

KEEP IT SIMPLE, SMARTBAY

Stephen Green calls himself the most uncomplicated man in the room. That, he explains, is why he likes to reduce things to their base form and make them as easy as possible to understand, getting directly to the root issues. The meteorologist and environmental engineer is the Marine and Weather Services Development Lead for AMEC Earth & Environmental's St. John's office. AMEC is a supplier of weather forecasting, oceanography, consultancy, engineering and project management services to energy, power and process industries around the world. His point is well taken. When Green explains things they are easy to grasp, and that simplicity has earned accolades and a place at the table with some big players.

AMEC is one of three private partners in the SmartBay Project along with Earth Information Technologies (EIT) and ICAN. SmartBay is an initiative of the Marine Institute School of Ocean Technology and started out as an environmental monitoring demonstration project in 2005. Placentia Bay, with its convergence of commercial traffic, fisheries and tourism that contribute towards making it the second busiest bay in Canada (based on the value of goods shipped), was chosen as the test site. SmartBay now hosts a network of tools for ocean observation, providing good information in a timely and uncomplicated manner. In fact, many users will no longer venture out onto the bay without a laptop, or even a blackberry, hooked up to the SmartBay website to give them all the information they need for a safe passage through the waters.

Green believes SmartBay's success comes down to two simple factors: the partners in the venture

enjoy working together and they all have a genuine desire to see the project grow and succeed.

It sounds simple, but it was enough to garner the attention of SECOORA (Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association) at the recent SEUS//CP meeting. Representatives from the much larger organization asked SmartBay for help in getting their own messages out to the public.

"Given the geographic distance between the SmartBay efforts and SECOORA/GCOOS (Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System) regions, one might be inclined to question any meaningful collaboration. However, the recent SEUS//CP Conference provided the perfect setting for us to discuss mutual observing system needs and success stories," added Sam Walker, Information Management Coordinator with the SECOORA Ocean Data Partnership.

SmartBay, SECOORA and GCOOS will be starting discussions to form a partnership to explore sustainable operating models and to learn from each other's collective experiences. They're planning on signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the next SEUS//CP meeting.

"During the SEUS-CP session on ocean observation it became clear that AMEC, GCOOS, and SECOORA were just getting their collective arms around existing and planned ocean observing platforms and data within their respective regions and that they were facing very similar challenges," said Joe Swaykos, Director at the Stennis Center of Higher Learning.

The main points of the MOU were apparently jotted down on the back of an invitation to the

next SEUS//CP, in Mississippi, at the SEUS//CP meeting in St. John's. The concept of utilising a convenient piece of paper is certainly in keeping with what the team is trying to achieve - it's simple and it works.

www.smartbay.ca



Hands-on experience. Stephen Green, Marine and Weather Services Development Lead with AMEC Earth & Environmental helps deploy a buoy in Placentia Bay as part of the SmartBay program.

JIGS AND SQUARE DANCES



Jerry Byrne, President, DFB Group, addresses the delegates at the 2009 SEUS//CP conference in St. John's July 26-28.

Builders of everything from Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) deployment systems to rigging products for marine, industrial and oilfield clients, the DFB Group of St. John's, NL, has rapidly grown over the last five years, increasing its sales annually. While the company is 100 per cent Newfoundland and Labrador owned and operated, 70 per cent of its business is done outside the province.

Most of its exported products are destined for the Gulf of Mexico area - the same region that a lot of the South Eastern United States members call home. With such close ties, the opportunity to co-host the 2nd annual SEUS//CP conference piqued the interest of DFB Group President Jerry Byrne. He approached the role with the enthusiasm and flair that he brings to the office on a daily basis. In Byrne's role as business co-chair he identified and introduced the 30 or so speakers and acted as an unofficial ambassador to the visiting governors and premiers. He has nothing but praise for the conference.

"Of all the events in which I've been involved, this had to be the most rewarding," says Byrne. "Even if it is a cliché, we blew them away. What they saw with regards to research and development, business capacity and education made for a quantum leap in how they see the province."

But it wasn't just the business side of the conference that impressed visitors.

Byrne uses the term 'jigs and square dances' to describe how the two cultures of the Canadian east and the American south came together. "Southern hospitality and eastern hospitality match up pillar for pillar. There are so many parallels that created instantaneous bonding. I've never seen anything like it before. I've made lifelong friendships and built great relationships."

Building on the opportunities that arose as a result of the networking possibilities presented by the SEUS//CP conference, Byrne and vice president of business development Sean Power have since travelled to the region to meet with companies in Mississippi. DFB Group is working on a project for one US company for which they will also be building winches and cages.

The next SEUS//CP conference is scheduled for April 2010 in Biloxi, Mississippi, and Byrne will be serving once again as business co-chair. He admits he isn't sure what to expect.

"We set the standard," he affirms, obviously believing that topping the effort put into the conference by Newfoundland and Labrador is going to be a tall order.

www.dfbarnes.ca