

**NATIONAL MARINE BIOLOGICAL AQC SCHEME / BEQUALM**  
**01/10/2013 teleconference, 10:00-15:00**

**Attending:** David Johns (DJ, Chair, SAHFOS), Tim Mackie (TM, NI EA), Mandy Prior (MP, Finance Manager, EA), Myles O'Reilly (MoR, SEPA), Claire Mason (CM, CEFAS representative), Richard Arnold (RA, Contractor), Ruth Barnich (RB, Contractor), Carol Milner (CMi, Contractor representative), Clare Scanlan (CS, SEPA), Astrid Fischer (AF, Technical Secretary, SAHFOS), Matthew Green (MG, Natural Resources Wales)

**Apologies:** Keith Cooper (KC, CEFAS), Joe Silke (JS, MI), Rafael Salas (RS, MI) and Jim Ellis (JE, CEFAS),

**1. Last Meeting Actions**

Astrid:

- Put the most recent version of the taxonomic database up on the web with a note that this is a version working with Internet Explorer only. *Done, in the participants' area.*
- Contact leads of HBDSEG subgroups to find out where there are gaps and update HBDSEG for their October meeting. *David has contacted the leads and we are collating results.*
- Discuss way forward for zooplankton questionnaire with DJ. *Zooplankton report has been sent out to those interested and those who completed the questionnaire.*

David

- Contact leads of HBDSEG subgroups to find out where there are gaps and update HBDSEG for their October meeting. *Has contacted the leads and collating results.*
- Keep CMi informed of progress on zooplankton. *Done.*
- Discuss with Roger Proudfoot in October the possibility for financing a macroalgae workshop. *Outstanding, next HBDSEG meeting not until after this NMBAQC meeting.*
- Discuss way forward for zooplankton questionnaire with AF. *Zooplankton report has been sent out to those interested and those who completed the questionnaire.*

Joe

- Send the BEQUALM quality protocol to MP. *Done.*

Myles:

- Send corrections to Richard so that updates can be sent out to participants. *RTB have now been put up on the web site.*
- Send corrections to MB20 report to RB. *Amended MB20 is now on the web site.*
- Investigate the ID issues with polychaetes. *Done.*
- CC JE in all fish communications. *Done.*
- Produce a draft document together with RA that outlines the problems using WORMS or ERMS using scaleworms and other polychaetes to highlight issues. *Ongoing (see below).*

Carol:

- Send TM some videos and supporting assessment. *Awaiting approval for sending these.*
- Send details to MP and KC so that 'information only' issue as NMBAQC participation can be addressed. *Done.*

Claire Mason

- Set up a meeting with Graham. *Done, had meeting yesterday and is now progressing the information.*
- Send photos for video analysis to TM. *Awaiting approval for sending these.*

Clare Scanlan:

- Look into the reference list and send one with definite approval to AF for inclusion on web site. *Done. Astrid has received the latest version and has uploaded this on the NMBAQC web site.*
- Find out who would be interested to join saltmarsh QA/QC scheme. *There is not a great deal of interest, only the main agencies. It may be possible to set up a ringtest with the EA, which currently holds a ring test commissioned from CEH. Action Mandy to provide Clare with contact details of EA staff involved in this ring test for Clare to investigate if we can set the ring test up under the NMBAQC flag.*
- Discuss the gridded square issues with Emma and others. *Quadrats or open quadrats- Clare has investigated the possibility alternatives, including using photographic assessments instead of in situ samples, but this will not be in place in time for the next ringtest.*
- Collate some ID guidance on seagrass to draft a standard for the NMBAQC web site. *Ongoing.*

Mandy

- Send seagrass ID sheet to CS. *Done.*
- Set up a meeting in 2-3 weeks time to discuss the tender. *Will be discussed under 'Finance update'.*

Richard/Ruth:

- Contact Nigel Grist to see how the new version is coming along. *Done. Astrid has received the latest version and has uploaded this on the NMBAQC web site.*
- Forward the correspondence about the polychaete fragment matter to MoR. *Done, this was a misunderstanding and all reports have now been amended.*
- CC JE in all fish communications. *Done.*
- Produce a draft document together with MOR that outlines the problems using WORMS or ERMS using scaleworms and other polychaetes to highlight issues. *This is an issue which is ongoing, and will need more time and discussion. WORMS web site entries for polychaetes especially are very much out of date and the state-of-the-art keys produced in recent workshops should be used instead. NMBAQC participants should be made aware of the recent keys. It may be possible to check the data with MSBIAS- Matt to forward information on this to Ruth.*

Carol

- to forward the correspondence about the polychaete fragment matter to MoR. *Done.*

All:

- Send photos of sediment types to TM. *Ongoing.*
- To give their feedback on Aerial mapping report within the next 3-4 weeks to MP. *Feedback has been received and commented on, as per documents sent out by Mandy.*

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting

It was agreed that decisions and actions should be captured, and that an annotated version would be fine.

## 3. Priorities from HBDSEG

- Collate what QA/QC is in place for in the development of Indicators for the upcoming Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Still in the process of doing this, but outstanding indicators are epibiota, zooplankton, seabirds and cetaceans.
- Funding possibilities to request from HBDSEG:
  - Workshop to look at sample collection issues, to investigate the differences between same grab or separate grab workups of sediment samples. There are also inshore/offshore difference. **Claire Mason to draft David a paragraph to take to HBDSEG.**
  - Workshop for macroalgae/seagrass identification. **Clare Scanlan to draft David a paragraph with rough costing for HBDSEG.**
  - Workshop for training Epibiota imaging/ Best practice guide.
  - Workshop together with ICES zooplankton group to set up standards for zooplankton analysis.

## 4. Phytoplankton update

The phytoplankton component is running a workshop next week 7-9 Oct in Galway with 25 people attending. Issues to be addressed are Intercomparison exercise results; Enumeration and identification exercise results; Community analyses of North Sea phytoplankton; Calculating Phytoplankton Biovolume, Biomass and Carbon; Lectures and microscope demonstrations of the Raphidophytes, nanoflagellates and naked dinoflagellates groups.

## 5. PSA update

Year 19 samples have all been completed and year 20 samples have been distributed. **Some of the distributed samples had shell fragments in them, action Ruth to investigate if this was due to transport issues.**

A discussion was held on the possibility of an own sample test in future, due to the procedure for workup of samples by the EA being slightly different to the NMBAQC protocol. It was agreed that this should be included in the new tender as something we wish to initiate. The PSA component has changed in recent years from being just supported data to currently being used for the IQI assessment. Action Claire Mason to investigate the level of significance of PSA assessment for the IQI tool. The own sample results will tell us if the data being generated are fit for purpose, by sending the dry part that is sieved and a later subsample for QA. A protocol will need to be developed to describe what we classify as an own sample and what the pass/fail criteria will be. The new tender should also include PSA workshops 'as and when required'.

Another item that was mentioned was freshwater soil samples, the PSA from these grabs comes without any proficiency testing and their workup protocols are different to marine ones, as they use different dispersants. Surveys are going further inshore and agencies should be aware of this.

## 6. Benthic Invertebrates update

Some of the Year 18 own samples arrived very late but have now been processed. Thomson are working on the summary and annual reports.

The Year 19 own samples have been received and are currently being processed. All reports should be ready by January 2014.

RT44 is complete and a first version of the report is available on the web site. Queries are coming in and all will be openly discussed.

## **7. Macroalgae**

The MB20 exercise is completed and the reports are up on the web. Except for the own samples exercise all has been completed. The Year 20 specimens have just been issued, and the MB OS have all been distributed.

Clare is still looking into the possibility of arranging a workshop, at a time of year when there will be seagrass around to look at. The workshop could take the form of a back-to-back remote sensing mapping/ in-the-field mapping workshop. **Matt and Tim to contact Clare Scanlan with ideas and possible participant contact information for the workshop.** Mandy mentioned a study by the EA Geometrics Team in which manned areal flight data was compared to remoted operate flight data. **Action Mandy to send details of this study to Matt and Clare Scanlan.**

Matt had feedback from Bianca Bacchi on the Opportunistic Macroalgae component, saying the test had not been very useful. **Action Matt to ask Bianca to contact Clare Scanlan with this feedback so that tests may be improved.**

## **8. Epibiota update**

David, Astrid and Tim attended an Epibiota workshop organised by Natural England and held early September in Plymouth. The workshop focussed on using epibiota imaging for monitoring change and gave a good overview of the issues that are important. It was also a good occasion to make contact with those doing the epibiota imaging and Envision has sent David and Astrid the original NMBAQC ring test footage.

Astrid has consequently set up a googlegroup with a google document that everyone can access and edit. This was distributed to the attendees and others interested in epibiota imaging and will be used as a setup for a draft Best Practise Guide.

Post meeting note- Astrid has been contacted by JNCC who are eager to take the lead and will help with the production of the Best Practise Guide.

## **9. Fish update**

The Fish component for Year 19 has been completed, and requests have been sent out for the reversed ring test for Year 20.

A suggestion from Jim Ellis was that it would be good to hold a workshop to also cover larger fish species and rarely caught species, which would not be available in sufficient numbers to send out for a ring test. This would avoid bias towards the more common species. Workshops would need to be financially viable, and there needs to be confidence in the ID of the species.

## **10. Zooplankton update**

The Zooplankton report has been distributed to interested parties and is now available on the NMBAQC web site. The conclusion is that there is a general interest in zooplankton and no current standards. There is also a lack of regular coastal zooplankton monitoring (although Matt Green mentioned regular sampling in Skomer, Wales). Next steps to take are to organise a workshop, together with the ICES Working group on Zooplankton, to come up with some standards or a Best Practise guide and take it from there.

## **11. AOB**

- NMBAQC Letterhead- **Clare S to send Astrid a draft letterhead which can be improved upon if needed (Post meeting note- received). Action all to send current protocols to Astrid so that she can hold a library of relevant documents.**

- Date and location of next meeting- Myles to investigate if the Edinburgh venue can be used again and come back with possible dates.
- Saltmarsh mapping standard – final draft- A final draft should be ready by end of October and Mandy will circulate this once received. Claire Mason has received some more comments from her colleague and will forward these to Mandy.
- Contractor’s comments as sent by Carol Milner- Thomson noted that there has been a transition period where issues have been addressed as they went along. All should be running smoothly now. Another comment was that the phytoplankton test was mainly focussed on harmful algae this year.
- Claire Mason is running a PSA workshop to find out where more detail in sub-sampling is required for the MSFD programme, as there is a lack of enforcing PSA methodology, and would like to do this under the NMBAQC flag. The workshop should be held this financial year, probably in early 2014, at Cefas Lowestoft. It was agreed to do this under the NMBAQC flag and Astrid to send out the invites.

**Date and place of next meeting to be agreed.** Awaiting availability information on Edinburgh venue from Myles.