

[News From The Field >](#)

NWS Alaska Region participates in WMO PPP-SERA meeting to address polar challenges

posted May 5, 2016, 7:35 AM by NWS Insider Staff - NOAA Service Account [updated May 5, 2016, 7:46 AM]



NWS Alaska Region Climate Science and Services Manager **Rick Thoman** participated in the WMO [Polar Prediction Project \(PPP\)](#) Social & Economic Research & Applications (SERA) subcommittee's meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand. The purpose of the meeting was to help translate science success into societal value. Rick is new to the team and provides a bridge between the physical science, environmental modeling world, and the service delivery sector. He is working to tighten the linkage between social and economic applications, the operational, physical science based community, and the polar information provider sphere.

During the week of April 18 – 22, a group of eight Arctic and Antarctic researchers, mostly social scientists, held this meeting to develop a strategy for improving the understanding of environmental information for users need. The meeting was hosted by the Gateway Antarctica at the University of Canterbury and chaired by Brian Mills, Environment and Climate Change

Canada and Jackie Dawson, University of Ottawa. PPP Chair Thomas Jung participated by telecon.

The New Zealand hosts provided visits to Christchurch area facilities to increase the team's understanding of Antarctic issues, which was particularly helpful since only two of the subcommittee members' current research focuses on the Antarctic. On several days, people with diverse activities in Antarctica joined the subcommittee for lunch, allowing the social scientists to conduct informal interviews about weather and climate information access, needs, and desires. Several themes emerged, most notably the severe constraints on web-based communications in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.

PPP-SERA recognized substantial differences and important commonalities between the Arctic and Antarctic user and provider communities. The subcommittee took a broad view of who was a user and who was a provider of weather/climate/ice information in polar regions. Most "actors" were both, and subcommittee members plan to use PPP and [Year of Polar Prediction \(YOPP\)](#) meetings as research venues. PPP-SERA is currently leveraging subcommittee members' ongoing work, that largely centers upon mobility as a demonstration of the value of social science to the polar regions' weather/climate/ice enterprise. The unique challenges of telecommunications in polar regions is of particular interest since it greatly impacts users' abilities to utilize environmental forecasts. Understanding the intersection of large organizations vs. feedback from a small group of users was identified as an area of potentially fruitful research.

Following a review of the role of SERA in PPP and updating the SERA implementation plan, the meeting focused on developing an outline and beginning work on a scoping document entitled, "suggested direction for social science research." The major project for the subcommittee for 2017 annual meeting is to complete the scoping document. In addition to annual meetings, the subcommittee will request budgetary support to for a Weather and Society conference to be held during the core phase of the Year of Polar Prediction.

PPP-SERA work is directly applicable to the NWS IDSS focus. SERA work will increase the understanding of the special needs and challenges NWS partners in Alaska and the Arctic face and could help suggest paths for maximizing IDSS efforts.