16th CHRIS MEETING
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 28-31 May 2004

REPORT ON OPEN ECDIS FORUM (OEF) ACTIVITIES

Submitted by:	Dr. Lee Alexander, USA-UNH, Member of the OEF Board of Advisors
Executive summary:	Report on the work undertaken and progress made on the Open ECDIS Forum, since CHRIS/15.
Actions to be taken:	CHRIS to note the report.
Related documents:	CHRIS letter No. 2/2004 (call for reports)
Related Projects:	Not applicable

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 it 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 organization 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

a. Discussion Forums
Now in its seventh 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 increased this past year. For many participants in IHO and IEC standards development working groups, e-mail discussions are being widely used as means to exchange ideas, as well as to prepare for meetings. It is also actively being used by the North American – European Inland ENC Harmonization Group

b. Registration Service

1) ENC Producer Codes
An increasing number of ENC manufacturers have requested ENC Producer Organization Codes. During June 2003 – May 2004, nine (9) more companies and organizations have registered on the OEF. There are now over 50 companies and organizations that are listed.

2) New Object Classes/Attributes

During the past year, 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 part of the S-57 Object Catalogue of the European Inland ECDIS Standard (Edition 1.01, 29 Nov 01) that was produced for the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR). To date, there are additional objects and attributes that have been registered for:
- Additional Military Layers (AMLs)
- Ice Information
- Inland ECDIS
- Weather

There are also some proposed "oceanographic" objects/attributes that may soon be registered as well.

3) Alternative ENC Product Specifications

In support of the ongoing work of the TSMAD S-57 Edition 4 Sub-WG, plans are being made to establish a registration service (i.e., a registry) 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" of ENC Product Specifications dealing with vertical and time dimensions (x,y,z & time), or ENCs produced from high-density bathymetry and remote sensing data.

c. Other events of note

1) 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). However, the management of the OEF is primarily performed by SevenCs. Over the next few months, further enhancements and modernization of the OEF are planned.

2) 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.

3. Funding for OEF Management

Continued operation and management of the OEF will require some level of financial support. While the amount of time/effort required in the past was relatively low, prevailing conditions with internet-based virus and spam threats have led to increased demands and additional resources (equipment, software, and personnel). This situation will likely continue in the foreseeable future. The IHB has been informed about the need to obtain funding to support continued OEF operations. 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 as well.

4. 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

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