

Notes from ETSI 3

These are my own (brief) notes from the meeting, which was held in Geneva from March 28 - 31, and are my interpretation of those items with an Antarctic dimension. The formal meeting report is on the JCOMM sea-ice web page <http://www.jcomm-services.org> under documents and this also includes all the preparatory documents for the meeting. These made no mention of SCAR, COMNAP or ATCM. One note of scientific interest was that the area of Arctic sea-ice over the last five years has shown progressive regression in all months, and retreat is now running ahead of model predictions.

The only representatives with a direct Antarctic interest were myself and Manuel Picasso from Argentina, although Paul Seymour, the US representative, was from the NIC, which produces Antarctic ice charts. The ice-edge in these charts is now much better as they are no longer so reliant on SSMI data.

The International Ice Charting Working Group, an independent group, has its next meeting in Frascati, Italy in October 2007. The Group would welcome new participants (it is an open group) particularly from Southern Hemisphere countries, which have not often participated. Meeting details are on the IICWG web page at <http://nsidc.org/noaa/iicwg/>

It was suggested that countries with responsibility for Metareas/Navareas 1 (UK - North Atlantic) and 6, 7, 10, 14 and 15 (Southern Ocean to Antarctica), which may not produce their own ice charts should if necessary include a note in their on-line information along the lines of "This area may contain sea-ice or icebergs. Please see the NIC charts at <http://www.natice.noaa.gov> or other web pages for ice details." Argentina is one country that does provide such information for their area (6), and has this on the internet in English (<http://www.meteofa.mil.ar/?mod=pronos&id=21>). At the time of checking the site <http://weather.gmdss.org/index.html> (April 17) only Metareas 6 and 15 gave forecasts for regions south of 60S and none included ice information. I did however find ice information for Navarea 6 at <http://www.hidro.gov.ar/Nautica/radioav/RadioINv.asp>

A catalogue of ice objects for use with Electronic Navigation Charts is being prepared by ETSI. These conform to the guidelines for Marine Information Objects, which are supplementary information that may be displayed by ECDIS (Electronic Display Systems) and are based on the SIGRID charting symbols and the WMO Sea Ice Nomenclature (No 259). There are some differences between Arctic and Antarctic definitions, so it is worth checking that you are happy with what has been produced so far. The work also identified some inconsistencies in the WMO Sea Ice Nomenclature, which needs further review. It was reviewed (by myself) after the last ETSI meeting, however the revised document has not been formally adopted, so there is opportunity for further revision or additions (eg frost flowers) – please let me have any that you want including. A revised Illustrated Glossary of Sea Ice Terms will also be produced, drawing on material already available, which includes the Canadian "MANICE", the UK Hydrographic Office "Mariner's Handbook" and UK Met Office "Marine Observer's Handbook" (which use the same illustrations), and the ASPeCt CD ROM.

ETSI is drawing up a table that will show the requirements for sea-ice services. Currently 3 separate tables have been drawn up by various groups, and ETSI will combine these into one. The discussion document is on the JCOMM sea-ice documents web page (Doc 2.9.1), however this omits most of the background explanation that originally went with the tables. I would welcome comment or feedback, as I'm one of those tasked with making the merger.

If you have old sea-ice charts or observations that have not been submitted to the Global Digital Sea Ice Data Bank centres (NSIDC and AARI), they would be welcomed, particularly as a legacy contribution to IPY.

A survey of users of maritime information will be carried out by the WMO and this will include questions on provision and availability of sea-ice information. The questionnaire will be available on the JCOMM SPA web page.

The JCOMM ETSI/Polar View IPY Ice Information Portal is under development and a Beta test version should be available in early May. Three members of ETSI will monitor the content and provide advice to Polar View – I'm one of them, and would welcome comment. I'll send out a further email when the portal becomes available for testing.

The ETSI has appointed me as a rapporteur to the WMO Ship Observations Team (SOT) with a view to rationalise and where necessary expand existing ice reporting codes (SYNOP, ICEAN, NIC, Aspect etc).

The ETSI will in future try to maintain closer links with other international organisations, which will include SCAR, COMNAP and the ATCM.

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