

FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present the Twenty-first Annual Report of the Data Buoy Co-operation Panel, describing the Panel's activities during 2007.

As you will note, the format is somewhat different from previous years. We have used the possibilities afforded by the CD-ROM medium to incorporate a wealth of new information, including the Annual Report of the Ship Observations Team (SOT) and other reference material such as workshop presentations, electronic documents from the DBCP Technical Document series, the current status of pilot projects and so on.

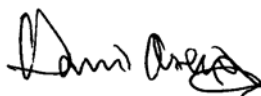
A number of new initiatives have been created, to serve both the Panel's immediate needs, and those of the wider community. Key amongst these initiatives are:

- Workshops, to engage with the users of buoy data and establish their current priorities and future needs, and where appropriate to establish pilot projects: the first workshops were held at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) in March 2006, and a waves workshop is planned for 2008;
- Training programmes, to engage new countries in the work of the Panel, both by increasing awareness and competence in the use of buoy data, and by fostering collaborative activities and deployment opportunities in critical and data-sparse areas: the first of these, directed at key personnel from the African region, was held at Ostend, Belgium in June 2007;
- Pilot projects, to rigorously evaluate new technologies that might ultimately enhance both the research and operational capabilities of data buoys: the first example is a detailed evaluation of the performance of the Iridium satellite communications system in real ocean conditions, launched for two years in October 2006 as the DBCP Iridium Pilot Project; and
- Provision of interim technical support to new observing systems, wishing to evaluate the efficacy of a technical co-ordinator role both for their own purposes, and as part of a more inclusive JCOMMOPS organization: the first system to benefit from this outreach will be the OceanSITES network of ocean reference platforms.

At its sessions in La Jolla, USA in October 2006 and Jeju, Republic of Korea in October 2007, the Panel acted very positively to set aside funds to support these new activities.

As regards to organizational matters, the search is being conducted to identify a possible new location for JCOMMOPS, the technical support function within JCOMM that is presently staffed by the DBCP / SOOP-IP and Argo Technical Co-ordinators. Since its inception, JCOMMOPS has been located within the CLS offices in Toulouse, France, which has allowed a close and amicable interaction with the operators of the Argos satellite system which has for many years been the system of choice for buoy operators. Nonetheless, the time is right to examine other options, given the increasing choice of useable satellite systems, the inclusion of new observing systems within the JCOMMOPS remit, the need for a closer dialogue with operational data users, and the urgent need to establish more secure employment arrangements for the Technical Co-ordinators. Following a round table meeting in Washington, USA, in May 2007, a call for Letters of Intent (LoIs) from potential hosts has been disseminated, and an initial sift of candidates will take place early in 2008.

Overall, I am confident that the Panel is now well placed to continue its pivotal role in ensuring the smooth flow of observations and other data from the oceans to a wide user community, and in addressing new observational and organizational challenges.



David Meldrum