



**GAMBLE**  
EVRI-CT-2001-20009

**Recommendations for Future Altimeter Programmes  
(Satellites, Payloads and Orbits)**

**Work Package 8 – “Constellation Optimisation”  
(Deliverables D10 and D11)**

**Final Recommendations**  
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Yves Ménard  
Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales  
18 Ave. Edouard Belin  
31401 Toulouse Cedex  
France

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1. A.Edwards (EESD programme, EC) – 2 Hard Copies
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3. GAMBLE Steering Group (Hard Copies)
4. ESA: Jerome Benveniste (ESRIN) and Juan Guijarro (ESTEC),
5. To be posted on GAMBLE web site (<http://www.altimetrie.net/>)

## 1. Introduction

The recommendations presented here for the orbits, satellites and payloads for future satellite radar altimeter missions are based on Sea Surface Height measurement requirements and sea state measurement requirements in terms of: Objectives, Coverage/Sampling, Performance, and Near-Real Time needs, derived in GAMBLE work packages:

- WP2 , SSH error budgets and recommendations (summarized in WP6).
- WP3, sea-state error budgets (summarized in WP6).
- WP5, Offshore Operators workshop.

In addition, the following have been taken into account:

- WP4, Orbit Determination and Satellite tracking performances.
- Existing and anticipated altimetric missions characteristics .
- State of existing and emerging technologies, instrumentation and platforms.
- Estimated time to develop and bring these new technologies into operation
- Cost optimization

Recommendations are expressed for 3 time frames

- Short-term (2004-2007)
- Mid-term (2008-2011)
- Long-term (> 2011)

## 2. A Few “Top-Level” Recommendations

Here we summarise briefly the headline user requirements for sea surface height and sea state applications, for climate monitoring, research, operational oceanography and offshore operations.

### **WP2 (Sea Surface Height Applications)**

The minimum requirement will be to continue flying a two satellite configuration with one long-term precise mission (T/P/Jason series)...This can be very significantly improved with an optimized three satellite configuration(reduction of sea level and velocity mapping errors by a factor of about 2 to 3)...to resolve the high frequency and high wavenumber signals, a constellation of more than 6 satellites and/or use of wide swath techniques would be required.

### **WP3 (Sea State Applications)**

Improved sampling in time and space (10-30 km/1h-6h) by satellite constellation and/or wide swath altimeters (e.g. SWIMSAT), availability of wave directional and wave period information by SAR and/or new concepts SWIMSAT)...Improved performances at coast....Near-real time availability of data (1-3 hours).

### **WP5 (Offshore Operations)**

For offshore operations, need to gain accurate knowledge of ocean currents...with improved spatial resolution...Wave-height is the most important, but needs improved space-time resolution...wave direction and period, swell and extreme waves need to be predicted better.

### 3. Recommendations for the 2004-2007 period

#### Present and Anticipated Situation (2004-07)

- T/P, optimized mission, launched in August 92, 10 days repeat orbit, 66° inclination, ending?
- Jason-1, T/P follow-on, launched in December 2001, designed for 5 years.
- *ERS2, no more on-board recording, only downloading data over ground-stations.*
- GFO, launched on 1998, 17 days repeat orbit, single-frequency altimeter.
- ENVISAT, launched on March 2002, 35 days repeat orbit, 98° inclination, designed for 5 years.

#### *Plus, flying in 2005*

CRYOSAT, optimized for ice observation, but will work over the ocean, repeat cycle of 369 days, sub-cycle of 30 days, non sun-synchronous orbit of 92° inclination, 720 km altitude, POD with Doris and SLR. Single frequency altimeter, no redundancy, no radiometer, no near-real time capabilities, designed for 3 years

#### Concerns

The following concerns are expressed regarding the situation that will exist in the (2004-07) time frame.

Today, based on the above configuration of 4 operational satellites, ocean dynamics research and operational systems like DUACS, Mercator, FOAM, are meeting their mission, BUT this situation will not last for very long (some of these satellites are getting old).

Sea-state near-real time needs are not satisfied, i.e. only 2 satellites with Wind/Wave 3 hours real-time capabilities (Jason, ENVISAT) (cf Météo-France tests). Continuous SWH spectra measurements are needed to improve the sea-state forecasts, and would also lead to improved corrections of altimeter range data (Sea-state bias correction).

#### Recommendations

Considering the 2004-2007 panorama in altimetry and related concerns, the Gamble Team recommends that:

- *Current Missions are Maintained*
  - As long as they are producing exploitable data,
  - Even in a degraded configuration (due for instance to deficiencies of one frequency of dual-frequency altimeters, radiometer, POD systems...),
    - Assuming the impact is not incompatible with the objectives (impact to be quantified, refer to WP7 recommendations).
    - Using dedicated tools and/or models to compensate (tropo/iono model, cross-over minimization, accurate mean sea surfaces...).
- *T/P-Jason tandem mission is maintained* as long as possible because of its proven usefulness (Le Traon and Dibarboure, 2003)

- *The maintenance of the near-real time capabilities* with the shortest possible delay in data delivery (< 2 days for SSH, < 5 hours for wind/wave) for feeding the operational systems on time (e.g. DUACS for SSH towards Mercator, FOAM, Topaze, MFS, and ECMWF, Météo-France for wind/wave through GTS system...)
- *The maintenance of satellite laser tracking*, because of its significant contribution in Precise Orbit Determination and to provide a fail-safe backup capability in case of failure of other on-board orbit systems.
- *Preparations are made for the use of CRYOSAT altimeter over the Oceans* by:
  - Ensuring IGDR/GDR data production and access to the ocean users
  - Developing appropriate techniques for processing the data.
    - Using the repeat sub-cycle (30 days), after constructing, from multiple altimetric time series, accurate reference mean sea level profiles along CRYOSAT tracks.
    - Developing GIM and Doris dual-frequency ionosphere models (note that solar activity is at a minimum during 2004-2007).
    - Improving wet troposphere models, based on other in-flight radiometers.
    - Studying the capability of near-real time products for ocean applications (2 days).

## 4. Recommendations for the 2008-2011 period

### Anticipated situation in altimetry (2008-2011)

According to current approved plans, if not changed, *only one altimeter mission is planned* for this period:

- Jason-2/OSTM, (MOU to be signed in 2004 for a launch end of 2007) The follow-on to Jason-1, same orbit, same performances, real-time capabilities, continue the unique long time series accuracy of T/P and Jason-1 altimetric missions.
- In addition to the core mission, Wide Swath Ocean Altimeter demonstration is expected on Jason-2, a unique opportunity of direct mapping of SSH and current velocity field. However, this is a non operational mission which has a limited ocean coverage

Previous missions will be reaching the end of their lifetime.

### Concerns

The Gamble team holds strong concerns about the situation that will exist during 2008-11:

As indicated in WP2, WP3 and WP5 Gamble reports, one single operational Jason2/OSTM mission is not acceptable with regard to SSH, Sea-State, and operational requirements (e.g. DUACS error mapping higher than 20 % with only one satellite, a limited 13 % impact of altimetric SWH data assimilation into WAM sea-state model).

Moreover, because of the launch of Jason2/OSTM now scheduled end of 2007 at the earliest, there is a high probability to have a very damaging gap between the Jason-1 and Jason2/OSTM missions, and so a gap in the time series.

In case of an unexpected nightmare scenario, i.e. a failure of Jason-2/OSTM at launch time or few months after the launch, and no other altimeters flying, there is no backup at all!

***Such a situation is incompatible with high priority issues related to Global Ocean monitoring, coastal area survey and water resources management, as indicated in the European GMES program, and not suitable at all to support operational ocean monitoring programs like MERSEA and MFS in Europe, or Mercator and FOAM at the national level, which are part of the International GODAE initiative.***

### Recommendations

Considering the anticipated altimetric mission situation in 2008-2011 and the strong concerns which have been expressed, specially those related to supporting European Environmental high priority programs and the Ocean International GODAE global vision, the Gamble Team recommends:

- *To maintain current missions, even in a degraded configuration, and their real-time capabilities as long as exploitable data are provided.*

- *To ensure the launch of the Jason2/OSTM satellite in a timely manner, without further delay beyond end of 2007, in order to avoid any potential gap in data coverage from the Jason-1 mission.*
- *To activate, if relevant, a Jason1/Jason2-OSTM tandem mission (Jason 1 orbit being shifted mid-way from the current orbit).*
- *To encourage the in-flight demonstration of new techniques, new concepts to provide high resolution, including Wide swath radars (WSOA, SWIMSAT), new altimeters for future micro-satellite constellations (Gander, AltiKa, doppler, laser altimeters), over-ocean GPS reflections. The objective is to assess and consider respective performances and appropriateness of these systems with regard to requirements, with a view to future missions (> 2011).*
- *To demonstrate WSOA on-board Jason2/OSTM and to involve PIs/CoIs in the in-flight assessment.*
- *To consider and encourage public/private partnership to support future multi-satellite constellations adapted to Sea-State operational requirements (with an optimum of 4 satellites flying at the same time) and consequently to SSH high resolution requirements.*
- *To decide, within the next months, at least one complementary mission to Jason-2/OSTM for flying in 2008. Such a two-satellite constellation is the minimum acceptable configuration, even if not optimum, for dynamic topography needs, but it does not meet the Sea-State operational requirements.*

## **Recommended Mission Options for 2007-2011**

Considering the absolute need and the high priority urgency for at least one conventional high inclination mission, complementary to Jason2/OSTM, the Gamble team recommends a strong endorsement by the EC, with support of space and operational agencies, to support a decision before mid-2004, between the two options which are realistically feasible with such a limited lead time, a “Proven Technology” option (taking the essential basic components from existing and proven technology), and a “New Technology” (partly developed and not completely proven) option.

### ***“Proven technology” basic option***

*Altimeter:*

Poseidon 3 B altimeter (replica of the Jason2/OSTM altimeter) :

#### *Platform Option 1*

A micro-satellite platform (UK AO opportunity?) equipped with laser retro-reflector for orbit determination (10 cm class orbit capability) and appropriate attitude control/knowledge (0.1°) - Repeat orbit at 35 days (ERS type) or at 17.5 days (GFO type), in order to take advantage of past reference mean passes (800 km class altitude, compatible with micro sat, better for assimilation, contribution of Grace and GOCE missions to determine better the earth gravity field at low altitudes)

#### *Platform Option 2*

As a passenger on-board an opportunity satellite (no orbit choice)

*Platform Option 3*

A Jason 2B clone (same satellite and same payload as Jason 2/OSTM, including 1 cm class POD and radiometer)

*Launch opportunity to be found*

*Real-time capability needed*

*Pros*

A relatively cheap scenario, Poseidon 3B about half the price of Poseidon 3A (if both are built at the same time).

Satellite and payload development feasible in the limited time frame available (4 years), if decided soon (before mid-2004).

Dual-frequency altimeter appropriate for ionospheric correction (solar activity is maximum around 2010) and for secondary objectives, i.e. rain, gas transfer at the air-sea interface.

A Jason 2B satellite (replica of Jason2/OSTM), developed in parallel with Jason 2A, is a unique opportunity of having a very low cost complete altimetric system ready in 2008 (with 1 cm class POD and radiometer).

*Cons (assuming just a Poseidon 3B on-board a micro-satellite)*

No radiometer on-board (but meteo models are much improved thanks to assimilation of in-flight radiometer data).

No POD on-board (but cross-over analysis may provide sufficient accuracy for meso-scale resolution).

***“New technology” partly developed option***

*Altimeter:*

AltiKa single-frequency altimeter and integrated radiometer (phase B completed).

*Platform Option 1:*

Micro-satellite platform (UK AO opportunity ?), equipped with laser retro-reflector for orbit determination (10 cm class orbit), and appropriate attitude control/knowledge (0.1°).

*Orbit Determination:*

Doris POD system and/or highly performing GPS receiver on-board as an option (< 4 cm class orbit)

*Orbit:*

Repeat orbit at 35 days (ERS type) or at 17.5 days (GFO type), in order to take advantage of past reference mean passes (800 km class altitude, compatible with micro sat, better for assimilation, contribution of Grace and Goce missions to determine better the earth gravity field at low altitudes).

*Platform Option 2:*

As passenger on-board an opportunity satellite (no orbit choice).

*Launch opportunity to be found*

*Real-time capability needed*

*Pros*

A consistent altimetric mission, with radiometer and POD (if Doris and/or GPS option selected)

A new class of compact radar instrument more adapted to specific applications (coastal, ice, inland...) if Doris on-board for driving adaptative tracker

New technology, research support may be expected from space agencies. Would be a demonstrator of future GANDER type satellite constellations,

*Cons*

Project cost relatively higher, with respect to Poseidon 3B option, because new technology altimeter development

Project development schedule feasible but not easily compatible with a short delay of 4 years

Single-frequency altimeter not very sensitive to ionosphere, but not adapted for secondary objectives, i.e. rain, gas transfer, some land and ice applications

## 5. Recommendations for the post 2011 period

Because, as recommended in European environmental monitoring programs (e.g. GMES), there is a need to sustain an optimum altimetric service compatible with operational requirements and new research perspectives of the ocean (mesoscale, coastal, tides, sea-state, refer to recommendations from GAMBLE WP2, WP3, WP7), ice and inland water survey, the Gamble team recommends that the EC, space and operational agencies:

- *maintain the continuity of the T/P-Jason series over the long term* to keep alive this unique reference time series which started in 1992 and which is essential in many applications because of its high accuracy, consistency and robustness
- *to develop and provide **operational** altimetric systems* for systematic and continuous high resolution sampling of the Ocean (“Ocean Watch” concept) by:
  1. *Deciding soon a series of multi-purpose Gander/AltiKa/Ku redundant altimeters* in order to produce low-cost (effect of mass production) altimeters with integrated radiometers, which can provide the required  $< 3$  cm range accuracy and be accommodated on board a micro-satellite. They could be used for micro-satellite constellation, but also as nadir altimeters for other missions (e.g. WSOA missions, NPOESS, Ocean Watch...)
  2. *Deciding, for a launch early in 2011, a multi-satellite constellation* (a minimum of 3 satellites completed by the NPOESS altimetric mission), based on low-cost, mass-produced micro-satellites and simultaneous launches. Preferential orbits are 800 km class-orbit, high inclination, sun-synchronous ERS 35 days repeat orbit or non sun-synchronous GFO 17.5 days repeat orbit, but other orbits may be acceptable.  $< 10$  cm class POD based on laser and low-class GPS and altimeter cross-over minimization. Laser, Doris and/or geodetic GPS tracking are optional for more accurate, independent and robust POD. Real-time capability. Radiometer on-board preferable but not absolutely needed. Altimeter measurement noise at a level of  $< 3$  cm

### Pros

This option presents a conventional and robust solution, which can be developed and built in a relatively short delay (i.e. ready in 2011), whilst waiting for new concepts be fully operational (e.g. wide swath altimeters), meet the high resolution requirements for both SSH and wind/wave. Additional objectives attainable with such a system (land, lakes, ice...with better results if DORIS navigation is available on-board...), multi-satellite low-cost redundancy

A SSH/Sea-state convergent Gander/AltiKa micro-satellite project would be a good candidate (feasibility studies already achieved)

### Cons

Launch opportunity for multi-satellites required, requires a multiplicity of systems, and more complex ground-segments.

3. *Deciding, for a launch soon after 2011, an operational Wide Swath radar altimeter mission, based on experience from in-flight demonstration (WSOA/Jason2), preferably on a high inclination sun-synchronous 10-20 days repeat orbit (non sun-synchronous orbit may be acceptable). Nadir altimeter needed. Very precise attitude knowledge is needed. POD preferable but not absolutely required. On board radiometer preferable . Real-time capability.*

#### **Pros**

Such a mission would provide global mapping of SSH and velocity field over the ocean with a unique high space/time resolution

#### **Cons**

Not designed for sea-state. A unique/single system whose failure is disastrous for the high resolution mission, if there is no backup ready for immediate launch and/or if no other altimeter satellites are flying at the same time.

4. *To decide a **demonstration** in-flight SWIMSAT mission.* This is an innovative high-resolution instrument for measuring directional spectra, wind speed, significant wave height, dominant wavelengths, wave slope statistics, providing a unique contribution for constraining much better sea-state models and improving forecasts. A low altitude orbit (~ 500 km), high inclination (97-98°), is required with a repeat cycle between 8 and 35 days. Additional Sea Surface Topography measurements at the nadir, are exploitable assuming Orbit Determination accurate enough (10 cm class-orbit).

5. *To investigate the potential of measurements, by low altitude satellites, of GPS reflections over ocean to measure sea-state and sea surface height.*

## **6. General Recommendations**

### **The Gamble team:**

- Encourage space and operational agencies (NASA, CNES, ESA, Eumetsat, NOAA...) to define a common long-term strategy, based on previous recommendations.
- Point out the vital link of these recommendations with the running of operational European environmental survey programs, like GMES and MERSEA, which rely on an uninterrupted adapted data production service! The benefits encompass many aims central to GMES, including the monitoring of long term climate change (sea level), improved understanding and prediction of inter-annual and seasonal climate variability (el Niño,.NAO), and enhancing security and safety of offshore operations (including shipping. exploration and defence).

## **7. References:**

Le Traon, P-Y, Dibarboure G, 2003. An illustration of the unique contribution of the TOPEX/Poseidon – Jason-1 tandem mission to mesoscale variability studies. Report for GAMBLE (WP2)