

**15th CHRIS Meeting
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Report on Open ECDIS Forum (OEF) Activities

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1. Background

The Open ECDIS Forum (OEF) was established in 1997 to facilitate the international development and implementation of ECDIS. The objectives of the OEF are to:

- encourage and support the development of ECDIS and its extensions
- provide lines of communication between IMO, IHO, & IEC standards developers and users
- promote the S-57 data model in the marine environment, and monitor its use
- examine new development proposals, and advise on their validity
- promote world-wide ENC production

Specific OEF activities include:

- a. establish discussion forums on issues related to ECDIS
- b. review and register "user-defined" S-57 objects
- c. register private producer agency codes
- d. distribute ECDIS-related freeware/shareware software and S-57 datasets
- e. organize workshops on ECDIS-related matters
- f. provide a link with the IHO website, and to other organizations involved in ECDIS

2. Year in Review

Discussion Forums

Now in its sixth year of operation, the OEF is widely recognized and used by industry and HO members. Both the number of discussion forums and the level of activity have remained relatively constant. For many participants in IHO and IEC standards development working groups, email discussions are being widely used as means to exchange ideas, as well as to prepare for meetings. However, it the IHO website -- not the OEF -- where meeting documents should be posted.

Registration Service

a. ENC Producer Codes

An increasing number of ENC manufacturers have requested ENC Producer Codes. From April 2002 – June 2003, approximately 20 companies and organizations have registered on the OEF.

b. New Object Classes/Attributes

Several new object classes and attributes compatible with S-57 have been registered on the OEF. These primarily involve additional objects and attributes that are included as part of the S-57 Object Catalogue of the European Inland ECDIS Standard (Edition 1.01, 29 Nov 01) that has been produced for the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR). There is also the expectation that additional objects and attributes will be registered related to Additional Military Layers (AMLs).

c. Alternative ENC Product Specifications

Consideration is being given to establishing a registration service for "alternative" ENC Product Specifications (i.e., in addition to the current ENC Product Specification contained in IHO S-57, Edition 3.1.). In the near term, these would pertain to ENC Product Specifications for European Inland ECDIS and the North American Inland ENC Product Specification developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the longer term, it could pertain to the "next generation" ENC Product Specifications dealing with vertical and time dimensions (Y & Z), or ENCs produced from high-density bathymetry and remote sensing data.

Other events of note that have occurred include:

- a. The OEF server that hosts the OEF website and the e-mail forums is maintained at the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping – Joint Hydrographic Center, University of New Hampshire (USA) under the supervision of Dr. Lee Alexander. However, the management of the OEF is primarily performed by SevenCs. Over the next few months, further enhancements and modernization of the OEF is planned.
- b. Gert Büttgenbach continues to chair the Board Of Advisors (previously called Board of Patrons) who supervise all OEF activities. Some of the current advisors have been inactive. During the next few months, some changes in the membership are anticipated.
- c. The Colours & Symbols Maintenance Working Group (C&SMWG) continues to be one of the more active IHO WGs using the OEF a means to discuss various issues.

Looking Ahead

The OEF continues to evolve. More than being primarily a discussion and information site, it is a means for consensus building and facilitation a range of topics related to ECDIS development and implementation. OEF has also become a site to register and list such ECDIS-related matters as ENC Producer Codes and new S-57 Objects/attributes. Further enhancements to the OEF should include more powerful search functions to browse discussion archives, and topics of broader scope/content to attract new talents to the field. All of this depends on the continued operation and maintenance of the web site. In the near future, organizations and companies interested in ensuring the continued operation of the OEF will be asked to provide a modest level of support to OEF.

For further information, please go to the OEF website: www.openecdis.org