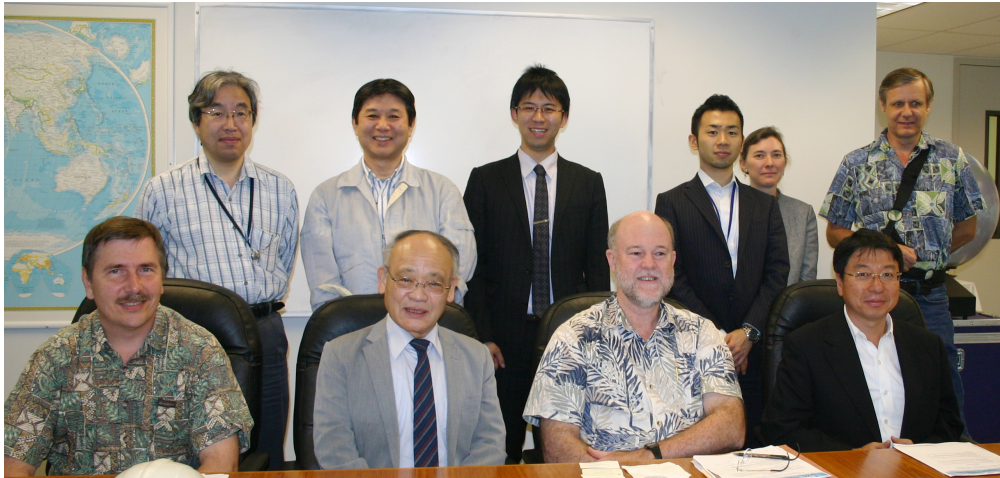


Meeting between “The Task Force for Nowcast and Forecast of the 3.11 Tsunami Debris Location” and IPRC’s Tsunami Project Team

Toshiyuki Awaji (Executive Vice President for Education, Kyoto University), Masafumi Kamachi (Director, Oceanographic Research Department of the Japan Meteorological Research Institute) and Hajime Nishimura (Executive Assistant to the Director-General of the Data Research Center for Marine Earth Sciences at the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology) came to the IPRC for a day-long meeting to exchange information with Senior Researcher Nikolai Maximenko and Scientific Programmer Jan Hafner about efforts to determine where the debris that was washed into the ocean by the March 11, 2011, tsunami might be. They came as representatives of “The Task Force for Nowcast and Forecast of the 3.11 Tsunami Debris Location.”



From left, front: Nikolai Maximenko, Toshiyuki Awaji, Brian Taylor, Kazuo Tsukada; back: Hajime Nishimura, Masafumi Kamachi, Yuya Yukishima, Fujihiko Hayashi, Ruth Yender, and Jan Hafner.

The Task Force is organized by the Office of Marine Environment, Environmental Management Bureau of the Japan Ministry of the Environment, which coordinates this tsunami-debris work at Kyoto University, the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, the Meteorological Research Institute of the Japan Meteorological Agency, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

Accompanying the Japanese scientific team were Kazuo Tsukada, Consul of the Consulate-General of Japan in Hawaii, Yuya Yukishima of the Ministry of the Environment, and Fujihiko Hayashi of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Representing NOAA was Ruth Yender, coordinator of the efforts by the NOAA Marine Debris Program to respond to the tsunami debris.

The meeting opened with a warm welcome to the task force by University of Hawaii Manoa Vice Chancellor Gary Ostrander and Dean of the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (SOEST) Brian Taylor.

Professor Awaji, the leader of the visiting team, then described the various ocean, atmospheric, and climate models the Japanese agencies are using in their efforts to locate the debris and to forecast where the debris is headed.

Nikolai Maximenko, Jan Hafner, and Henrieta Dulaiova discussed tsunami-related research at the University of Hawaii. Hafner presented the development of the diagnostic model used by the IPRC to describe distribution and motion of floating tsunami debris. Maximenko talked about the tsunami debris work at IPRC, including the most recent survey expedition from Honolulu to beyond Midway.

Maximenko brought evidence how, had the tsunami happened on March 11 in another year rather than in 2011, the debris path may have been quite different, since the path depends greatly on the basin-wide ocean-atmospheric conditions at the time, such as the phases of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation, and the North Pacific Gyre Oscillation.

The scientists look forward to working together on finding and tracking the tsunami debris. The tsunami tragedy may now bring world-wide attention to the much longer-lasting, huge problem of marine debris in the global ocean and help to launch a new field of study: Marine Debris.