JCOMM-II


The local facilities for the conference and session were excellent, and the overall organization was superb. Halifax, a medium sized city, major port and centre for oceanography in eastern Canada, was a very appropriate and congenial venue. Tours were organized for delegates to the Meteorological Service of Canada Regional Office and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography.

Scientific Conference

The Scientific Conference was conceived both to showcase some of the achievements associated with the work of the Commission, as well as to provide recommendations and pointers for its future directions. The Conference was well organized by Dr Allyn Clark, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Canada. Some 37 oral papers and 22 scientific posters were presented during the two and a half days, to around 130 participants from 30 countries.

In a short wrap-up session at the end of the Conference, the three session chairs provided brief summary overviews of their respective sessions, focusing on lessons and messages for JCOMM. These were then compiled by Allyn Clark into a consolidated summary report, which was presented to participants in JCOMM-II in a lunch-time information session, classified under three primary headings:

(a) Celebrating success

- More than a century of successful international collaboration;
- Confirmation by marine observations of the dominant role of the oceans in climate variability and change;
- Marine observations and services vital to many community sectors;
- Established global marine observing and information systems.
(b) Common themes
- Need to involve all participants and users in planning, development and implementation of marine systems and products;
- The fragility of observing existing systems, both in situ and satellite;
- The observing systems can and do serve multiple needs and applications;
- Better integration is required of shelf and open ocean systems;
- A much enhanced standardization of data and information formats and protocols is required, together with catalogues of data and information sources;
- Ever-increasing use of automated observing systems, with new and multiple sensors, and exploiting a range of communication systems;
- Products must be user oriented, with the private sector playing a key role in the production and delivery of information to end users.

(c) Messages for JCOMM
- Develop an action plan to address priority issues: sustained funding for the observing system; homogeneous access and greater visibility for data and products; implementation of new technologies; observations in EEZs;
- Involvement of the private sector in JCOMM planning and development;
- Coordination and collaboration with regional systems and Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Regional Alliances in JCOMM development.

Overall, the Conference was a great success, with very positive support for the concept, role and future development of JCOMM.

The conference was followed by the deployment of surface drifter #1250 on 18 September 2005 from Halifax, with a special ceremony to commemorate this significant milestone of the first GOOS component to be completed.

JCOMM-II

General

Participation in the session was very similar to that at JCOMM-I in Iceland – around 125 participants from 42 Members/Member States and a number of international organizations and programmes. However, it was noticeable that the overall level of and participation in the discussions was significantly enhanced from JCOMM-I, which indicates a growing understanding of and involvement with the JCOMM concept.

In addition to the Executive Secretary IOC, Dr Patricio Bernal, and Secretary-General of WMO, Mr Michel Jarraud, speakers at the opening ceremony included Mr Larry Murray, Deputy Minister, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, Dr Wendy Watson-Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister for Science, DFO, and Dr Marc-Denis Everell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Meteorological Service of Canada. At the conclusion of the opening ceremony, JCOMM Outstanding Service Certificates were awarded to Mr Val Swail, Canada, and Dr Neville Smith, Australia.

Scientific Input and External Interactions

The relationship and interactions between JCOMM and both GOOS and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) (and the Ocean Observations Panel for Climate, OOPC) in deep ocean physical oceanography and climate are now well-established and
effective, with the ocean component of the GCOS Implementation Plan (GCOS 92) having been adopted by JCOMM as the scientific basis for its operational ocean observing system. The interaction of JCOMM with the non-physical and coastal components of GOOS, however, is less clear. While it was generally agreed that JCOMM can and should take on the implementation of the major physical components of the GOOS Coastal Implementation Plan, when the requirements for these are clearly defined and established (e.g. through pilot projects), the same is not necessarily true for non-physical elements, which may be better suited to implementation through the GOOS Regional Alliances (GRAs). To help with this overall process, it was agreed to set up an ad hoc task team, comprising representatives of JCOMM, the GOOS Scientific Steering Committee and the GOOS Regional Alliances, to address both coastal GOOS implementation and the general interaction between JCOMM and the GRAs.

Two very topical issues, which engendered substantial discussion, were natural disaster prevention and mitigation, specifically related to tsunami and other marine multi-hazard warning systems, and GEOSS. While there was a strong sentiment in the meeting that JCOMM should contribute in some way to tsunami warning mechanisms, this was tempered by the need to ensure no duplication of and full coordination with existing projects and mechanisms now in place in IOC and WMO. At the same time, it was recognized that the existing JCOMM expertise in services (e.g. storm surges and waves), observing systems (sea level, ocean data buoys), and warning dissemination mechanisms (marine meteorological warning services) could best be utilized in the context of a comprehensive marine multi-hazard warning system. In a recommendation on the subject, the Commission has charged the Management Committee with developing a plan for a JCOMM contribution in this area.

While JCOMM has already achieved some recognition within GEOSS, in the context of being an implementation mechanism specified in the GCOS Implementation Plan, the Commission felt the need to enhance this recognition, both in GEO and at national level. There was an understanding that GEOSS holds potential benefits for JCOMM and its programme, for resources but more importantly in standardization, coordination and data exchange; however to gain these benefits JCOMM will need to have a higher profile in the process.

*Programme Areas*

The core business of JCOMM takes place within the Programme Areas, and there was a clear recognition that the work is progressing well, with broad satisfaction with past achievements and ongoing activities. Highlights included:

(i) The GMDSS Marine Broadcast System is operating smoothly, with the new web site increasingly utilized. There are some ongoing technical issues, including in particular the possible transmission of graphics over Inmarsat, as a part of the GMDSS services;

(ii) The MPERSS is now operational, a new standing Expert Team established, and an embryo web site developed;

(iii) Outline of a guide to storm surge forecasting has been prepared. The finalization of this guide is a priority for the new intersessional period;

(iv) The Sea Ice Team is preparing a substantial input to the IPY

(v) The surface buoy network is now essentially complete. Overall, the ocean in situ observing system is some 53% implemented, with the JCOMM plan driving to full implementation, in principle by 2010;
There is close ongoing interaction with pilot projects and experimental systems such as Argo, OceanSITES, International Ocean Carbon Coordination Project, etc;
A successful integration of ship-based observations (VOS, ASAP and SOOP) is taking place under the new Ship Observations Team;
JCOMM has agreed to a re-engagement with the concept of bulk purchase of consumables for ocean observations, initially XBTs, but with possible extensions to other types;
The value and further development of JCOMMOPS as a major technical information and support portal for in situ ocean observing systems is clearly recognized;
The SEACAMP Project is finally operational.

With regard to data management, although a full merger of JCOMM/DM and IOC/IODE is not yet being planned, the practical coordination and cooperation between JCOMM and IODE is now almost seamless. Similarly, interaction with the WMO Information Systems (WIS) is developing well. The Marine Climatological Summaries Scheme continues to operate well, and some progress has been made with pilot projects in ocean data management.

A major new area of work for JCOMM in the next intersessional period, and which was the subject of considerable effort and discussion in the lead up to and during the session, relates to operational oceanographic products and services. JCOMM adopted a recommendation, which proposes a number of specific issues and topics for the Commission to work with the ocean modelling and research community, in particular the Global Ocean Data Assimilation Experiment (GODAE), to help transition from pilot projects to true operational oceanography. These include standardized formats, protocols, procedures and nomenclature for the operational delivery of ocean data, products and services, as well as, more generally, the building of the business case for operational oceanography.

**JCOMM Development**

The Commission approved, with some amendments, the draft JCOMM Strategy Document, and agreed strongly on the need for the preparation of an accompanying Implementation Plan. The Commission also agreed on the need for the preparation and implementation of a JCOMM Communications Plan, to provide a coherent and directed approach to communications and outreach.

The observations programme area has already developed extensive observing system performance monitoring, with the results available through JCOMMOPS. The session agreed that JCOMM should now implement a full system-wide performance monitoring, based on the Implementation Plan, with clear objectives, milestones, timelines, performance indicators, etc. This will be valuable in a number of ways, including for WMO and IOC Secretariat programme performance monitoring and for the full internal review of JCOMM, planned to take place prior to JCOMM-III.

**Structure and Nominations**

Two new co-presidents were elected at the session. Peter Dexter (Australia) is now co-president for meteorology, to replace Johannes Guddal, while Jean-Louis Fellous (France) has become the co-president for oceanography, replacing Savi Narayanan. The new Programme Area Coordinators are Craig Donlon (UK), Services, Mike Johnson
(USA), Observations, and Robert Keeley (Canada), Data Management. There is no longer a separate Programme Area for Capacity Building, with this work now to be undertaken by a cross-cutting team comprised of specialist rapporteurs within each of the other Programme Areas. It is hoped that this will allow the JCOMM capacity building activities to be more directly related to the technical work areas of the Commission. There is also a new, cross-cutting Task Team of experts on satellite data requirements. As with the capacity building rapporteurs, members of this satellite team will also work directly with the three programme areas. The new structure of JCOMM is shown in the accompanying figure.

Closing

The Commission noted with appreciation the formal offer by Morocco to host JCOMM-III in 2009.

During the closing ceremony, there were many tributes paid to the outgoing co-presidents. Johannes Guddal has been with the former CMM, and subsequently JCOMM, for more than 20 years, and has made significant contributions to the marine community throughout that time. Savi Narayanan made an enormous positive impact during her four years with JCOMM, but sadly her new senior position in Canada made it difficult for her to find the time required to devote to a second term as co-president.

Coming Intersessional Period

The coming intersessional period is shaping to be a very busy one, with great expectations for it to be very productive. JCOMM-II agreed on an extensive programme of work, which has been compiled by the Secretariat and is being distributed to the Programme Area Coordinators. They in turn will very shortly be contacting all the expert team and panel chairs and rapporteurs to initiate activities. The successful completion of the work programme is going to require input and support from everyone in the JCOMM community, the members of the expert teams and panels, of course, but also all members of the Commission itself. We as co-presidents will be working with the Management Committee and the Secretariat to determine the best ways of involving all of you in this work. Priority issues for the next four years include:

(i) The further development of oceanographic products and services, and the transition to operational oceanography;
(ii) An enhanced involvement in and support for natural disaster prevention and mitigation and marine multi-hazard warning systems;
(iii) Full implementation of the ocean observing system and its long-term maintenance on an operational basis, including existing pilot projects such as Argo and the key ocean satellite missions;
(iv) An active engagement with the GOOS community in the implementation of the GOOS Coastal Implementation Plan;
(v) Substantial enhancement of JCOMM data management and its integration with IODE and WIS;
(vi) A greater involvement of smaller maritime countries, in particular, in the work of the Commission;
(vii) An engagement with the private sector in support of the implementation of the JCOMM work programme and of operational oceanography in general.

As is the case everywhere, this work will only be accomplished through the investment of resources, both financial and human. A certain amount of such resources is available
through the Secretariat, but this is by no means sufficient to achieve everything we hope and plan for. The Commission is therefore looking to all its members, and their home institutions and countries, to contribute in whatever manner you can, to the realization of our ambitious but vitally important role in support of WMO/IOC and their programmes.

JCOMM Electronic Newsletter

Effective and frequent communication, both within the JCOMM community and externally, is extremely important to the Commission if it is to successfully fulfil its mission and also ensure that potential users and collaborators in the wider community are aware of our work and have access to the results of this work. In an endeavour to enhance this communication during the coming intersessional period, it is therefore the intention to publish, hopefully on a bi-monthly basis, an electronic newsletter, containing news and information on JCOMM activities, as well external events of interest to the JCOMM community.

The newsletter will be published on the JCOMM and other relevant web sites, and announced through an email to JCOMM members, the members of all the JCOMM subsidiary bodies, the GOOS community and any others potentially interested in our work.

To assist in this process, you are all therefore invited to inform the Secretariat (Candyce Clark, c.clark@unesco.org) of your preferred email contact address, so that you may be included on the mailing list.

Peter Dexter
Co-president JCOMM

Jean-Louis Fellous
Co-president JCOMM

JCOMM co-presidents, past and present, Halifax 2005
from left to right: Peter Dexter, Savi Narayanan, Johannes Guddal, Jean-Louis Fellous