

South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre has kicked off!

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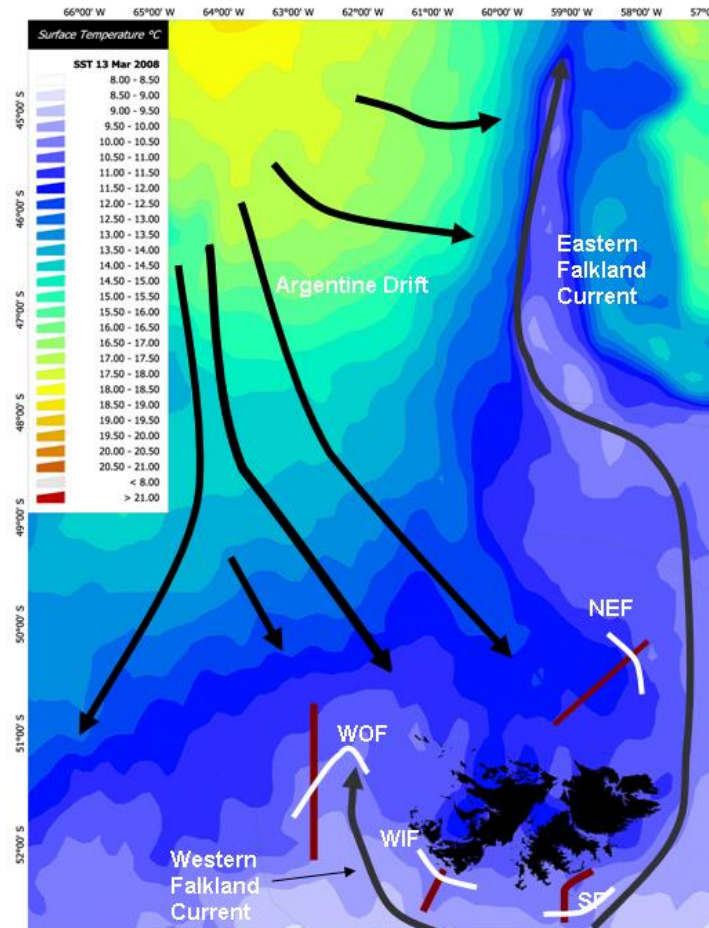
Hello everyone! I am iLaria and this blog is the first of a series to keep you updated on the development of the South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre. The first news, which I am delighted to provide you, is that the new SAERI programme has officially started! Although I am currently working in Aberdeen (Scotland) the first steps have been made and, to be honest, the initial weeks of the project are going to be full of interesting events. Nevertheless, before unveiling them, I would like to introduce briefly what the South Atlantic Information Management System, GIS Centre wants to achieve, and what my role is within SAERI.

As project manager and GIS specialist I will be responsible for the realisation of the South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre whose aim is to make environmental data storage and management more efficient across the five South Atlantic UK OTs (Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension, and St Helena).

The main idea is to realise a centre able to underpin environmental research in the South Atlantic by assembling baseline information, managing knowledge and establishing linkages amongst researchers to make sure that nobody is "reinventing the wheel" and that the outstanding scientific work already carried out in the South Atlantic region is enhanced further.

The objective is to establish an information management system based on open source and to include shared GIS capabilities, accessible to all the territories, partners and external data users. In fact, to be effective and useful the GIS data centre should become the reference point for scientists, NGOs, developers and Governmental departments looking for data (raw and processed) about the South Atlantic region. GIS facilities and a structured and solid database management is the type of service that the centre would like to provide. Hence, it is important to work in synergy and identify priorities and what the data users and partners in the project need.

Surface sea temperature and fronts in the South Atlantic.



In addition, the centre will focus its attention in training OT personnel across the region to ensure that GIS and data management skills are built up in the region and dependence on outside assistance is reduced.

To be successful, this ambitious project requires the co-operation not only with the other 4 South Atlantic Overseas Territories but also with eternal partners such as BAS (British Antarctic Survey), private consultants and universities.

From the 30th of September until the mid of October my agenda is filled with meetings which will take me to tour the UK. I will start in Aberystwyth meeting Katie Medcalfe who is Environment Director at Environment Systems. I hope to gain some good ideas for our South Atlantic Information Management System and GIS Centre by taking Katie's practical experience



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and knowledge in using and applying GIS and open sources for handling and managing data as a model.

Next destination after Wales is Southern England, precisely Cambridge and London, where I will meet up with researchers at BAS and private consultant Alan Mills, who has already provided useful advice for setting up a GIS in Ascension Islands. The last étape of the UK tour is Canterbury, where at DICE I will meet Zoe Davies and Bob Smith. Their work is to realise a land cover map for the Falkland Islands with the funding of the Darwin Plus funding. SAERI will support Zoe by providing expertise in GIS spatial data analyses.

I will then move to Gibraltar, where with Paul Brickle, director of SAERI, I will represent the Falkland Islands and we will join the GIS specialists from the other UK OTs. The event is a good opportunity for me to share knowledge about GIS and data management; to learn from others' working experience; to gather useful ideas to develop the project and understand possible issues.

As you can evince, there are many people and countries to seen before my arrival to the Falklands. The enthusiasm and desire to provide a useful and efficient service for the South Atlantic community, from the researchers to the conservationists and the governmental bodies, is extremely high. Now that the project has kicked off, for SAERI and me it is time to work passionately to achieve the goal.