At the end of three days of dialogue, in order to bring focus to the discussions, the participants were asked to break into small discussion groups and to consider: whether the intention was to build a platform for continuing engagement; or, whether this was an event in and of itself. The answer to this question would have significant implications for outcomes envisioned from the session.

The response was clear: continuing the Changing Currents engagement was the goal, and finding ways in which to do so most effectively was a desired outcome. The group explored the different forms that this might take. The conclusion that emerged was to build a network - Changing Currents Network (CCN) - which would continue to connect the participants and others with a focus on moving the global oceans agendas forward. The challenge is to build the network in a way that will not weigh it down with a formal, top down cumbersome structure. However, it was acknowledged that without structure and leadership of some form, the network would not be sustainable. The network would have as a cornerstone goal the widening of the constituency of engagement. It would build on the foundations that have been laid by Turning the Tide (December 2004), and Defying Oceans End (February, 2005), the Changing Currents dialogue and other recent reports such as the US Oceans Commission and the Pew Oceans Commission (2004).

A Steering Group alongside a coordination team and issue oriented task forces (see figure 1) emerged as the structures through which to strike this balance. The Steering Group would give gentle guidance and direction. Something akin to a “think tank”, it would incubate ideas for action to share into the network. If sufficient energy clustered around the idea for a specific goal to be defined, the next evolution of the idea would be the formation of a working group or task force. Built in this way, actions within the network would grow out of energy and commitment and the results would be shared back into the network. The Steering Group would be multi-sectorial and ocean based, reflective of the full range of perspectives and would address, for example, ocean issues related to transport and shipping, energy production, food production, waste disposal, tourism, water supply, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, habitat, culture and communities. The Steering Group would communicate by email, teleconference and in person when possible.
Figure 1. Changing Currents Organizational Structure.

The CCN Coordination Team, comprised of the founding members of the Changing Currents project, (Patricia Gallaugher and Leah Bendell-Young at the Centre for Coastal Studies, Simon Fraser University, and Jackie Alder and Sylvie Guénette at the Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia) would work with the Steering Group to make the network operational. Collaboration with existing networks such as Canada’s Oceans Management Research Network (OMRN) and the international Land Ocean Interaction in the Coastal Zone (LOICZ) network would be built where relevant. At a very practical level, a central challenge is capacity to do the work envisioned; to secure the commitments of time, energy, and money will be essential to success. The strengths represented in and by the network will need to be mobilized. This will require the ideas of the Steering Group and the efforts of the Coordination Team.

The first action within the network will be for the Coordination Team to develop a proposal to create an Interim Steering Committee, and to identify candidates who would serve as its initial members. At the end of the Changing Currents dialogue, everyone was invited to make their interest known to the Coordination Team. It was agreed that the composition should reflect an international profile. While the possibility of a more distinctly Canadian focus was raised, the direction that emerged from the discussion was to build a future as an international network. The ocean-based network focused on ‘action’ would, like the oceans, work without borders. Connecting global perspectives would also be a catalyst for connections and actions locally.

The lens of the network would be imprinted with a grid - themes and the necessary actions within them cross cut with different scales, levels, tools, organizations, people, responsibilities, and accountabilities, with a careful eye on where the resisters (factors/actions or initiatives that prevent the ocean agenda from moving forward such as lack of appropriate legislation) and enablers (factors/actions and initiatives that affect positive change such as community based management) lie. As the dialogue structure, role, and operation of the network evolved over the course of the conversation, many ideas were shared as to the range of potential themes that it should envision in its future, including the issues raised in Changing Currents:

- Leadership and Institutional Reform are needed at all levels - we must recognize that a major aspect of the oceans challenge is not the state of the oceans but the state of decision making around oceans. Developing a global agenda is perplexed by the lack of coordination and cooperation and integration among governments, agencies, commissions at all scales and levels locally, regionally, and nationally.

- Review, Oversight, and Accountability are necessary - from asking the right questions to observing and monitoring performance where commitments have been made.
• Develop Best Practices - from international standards to implementation activities at the local level.

• Learn from Inspirational Stories at different scales and promote these successes as Working Models that demonstrate best practices in the use of a full range of tools that have been shown to make a difference in maintaining living oceans.

• Ask and Prioritize the Right Questions - perhaps through case studies focused on particular countries (For example, a task force to address Canadian issues), as a way of illustrating the key questions to address in bridging scientific information and decisions institutionally, and connecting science and action on the ground. Such a study, in the Canadian context, would also enable looking at the challenges of small scale communities and the human dimension, engaging not only natural, but also social, scientists.

• Share, Develop, and Communicate information accessibly, freely, and widely.

• Develop Linkages and Alignments - wherever and with whomever it makes strategic sense, in furthering the goals of the network, as it evolves and what it is becoming.

• Focus on “Doables” and the “Big Ones” - on Actions which are achievable, inspirational, and within manageable timelines which can demonstrate the possibility of bringing about change one step at a time, and those Actions which represent fundamental architectural building blocks in an action-focused agenda for change.

• Establish long-term inclusive and marketable Visions that can address the various scales of large marine ecosystem management.