

Surface temperatures steering committee call 22/11/10

Present: Peter Thorne (PT), Kate Willett (KW), Peter Stott (PS), Xiaolan Wang (XW), Blair Trewin (BT), Akiyo Yatagai (AY), Richard Chandler (RC), Thomas Peterson (TP)

Apologies: Matilde Rusticucci, Jay Lawrimore

Membership

Current membership:

- Peter Thorne (CICS/NOAA NCDC, USA; chair)
- Jay Lawrimore (NOAA NCDC, USA; chair of databank subgroup)
- Kate Willett (Met Office Hadley Centre, UK; chair benchmarking and assessment subgroup)
- Peter Stott (Met Office Hadley Centre, UK; chair governance group)
- Xiaolan Wang (Environment Canada)
- Matilde Rusticucci (Buenos Aires University, Argentina)
- Blair Trewin (Bureau of Meteorology, Australia)
- Akiyo Yatagai (Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), Japan)
- Richard Chandler (UCL, UK)

Ex-officio: Thomas Peterson (President CCI)

Gap analysis:

Firstly, it was agreed that we don't want this group to become huge and unwieldy, so any additions need to be for a definite reason. We are pending responses from Adrian Simmons and Ghassem Asrar for ex-officio membership. TP noted that if the group gets large we might need an executive group that can make quicker decisions to avoid getting bogged down.

Attention turned to filling gaps. On geographical representation African and India / Russia were noted as potential gaps with Africa being identified as the priority area by BT and XW. BT agreed to discuss with WMO as he is currently seconded to Geneva and therefore best placed to solicit suggestions. KW noted that she had been approached by one of the Indian representatives and that they may be persuaded to take part.

ACTION: KW to chase Indian representation

ACTION: BT to pursue African representation suggestions through WMO channels.

On expertise it was recognized that we had no representation at present from two fields who had been represented at Exeter: metrologists and IT experts. TP noted that given that we wish to do something fundamentally different and to take a more forensic approach interfacing with the metrology community will be key. It was unclear whether we have an IT expert body to interface with and whether there is a requirement for representation. KW suggested contacting Nigel Fox in first instance. Michael de Podesta (KW, BT) was also suggested as was Antonio Possollo (PT).

ACTION: PT to contact named metrologists and see whether any of them are interested. Need one representative only.

On overlap in mission it was recognized that the substantial overlap was with ACRE and to some extent reanalyses. PS suggested addition of Rob Allan or Gil Compo or a nominated representative from ACRE.

ACTION: PT to invite Rob Allan in first instance.

TP raised that we do not have an obviously high profile 'skeptic' voice on the steering committee. PT noted that John Christy had been verbally offered but had wanted to concentrate on the databank effort where his current scientific interests lied and where he is making a valuable contribution. It was agreed that it would be counter-productive to invite active bloggers who may spin and disrupt – a measured approach that does not fit with the now now now blog culture and expectation of the ability to have in confidence discussions is required. It was agreed to keep a watching brief on this and revisit if necessary.

Mode of operation (interim)

Pending results from governance group we need a mode of operation that ensures the overall exercise does not lose significant momentum. PT suggested that starting in January we hold a phone conference with anyone available first Tuesday of the month at 13Z. After some discussion it was agreed that bi-monthly meetings would normally be adequate, on the understanding that occasional extra meetings may be necessary to deal with urgent business.

ACTION: PT to instigate regular calls.

It was agreed that an email alias would be useful. BT pointed out that this reduces chances for errors creeping into threads. PT agreed to investigate whether current platform for site has such capabilities. The need for an area for business to be recorded etc. was also discussed. PS and KW stressed importance of openness and transparency and that as much information as possible should be posted.

ACTION: PT to instigate web area for steering committee and investigate an email alias.

Several suggested that similar aliases for the other teams would be useful. PT agreed to instigate if it is easy and chairs supply the lists.

ACTION: KW and Jay Lawrimore to provide PT with contact lists for their teams.

RC outlined the potential for closed wiki spaces for development of documents / sharing for conference calls etc. This has worked well for some committees on which he sits.

ACTION: RC to share some information on this and PT to consider technical feasibility of taking on this in addition to website / blog.

PT noted that website and blog may be better distributed administrative support. KW and BT agreed to take this on to offer full timezone support.

ACTION: PT to enable admin privileges for KW and BT.

Status of other teams instigated at Exeter

The databank subgroup has already had a call and the minutes are published. Steering committee members were encouraged at progress to date. BT noted that the minutes showed the enormity of the task facing us. RC noted concerns that discussions regarding databank format and practices may occur in isolation from a rational consideration of end-user requirements. For example, units, digit carry and rounding decisions may have substantial implications for statistical end-analyses and careful thought is required. XW raised two issues: first that some NMSs such as meteofrance who could yield data for large regions aren't currently represented and should be; and secondly that we need to be clearer about how we plan to go about collating the data that is already digitally available without restriction.

PS sent round in advance a governance strawman for consideration consisting largely of Exeter meeting notes. He outlined how he intends to solicit input from his group this week or next. He stressed the opinion that final governance should be as light touch as possible. This was broadly agreed upon. BT caveated that it was important for WMO and other relevant bodies to buy-in and that this required us to report in some sense to those bodies. PT suggested that what we need is a terms of reference that gives the charge of the project, reporting lines, clearly delineates issues of autonomy / patronage and has milestones / a sunset clause to assure against drift. It needs to clearly delineate whether the remaining groups answer solely to the steering committee or in addition the sponsors. RC noted that several statistics bodies could be answered to. PT stressed need to report to and engender input from all necessary specialities to extent possible. It was noted that most expertise fields present at Exeter sit in the governance group. PS expressed that he hoped to have a document for discussion on next call. PT stressed that steering committee could help in interim on an ad hoc basis as solicited.

KW outlined how the benchmarking subgroup invitations have been sent and everyone on her initial list has accepted but no initial meeting has taken place. A review paper is planned first. KW outlined how Robert Lund was planning a workshop which may fit into this area in late 2011 / early 2012. KW also has some initial analogs created for a separate project ready to go so software to do this exists in theory. TP outlined progress on the spatial interpolation benchmarking project spun up from Exeter and stressed desire to keep it distinct as it is better defined and less obviously open-ended. PT stressed that we need to build momentum and can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We need to be in a position to release a set of analogs in a reasonable timeframe after the initial databank version is released.

PT stressed the need to build momentum and ensure that demonstrable outputs are occurring on a reasonable timeframe. This applies to all aspects but particularly the databank and benchmarking groups.

Open issues

The Exeter workshop had envisaged a fourth group on access and visualization. PT opened by querying how important this was. General agreement that this was important to resolve. KW noted how it was important to set expectations from the outset to those doing the scientific analysis as to how it would be stored and visualized. It was agreed to solicit input by invitation of potential participants. Potential candidates for membership were recognized as from google, KNMI data explorer, BADC, ACRE, climate.gov

ACTION: ALL to feedback to PT specific suggestions for people to invite. Deadline Dec. 6th.

It was recognized that the project will ultimately be successful if multiple groups take part and that requires support for fundamental science. National (NERC, NOAA OGP) and international (EU) mechanisms were discussed. PS noted how these bodies need to be convinced in terms of full through benefits e.g. climate services, economic benefits, outcomes. TP noted how it may be better to be targeted and support the process bit-by-bit. RC suggested that we needed a two page document that we can use that sells why there should be support for this. Offered to lead but only if others help.

ACTION: RC to lead production of 2-pager for soliciting funding calls. ALL to review and provide input.

Publicity and outreach

PT outlined publications in blogs for Significance and climatecentral (both linked from blog) and updates on BAMS and WMO TD preparations. AY outlined two submissions to relevant Japanese journals one of which will be published shortly.

BT noted that the upcoming WMO end of year statement may provide a limited opportunity to promote the exercise.

PT raised the forthcoming WCRP conference at which a keynote had been posited at Exeter by Ghassem Asrar. As BT is in Geneva he agreed to follow up but if he cannot then Simon Gilbert will be asked to do so.

ACTION: BT to ascertain presence at WCRP conference and report back.

PS noted that WMO congress in May 2011 had been mentioned. PT suggested that the more in depth report being prepared by KW may be adopted there as a TD along with any updates on progress at the time. PT noted that documents generally need to be submitted two months prior.

Any other business

PT outlined three developments:

A planned visit by zooniverse to NCDC to scope crowdsourcing digitization

NIST interest in creating a dataset which NCDC are following up on

Encouraging signs that the NOVIM dataset (Robert Rohde was present at Exeter) will provide an additional new and structurally distinct estimate.

It was agreed that the next meeting by teleconference would occur early in the new year.

ENDS