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EBM Toolbox: Is There an App for EBM?

Editor's note: The goal of The EBM Toolbox is to promote awareness of tools for facilitating EBM processes. It is brought to you by the EBM Tools Network, a voluntary alliance of tool users, developers, and training providers.

By Sarah Carr

Over the past decade, there has been an explosion in the number and functionality of geospatial tools addressing coastal and marine management issues. Although these tools, both singly and in combination, can address many of the problems encountered by managers, the complexity of the tools often makes it difficult for managers to use them. At the same time, there is currently a shift in personal computing from relatively complex, multi-functional desktop tools toward "apps" (loosely defined here as easy-to-use, limited-functionality tools).

Currently, most geospatial apps are limited to data exploration and visualization (e.g., Earth Observer at www.earth-observer.org and Google Earth at earth.google.com) but the ability to do simple analysis is on the horizon. Resource managers are hungry for tools that will help them base their decisions on science and make their work easier. Is it possible that geospatial apps can increase the use of geospatial analysis in EBM? If so, what functions could they do well/adequately? Could EBM ever be fully accomplished through the use of apps rather than more complex tools?

The EBM Tools Network would like to hear from you, coastal and marine resource managers and tool developers alike, on this issue:

- What functions could you use apps for?
- Are you more likely to use a combination of apps than a single, multi-function tool?
- What advantages and limitations do you see in using apps?
- Are there ways to overcome the limitations?

Please send your thoughts on this to ebmtools@natureserve.org. Responses will be summarized in a future EBM Toolbox column.

(Sarah Carr is coordinator for the EBM Tools Network. Learn more about EBM tools and sign up for Network updates at www.ebmtools.org.)

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