



Report on the 1st Session of the WMO CMM Working Group
on Requirements for Marine Meteorological Services

by
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The Working Group was appointed by WMO's Commission on Maritime Meteorology (CMM) to look into the need of various user groups for marine meteorological services. The Working Group held its 1st session in the WMO Secretariat, Geneva on November 16-20, 1970, under the chairmanship of Mr. M.W. Mull (U.S.A.). Nine members of the group were present, viz., representatives for 6 WMO member countries and for FAO, IMCO and ICS (International Chamber of Shipping). I was invited to attend the meeting as observer for ICES.

The participants were welcomed by Dr. K. Langlo, on behalf of the Secretary General of WMO. Dr. Langlo explained how CMM at its last session had noted that the expansion of marine activities made it desirable to make a close study of present and future requirements for marine meteorological information and services and, therefore, established the Working Group. He also referred to the recent meetings of the IOC Working Committee for IGOS and the WMO Executive Committee Panel on Meteorological Aspects of Ocean Affairs which both had stressed the need for more information on marine user requirements.

The session discussed the marine environmental parameters of operational significance. A summary of requirements of different user groups (shipping, fisheries, coastal and offshore activities, recreational boating, marine pollution combatting) with respect to parameters and forecast products was set up.

Evidently the requirements for fisheries are, to a large extent, very similar to those for merchant shipping. However, when actually engaged in fishing operations, fishing vessels are more susceptible to certain weather hazards, e.g., ice accretion, gales etc. In connexion with fish catch, parameters such as sea surface temperature and mixed layer depth may be important. The Group discussed other special requirements for fisheries, such as bottom temperature, salinity and the intensity of the thermocline.

The requirements, both for synoptic and real time information and for climatological information were considered. With regard to the latter item the Group was informed of two projects sponsored by WMO, viz., the Marine Climatological Summaries Project and the Historical Sea Surface Temperature Data Project; the former covers the period from 1961 onward and the latter, the period 1860-1960.

In this connexion your observer expressed concern regarding the delay in making the climatological data available, as access in time to this material is of great importance to, i.a., some of the activities of ICES.

The Group, although realizing that delay is unavoidable in a project such as the Marine Climatological Summaries, expressed the hope that the issue of the summaries might be accelerated. Since then appropriate action has been taken by the Secretariat of WMO to further this end.

With regard to access to the raw data collected and processed by the WMO members responsible for the preparation of marine climatological summaries, also a matter of importance to ICES activities, the Group agreed that possibilities might be explored with the individual members on a bilateral basis.

The Group made an analysis of the present state of services to marine user groups. From the discussion emerged that some mariners are not sufficiently aware of the marine meteorological information available to them and may not understand how it can be usefully applied to their activities. It was therefore, proposed, i.a., that simplified guidance material be prepared, that meteorological or other informed personnel make voyages on ships in an advisory capacity and that appropriate training courses be provided on shore.

The Group noted the proposal of the WMO Executive Committee to establish a broadened Commission for Maritime Meteorology, viz., a Commission for the Marine Environment. In this connexion the Group expressed the hope that the new commission would give the necessary consideration, as CMM in the past, to the matter of providing marine meteorological services to a variety of marine user groups, including fisheries.

The advantages, disadvantages and deficiencies in the various media (radio telegraphy, radio facsimile, radio telephony, visual displays) used to provide marine meteorological services were discussed. The Group agreed that provision of marine meteorological services by facsimile is the most effective means of transmitting a large amount of information. The value of facsimile is enhanced by the possibility of using this medium for the transmission of other than meteorological information. It was noted that the use of radio facsimile is increasing.