

NMBAQC Committee Meeting Minutes
11th May 2011, East Kilbride SEPA Offices, 10:00 – 15:30

Present: Tim Mackie (TM, Chair, NI EA), David Hall (DH, Contractor), Clare Scanlan (CS, SEPA), Steve Coates (SC, EA), Myles O'Reilly (MoR, SEPA), Keith Cooper (KC, CEFAS), Carol Milner (CMi, Contractor representative), Amanda Prior (AP, Finance Manager, EA), Milly Hatton-Brown (MHB, Technical Secretary SAHFOS).

Telephone: Claire Mason (CMa, CEFAS), Joe Silke (JS, MI), Raphael Salas (RS, MI).

Apologies: James Strong (JSt, AFBI), Rob Cooke (RC, CCW)

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Last Meetings Actions

ACTION: TM scan annual report. Ongoing
ACTION: KC ask Thomas and Ed about latest re review of CSEMP data. Steer from HBDSEG is we still want temporal trends. A CSEMP redesign trial has been carried out by CEFAS (2006-2009), all sampling is complete but data needs to be analysed and collated into a report. KC has put pressure on Thomas to get it done but has had no response. KC is willing to volunteer to write up data if no one else will do it. All agencies should work together on this to develop a specification of what is needed and how best to collect information. MSFD is the driver for this data. Action: KC talk to Thomas and Ed again and volunteer to analyse and write up results if necessary.
ACTION: CS compilation of macroalgae taxonomic literature list. Ongoing
Action: TM follow up epibiota video guidance document with Bill Sanderson (Herriot Watt ex CCW) who is looking for funding for a PhD student to carry out the work.
ACTION: DH circulate completed annual reports to committee for comment during interim without a contract manager. Ongoing – no annual reports have been written since this action was raised. ACTION: ALL NMBAQC committee needs to sign reports above off before they go on website. Ongoing
Action: CS speak to Emma or whoever completed the contract to find out what the cost of algae RRT would be.

3. Sign off by committee of information note and application form for Yr 18

Action: DH Send email addresses to AP to add to distribution list.

Action: AP Incorporate the following final changes to the info note to be sent out on Tuesday 17th May:

- Add a sentence to the effect that: applications will be considered from anywhere in the world subject to discussion with contract managers / finance manager – there will be cost implications.
- Emphasise that the scheme is self funding, operating at <+ or - 5% so it is a very tight budget.
- Include a drop down box so that shipping costs can be included in the scheme costs to participants.
- Change invertebrate course from beginner to expert.
- Add a sentence to highlight that ring test can be a useful way of picking up non-natives and climate change indicators.

Action: DH Liaise with AP and provide estimates for shipping costs based on TNT zones.

Action: DH Contact experts from workshops and ask for a finalised version of identification keys to put on the website.

4. Phytoplankton contract manager update (telephone).

Summary of Year 17:

The 2010 report is available online. 39 analysts from 29 labs participated most were based in Europe but 2 South American labs also participated. All analysts scored well – achieving 90% or more in the identification exercise. The enumeration exercise included a low density sample and a high density sample - all participants performed well in this test. Most labs are now using the methods that are promoted by NMBAQC for enumeration so results have improved. JS and RS emphasised that the test is still challenging – there are lots of elements to the taxonomic quiz – the quality of photographs are not always ideal, participants have to be highly skilled to accurately identify, in the enumeration exercise it is difficult to get within 3 z scores. JS presented at the biennial HAB species conference in Crete which generated a lot of interest in the scheme.

Plan for Year 18:

The format of the scheme will remain the same, with 35 participants from 21 labs signed up for year 18. The BEQUALM workshop will be held in October/November location TBC. Jacob Larsen and Henrik Enevoldsen from IOC Denmark will be involved in the preparation of the taxonomic quiz it will go onto their ocean teacher website. It is hoped that involving the IOC will raise the profile of the whole scheme. RS/JS are aiming to gain proficiency scheme accreditation for the phytoplankton element of the scheme, through ISO 17043, in the next couple of years. In order to achieve accreditation, resources and expertise from other labs will need to be used. JS and RS will need to investigate the implications on statistics (ie. what would the impact on participants be if the margin for error was reduced from +-3% to +-2%) and find and develop appropriate reference material.

MOR Highlighted the need to be careful when using the word accreditation. Participants must be made aware that they/their labs will not be accredited by taking part in the scheme.

Action: MHB to email JS/ RS for web update.

Action: MHB to keep JS up to date with progress of SAHFOS/MBA Phytoplankton 2012 workshop.

Action: JS/RS Keep committee informed when location for BEQUALM workshop (to be held in October/November) has been decided.

5. PSA guidance sign-off following review of feedback

Action: ALL read PSA document final draft or pass to PSA person within their organisation and check that it scans properly and is robust. Email any feedback to CMa.

Action: CMa add the following changes to the participant review (and inform participants of response to feedback) before sending final draft WB 1st June ready to go online at end of that week:

- Add the specified method from green book, on grab size and method for collection of depth integrated PSA, to section 4.
- Remove the specification for bag size.
- Add word of warning to participants using different methodologies (ie. different laser capabilities) as per solution in participant review document. Add that we will not be able to include those using other methods in the Z score calculations.
- Add a sentence to the effect that: you can use lower phi for laser data but there is currently no evidence to suggest that using lower than ½ phi will improve data.
- Add a qualifying statement to section 6.1 to say that the reason for raw data is to avoid anomalous results due to different statistical methods. Any further statistical analysis is down to participants to carryout – outside of the ring test.
- Add MOR comments to the text and flow charts

Action: CMA email Rob Nunny to say that: caveats within the guidance are clear enough - it is the consultants responsibility to specify methods and parts of NMBAQC that are relevant.

Action: CMA contact Bob Kennedy (CC TM) and seek his advice, whether his work will be ready in time to include the appendices. If not possibly include paragraph to say report is due soon.

Action: CMA email Simon Blott to say that there is no evidence that we are losing information by not using dispersant.

Action: DH email reformatted PS36/37 report to MHB for web and advertise to participants when it is online.

6. Benthic Invertebrates scheme component update

Action: TM mention to Roger Proudfoot at HBDSEG meeting that we still need contract manager for Benthic Invertebrates. In the mean time MHB and MOR will take on tasks.

Action: MOR write down some of the key points of the contract manager role for Roger.

Action: TM talk to Brian Miller about MOR involvement – explain it has been reduced.

Action: MHB write on website that part of the contract manager role has been taken by the technical secretary.

(Above four actions no longer required as SEPA agreed on 24/5/11 that MOR can return to contract manager role)

DH updated all on the progress of all tests, participation, reports and bulletins.

Action: DH finish year 16 annual report.

Action: MOR send statement of performance to participants.

Action: DH to complete RT39 Bulletin (still awaiting Andy Mackie's clarification) and pass to MHB for web and advise participants when it is online.

7. Macroalgae scheme component update

Summary of year 17:

Two sets of exercises were run in Year 17. After participant feedback that tests should be run earlier in the year what would have been the year 18 tests were run as 17a and 17b. The biomass exercise was changed slightly with the addition of some wool, the drying process instructions were followed better than in previous years leading to better results.

Rocky shore test had fewer participants, but the exercise was late in going out so deadlines were very tight - the bulletin has not yet been received for these tests, but results are being processed now. No reverse ring test was run, as there was little interest expressed.

Plan for year 18:

The next series of tests will be sent out at the end of year 18 (January). This year we will include some seagrass in percentage cover test, using 30 photographs instead of 20, split between seagrass and macro algae. The year 18 rocky shore test will be in January. The contract tenders to be agreed this week and advertised WB 16th May. Participants won't know costs until quotes have come in from contractors but CS/AP envisage a similar cost to previous years.

It may be beneficial to hold a workshop on aspects of macroalgal blooming/seagrass mapping.

Action ALL: comment to CS on Macroalgae report – specifically GIS estimates as the method for this has changed.

Action: CS to assess participant feedback from Y17 and the cost of running a macroalgal blooming workshop in Year 18 to decide whether or not to go ahead with it.

Action: CS chase up Yr 17 rocky shore test report and participant feedback.

TM began a discussion about the use of video analysis for sub littoral macroalgae. Phycological video QA with reverse ring tests could potentially be included as an optional part of the macroalgae scheme component.

Action: AP/CS add to contract tender for someone to explore or price video ring testing so it can be offered as an optional module in macroalgae scheme.

Action: TM contact James Strong about use of video for macro algal identification, ask him to contact CS.

8. Fish scheme component update

DH updated all on the progress of all tests, reports and bulletins. Draft report of standard fish ring test will be ready shortly.

Fish workshop update:

Participants comments were positive and literature provided at the course was well received – especially the factsheets from Pete Henderson (PICES Conservation).

The workshop in year 18 depends on funding. The possibility of holding an expert workshop in the Autumn and a beginners workshop in the Spring was discussed, as was the possibility of alternating the location (ie. North one year South the next) and including fresh water species.

Action SC: explore options for suitable venue in the South with accommodation, lab space and a vessel. Look at outdoors centres, RNLI training centres etc.

Action SC: ask Ian Cowx about the possibility of including freshwater fish sampling to the scheme - is there a demand for it?

It was decided that SC should stay on the committee for the time being even though his role within EA has changed.

9. Finance update

10. AOB

CMi: Dave Barnes mentioned the need follow on workshops with regard to nomenclature changes. NMBAQC position is to use WORMS unless you know it is incorrect in which case feedback to the course providers. Workshops should then feed back to WORMS and help to improve it. Participants shouldn't be marked down for using synonyms.

CMi: raised her concern that contractors don't have issues for her to raise at NMBAQC meetings. She will add to her emails that contractors can contact AP / MHB if they are not happy to contact her.

DH: Thomson Unicomarine is aiming to have UKAS accreditation by the end of 2011, followed by audit methods accreditation – the next step is proficiency testing. DH suggested that in the future we could offer onsite auditing as well as the various ring tests. The audit would be a confidential, the idea being to improve lab practice as opposed to criticising participants.

DH: UNICORN is looking at designing an epibiota video storage and analysis module DH will be consulting James about this.

DH: talked everyone through his draft CSEMP Invert sample flagging report and asked if everyone was happy with the layout etc. The web version will need to be revised to exclude any sensitive data.

Action: ALL Feedback to DH re structure and layout of CSEMP Invert sample flagging report by end of July to be on website by next meeting.

Action: ALL Email a paragraph to DH for CSEMP Invert sample flagging report describing how their samples have been collected (ie sampling strategies clustered or dispersed, fixed or re-randomised etc.) and how it has changed over time.

Date for next committee meeting: Tuesday 23rd August teleconference.