of reference it was noted that participation from Baltic member countries is essential if the group is expected to address the items specific to the Baltic. To date there has been no participation from Baltic member countries. This message should be delivered to the Delegates of the relevant countries.

The Working Group Chair noted that the Working Group is not responsible for the EUNIS classification. The

Chair of WGEXT remarked that his Group had been asked to comment on this classification on two occasions. The current comments simply re-iterate the earlier ones. However, it has been determined that the EUNIS classification at level 3, despite some problems, is an appropriate basis for proceeding with habitat mapping. The Working Group is recommending that it conclude its discussions of classification approaches and redirect its efforts to the process of mapping marine habitats. To facilitate that work there has been a change in the Theme Session proposed for 2002. The proposed Session has been combined with a Session looking at the utility of various acoustic and optical systems. The title of the proposed theme session is "The integration of acoustic and optical survey techniques and marine biological data for the purpose of seabed classification".

Working Group on Statistical Aspects of Environmental Monitoring (WGSAEM). Chair – Steven Uhlig (Germany). Doc. E:05

There was no review presented for this report and there was no member of the Group present to comment on its work. The products of this Working Group are often the subjects of specific requests from clients. The Working Group has been generally successful in responding to those requests. However, due to the nature of this work there is limited expertise to participate in the work of the Group and review its products. The Committee recognises this as an important issue, but there is no immediate or apparent solution.

Steering Group on a Seagoing Workshop on Methods for Pelagic Biological Effects (SGSEA). Chair – Ketil Hylland (Norway), Reviewer – Santiago Lens (Spain). Doc. E:01

The outline provided for the review was not considered to be entirely appropriate for a Steering Group. Nevertheless the Chair of the Steering Group found many of the comments useful regarding clarity of objectives, etc. The Chair gave a brief update on the status of the Workshop that was enjoying a high level of participation, i.e. about 20 to 25 laboratories from 13 different countries. The Workshop field activities will be completed this year, samples are being distributed to participating laboratories, and results will be distributed in about 6 months. A Theme Session is proposed for next year's ASC and will seek to include presentations from laboratories not involved in the Workshop as well as those that were. It is planned to compile all of the papers describing the results of the Workshop into a single publication. The results will also be presented to the oil companies that assisted with the funding for the Workshop.

General Issues

Terms of reference

More effort has to be placed on the selection and exact wording of the terms of reference for the Working/Study Groups. This is generally not a problem with requests

coming from clients but can be a problem with terms of reference that are internal to ICES. There are several problems that need to be addressed, including:

- reasonable deadlines should be set for the availability of reports that are to be reviewed. The review of the reports that are not available on time should be deferred.
- as many specific actions as possible should be requested. It is not sufficient just to ask for a review; the reason for the review should be stated.
- Working Group Chairs need to identify potential problems with addressing specific terms of reference, for example, if low participation will limit the ability to respond then this should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Delegates for action.

Ecosystem Quality Objectives

There is general concern about Working/Study Groups being requested to deal with Ecosystem Quality Objectives. The Consultative Committee needs to make certain that these requests are consistent and that they are appropriate for ICES. This matter may require some direction from ACE as to the role of Working/Study Groups in determining EcoQOs.

Attendance

The ability of many Groups to do the work requested is impacted by the attendance at meetings and participation in the work of the Group. There needs to be a clear mechanism provided for a Chair to bring these problems to the attention of the Delegates for their action.

Executive summary and list of acronyms

There is a problem with virtually all of the reports in that they lack an executive summary and a list of acronyms used in the report. Providing and maintaining a list of acronyms for attachment to reports could be done by the ICES Secretariat. The need for, and importance of, an executive summary should be re-iterated to Group Chairs.

Terms of Reference, agenda, and report outline

There is a need for more consistency in the structure of the reports. This could be facilitated by the ICES Secretariat providing a template to the Chairs. The template should include, in addition to the appropriate styles etc., the basic information for the meeting, including such things as the date and location and the terms of reference. It could also include the framework for the sections of the report based on the terms of reference. Basically the terms of reference should be the main body of the meeting agenda and the table of contents of the report. For this reason the wording of the terms of reference need to be more carefully considered by the Chairs.

Election of Chairs

The Committee accepts the nomination of Føppe Smedes (Netherlands) as the Chair of the Working Group on Marine Sediments in Relation to Pollution (WGMS). The Committee noted that Føppe Smedes has yet to confirm that he is able to Chair this Group which may be for one year only.

Any other business

The Chair brought to the attention of the participants that there had been a substantial change in the terms of reference for the Publications Committee. During the Statutory Meeting the Delegates approved the recommendations, and the terms of reference have been adopted. The Publications Committee is now more closely aligned with science activities in ICES; the Consultative Committee will be nominating four

scientists to be members of the Committee. These changes are of particular interest to chairs of Working and Study Groups, symposia and workshops since this Committee will now take a more active role in publishing the appropriate documents. Chairs should communicate potential publication needs to this Committee in the early stages of consideration.

Odd Aksel Bergstad (Norway) gave a presentation concerning a proposed project called "Patterns and Processes of the Ecosystems of the Northern Mid-Atlantic (MAR-ECO)". This was part of the Census of Marine Life programme.

Closure of meeting

The Chair thanked all participants for their contribution to the Committee's work during the past year and for their discussion, input, and work during the Committee's meetings.