

HYDROMETEO SYSTEM FLEMISH BANKS

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The Hydrometeo System Flemish Banks consists of The Monitoring Network Flemish Banks (Meetnet Vlaamse Banken) and the Marine Forecast Centre (OMS). The Monitoring Network was set up for the acquisition of real-time oceanographical and meteorological data along the Belgian coast and continental shelf. The oceanographic parameters monitored are waves, tidal height, current and water temperature; meteorological parameters are wind, air pressure, air temperature and rainfall. The network consists of small measuring platforms on the North Sea with hydro-meteo sensors, of wave buoys, meteorological stations and telemetric water level gauges on the coast.

The Network is sponsored by the government of Flanders, and set up and maintained by the Waterways and Maritime Affairs Administration (Administratie Waterwegen en Zeewezen – AWZ). AWZ is also responsible for the central server and quality control of the data.

The data resulting from the Monitoring Network are primarily intended for the daily redaction of marine weather forecasts of tidal heights, waves, wind and visibility along the Belgian coast and in the shipping lane to the coastal harbours and to the estuary of the River Scheldt. The marine meteorologists of the Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium at the AWZ Oceanographic Meteorological Station (OMS) in Zeebrugge produce these forecasts several times a day.

Flanders Marine Institute (Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee: VLIZ) was invited by AWZ to distribute the data to the academic world, and to create a web site offering public access to the most recent measurements. The web site also gives a description of the Network, including location of the measuring platforms and buoys, sensors used, and frequency and precision of the measurements.

AWZ participates in several international projects on the strength of its Measuring Network. The most important of these is SeaNet, a European project involving nine countries that maintain operational networks in the North Sea. SeaNet Data Interface is a European MAST project, joining measuring networks of six SeaNet partners for the exchange of data in near-real time.