

Shallow Survey 2012

More than 200 hydrographic and marine charting experts and other scientists met during the International Shallow Survey Conference held from 20 to 24 February 2012 in Wellington, New Zealand. The conference was hosted by LINZ, NIWA and GNS Science. In addition to the conference's key session on the common dataset, the event comprised five days of workshops, keynote speeches and expert presentations as well as a trade show.

Plenty of networking took place at the Monday evening icebreaker, at the official conference dinner held at Te Wharewaka o Poneke, and also over coffee in Wellington's many excellent cafés.

After the powhiri (Maori welcome), the conference was opened by the Minister for Land Information, the Hon Maurice Williamson, who emphasised the need for agencies to work together to make it easier to find, share and use high-value geospatial information.

Highlights were the four keynote speeches presented each morning. Of note was Larry Mayer (image) from the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping, USA, who looked to the past with a review of his predictions for the future, made in 2001, before taking out his crystal ball to see where technology is heading. He said that "operational mindset change" is required for more efficiency in the collection of data. On Wednesday, Cornel de Ronde (GNS Science) spoke of his exploration of Lake Rotomahana last year and the re-discovery of the world-famous Pink & White Terraces that had disappeared after the volcanic eruption of Mt Tarawera in 1886.

LINZ's National Hydrographer, Adam Greenland's, theme was 'New Zealand Bathymetry: Mapping the farm'. Adam pointed out that New Zealand's seabed within the Exclusive Economic Zone, coupled with the extended continental shelf and the Ross Sea, is 29 times the size of the country itself, thus giving the country unparalleled opportunities for economic growth.

The final keynote was from NIWA's Geoffroy Lamarche who spoke on using remote-sensed data for quantitative shallow water habitat mapping in New Zealand and the need to develop strategies for characterising largely unknown coastal seafloor environments and to assess potential resources.

The Common Dataset, the centrepiece of the conference, was the focus of the first conference session, with speakers commenting on the performance of the systems used to collect data in and around Wellington Harbour.

Duncan Mallace, from NetSurvey, made a comparison of the backscatter data which provoked some discussions amongst the system manufacturers.

Chair of the conference organising committee Adam Greenland said, that the conference was a great success for the New Zealand and international speakers, delegates and trade show exhibitors. He found the breadth and depth of cutting edge science imparted over the week impressive. The 7th International Shallow Survey Conference will be held in the UK in 2015. The location is yet to be determined.

The principal sponsors of this Shallow Survey conference were Discovery Marine Limited (New Zealand), Fugro (The Netherlands), IX Survey (Australia & France) and Kongsberg (Norway).