

International Coastal Atlas Network (ICAN) Update

The International Coastal Atlas Network initiative's workshop ICAN 4: "Formalizing the Network, Engaging the Mediterranean," was held at the Adriatico Guest House, UNESCO International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), in Trieste, Italy, 16-20 November 2009, in association with the European Environment Agency (EEA)/Environmental Information and Observation Network (EIONET) Workshop on Maritime and Coastal Information Systems, taking place on 18-19 November 2009. The main objective of the EEA/EIONET workshop was to inform participating countries of the EIONET National Reference Centre (NRC) network and to allow for a first exchange of views on scope, and roles in the new formation for this entity. EEA/EIONET participants also explored opportunities that are becoming available as a result of ICAN. ICAN 4 was co-organized and co-chaired by Prof. Dawn Wright of Oregon State University, USA and Dr. Ned Dwyer of the Coastal and Marine Resources Centre, Ireland.

The ICAN 4 workshop followed last year's successful workshop, ICAN 3: Building on the Interoperable Approach, hosted in July 2008 by the EEA in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the two previous workshops held in Cork, Ireland and Corvallis, Oregon, USA in 2006 and 2007 respectively. ICAN 4 was sponsored in part by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), as well as by the EEA.

ICAN has captured the interest of local and state governments, non-governmental organizations, universities, NOAA, the European Environment Agency (EEA), and UNESCO. ICAN 4 objectives and activities included:

- Examining implementation structures on governance, strategic planning, and technical activities so that ICAN can formally incorporate as an organization.
- Presentations on emerging atlases in European countries that are becoming relevant through policy, environmental and socio-economic indicator work and related themes.
- Continued progress on coastal/marine ontology and semantic interoperability work, while articulating the benefits of semantic interoperability at a broader scale, to non-specialists. The US-funded Marine Metadata Interoperability Project (MMI) and EU-funded projects such as SeaDataNet and NETMAR are involved in ICAN and have developed relevant conceptual framework documents.
- A small "workshop within a workshop" for atlas administrators was held, covering further improvements of existing nodes and discussions on further work needed on partnerships, infrastructure and data exchange formats, so that nodes can share data and communicate with each other, avoid duplication, and streamline information management.
- A focus on users – who are they, what are their needs, and on inventory, assessment, and evaluation of atlases.
- Coordination of research agenda and proposal teams for submissions to the National Science Foundation and EU funding programmes.

ICAN 5 is tentatively scheduled to be held in Oostende in September 2011. For reports of all four ICAN Workshops and further developments, visit:
http://ican.science.oregonstate.edu/about_ican