

The MARMARIS DECLARATION

Global Congress on Integrated Coastal Management

EMECS 10 – MEDCOAST 2013 Joint Conference

2 November 2013

At the Crossroads

This declaration has been adopted by the more than 300 participants from 40 countries who have attended the second joint EMECS / MEDCOAST conference, 30 October – 3 November 2013. We met on the Mediterranean coast in Marmaris, Turkey, a city that is working hard to retain the beautiful setting provided by nearby conserved natural lands and protected waters while harvesting the economic benefits of environmentally responsible development. We are elected officials, policy makers, environmental managers, scientists, students and educators. We come from the Mediterranean region and from other coastal communities on six continents around the world. We have shared our findings, concerns, ideas, and, ultimately, our optimism under the conference theme, “Lessons Learned to Address New Challenges.”

We have learned that environmental management of enclosed coastal seas is at a policy-making crossroads. The unabated dedication of research scientists and unprecedented technological advances in such areas as remote sensing, modeling, and electronic communications have taught us far more about coastal seas and their resources than we knew when EMECS and MEDCOAST began their respective programs two decades ago. We now know how much coastal waters have been degraded; we have shared our experiences with regard to actions we have undertaken to reduce pollution of their waters; we have learned to make much better predictions about how their living resources are responding at both individual species and ecosystem levels; and we enjoy a deeper understanding of the ecosystem services they provide. We are setting realistic limits to pollutant loads and undertaking improvements to monitoring programs that allow for more accurate assessment of changes and for more effective dissemination of such information to policy makers who would implement science-based management actions. We are optimistic that these advances will proceed and that our successes, limited though some may currently appear, will continue to increase. These are indeed good lessons learned.

But, as we stand at this crossroads in policy-making, we see major challenges ahead and we recognize that we still have much to learn. These new challenges are posed by society itself, no matter what culture, no matter what political circumstances. Our significant and often successful efforts in environmental science and policy have not been met with similar endeavors to define and resolve social issues. Laws and regulations may be successful in reducing pollution and enhancing water quality but they are far less appropriate to address how people behave in their daily lives. We now understand that the looming consequences of global warming are an example of our failure to incorporate society into our policy-making endeavors. While science has taught us about the causes of climate change, efforts to address those causes have met with political, economic, and cultural misunderstanding and resistance. We know that the future of the world’s coastal communities very much depends on the degree of our success in cleaning

coastal waters and restoring coastal resources to sustainable levels. But we are learning that the same sustainable future is threatened by climate change and sea level rise – ultimately, by the very waters the people cherish and upon which their economies so heavily depend.

Our conference declaration, therefore, makes only this single recommendation:

We must incorporate social concerns into our continuing coastal seas' environmental research, policy making, management, and education programs.

Whether we call the underlying concept “sato-umi,” “working landscape,” or “ecosystems-based management,” our efforts toward truly integrated coastal management must recognize humankind as a truly integral component of the coastal ecosystem. We must recognize that how people conduct their daily affairs has not only ecological, but also social, economic, and even cultural consequences. The citizens of coastal communities must come to understand that a sustainable coastal environment also includes a sustainable coastal society.

At this policy-making crossroads where natural science and social science meet, we call for a new form of education, one that goes far beyond the young people in the classroom to reach the citizens themselves – the parents, the workers, the executives, the officials – all members of society as a whole. The people must truly understand that they are part of the coastal environment, just as much as a striped bass, a mussel bed, or a coral reef. They need more opportunities to access that environment, to experience it, and to appreciate it. They need authentic information translated specifically to enhance their understanding. They need expanded opportunities to network, to use what has become everyday communication technology to bring about change in policies that threaten their ability to function as integral members of the coastal seas systems they love.

Our view from the policy-making crossroads reveals a new goal for environmental management of enclosed coastal seas. We once believed that it is important to leave the next generation with a better environment than we have now. That certainly remains true. But we must also leave that generation with the best tools possible to address new challenges that we are only beginning to understand. These tools include outstanding science, science-based policy, and electronic advances in monitoring, education, and communication. We must continue to improve all of them. But at the same time we must forge them into a new policy-making instrument, one that increases the ability of tomorrow’s generation to understand its place in the local and global coastal environment and to sustain that place for succeeding generations.

The Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet wrote, “The most beautiful ocean is the one we have yet to cross.” We have developed the tools and acquired the knowledge to design an instrument for policy-making that will help navigate these new waters. With our help, perhaps the next generation will use that instrument to approach a distant coast that we can barely envision today. That would be a wonderful legacy. So now let us leave these crossroads and embark together on an exciting new course, one that leads toward a truly sustainable future for world’s coastal seas.

Marmaris, Turkey
2 November 2013