What’s the problem?

The UK requires a managed process for marine contaminant data to be made available for European and national assessments. These data must be quality assured so that the data which are collected by 6 organisations is comparable and can be used for temporal trend analysis. In particular, contaminant data must be submitted to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) each year which then fulfils the UK’s obligation to sections of the Oslo and Paris Convention (OSPAR).

What are the aims of the project?

This project will provide management service and support for MERMAN to deliver quality assured data in a timely fashion to relevant parties in order to provide an evidence base to support policy decisions within the UK and Europe. Aims include:

- To coordinate the timely submission of data from CMAs annually by the 1st June and host a helpdesk to ensure any issues are resolved quickly.
- To liaise closely with the submitters and users by organising a MERMAN Focus Group meeting and reporting to CSSEG each quarter. Coordinate with the national marine quality control groups to ensure that quality data are available for assessments.
- Transfer data to ICES by 1st September annually so they can be used in the OSPAR MON assessment.
- Implement the developing needs of CSSEG by overseeing enhancements to the structure and data management within MERMAN.
- Ensure that CSSEG data are available to the widest audience by completing requests from the public and liaising with other national and international initiatives (e.g. MEDIN, EMECO, EMODNET) to ensure the maximum value is made from the data.
- Maintain and update the MERMAN User guide, reference data and input templates to allow data submissions to run smoothly.
- Provide a timetable and advice to all submitters for the forthcoming submission period.
- Host a Business Objects workshop to improve the use of MERMAN data in the CMAs.

Which policy areas will the research inform?

The data are used to review the status of contaminants and benthic invertebrates in the UK’s coastal seas. They allow us to see the impacts that hazardous substances are having on the marine environment and are used to assess compliance against national and European legislation.

MERMAN provides automated data submissions to ICES to satisfy requirements of OSPAR.
Management of the Marine Environment Monitoring and Assessment National Database (MERMAN)

What are the results from the project and how will they be used?

The results of the project are the quality assured data which are used for the assessments. The assessments are made to identify the impact of hazardous substances on the environment and to track compliance with national and European legislation. In particular, the data have been used for the assessments of hazardous substances in ‘Charting Progress 2’ and the OSPAR decadal assessment ‘Quality Status Report’.

The data are also made available to the widest audience by providing data to 3rd parties and through participation in other national and international initiatives. Any provision of data to third parties is provided under the previously agreed data use agreement. Representatives of the proposed BODC team are centrally involved in national (MEDIN) and international (ICES, EMECO, EMODNET, WISEmarine) data initiatives and through attendance at meetings and feedback will ensure that MERMAN data are fully integrated and complementary to these other programmes.

With regard to MEDIN, a submission of data to MERMAN is seen as meeting the obligations of MEDIN partners for the submission of that data to a Data Archive Centre. This will ensure that MERMAN data are easily discovered and reused so that maximum value is made.

The project has been managed by BODC for 4 years and the current phase is focused on broadening out the scope and amount of data that is made available for assessment.

Where can I find further information about this and related research?

Further information on the use of the data is available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/science/monitoring/ukm as-csseg.htm

Further information on the application MERMAN is available at http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/science/monitoring/mer man.htm and http://www.bodc.ac.uk/projects/uk/merman/

Alternatively, please contact Defra’s Marine and Fisheries Science Unit: marinescience@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Defra Science – did you know?

At any one time Defra manages over 2000 research projects covering a wide range of topics. For more information on current research see http://randd.defra.gov.uk and to find out about future research proposals see the Defra Research and Analysis page at: www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/index/htm