

MASTS-MEOPAR exchange

The Marine Environmental Observation, Prediction and Response Network (MEOPAR) was established slightly later than MASTS but fundamentally has the same goals, which are to support interdisciplinary research and cooperation across marine scientists and the government, provide training to marine scientists and mobilize scientific knowledge in the field of marine science. This year's MEOPAR Annual Science Meeting and Training was held in conjunction with the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society's (CMOS) Congress. However, there was just one day during which we had the chance to attend talks from the congress since the timetable was almost fully filled with specific workshops for MEOPAR attendants. Some of the workshops, which I found most useful, are described below.

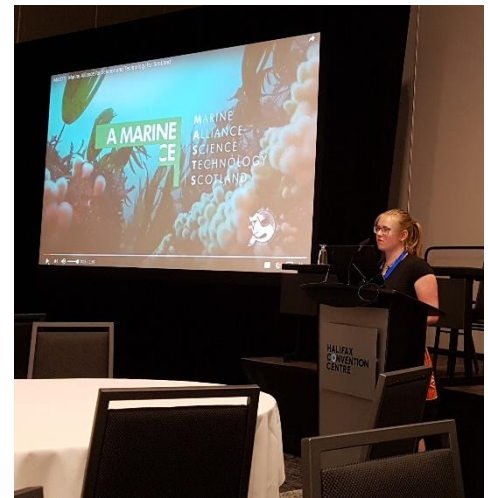
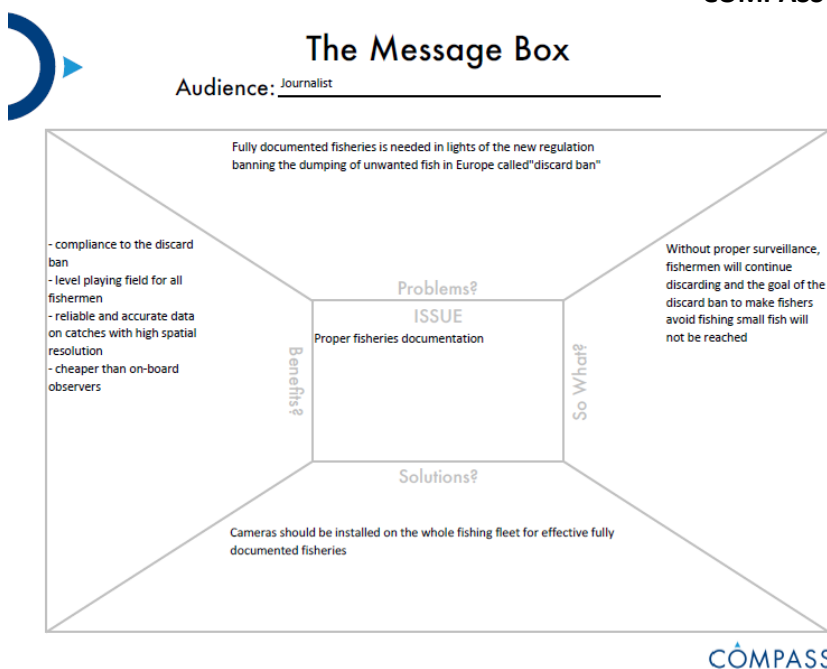


Figure 1: MASTS presentation at the MEOPAR welcoming and introduction session

Mitacs – Practical Tips for Growing your Network

During this workshop, we learned about the importance of networking and how to identify networking opportunities by exploring the network around us. We learned about the attitude to take when going to a networking event and approaching people, the strategies to make sure to make and keep contact with the person and which questions are best to ask. The workshop was very interactive with exercises in groups and in couples. Prior to the workshop, we had to complete a one-hour online course, the content of which was then repeated and discussed during the workshop. We had to make a list of personal question (not necessarily specific to our research) and discuss them in a group to see if we could help each other by the means or our personal network. In my group, we were able to answer some question directly or indirectly by redirecting the person to someone we knew could help them. During the workshop we also had to make a list of network objectives (people we would like to talk to and include in our network) as well as the occasion (conference, course,...) at which we plan to do so. This was a great exercise as I am now committing myself to fulfil these networking objectives and the workshop exercises have given me the means to reach this goal.

COMPASS - Science Communication Workshop



During this workshop we focussed on how to effectively convey our research to other parties. Indeed, it is common that scientific research does not or incorrectly reach out to the public. At Compass, science communication is done by making a message box which has five parts: the central issue, Problems?, So what?, Solutions?, and Benefits? (Figure 2). We had to make our own message box prior to the

Figure 2: Message box on one aspect of my PhD research, and which was developed during the workshop

workshop, which then served as a base for improvement during the workshop. We practiced writing the message box for different audiences and found out that the “So what?” and “Benefits?” sections vary greatly depending on the audience. Indeed, it is important not only to adapt the wording used but also consider the interests of the different parties. For example, would you talk about the importance species diversity *per se* to a politician? Probably not. You might want to reformulate it in terms of the monetary value of species diversity for tourism/fishing/hunting instead. At the end of the workshop, we practiced doing a timed (30 seconds) elevator pitch about ourselves and our research face to face with another student. We gave each other feedback and did the same exercise with at least three different students.

Peaks and Valleys - Mental Wellness in Grad School

During this workshop we had a lecture from two experts in mental health who talked about the factors which can cause mental distress, followed by the testimony of two MEOPAR postdoc students who experienced mental health issues (depression and anxiety) during their academic career. After sharing their stories, we had a group discussion, during which we had the chance to talk about personal experiences as well as our ways to cope with mental health issues. It was very useful and I am very grateful for the two students who had the courage to stand up and talk about it. This made it clear to me that it is a serious issue in academia which could affect me one day but there are ways to avoid it and means to withstand it.

Poster sessions

I had the chance to exhibit a poster (for the first time) on my research both during the congress and the MEOPAR training. It was a great exercise for me to speak about the specific context of my PhD - which is the fisheries situation in Europe - to which Canadians are not familiar. Furthermore, as I am a first year PhD, and that most conference attendants were not fisheries scientists, it helped me to think about how to effectively convey my research to people who are not in my research field.

As a conclusion, I can say that it was a highly valuable experience which I am very thankful for. I felt very much integrated into the MEOPAR group as if I was one of them. I am glad to have had a sight on aspects which we do not have in Scotland such as indigenous knowledge, language barriers, great travelling distances and research on extreme climatic conditions such as freezing rain. Even though I did not meet many people from my research field due to the nature of the congress, I learned transferable skills which I am undoubtedly going to use for the rest of my academic career.

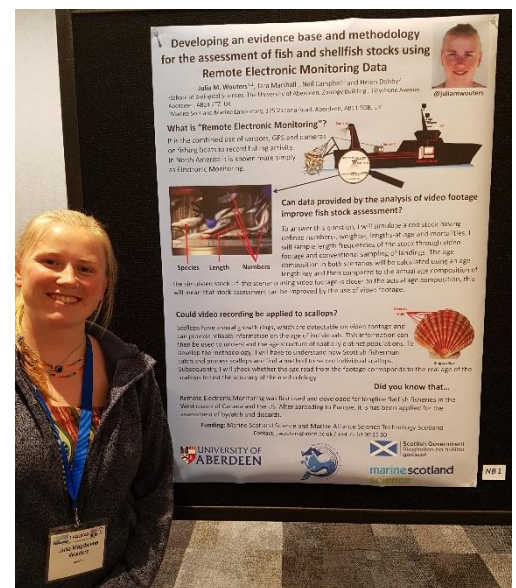


Figure 3: Presenting my poster at the CMOS Congress poster session