

MASTS Small Grants Award Scheme – Award number SG37

Developing deep-sea ecosystem principles to enhance understanding for ecological values beyond the academic community

Amount awarded by MASTS: £500

The MASTS funding was assigned to allow the participation at a conference including a poster contribution and organising an expert workshop at the HERMIONE (Hotspot Ecosystem Research and Man's Impact On European Seas) meeting in Faro, Portugal from 10-14 September 2012. The emphasis was clearly on the opportunity to hold a workshop with submarine canyon experts from all over Europe. Its purpose was the development of a list of ecosystem principles¹ for submarine canyons, with the focus on the Nazare Canyon on the Portuguese margin. In total 14 HERMIONE researchers participated in the workshop and gave their feedback and input on a list of principles that was based on the current literature and presenting some of the paradigms within this field of research. The workshop was exploring how researchers saw the plausibility of the principles they were presented with and the ways in which principles could be improved in the future. A workshop follow-up process was outlined and benefits of participation highlighted to the researchers. The first workshop follow-up survey closed at the end of April 2013 and respondents were asked to rank deep-sea ecosystem services (ES) according to how important they thought they were, and also further refine the list of submarine canyon principles. We used a Best-Worst Scaling² approach that allowed a more rigorous ranking of in total 12 deep-sea ES which were relevant for the Nazare Canyon. This approach can be understood as a non-monetary valuation of ES and will shed further light into how researchers think about the value of deep-sea ES. More importantly, to date a rigorous list of ecosystem principles has been established, we learned about researchers priorities for different ES within submarine canyons, and the second phase of the workshop follow-up phase, which is closing at the end of June 2013, will provide further insight into the current evidence base of the list of principles. The outcome of the project is thought to feed into improving trans-disciplinary communication among the very wide spread submarine canyon research community, but also set a first example for simplifying ecological knowledge for further informing marine planning and eventually marine stakeholders.

The costs for participating in the conference and holding the workshop were higher than expected, as there was a considerable conference fee, which had not been taken into account at the time of applying for the MASTS grant. The conference organisers provided us with the workshop venue, catering and workshop resources and the costs for accommodation, travel, conference fee and subsistence were jointly paid for by the University of Aberdeen and MASTS. The whole £500 awarded by MASTS had to be used and the remainder of 419.05 paid by the university budget.

Table 1: Total costs of workshop and conference contribution.

Expenditure type	Value (GBP)
Conference fee	191.89
Accommodation	308.23
Public transport	376.70
Subsistence	42.23
Total	919.05

¹ Ecosystem Principles Approach by Townsend et al. (2011)

² BWS is used mainly in Health Economics to value people's preferences for certain goods or services.