

Ethical recommendations for ocean observation

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Abstract

In the face of the Anthropocene's growing world, human population, sustainable (biological, social and economic) management of marine resources depends on knowledge of ocean systems. The United Nations Decade of Ocean Science (2021- 2030) recognizes this and is working to develop a common framework for ocean science. The study of the many interrelationships in the oceans requires the integration of multidisciplinary approaches and different investigative skills, one of which is observation. The ocean observing community, therefore, has a responsibility to collaborate internationally to provide the scientific knowledge needed for wise global strategic decisions.

Ocean observation, especially on an integrated global scale, is leading to potential ethical issues. The ocean observing community has started discussing its own ethics, and a tentative definition of ocean observation ethics has been proposed recently (Barbier et al. 2018). It is seen as a reasoned reflection and set of actions based on core-values and technological advances to develop oceanographic knowledge that takes into account external dimensions and leads to Best Practices. These dimensions are environmental, societal, legal, political, social, economic, historical, philosophical, and cultural. Ethical frameworks help design recommendations for commendable and responsible behavior necessary for ocean science to support sustainability, the stability of our oceans and the resilience of the Earth system.

A major next step for the Ocean Observing Community would be the drafting of a statement on "ocean observation ethics".