



The official Newsletter of the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project.

September 2004

Introduction

Welcome to the September 2004 Newsletter for the South Pacific Sea Level & Climate Monitoring Project! As many readers will know, this AusAID funded project was developed in the early 1990's as a response to concerns about the potential impacts of global warming on climate and sea levels and aims to provide an accurate, long term record of sea levels in the South Pacific. This newsletter will provide an update on project activities and progress.

Readers are reminded that a broad range of data and information products are available on the project web site, www.pacificsealevel.org. Newsletters, fact sheets, posters, tidal prediction calendars, Monthly Data Reports and Pacific Island Country Status Reports can all be downloaded from this site. Also available on the project web site are the project's sea level data (including associated meteorological data) from the start of the project and Continuous Global Positioning System (CGPS) data.

3rd Project Coordination Committee (PCC)

The recent Project Coordination Committee meeting was held at the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) Secretariat in Suva on 26th May 2004.

Participants in the meeting included representatives from the governments of four Pacific Island Countries - Cook Islands, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - and regional organisations such as SOPAC, the University of South Pacific (USP) and the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP). AusAID and the Australian Managing Contractor, Australian Marine Science and Technology (AMSAT), were also in attendance.

The Project Coordination Committee discussed the progress of the South Pacific Sea Level & Climate Monitoring Project (SPSLCMP) in 2003-2004, and in Phase III more generally. Major items included:



- data transfer and the format and distribution of project products;
- Continual Global Positioning System installations and maintenance;
- maintenance, electricity and communication costs; and
- training and skills transfer.

The committee also discussed the way forward for 2004-2005 and the longer term future of the project after Phase III concludes in December 2005.

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Information and Training Working Group (ITWG) Meeting discusses project communication activities

The 3rd meeting of the Information and Training Working Group (ITWG) was convened in Suva on 27th May 2004, following the PCC Meeting.

The Information and Training Working Group has the important responsibility of coordinating communication and training activities between the project, relevant regional organisations and governments.

Participants in this 3rd meeting of the ITWG included representatives

from Pacific Island Country governments, Regional Organisations and AMSAT.

Topics discussed in the ITWG meeting included:

- on-the-job training and policy and modelling workshops conducted by the project in the past 12 months;
- the facilitation of further information sharing and cooperation in training initiatives between regional organisations and the project in 2004-2005; and
- initiatives by the project's new Communication Officer, including a stakeholder survey about current SPSLCMP information products.



Four successful field visits conducted in project countries

Field visits to four partner countries, including Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, were conducted by project staff during May and June 2004.

The purpose behind the Kiribati and Vanuatu visits was primarily to conduct precise levelling surveys. Maintenance of the Continual Geographic Positioning System was the main priority of the Federated States of Micronesia and Tuvalu missions.

On all four field visits, project staff were accompanied by personnel from in-country departments responsible for meteorological services and land and surveys. Valuable on-the-job training and skills transfer in surveying and maintenance of CGPS systems was transferred to government officers.

The project would like to thank those people who provided their time and cooperation during these field visits.



Mr Andrick Lal conducting a precise differential levelling survey in Betio, Tarawa, Kiribati.

Evaluation of SPSLCMP information products

The penetration and impact of project products will be evaluated in an information products survey being distributed to all stakeholders.

The survey will be emailed to all project stakeholders and will investigate the value of SPSLCMP information products to users and any outstanding information needs. All those people with an interest in the project are encouraged to provide their input.

Newsletter readers who have not obtained a copy of the information products survey can obtain one by emailing am-sath@connect.com.fj. Any questions should be directed to the project's Communication Officer at am-sath@connect.com.fj or 679-330 4003.

Project represented at regional workshops and meetings

The SPSLCMP Regional Coordinator has provided a number of project presentations to regional workshops and meetings during 2004. These have included:

- a presentation on project results and outputs for the Pacific Island Training Institute on Climate and Extreme Events hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP);
 - a presentation on the actual and potential use of the project's tide gauges as tsunami early warning systems during the South Pacific Tsunami Awareness Workshop organised by the SOPAC Secretariat; and
- a discussion of the current status of sea levels in the region and the distribution of Country Specific Sea Level Reports at the South

Pacific Forum annual meeting in Samoa.

The project will also be represented by the Regional Coordinator at up and coming regional meetings in 2004. Project activities will include:

- the presentation of technical and annual reports at the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme Meeting from the 9-17 September 2004; and
- a presentation on project progress and support for extreme event management at the SOPAC Annual meeting from the 17 – 24 September 2004.

National Tidal Facility becomes National Tidal Centre

The National Tidal Facility Australia (NTFA), one of the key players in the South Pacific Sea Level & Climate Monitoring Project, has now become the National Tidal Centre (NTC), a part of the Oceanographic Division in the Bureau of Meteorology. The NTC will continue to provide the technical services previously provided by the NTFA, including management of the Seaframe data and primary carriage for the production of sea related information.



Training workshops in Pacific Island Countries introduce new storm surge modelling system

Training workshops in the Pacific have begun introducing the project's new storm surge models, providing four partner countries with a unique tool for forecasting storm surges associated with extreme weather events. The workshops were conducted in Fiji and Samoa in June 2004 and will be held in Vanuatu and Tuvalu before the end of this year.

The training provides users with hands-on experience in running the StormTrak model and assessing storm surge risk.

The storm surge model was developed by the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project in collaboration with a number of institutions in Australia and the South Pacific. In the cyclone season, the model will provide valuable information on the potential intensity of storm surge and wave run-up during extreme weather events. They are expected to be an important tool to support natural disaster management and weather offices in-country.

There are plans to extend the models to include other countries in the Pacific region as the required level of oceanographic, geographic and bathymetric data becomes available from institutions in each country.



Mr Kesho Vijay and Mr Sili Lomalagi use the new StormTrak model to assess storm surge during a historical cyclone at the recent workshop in Nadi, Fiji.

Project Personnel Profiles

Neil Collins

Neil Collins has been appointed as the new Project Manager for Australian Marine Science & Technology. Neil previously worked for AusAID and brings to the South Pacific Sea Level & Climate Monitoring Project a large amount of experience from past AusAID projects. Based in the AMSAT head office in Canberra, Neil oversees all aspects of the project. The CEO of AMSAT, Robert Harriss remains involved in the project as Project Director.

Laura Holbeck

Laura Holbeck also joins the South Pacific Sea Level & Climate Monitoring Project as the project's Communication Officer. Laura has previously worked in project management, planning and communication roles with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and Marine Parks Authority in Australia. Laura's position with SPSLCMP has been funded under the AusAID Australian Youth Ambassador for Development programme and she will be working on the project until December 2004. While working with the project, Laura will be conducting an information products survey to assess the penetration and suitability of current project products. Laura will also be conducting awareness raising activities on climate change and writing project information materials.



SPSLCMP

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