

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY STEERING COMMITTEE

#### MEETING #73: 15-16 OCTOBER 2013

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It has been an extremely exciting and busy period as we approach the arrival of *Investigator*, our new state-of-the-art research vessel.

It has also been a very full work program with *Southern Surveyor* as its schedule has been extended to minimise the impact on marine research caused by the transition from *Southern Surveyor* to *Investigator*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the marine community for their patience throughout the transition period. The Marine National Facility (MNF) greatly appreciates the support being provided and the flexibility being demonstrated by people in the marine community.

#### **RV *Investigator***

As we follow the construction of the new vessel it is hard not to be impressed with its size and the breadth of new science capability that will be available to marine researchers.

*Investigator* is in the water, having been skidded from the build yard onto a flat top barge in July. The barge with the vessel secured was then put into drydock, the drydock flooded, and the vessel towed into the outfitting berth for final construction work and fit out.



<http://csirofrvblog.com/2013/12/16/investigator-takes-the-plunge/>

On 5 September there was the official Naming Ceremony which I was privileged to attend, giving me the chance to inspect the vessel for the first time. *Investigator* is quite a sight, and the level of cabin comfort, on-board facilities and plethora of state-of-art science equipment can't fail to impress!

Work is still continuing with fitting out the vessel and testing the components prior to sea trials commencing. The initial sea trials are carried out by the project managers prior to handover to the Marine National Facility. The Marine National Facility will then complete the fit out in Hobart and commence their own sea trials with ASP to fully test the capability of the vessel, establish safe working procedures for all scientific operations and train the marine crew and MNF support staff.

Although a lot of work still needs to be done it is nonetheless exciting as we approach the commencement of our scientific work program using the greatly enhanced capability of *Investigator*. However, it needs to be emphasised that with a project of this scale and complexity, developing what is essentially a one-off bespoke vessel, there are bound to be 'teething' and 'settling' issues that will need to be worked through in the first year of use. All voyagers will need to be patient and understanding during the commissioning year.

Our current expected arrival time in Hobart for *Investigator* is early in the New Year. A 'Welcome to Port' celebration is currently being planned.

For those involved with commissioning activities and voyages the schedules will be kept up to date on the MNF website ([www.marine.csiro.au/nationalfacility/](http://www.marine.csiro.au/nationalfacility/)) and other news can be found on the *Investigator* blog (<http://csirofrvblog.com/>).

#### **New Ship Managers**

After an extensive tender process ASP Ship Management Pty Ltd were appointed in May to provide vessel management services for *Investigator*.

The committee welcomes ASP and looks forward to a productive partnership.

ASP marine crew and support staff are already working in Singapore to familiarise themselves with the vessel and prepare it for the return voyage to Hobart.

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**Sale of *Southern Surveyor***

The *Southern Surveyor* is being sold by tender. This process is under way.



*Southern Surveyor's* last voyage was concluding as we met for our meeting in Hobart in October.

The successful retrieval of three moorings from the Southern Ocean (and in very difficult weather conditions) was a fitting conclusion for the many years of service the *Southern Surveyor* has provided the MNF.

With the sale of *Southern Surveyor* we will also be concluding our relationship with P&O Maritime Services. P&O have managed *Southern Surveyor* since it became part of the National Facility in 2003 and prior to that when it was part of the CSIRO fleet.

The Steering Committee would like to thank P&O Maritime Services and particularly their ship management team, who have worked closely with the MNF, and their marine crews who have worked closely with the voyage participants. The marine crew's dedication to supporting the voyage participants in helping them meet their science objectives, particularly in an old vessel, has been critical to the success of research programs. We are very grateful for their excellent support.

**Piggybacks**

The Steering Committee have formalised the process of obtaining piggyback voyages on *Investigator*. Information will be included on the MNF website shortly.

A piggyback is work carried out on an existing voyage that is not included as part of the main application process for primary voyages or supplementary voyages. This may be a task as simple as a single deployment of a device because the voyage is going past a site of particular interest. In many cases this task would be carried out by the science team already allocated to the voyage or the MNF support staff.

Given the much expanded capability of *Investigator* over *Southern Surveyor*, which covers access to both more types of equipment and many more berths, and the kinds of queries we have already received, we anticipate a significant increase in requests to tap the opportunity for 'piggybacks'. Given this, it is likely that the MNF will need to develop better guidelines to indicate the kinds of tasks that are likely to be possible (and not possible) through piggyback arrangements. Watch our web space!

**Scientific Advisory Committee**

Professor Iain Suthers from the University of New South Wales and Dr Diana Greenslade from the Bureau of Meteorology have retired from the Scientific Advisory Committee. Iain has been on the committee for 11 years and Diana for 4 years. We are very grateful to both members for their contributions and professionalism over the years.

I would also like to welcome our new committee members Professor Phillip Boyd (University of Tasmania), Dr Alain Protat (Australian Bureau of Meteorology) and Dr Peter Doherty (Australian Institute of Marine Science). They bring an enormous depth of experience to the committee.

**New equipment**

Every year, CSIRO provides a capital expenditure allocation for MNF scientific equipment, which is now focussed on *Investigator*.

Items purchased in 2012-13 included replacement rock dredges, portable pressure generator, acoustic modem, an oceanographic sensor suite and water purification systems for laboratories on *Investigator*.

These MNF capital expenditure purchases are separate to equipment being purchased under the Future Research Vessel project and are a contribution from the CSIRO capital expenditure process, for which we are very grateful.

**Medical strategy**

Since *Investigator* can stay at sea for up to 60 days and is ice strengthened (but not an ice breaker) it has a much greater operating range than *Southern Surveyor*.

*Investigator* will be able to conduct research in the far reaches of the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans, and in the Southern Ocean, voyages can extend to the ice edge.

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To support activities in remote regions, the MNF is enhancing its medical capability and is currently establishing support arrangements with the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) Polar Medicine Unit. This is an important development as the AAD have extensive medical experience operating in remote regions.

**Stakeholder workshop**

The intent to operate *Investigator* for 300 voyage days annually opens the possibility for multiyear voyages, and thus forward planning for large programs that interface with the MNF, such as IMOS. To ensure a high level of coordination and to optimise efficiency in planning and engagement between the MNF and this kind of large program, a workshop will be held early next year with representatives of the marine research community. The SC needs to emphasise that all voyage applicants will be assessed and treated identically; this issue focusses on forward planning and efficiency in large programs once voyage time has been secured through the normal process.

**Data Management**

A number of developments are underway that will improve data management on the *Investigator* compared to the *Southern Surveyor*.

These include enhanced event logging and tracking on the vessel, simplified licensing, improved data repository support and continued evolution of the data portal services.

This work builds on existing services provided through the CSIRO Data Centre, Australian Ocean Data Network and other portals in support of national and international research programs of national significance.

**Sample Management**

Work is underway between CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division to develop guidance on the curation of samples.

The MNF is also exploring how sample management can be improved on the vessel with regard to recording data and leveraging underway systems.

**Publications**

A new publications database is being developed. This will facilitate the collection of publication information and its access through the MNF website.

**Voyage reporting**

Voyage reporting is being streamlined with the voyage summary going online and being able to be completed on the vessel.

**Steering Committee**

This will be my last Communique' as I will be retiring from the Steering Committee at the end of next month as will two of my colleagues on the SC, Professor Richard Arculus (Australian National University) and Greg Paten (Woodside Energy).

I would like to thank Richard and Greg for their valuable contribution to the Steering Committee.

Richard's depth of understanding of the university sector and extensive 'at-sea' research experience has been invaluable in helping the committee tackle complex policy questions.

Greg has provided a private industry perspective on shipping operations and has played a particularly important role in helping the committee deal with health, safety and environmental issues.

I also thank the Steering Committee for their support; it has been a pleasure to engage with such a pragmatic, careful and thoughtful group who exercise both a 'can do' attitude and bold vision for the MNF. Last, but by no means least, I thank CSIRO and the MNF office, particularly Toni Moate, Ron Plaschke and their staff for their energy, drive and commitment to the cause of bluewater science voyagers ; this team does wonderful work on behalf of the nation.

**Prof Craig Johnson**

**Chairman**

**Marine National Facility Steering Committee**