

## **InterRidge Industry Liaison Committee**

Final report on first meeting held 16 October 2012 at Tongji University, Shanghai, China

### Background

At the 2012 InterRidge Steering Committee meeting, in St. Petersburg, Russia, national representatives recommended the formation of an Industry Liaison Committee, to work with the ocean mining industry. This decision came in response to the recent granting of exploration licenses to several countries by the International Seabed Authority, for the evaluation of seafloor massive sulphide deposits (SMS) on mid-ocean ridges. The IR Steering Committee concluded that efficient and environmentally responsible exploitation of SMS deposits committee would require that industry have direct access to scientific expertise and up to date scientific information. The upcoming Underwater Mining Institute meeting in Shanghai, China was identified as good opportunity for a first meeting of the Industry Liaison Committee, at a venue where industry could easily participate.

Note – This final report was developed from meeting notes taken by Kim Juniper and from comments on an initial draft report provided by Samantha Smith and Jan Willem van Bloois.

### Meeting Participants

Kim Juniper (Canada, Chair)  
Georgy Cherkashov (Russia, President International Marine Minerals Society)  
Sven Petersen (Germany)  
Huaiyang Zhou, substituting for Jiabiao Li (China)  
Samantha Smith (Nautilus Minerals)  
Fredrik Søreide (Nordic Ocean Resources)  
Jan Willem van Bloois (IHC Merwede)

### Participating via Skype connection

Lyle Glowka (Convention on Biodiversity Secretariat)  
Catherine Mevel (France)

### Regrets

Cornel de Ronde (New Zealand)  
Chuck Fisher (USA)  
Andrew Thaler (USA)  
Joe Resing (USA)

## Opening Discussions

After introductions, participants discussed the mandate and scope of work for the Committee that included first-time industry representation. InterRidge Chair Bramley Morton had suggested that researchers and industry work together on the Committee to develop “informed, sensible and consensual guidelines for seafloor massive sulphide [SMS] exploration and exploitation”. Committee members were reminded that the International Marine Minerals Society (IMMS) had already developed a general set of best practices deadlines for ocean mining, and that these guidelines had been endorsed by the International Seabed Authority (ISA). Sam Smith pointed out that the ISA and other agencies such as the European Union have other relevant guidelines that are published or in the making, all of which should be consulted for review and to avoid duplication of effort. Sam Smith also suggested that the Committee work closely with the ISA and consult with relevant NGO’s in this review process.

In his email message to the Committee, Bram Morton had requested that committee members familiarize themselves with the IMMS guidelines, and proposed that these be used to build more specific guidelines related to the exploitation of SMS deposits. SMS deposits fall within the hydrothermal processes research focus of InterRidge, in mid-ocean ridge and island arc and back-arc settings. Other types of deep-sea mineral deposits (eg. manganese nodules and crusts) are outside of the scope of current InterRidge research.

Kim Juniper explained that InterRidge expects the Liaison Committee to produce a report and set of guidelines within an 18-month timetable. These will be published by InterRidge and presented to the ISA to be considered alongside the general guidance adopted from the IMMS. Where appropriate, the InterRidge Guidelines could be presented to NGOs and relevant policy makers and regulators.

## Further Discussions

Committee members agreed that the IMMS guidelines were very general and that a more focused set of guidelines could be a useful supplement to ISA regulations and could fill gaps where there are no appropriate national regulations. Sam Smith pointed out the risk of becoming too specific in the development of guidelines for an industry that does not yet exist. Lyle Glowka mentioned that there are small island nations with SMS deposits within their jurisdictions that do not have the capacity to develop their own regulator regime for SMS mining. In her additions to the meeting notes, Sam Smith pointed out that the EU is currently funding and managing a project to help Pacific Island nations set up appropriate legislation [presumably related to ocean mining].

Several committee members suggested broadening the scope of work for the committee to enable InterRidge researchers to provide expert assistance to

industry. Georgy Cherkasov pointed out that contractors who've signed exploration contracts with the ISA are ready to begin 15 years of work evaluating SMS deposits in their license areas, and need advice on prospecting methods that the experienced research community can provide. This contribution of expertise could also help agencies such as the ISA to identify sensitive areas. This discussion left the committee with two potential directions for future work: the previously suggested development of SMS-specific best practices guidelines; and the emerging idea of contributing expertise to prospecting and environmental protection in relation to SMS deposits.

### Recommendations

Committee members identified several initiatives that would serve to transfer knowledge from the InterRidge research community to industry and regulatory agencies in order to ensure the efficient and environmentally responsible exploration and exploitation of SMS deposits. Proposed initiatives include:

- Undertaking a gap analysis between the provisions of the existing IMMS best practices guidelines and the requirements for guidelines specific to SMS deposits. This analysis would first serve to objectively determine the need, or not, for the development of SMS-specific best practices guidelines by the committee. It would be important to engage the ISA in this gap analysis.
- Requesting that InterRidge set up an online platform to locate expertise and a forum for answering questions. This platform should provide links to the existing IR cruise and expertise databases.
- Collaborating with the IR Vent Ecology Working Group. The Vent Ecology WG would be requested to review existing hydrothermal vent sites, identify sensitive sites and establish priorities for protection from mining activities. Lyle Glowka suggested that the Vent Ecology WG could use the Convention on Biodiversity process for the identification of Ecologically and Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSA's). This would provide a more objective means of weighing ecological value against commercial value.
- Connecting with the ISA regarding exploration work in license areas, in particular to determine if contract reports from license areas could be made public. This would aid in the identification of sensitive areas.
- Contacting the ISA about standardizing data collection in license areas. The ISA is already working on standardization and InterRidge could contribute to this process in order to optimize the usefulness of archived data to researchers.

### Action Items for Committee Members

Juniper - Contact InterRidge office to discuss the establishment of an online forum and simplified catalog of expertise and cruise listing for industry. Request that InterRidge office circulate ISA best practices guidelines to all committee members and post document or link on IR web site.

Cherkasov/Juniper - Work with the ISA to determine the requirement, or not, for an SMS-focused set of best practices guidelines. This would necessitate that the ISA consider all relevant existing or developing guidelines. If a need for further guidelines is found, the ISA would be requested identify major points for SMS-specific guidelines, to which the IR Industry Liaison Committee could contribute.

Smith – Review any specific request for SMS guidelines from the ISA and undertake a gap analysis between these and the current IMMS code of practice.

All Members – Review IMMS guidelines and any draft gap analysis that may emerge from discussions with the ISA and follow up by Sam Smith.

Juniper - Contact Chair of IR Vent Biology WG to request their input in relation to the prioritization of sensitive areas among the SMS sites listed in the IR database.

### Next Meetings

Participants agreed to meet at the next UMI meeting in Rio de Janeiro in October 2013, and to meet or hold a teleconference in May 2013 to assess progress. The May 2013 meeting would consider the scope of work of the Committee, specifically whether to continue working on developing SMS-specific guidelines or to focus efforts on developing a mechanism for contributing InterRidge expertise to prospecting and environmental protection in relation to SMS deposits.