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REPORT ON THE WORLDWIDE RECURRING ASAP PROJECT (WRAP)

(Submitted by Mr Graeme Ball, Chairperson of SOT)

Summary and purpose of document

This document provides details about Worldwide Recurring ASAP Project, a joint project between NOAA, the UK Met Office and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

ACTION PROPOSED

The ASAP Panel is invited to note the information contained in this report, and comment as appropriate.

Appendix: Letter of BOM regarding its withdrawal from WRAP.

WORLDWIDE RECURRING ASAP PROJECT (WRAP)

Background

The concept of an ASAP operating on round-the-world merchant vessels in the Southern Hemisphere was first discussed between the WMO, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, Met Service New Zealand and the South African Weather Service (formerly the South African Weather Bureau) during the Second Regional PMO Workshop for the WMO RAs II and V, Melbourne, Australia, 1999.

The Worldwide Recurring ASAP Project (WRAP) as it was to become known, evolved from that meeting and commenced in the first half of 2001, with support from the UK Met Office, NOAA and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Programme

The first WRAP vessel, M.V. *P&O Nedlloyd Palliser Bay*, completed four voyages between early 2001 and mid 2002. An assessment of the WRAP-I data by the Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre (BMRC) was presented at the SOT-I, Goa, India, 2002, which concluded that the WRAP data generally had a greater impact on the upper-air analyses than any individual mainland Australian upper-air station.

After much effort, the M.V. *MSC Corinna* was recruited early in 2004 as the second WRAP vessel, but was not declared operational until late in 2004, due to a number of problems with the equipment. The ship successfully completed four test flights from Australia to Europe late in 2004. Routine upper-air flights started early in 2005, however, soon after leaving Melbourne, Australia, having just completed its maiden WRAP voyage, the vessel was directed to immediately begin trading on a different route. With assistance from the MSC, the equipment and consumables eventually landed in Singapore and subsequently returned to the United Kingdom.

Discussion

Despite the undeniable impact that ASAP data had on the upper-air analyses, the seven 0000 UTC flights per one hundred days crossing the Indian Ocean, did not justify the enormous expense for consumables (radiosondes and gas) or the time required to manage the project, install the equipment, train the crew or service the ships.

It was with regret that the Bureau of Meteorology formally withdrew from WRAP in a letter dated 25 May 2005 to the interim Chairperson of the ASAPP. A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix 1 of this document. As recorded in that letter, the concept of WRAP is sound and the cooperation between the participating agencies and the WRAP Coordinator was very effective and efficient.

Future

If WRAP is to be resurrected in the future, as is the hope of the Dr. Peter E. Dexter Co-president of JCOMM, then it will require a commitment from many more agencies that will benefit from the acquired data. The low volume of data can only be addressed by increasing the size of the fleet and at the same time implementing a programme of 0000 and 1200 UTC radiosondes, all of which will increase the cost.

One of the concerns facing VOS Operators in the Southern Hemisphere is the uncertainty in the shipping industry. It is not uncommon for ships to begin service on a desirable route and disappear just as quickly. Until such time that there is stability in the industry, it is hard to recommend a revival of the WRAP in the foreseeable future.

Appendix: 1

