

**CIRCULAR LETTER 16/1999  
30 March 1999**

**STANDARD EXCHANGE FORMAT FOR HYDROGRAPHIC DATA**

Dear Sir,

During the last decade the IHO has been developing a standard exchange format for hydrographic data which resulted in the present edition of IHO Publication S-57 entitled "IHO Transfer Standard for Digital Hydrographic Data". Actually, the current S-57 Object Catalogue essentially describes chart features and Edition 3.0 of S-57 contains only an ENC Product Specification.

Many Hydrographic Offices already have considerable data holdings in a variety of formats, which might be useful for numerous applications other than navigation, e.g. fishing operations, coastal zone management, etc. The main problem seems to be that there is no standard format in which these data can be provided to customers. A standard exchange format might therefore help to create new markets and thus income for HOs. During a recent IBCCA meeting it was proposed to use S-57 to exchange bathymetric data.

As S-57 has been designed to exchange any kind of hydrographic data and taking into consideration the considerable know-how acquired by the IHO CHRIS Committee in developing S-57, it is proposed to proceed in three phases as follows:

- A. Member States indicate which type of data should be covered under the term "hydrographic data", e.g. bathymetry, tides, gravity, bottom structure, side-scan sonar images, etc.
- B. The IHO Working Group on Standards for Hydrographic Surveys (S-44), which has not yet been disbanded, be tasked to:
  - 1. Develop from Member States' responses a detailed list of all "HYDRO" parameters and features which are likely to be exchanged, with appropriate definitions.
  - 2. Identify in this list those features and parameters which should form a "HYDRO" product.

C. CHRIS be then tasked to:

1. Identify features/parameters already addressed in S-57 Edition 3.0 (following-up of above B.1); eventually develop new attributes and/or attribute values.
2. Create new objects, attributes and attribute values, as necessary, and make any appropriate adaptation to S-57, e.g. for exchanging side-scan sonar images as raster files.
3. Develop a "HYDRO" Product Specification (following-up of above B.2).

It is noted that the above plan of actions would avoid creating new subsidiary bodies while making the best use of S-57, as features already addressed by the IHO Transfer Standard could be re-used to the maximum extent possible.

You are kindly requested to fill in the attached questionnaire and to return it to the Bureau **before 15 May 1999.**

On behalf of the Directing Committee,  
Yours sincerely,

Rear Admiral Neil GUY  
Director



YES

NO

Comments:

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