



## **Summary**

### **Meeting of the U.S. National Committee for the Census of Marine Life March 21-22, 2006**

**Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education  
1201 New York Avenue, NW  
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Washington, DC 20005**

The U.S. National Committee (USNC) of the Census of Marine Life (CoML) held its biannual meeting March 21-22, 2006 at the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE) in Washington, DC. The principal goals of the meeting were to 1) define and adopt a 2006-2007 outreach strategy for engaging stakeholder groups, and 2) identify and adopt strategies to support the full implementation of a sustained U.S. Regional Node of the Ocean Biogeographical Information System (OBIS). Members of the USNC were joined in their discussions by representatives of the Gulf of Maine project, OBIS-SEAMAP project, US Regional OBIS Node, Sloan Foundation, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration, Ocean.US, Centers for Ocean Science Education Excellence (COSEE) Network Coordination Office, and CoML Secretariat.

U.S. contributions into CoML grew \$24 M since August 2005, now totally over \$100M. Recent grant awards to CORE from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Ocean Exploration and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation now ensure support for the USNC through 2007. In addition, CORE and the USNC continue to seek additional funding for implementing specific activities, such as a 2006 USNC workshop and the US Regional OBIS Node.

2006-2007 Outreach Strategy: At this meeting, the USNC considered the draft 2006/7 Outreach Strategy, deciding to further refine the long-term U.S. vision for CoML past 2010 and agreeing to implement many of the outlined 2006/7 activities without delay. The USNC activities to support implementation are in four essential areas: 1) raising awareness and strengthening visibility in Congress, 2) expanding programmatic collaborations with federal ocean agencies, 3) furthering knowledge of CoML within research institutions, and 4) improving communication to the private sector and general public. This document will be revised and approved by the USNC intersessionally.

2006 U.S. Regional OBIS Node Implementation: After a presentation by the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) of the U.S. Geological Survey, the USNC

discussed several important ways in which implementation should occur this year. The USNC agreed that the committee should 1) develop a vision statement for US RON that meets national priorities, 2) provide feedback on a fact sheet, as well as short- and long-term strategies being developed by NBII, 3) assist in identifying and prioritizing data types (e.g. DiGIR) and datasets for acquisition, and 4) facilitate data acquisition where previous agreements of the USNC have been made.

In addition to making important decisions regarding the two principal meeting goals, the USNC discussed a number of other important developments and opportunities:

U.S. Ocean Research Priorities Plan: Through discussion the USNC decided to 1) develop and share broadly a USNC list of research priorities that highlights the strengths of CoML within the U.S., 2) encourage participation of CoML investigators at an April 18-20, 2006 public workshop being organized by the National Science and Technology Council, Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology to gather input into the Ocean Research Priorities Plan, and 3) encourage comments on the draft ORPP during a 45-day period of public comment.

Better Engaging Existing Field Projects: Lew Incze, of the Gulf of Maine Area Program, and Pat Halpin, of the OBIS SEAMAP project, provided informative presentations on project activities. Through discussion, decided to expand outreach to U.S. CoML participants through several important ways: 1) establish a USNC quarterly newsletter, 2) provide information to principal investigators regarding the mechanisms by which the USNC can support their activities, 3) continue to invite the participation of US investigators in meetings of the USNC, and 4) continue to facilitate outreach opportunities.

Affiliating with CoML: Through discussion regarding the draft affiliation documents provided by the international Scientific Steering Committee (SSC), the USNC decided to: 1) continue to encourage affiliation under the umbrella of existing field projects wherever possible, 2) provide letters of support on request regarding the consistency of new research with goals of existing field projects, 3) continue outreach to existing funding programs to encourage affiliation through the SSC affiliation criteria, 4) review requests for affiliation and support projects willing to agree to the SSC affiliation criteria, and 5) provide SSC affiliation criteria on the USNC website along with a list of affiliated researchers.

USNC Workshops: Two co-chairs of the 2006 USNC workshop, JoAnn Leong and Lew Incze, presented progress in planning the September 12-15 workshop to be held in Washington DC. USNC members agreed to follow-up raising the necessary financial support (from NSF and NOAA) or to scale back the meeting to a smaller size if funding was not identified by April 1. JoAnn announced that Ben Halpern and Steve Palumbi have also agreed to join Paul Sandifer and the other two co-chairs as part of a wider workshop steering committee. The USNC additionally discussed topics for a 2007 workshop in order to begin early planning and decided on one topic for further

development prior to the fall 2006 meeting - CoML tools that transform data into information (e.g. mechanisms for science to reach stakeholders).

Capitol Hill Ocean Day: After discussing CoML participation during Capital Hill Oceans Week 2005 and the draft 2006 agenda, the USNC decided to recommend to organizers three researchers involved in CoML projects for consideration in a panel discussion on visualization technologies.

Collaboration with Centers for Ocean Science Education Excellence: In response to the 2005 expression of interest sent by the USNC, Susan Ganter, the COSEE Network Director presented an update of COSEE activities and a number of options for the USNC to effectively engage the network as an outreach mechanism for CoML. The USNC returned to this topic several times during the meeting and later decided to: 1) attend a COSEE collaboration meeting March 27-28, 2006 at CORE, 2) identify regional opportunities for pilot collaborations between investigators and educators, and 3) send a follow-up letter to COSEE network coordination office expressing interest in collaboration on national initiatives (e.g. ocean literacy).

CoML Fellowship Program: The USNC continued its discussion begun in August 2005 regarding the establishment of a graduate or post-graduate fellowship program to build support and capacity for CoML. The USNC decided to pursue this concept by initially developing a concept paper intersessionally that could be used to garner the additional financial support necessary to implement the program.

USNC Membership: The USNC also discussed new members of the USNC. There is currently one vacancy and one member's term will be ending in May 2006. Invitations to two new members will occur now to fill those positions. There are two additional members whose terms will end in December 2006. Invitations to new members will occur at the end of the year to fill those positions.

The USNC will next meet in November 2006. Exact dates and locations will be selected in the coming weeks.