

November 14, 2003

TO: U.S. Members and Participants in the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and Other Interested Individuals

FROM: Michael Sissenwine, NOAA Fisheries Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor; and President of ICES

SUBJECT: U.S. Participation in ICES

While many of you are very familiar with ICES, I would like to (1) provide some basic information on this important international science organization; (2) as President of ICES for the next three years, explain my priorities for ICES activities; and (3) solicit your suggestions and nominations for expanded U.S. participation in existing and new ICES Working Groups and other activities.

### **Background Information on ICES**

As many of you know, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), with 19 member nations, is the oldest intergovernmental organization in the world concerned with marine and fisheries sciences. (ICES was founded in 1902, and the United States joined in 1912). ICES is a leading forum for the promotion, coordination, and dissemination of research on the physical, chemical, and biological systems in the North Atlantic and adjacent seas such as the Baltic Sea and North Sea, and advice on human impacts on its environment, in particular fisheries effects in the Northeast Atlantic. ICES has long recognized the mutual interdependence of the living marine resources and their physical and chemical environment. In support of these activities, ICES facilitates data and information exchange through publications and meetings, in addition to functioning as a marine data center for oceanographic, environmental, and fisheries data. ICES works with experts from its 19 member Countries and collaborates with more than 40 international organizations, some of which hold scientific Observer status.

ICES is a complex organization involving about 1600 scientists. It fulfills functions through an Annual Science Conference, about a dozen committees, close to 100 working and study groups, several symposia annually, and a wide range of publications. Two delegates represent each member country on the Council. With Dr. Ann Bucklin from the University of New Hampshire, I serve as a U.S. Delegate and at the 2003 Annual Science Conference I was inaugurated as President of ICES for the years 2003-2006.

Further information on ICES can be found on the Web at:  
[www.ices.dk](http://www.ices.dk) and [www.nefsc.noaa.gov/icesconnection/](http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/icesconnection/)

### **91<sup>st</sup> Annual Science Conference**

From 21 September-1 October, ICES held the 91st Annual Science Conference in Tallinn, Estonia. This excellent scientific meeting marked the first time one of the former Soviet Republics has hosted the annual conference, and we made good progress in the Council on behalf of the ICES scientific community.

Symposia and theme sessions covered a wide array of subjects in areas relevant to the missions of NOAA, including the role of benthic communities as indicators of marine ecosystem quality and change, transport of eggs and larvae cod in the Atlantic, long term changes in distribution and abundance of resources, and other topics. A highlight of the conference was the keynote address by Dr. John Caddy concerning the scope and effectiveness of stock rebuilding plans in fishery management from around the world, during which Dr. Caddy singled out the United States' progress in stock rebuilding under the Sustainable Fisheries Act as an example of the most effective and comprehensive approaches to rebuilding depleted stocks worldwide. Another noteworthy outcome of the meeting included a decision that Sea Grant and ICES would jointly sponsor a symposium on Aquatic Nuisance Species in 2006, an issue of increasing importance to the health of our nation's fisheries and to NOAA's mission as a whole.

### **My Priorities for ICES**

As I embark on my new role as ICES President, I would like to briefly highlight a few of my priorities for ICES in the future. I place priority on the following:

- Expanding the size and diversity of the ICES scientific community. The ICES Strategic Plan vision is for an "International scientific community that is relevant, responsive, sound and credible, concerning marine ecosystems and their relationship to humanity." This is the scientific community that is needed so that ICES can fulfill its mission "To advance the scientific capacity to give advice on human activities affecting, and affected by, marine ecosystems". ICES needs to continue its efforts to make its scientific activities attractive to scientists from government laboratories, universities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, from ICES member countries and worldwide, from a broad range of scientific disciplines, of both genders, and that are diverse in race and culture. The quality of ICES publications is an important factor in making ICES attractive to scientists. ICES also needs effectively to use the power of modern information technology to make it self better known, and to provide access to its many valuable products.
- Modernize ICES's advisory processes to fulfill today's societal needs. ICES has a long and successful history as a premier provider of scientific advice to underpin societal decisions that affect marine ecosystems. However, societal needs are changing and expanding. Increasingly, advice is needed on more complex issues, and sometimes it is needed sooner than can be accommodated by the typical annual cycle that ICES uses. Also, some advice has tremendous social implications which means that the credibility of the advice is more important than ever before. ICES's advisory processes have been evolving for several years. ICES needs to continue the evolution through routine two way communications with advice users and stakeholders, by implementing quality assurance protocols including more independent peer review, by becoming more transparent without exposing scientists to political or advocacy group pressure, and by recognizing that some degree of flexibility is necessary. ICES must form a coalition with advice users and stakeholders to achieve a better balance between expectations for advice and support for the science that is necessary to meet expectations.

- Providing the Secretariat with the tools and work environment it needs to effectively serve the ICES community. ICES is fortunate to have a dedicated and capable Secretariat staff. Those of us who spend considerable time at the Secretariat facility in Copenhagen consider the staff to be both valuable colleagues and important friends. However, we also recognize that we are demanding more from them than ever before. It is our responsibility to provide the tools they need (e.g., modern IT support, training, and a physical facility that suits the demands being placed on it) so that they can raise to an even a higher standard of support for the ICES community. It is also our responsibility to set priorities when we cannot afford to provide the support necessary to fulfill all our desires.

### **Solicitation of Nominations:**

A large number of ICES Working Groups, Study Groups, and other Groups and Workshops were established or re-established at the ICES 2003 Annual Science Conference.

The attached document “*New Groups*” provides detailed information on the structure and planned foci of the new Groups. The second document (“*U.S. Members*”) provides information on existing groups and U.S. participants. Please review the documents with a view to any changes or additional nominations (self-identification is acceptable) to the various groups, or participation in meetings and workshops, that you would like U.S. Delegates to ICES Mike Sissenwine and Ann Bucklin to propose to ICES.

### **What it means to be a member:**

**Science Committees:** Each of the Science Committees has two members from the US. The members are generally expected to attend Annual Science Conference Meetings, where the Committees meet. While we do not anticipate changes in U.S. membership at this time, expressions of future interest are welcome.

**Advisory Committees:** There is one member per country, and these need to be approved by ICES. Members of advisory committees are nominated by countries, but once approved by ICES, they serve in their own professional capacity. While we do not anticipate changes in U.S. membership at this time, expressions of future interest are welcome.

**Working Groups and Study Groups:** These have flexible membership. Members are expected to attend some, but not all, intersessional meetings (usually one per year or every other year). Some of these groups work by correspondence. Since membership is flexible, we would be happy to add U.S. scientists that want to contribute.

It should be noted that, except for Advisory Committees, ICES does not fund travel. In general, it is up to individuals to work out their own travel support, usually with their own institutions.

NOAA employees should first obtain permission (and some indication of travel support) from their organization’s leadership (e.g. Science Center Director).

Feel free to contact us at any time. If you have specific questions or would like to make a

nomination, please contact Jim McCallum.

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