Drifter Newsletter #4
December 2009

NOAA's Adopt-a-Drifter Program

This initiative (www.adp.noaa.gov) has similar objectives to ours in that they engage teachers and students. We are considering ways to merge our respective projects in order to share resources. In a proposal recently submitted to NOAA's Northeast Consortium, we suggested a formal collaboration. The ADP program is already connected with NOAA's Teachers at Sea Program which provides educators an opportunity to sail on NOAA vessels.

Forecasting drifter trajectories

We continue to develop ways to generate forecasted tracks from circulation model output. If your regional association of ocean observations systems has a modeling component and they post their output in "CF-compliant netDCDF" files, there are now means to extract forecast velocities at any point and time in their grid in order to derive a simulated pathways of numerical drifters. To follow the progress of this endeavor, visit http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/epd/ocean/MainPage/circ/gettrack.html . While much more work needs to be done to make this a user friendly operation, we welcome folks to join us in the open-source development. At this point in time it requires a MATLAB license and some familiarity with that language to run smoothly.

Website revisions planned for 2010

As you may have noticed, the website http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/drifter/ needs significant upgrades. Since this site started by tracking a single drifter in 2005, it has expanded to become cluttered and unwieldy. We are in the process of developing a sortable table format where users will be able to get a list of deployments and links to the various tracks in the order they prefer (by region, by date, etc). Ideally, we hope to provide automated forecasts and links to animations as well.

COSEE Podcast scheduled for January 2010

Our drifter project will be featured as an "Ocean Gazing Podcast" next month. Ari Shapiro conducted interviews with students and actually went on board to deploy a drifter in Casco Bay this past week. This deployment by the Southern Maine Community College included both a surface drifter (ie Rachel) and a drogued drifter (ie Kara). While the surface unit washed ashore five days later during a storm, the drogued drifter still underway at the time of this writing. You can follow its progress at http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/drifter/ by clicking on links to SMCC.

Ocean Science Meeting in February 2010

There were a record number of abstracts submitted for the meeting in Portland Oregon in a few months. While I have submitted an abstract with my colleague Vitalii Sheremet on our low-cost current meter development, I will not attend. If any of you are attending, please track down Vitalii and ask him about his current meter. There are several sessions pertaining to "education" in marine sciences including evaluation of COSEE, for example.

"No Acquisition" sometimes listed on SensService.com

A few of you have noted that "No Aquisition" is occasionally listed where position fixes are not

available. I'm not sure why this happens but I suspect that it is occurring either when there is rough seas or when the transmitter's battery is getting weak. This is just another quirk associated with this generation of TrackPack transmitters. If your transmitter seems to be failing prematurely (ie doesn't communicate or fails to provide any fixes at all), please send them to me so that I can return them to the manufacturer as a batch. The next generation of TrackPacks (due to be released soon) may correct some of these quirks.

Bristol Community College Drifter In-the-News

As noted on the MATE drifter blog, the BCC deployment story was written up in the news at: http://www.heraldnews.com/news/x215403522/Bristol-Community-College-uses-device-to-study-ocean-currents and a link to the googlemap was provided. One highlight of the BCC story that was not mentioned in the article is their visit to the local elementary school. See photo below by BCC's Bob Rak. Dozen's of children from Fall River MA are following the progress of this drifter!