

Quality Assurance Workpackage

By Keith Cooper

WITHIN THE QUALITY Assurance Workpackage, we have been working in a number of ways to raise the profile of quality assurance (QA) issues within the MarBEF community. This effort is taking place through attendance at various meetings, the development of a MARBEF QA framework and web page and, most recently, through the development of a 'procedures database.'

The rationale for the development of a procedures database comes from the recognition that the integration of datasets from different sources, a major activity within MarBEF, requires an understanding of the various sampling methodologies used, and ultimately the 'quality' of the data. Whilst all data can be regarded as being of poor quality if not collected in a scientifically robust way, 'data quality' also refers to 'fitness for use' and hence data may simultaneously be of high and low quality depending on how they are to be used. There is therefore a responsibility on both data providers and users to determine this 'fitness for use' and we hope the procedures database will go some way to achieving this.

The intention is to allow datasets submitted to MarBEF to be linked to a procedure in the procedures database, which will allow researchers to compare the sampling procedures for the datasets they wish to integrate, thus minimising the risk that data are used inappropriately. The capture of such procedural information will also allow the identification of gaps (where guidelines are inadequate or non-existent). In these cases it may be appropriate to fill the gaps with new procedures, which could be developed through the MARBEF network. An added benefit may also be the potential for greater harmonisation of methodologies across Europe.



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As a first step, we will begin the process of populating the database at the workshop in Banylus, "How to detect Changes in Biodiversity – Concepts, Methods and Tools," during February 2005. Firstly, we will identify the different types of procedures relevant to the MarBEF network (e.g. grab sampling, intertidal coring, plankton sampling, etc) and secondly, those factors which are likely to vary between procedures (size of grab, plankton net mesh size, etc). These variables will become required fields in the procedures database.

So, what of the next steps? We intend to make the web page available through the MarBEF site in the very near future, and also intend to work with all MarBEF partners to promote quality assurance issues within the network. ●



• EcoServe

Collecting data.

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