

COINATLANTIC, A NETWORK OF PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY IN SUPPORT OF COASTALSHED MANAGEMENT

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One of the challenging concepts related to information management in support of integrated coastal and ocean management (ICOM) is a succinct reference to the geographic area being considered. This is necessary to help define the common interests of the collaborating agencies involved. Past use of the phrase “coastal and ocean” puts the emphases on salt water. Watershed, and ecosystem-based, terminology tends to isolate the freshwater geography from the estuarine and marine. To help to promote a concept that links the materials and process of the watershed, with the estuary and coastal areas that they drain into, the Atlantic Coastal Zone Information Steering Committee (ACZISC) and its initiative the Coastal and Ocean Information Network – Atlantic (COINAtlantic) are developing and promoting the concept of a coastalshed as a defined geographic area that has influences on, and through, coastal waters. In the context of information management for ICOM, this paper will define and use the coastalshed concept.

Successful management of the coastalshed, requires the best available information. Information required includes all forms of hard copy and electronic information. With the existing internet capability, coastal managers have the potential to search, find, access and use an incredible amount of information online. In this lies the challenge of having appropriate access to the salient pieces of information within an ever expanding plethora of information. Technology is quickly evolving to facilitate access to available information. However, the need for human interest, trust and participation in information sharing is key to providing managers with access to information required for management decisions. No one person or agency has, or can control, all of the information required to adequately manage coastal and marine ecosystems. This paper will demonstrate the necessary balance between personnel and technology in a modern day Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI).

The ACZISC was established in 1992. Members include the four Atlantic Provinces, ten federal departments/agencies, community organizations, NGOs, the private sector and academia. These are organizations and agencies which have a mandate for, and can contribute to, the promotion of integrated coastal and ocean management (ICOM) initiatives. They cover a broad range of management issues, including fisheries, aquaculture, marine planning, water quality, security, etc. The ACZISC experience has shown that broad representation is essential to foster cooperation in all aspects of ICOM.

In 2008, the ACZISC launched COINAtlantic as an important component of regional information management. Guided by the ACZISC, COINAtlantic is assembling the best available internet data sources, search engines and technologies, including the people and partners interested in ICOM.

The four main components of a successful COIN, are:

- online access to data using recognized standards
- metadata catalogues that can be used to search for geospatial information
- a web interface that allows users to search, access and retrieve the best available information from the most reliable sources
- active participation of data providers and data users to ensure that the right data are available to contribute to more effective decision-making.

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