It has been an active boreal autumn-winter for JCOMM, with highlights below. Please remember that this JCOMM Newsletter is intended as a two-way street, and you are encouraged to submit information of interest to the wider JCOMM community for inclusion in future JCOMM Newsletters (submit to: c.clark@unesco.org).

- **JCOMM Management Committee, Geneva, October 2006**
- **JCOMM Coordination Groups**
  - Data Management Programme Area, Geneva, October 2006
  - Services Programme Area, Exeter, November 2006
- **Data Buoy Cooperation Panel, La Jolla, October 2006**
- **GOOS Regional Alliance Forum, Cape Town, November 2006**
- **Upcoming events**
- **Call for applications for 2007 POGO-SCOR Visiting Fellowship Programme**

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**JCOMM Management Committee**

The fifth session of the JCOMM Management Committee, hosted by WMO in Geneva, 5-7 October 2006, was the first formal session of the new Committee established by JCOMM-II (Halifax, September 2005), and as such represented an important occasion for the Committee to review the overall programme, provide guidance to the Secretariat and co-presidents on major issues, and assign specific tasks for each Committee member. The sixteen member Management Committee is currently composed of an almost equal number of new members and experienced hands from the last intersessional period, and form a strong team to lead the Commission over the next several years.
Major items addressed during the meeting included: JCOMM-II follow-up; urgent and cross-cutting issues; actions arising from the work of the Programme Areas requiring advice and input from the Management Committee; external interactions; meetings of the WMO and IOC Governing Bodies; communications, outreach and strategic development; coming major events; priorities for the current intersessional period; and funding and Secretariat support. In their report to the meeting, the co-presidents put particular stress on those issues which would require the attention of the Committee during the session, and also underlined the importance of all Committee members contributing, both to the debates during the meeting, and also directly to the implementation of specific work assignments during the remainder of the intersessional period. Specific issues and outcomes of interest included:

- Continued enhancements to the observing system monitoring and performance reporting, together with proposals to further expand the work and scope of JCOMMOPS into an overall observing programme support centre, encompassing experimental and pilot observing systems such as OceanSITES and ocean carbon, as well as the existing operational components;
- Enhancing the focus of the Services Programme Area on marine service delivery (especially for maritime safety, emergency response and hazard risk reduction), accompanied by a restructuring to support the new focus, together with a new emphasis on ocean services and the follow-on to GODAE, including the development of standards and recommended best practices for operational ocean products and services;
- A strategic plan for JCOMM data management is nearing completion; the JCOMM end-to-end data management pilot project is making a major contribution to WIS; and JCOMM is proceeding with the preparation of BUFR tables for non-physical ocean variables;
- Three major scientific conferences sponsored by JCOMM are planned for the remainder of the intersessional period: a storm surge symposium, Seoul, October 2007; CLIMAR-III, Gdansk, May 2008; and a maritime services conference, Exeter, October 2008;
- The JCOMM web presence is being substantially upgraded and unified under a new domain name (www.jcomm.info);
- A greater emphasis across JCOMM programme areas on standards and quality control practices, for observational data, metadata, products and services;
- Review and reiteration of the importance of JCOMM direct involvement in and input to a range of cross-cutting activities, including marine multi-hazard warning systems, the IPY, GEO/GEOSS, and the implementation of coastal GOOS. The Committee also supported an enhanced JCOMM interaction with other WMO technical commissions, in particular CBS, CCI and CAS;
- The Committee provided the co-presidents with a strong message to take to the GOOS Regional Forum in Cape Town, 13-17 November 2006, regarding the role of JCOMM in coastal GOOS implementation, and indicating areas where JCOMM can and will provide direct input and support (including the development of new BUFR tables as noted above);
- Agreement on preparation of a JCOMM strategic implementation plan for capacity building, to be completed within 3 months;
- Agreement on the annotated table of contents for a JCOMM implementation plan, as well as a timetable for its preparation (by a consultant, Jim Baker) and completion (late 2007); agreement also on the preparation and implementation of a JCOMM communications strategy;
Support for a continued and enhanced JCOMM dialogue with the private sector, as a follow-up to the recommendations of the JCOMM/GOOS/Industry task team meeting in March 2006;

Review of and provision of some input to the WMO Strategic Plan 2008-2011, as well as agreement on procedures and a timetable for JCOMM input to the IOC/UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy, Cg-XV and IOC Assembly XXIV in 2007.

Overall, it is clear that much has already been accomplished in the past year, and the Commission is well on track to achieving a substantial proportion of its objectives for the current intersessional period, despite a chronic shortfall of regular budget funding in both parent Organizations, below that required for basic programme coordination support. Efforts are underway to secure extra-budgetary funding for a range of programme implementation activities, but this still only partially addresses the problem.

This fifth meeting of the JCOMM Management Committee was more efficiently conducted and more effective in its outcomes than any of the previous four sessions, reflecting the large amount of preparatory work put in by the co-presidents and Secretariat to focus the agenda, input documentation, and subsequent discussions, on those issues requiring management decisions. The use of breakout discussion and drafting groups also proved very effective. Improvements can still be made, but we are on the right track. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Management Committee should continue to meet every year, at least while JCOMM continues to evolve rapidly.

JCOMM Coordination Groups

The JCOMM Coordination Groups for both the Data Management and Services Programme Areas have recently met, with the Coordination Group for Observations scheduled to meet in April 2007. All the Coordination Groups have incorporated the instructions given at the JCOMM 2 session in Halifax into their ambitious work plans for the intersessional period leading up to the third JCOMM session in 2009.

The Data Management Coordination Group at its second session (October 2006, Geneva) agreed on a comprehensive list of actions and work plan, including:

- Activities aimed at guaranteeing a common (or compatible) system vision and basic technical metadata/data standards for system interoperability, including a prototype for the development and testing of end-to-end data management technology recognized by the WMO Information System (WIS).
- Definition of a robust JCOMM Data Management Strategy (the Strategy will be finalized after discussions at the upcoming IODE 19 meeting, March 2007).
- Support for delayed-mode Voluntary Observing Ship data.
- Strengthening of both historical and real-time metadata collection and archiving, working with the ODAS (Ocean Data Acquisition Systems) operated by China.
- Pilot Project on Water Temperature Metadata (META-T) aiming at providing a standard framework for collecting SST and temperature profile instrumentation metadata from a number of observational systems.
- JCOMM requirements for Table-driven code formats, working with CBS (WMO’s Commission for Basic Science).
• Strengthening of capacity building, recognizing the excellent training facilities available at the IOC/IODE Project Office facilities, and including the expansion of OceanTeacher to include JCOMM-related modules on marine meteorology, operational oceanography and multi-hazard marine warning and mitigation.

Members of the Data Management Coordination Group near the end of their successful session

The Services Coordination Group at its third session (November 2006, Exeter) endorsed a work plan founded on a number of objectives:

• Support to maritime safety, hazard warning and disaster risk management systems
• The Importance of a user focused programme
• Working effectively with Members/Member States
• Pulling through scientific and technical expertise to operational systems
• Communications and ‘joining up’ the SPA
• Maintaining and monitoring international standards
• Building appropriate capacity within JCOMM.

The SCG coordinator has noted that the key challenge for the SCG is the integration of science and standards into operational services supporting maritime safety, emergency response, disaster risk reduction and maritime hazards, with full user support and interaction. A new structure for the Services Programme Area which focuses all current ETs on a common theme of met-ocean services will be proposed at JCOMM-III. In addition, noting the importance of operational ocean forecasting systems (and pulling through the successes of the GODAE Project into JCOMM as GODAE concludes), a new rapporteur for Operational Ocean Forecasting Systems was appointed. The SCG also launched planning for an International MetOcean Maritime Safety Conference to be held in 2008 in Exeter, with the aim to establish and agree on international MetOcean services requirements, identifying shortcomings of present systems and reviewing long and short-term solutions.
Data Buoy Cooperation Panel

A technical and scientific workshop focusing on ocean related hazards opened the twenty-second session of the data Buoy Cooperation Panel, held in La Jolla from 16 - 20 October 2006 at the kind invitation of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography. The Panel discussed a number of issues ranging from global implementation aspects (the Panel now operates through nine Action Groups, including the OceanSITES adopted last year), data requirements, data management, quality assurance, satellite data telecommunication, instrument evaluation and technical developments, to capacity building. The Panel addressed a warm welcome to its new Technical Coordinator, Ms Hester Viola, who started to work for the DBCP at JCOMMOPS in Toulouse in July 2006. Other highlights from the session included:

- The addition of barometers on all drifters have been included in the JCOMM Observations Coordination Group (OCG) strategic workplan. The Panel noted that the JCOMM Management Committee has stressed that the Panel needed to focus on achieving optimal spatial distribution on the drifter array.
- Need for additional high-quality wave measurements in under-sampled areas of the world oceans in support of the activities of Maritime Safety Services, and to add wave measurements to the DBCP Implementation Strategy. Buoy operators and Panel Members are invited to increase wave measurements, particularly from open ocean areas, in the Southern Ocean, and in the tropics.
- Cooperation with the International Tsunameter Partnership group, to explore mechanisms for constructive engagement with global tsunami warning systems development.
- Importance of capacity building activities. As a first initiative, the Panel supported the proposal to organize a training workshop in Ostend in June 2007 in close cooperation with IOC's ODINAFRICA programme. The Panel was also very supportive of organizing training workshops in the regions for developing multi-national operational oceanography partnerships, contributing to the in situ and remote ocean observing system, as well as the applications of these ocean data and information for realizing socio-economic benefits and regional sustainable development.
- Establishment of a DBCP satellite data telecommunication Iridium Pilot Project for a period of two years to evaluate and demonstrate the operational use of Iridium Satellite data telecommunication technology for the real-time collection of drifter data in support of the WWW, GOOS, and GCOS applications, and in particular of the WMO Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Programme.
GRA Forum (report by Peter Dexter)

The Forum of the GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs), which was held at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa, from 14-17 November 2006, hosted by GOOS-Africa, was the third in the series, following the earlier ones in Athens (2002) and Fiji (2004). There is no doubt that this third Forum was much more effective than the previous two. In addition to the general objective of enhancing coordination and cooperation among the GRAs in addressing GOOS implementation and in support of the intergovernmental process, the forum was focussed on three specific issues: developing a more formal coordination arrangement, including a relationship to IGOOS; enhanced coordination with the Large Marine Ecosystems network supported by GEF; and the implementation of coastal GOOS. This latter issue was also of particular importance to JCOMM, and a review of the report of the joint JCOMM/GOOS/GRA Task Team on Coastal GOOS was the focus for this issue. There were around 50 participants overall, representing all the GRAs except WAGOOS as well as a number of associated organizations, bodies and programmes. Peter Dexter participated as co-president of JCOMM and as an observer from Australia.

Overall, the Forum was both productive and largely devoid of the conflicts and disagreements which affected the previous two. This was due to good preparation, better focus, and a clear desire of participants to work towards common goals. The Forum decided to establish a GOOS Regional Council, as an advisory body to IGOOS and the GSSC, and prepared initial draft terms of reference. These have subsequently been refined and better focussed, with substantive input from Jim Baker, John Field, Tom Malone, Francois Gerard and JCOMM. They will be reviewed by I-GOOS-VIII (June 2007), which is expected to recommend that the GRC should be recognized as an advisory body to I-GOOS, with an ex officio member on the I-GOOS Board.

The Forum developed and approved a large number of recommendations (to the GRAs themselves as well as to I-GOOS) relating to cooperation with the LMEs and the implementation of coastal GOOS. In particular, several pilot projects were initiated or supported. The Forum reviewed the draft report of the JCOMM/GOOS/GSSC Task Team on Coastal GOOS Implementation, including the comments and recommendations on the report by the JCOMM Management Committee. The Forum largely agreed with the JCOMM recommendations, and included a number of its own. These have all been incorporated into the final report of the task team, which have been submitted formally to GSSC-X in March 2007, as well as to the JCOMM co-presidents. Essentially, it is now agreed that the GSSC will be the body responsible for coordinating all implementation actions for coastal GOOS, addressing these actions to JCOMM, the GRAs or other bodies as appropriate and as technologies, methodologies and requirements become firmly established and ready for operational implementation. In this context, the Forum also strongly supported the establishment of the proposed Panel for Implementation of Coastal Observations (PICO), jointly with GTOS as appropriate, to act as an advisory body to the GSSC.
Participants in the third GOOS Regional Forum, Cape Town, November 2006, with Table Mountain as a backdrop

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Upcoming Events

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See full calendar at: http://www.wmo.ch/web/aom/marprog/Forthcoming-Events/forthcoming-events.htm

Call for Applications:
POGO-SCOR Visiting Fellowship Programme for 2007

The Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (POGO) and its partner, the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR), announce the POGO-SCOR Visiting Fellowship Programme for 2007. This programme is designed to promote training and capacity building leading towards a global observation scheme for the oceans. A limited number of fellowships will be awarded to those involved in oceanographic work or study in developing countries, providing airfare and a cost-of-living stipend for a training period of up to three months in oceanographic institutions worldwide.

The deadline for application is 15 April 2007. More details and the application can be found at: http://ocean-partners.org/Training_Education.htm.

Opinions expressed in attributed articles appearing in the JCOMM newsletter are the author’s opinions and do not necessarily reflect those of WMO and IOC.