The CLIVAR - Pacific Workshop

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Dr. John Gould directs the WCRP's WOCE and CLIVAR projects offices. John is a physicist and physical oceanographer who started his working life with John Swallow, the inventor of the neutrally buoyant float that provides the underpinning technology for Argo. His research focussed almost entirely on the North Atlantic, its circulation and influence on climate. He was recently co-editor of a book "Ocean Circulation and Climate - Observing and Modelling the Global Ocean", published by Academic Press, that documents the present state of physical oceanography and the advances made in the 1990s during WOCE.

In February 2001, 50 climate scientists met at the International Pacific Research Center in Honolulu to review our knowledge of the climate of the Pacific sector and to start to plan a strategy for sustained atmospheric and ocean observations, process studies and numerical modelling that will work towards achieving CLIVAR's objectives.

The World Climate Research Programme's project on Climate Variability and Predictability (CLIVAR) seeks to better understand the variability of the physical climate system on a range of timescales as short as seasonal/interannual and extending to issues of anthropogenic climate change. Through that understanding, and the use of observations and models, will come assessments of the extent to which various climate phenomena are predictable, and hence, where appropriate, better climate predictions. Thus in the Pacific, CLIVAR builds on the earlier Tropical Ocean Global Atmosphere project that has led to an ENSO prediction capability. These objectives are described in the CLIVAR Implementation Plan published in 1998 that can be downloaded from http://www.clivar org. The plan focuses on a framework of global observations and modelling activities embedded within which are Principal Research Areas (PRAs) highlighting particular climate phenomena and regions such as ENSO, Monsoons and the Southern Ocean.

However, implementation often needs a regional focus that encompasses all timescales and phenomena. It was for this purpose that the CLIVAR Pacific regional workshop was held. Plenary talks were interspersed with working group sessions that started to identify important modelling and observational activities, to document activities already under way and those critical gaps in our knowledge for which new resources need to be sought.

The conclusions from the meeting are too lengthy to be adequately documented here. A report has been prepared by Dr. Robert Weller who was instrumental in driving forward the planning for the workshop. One recommendation from the meeting was that CLIVAR should have an implementation panel for the Pacific sector. This recommendation was endorsed by the CLIVAR Scientific Steering Group at its annual meeting in May 2001, and proposed terms of reference and membership of the panel are now being refined. The panel should be in place by July 2001.

CLIVAR is concerned with the coupled ocean-atmosphere physical climate system. That system influences, and is influenced by, variability in the terrestrial and marine biosphere. In this latter area collaboration among CLIVAR and the IGBP core projects (GLOBEC, JGOFS and PAGES) will clearly be needed - both on scientific and on logistical/resources issues (for instance in making best use of ship time and in developing appropriate data management systems). For the Pacific, PICES will be an important means of fostering this collaboration.

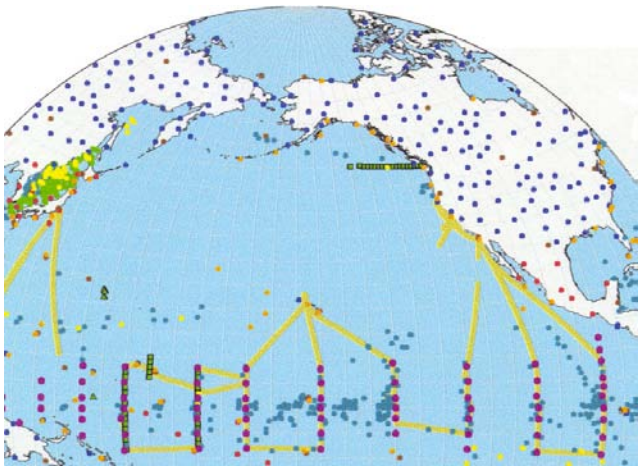

Fig. 1 CLIVAR-relevant sampling in the North Pacific sector since 1999.