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## The EBM Toolbox: Integrating diverse tools, and why there is no EBM "SuperTool" yet

**Editor's note:** The goal of The EBM Toolbox is to promote awareness of software tools for facilitating EBM processes, and to provide advice on using those tools effectively. It is brought to you by the EBM Tools Network ([www.ebmtools.org](http://www.ebmtools.org)), a voluntary alliance of leading tool users, developers, and training providers to promote awareness, development, and effective use of technology tools for EBM in coastal, marine, and watershed environments.

By Sarah Carr

### Integrating diverse tools, and why there is no EBM "SuperTool" yet

Ecosystem-based management involves integrating information from diverse fields (such as ecology and economics), sectors (conservation, industry), and sources (scientific studies, traditional knowledge). It can also involve integrating diverse software tools, such as land use planning tools, ecosystem models, and conservation site prioritization tools. Linking such tools - i.e., making them "interoperable" - can provide EBM practitioners with a structured and scientific means of bringing communities together and facilitating communication.

Would it be better if we just had one tool, an EBM "SuperTool", that could be applied to every EBM project - rather than having to piece together a different set of tools for each project? Not necessarily. EBM projects are very different from each other, so a single SuperTool would have trouble addressing the needs of most EBM projects without being prohibitively complex and data-hungry. In addition, interoperating tools from diverse sectors allows specialists to keep individual tools up-to-date with the latest developments in their respective fields, thereby bringing that new knowledge into EBM.

That said, it is undoubtedly desirable for the EBM field to have a suite of user-friendly tools to address the greatest demands for integration. Current projects on tool interoperability are an important step toward this goal. To learn more about interoperability projects being conducted by some EBM Tools Network members, check out "Advancing Ecosystem-Based Management: A Decision Support Toolkit for Marine Managers" at [www.marineebm.org](http://www.marineebm.org).

(Sarah Carr is coordinator for the EBM Tools Network. Learn more about EBM tools and the EBM Tools Network at [www.ebmtools.org](http://www.ebmtools.org). Sign up for Network updates and contact Sarah at [www.ebmtools.org/contact](http://www.ebmtools.org/contact).)

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