

SedNet Corner

Formation of a SETAC Europe/SedNet-Advisory Group on Sediments at the SETAC Europe Annual Meeting 2005 in Lille

Join together for sediments in research and application

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The European Water Framework Directive (EWFD) pursues the aim to achieve a good ecological and chemical status in the surface waters of European river basins by the year 2015. The necessary reduction of anthropogenic contamination of waters from diffuse and point sources is planned to be achieved with a combined approach by setting emission thresholds and immission oriented water-quality targets (Förstner 2002).

Sediments are an important factor concerning water quality in aquatic ecosystems. They can act as sinks for water soluble pollutants but could also become a contamination source, under certain circumstances such as dredging or flood events (Förstner & Müller 1974, Ahlf et al. 2002).

Especially through the European SedNet network and the SETAC North America (Wenning & Ingersoll 2002) sediments evolved as an important topic for science and public within the last years. Meanwhile, sediments are not only understood to be an often problematic water compartment; instead, a holistic point of view has been established, which puts sediments in the Global Change context (Salomons 2005) and also treats them like an important resource (SedNet 2004). Sediments are a habitat for numerous organisms and a nutrient source for both organisms and agriculture. As a consequence, sustainable management strategies for sediments will increasingly gain significance.

While water quality has notably improved over the past three decades through technical water-protection efforts, the – sometimes highly – contaminated sediments in many European river basins remain a heritage from the past era of uncontrolled industrial production and will continue to influence the quality of waters significantly for many years to come (SedNet 2004). Sediment-borne contaminants can be remobilized through bioturbation (Power & Chapman 1992), flood events (Hollert et al. 2000, 2003) or dredging and relocation of sediments (Köthe 2003). Thus, the monitoring and assessment of sediment quality assumes to be of high significance for national laws in general and particularly for implementation of the European Water Framework Directive (SedNet 2004).

This year's annual meeting of the SETAC Europe in Lille was the biggest European SETAC meeting so far. Although more than 80 presentations in this meeting mentioned 'sediment' in their titles and numerous others more or less dealt with this topic, no session was specifically dedicated to it. In contrast, sediment topics are represented regularly at e.g. North American SETAC meetings, often even in several parallel sessions. This documents the relevance as well as possible synergic potentials of a link between sediment-related interests in universities, industries and stakeholders in Europe.

Feeling the necessity to strengthen sediment issues in the perspective of European environmental management, SedNet and SETAC

Europe joined forces. On May 24th, a European Advisory Group on Sediments was formed at the SETAC Europe annual meeting 2005 in Lille, France. The group intends to concentrate, discuss and communicate sediment related issues, challenges and concepts. As a first task, a list containing suggestions of sediment-related topics has been prepared for the next SETAC Europe annual meeting 2006 in The Hague.

Out of a number of interested people that met in Lille, 11 volunteered to form a steering group with the objective to assist in facilitating exchange between research (SETAC) and application (SedNet) with regard to sediment related issues. For further information, please contact Dr Susanne Heise: s.heise@tu-harburg.de.

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