

June 19, 2015, 14:00-15:30 EDT Conference Call

Polar Programs Subcommittee (PLR SC) participants: W. Berry Lyons* (Subcommittee Chair), Stefanie Brachfeld, James Dixon*, Thomas Neumann, Leigh Stearns, and Gregory Sullivan* (*designates subcommittee members who are members of the full committee).

National Science Foundation Division of Polar Programs (NSF PLR) participants: Kelly Falkner (Director, PLR), Gwen Adams, William Ambrose, Charles Amsler, Scot Arnold, Andrew Backe, Scott Borg, Jessie Crain, Renee Crain, Paul Cutler, Hedy Edmonds, Michael Jackson, Sue LaFratta, Maggie Knuth, Nature McGinn, Tim McGovern, Polly Penhale, Eric Saltzman, Paul Sheppard, Pat Smith, Brian Stone, and Neil Swanberg.

Discussion Notes

Berry Lyons, chair of the PLR SC developed the agenda in coordination with Kelly Falkner, Director of NSF PLR. The agenda and main topics were outlined in a set of power point slides provided to all invitees prior to the teleconference. The main subjects were as follows:

1) Antarctic Infrastructure Modernization (AIMS) Community Engagement Plan

Kelly Falkner provided a status update on AIMS and explained its relation to the Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) report. Nature McGinn reviewed the AIMS Community Engagement Plan and thanked the Polar Subcommittee members for their review of a matrix (which she previously provided to Berry Lyons) identifying science expertise needed for providing input to AIMS. Berry Lyons provided the status of PLR SC input on the matrix. Brian Stone reiterated the importance of obtaining input from the scientific community to help develop design requirements during the upcoming charrettes. Stephanie Brachfeld asked whether AIMS included vessel requirements. Kelly Falkner responded that those requirements are being addressed through other means. Tom Neumann asked about timelines for feedback and what details are needed in the feedback; Nature noted the charrettes are in July and Berry will coordinate input from the PLR SC.

Polar Programs Subcommittee of GEO Advisory Committee

II) PLR Updates on Personnel and Budget

Kelly Falkner reviewed PLR personnel reassignments, departures, additions, pending selections, and vacancies. All newcomers who were present during the teleconference introduced themselves to the Polar Subcommittee. Scott Borg (Section Head for Antarctic Sciences) and Eric Saltzman (Section Head for Arctic Sciences) provided background on those newcomers who were not present. Sue LaFratta (Section Head for Polar Environmental Safety and Health) provided a status update on pending personnel action for the Medical Officer and Environmental Policy Specialist. Kelly Falkner and Scott Borg spoke about the Antarctic Integrated System Science Program Director position and encouraged Subcommittee members to inform the community of the vacancy and the Dear Colleague Letter relevant to those interested in possible IPA positions.

Kelly Falkner reviewed PLR's current budget circumstances and GEO's and NSF's circumstances more generally. In relation to the FY2015 budget, PLR is expecting for the FY2016 budget to be flat at best, with the outcome depending on numerous factors at the National level. Eric Saltzman commented on the spending for Arctic Research Support and Logistics in FY2015, explaining that such spending is expected to go back down in FY2016. Subcommittee members asked how the budget situation relates to AIMS. Kelly Falkner and Brian Stone explained that PLR has to make R&RA investments in design before being approved to receive MREFC funds for AIMS.

III) PLR COVs

Kelly Falkner reviewed the purpose, timing (every three years), and composition of Committee of Visitors (COVs). She informed the Polar Subcommittee that we would need recommendations for membership for the upcoming COVs. Scott Borg indicated that the next Antarctic COV (combined Antarctic Sciences and Antarctic Infrastructure and Logistics) and Arctic COV (similarly combined science and infrastructure and logistics) are planned to occur simultaneously in May of 2016. Scott Borg noted that the Polar Subcommittee would need to provide membership recommendations by January 2016. Eric Saltzman provided a status update on the Arctic Sciences response to the 2013 COV report. He plans to provide the complete formal response during the October 2015 AC GEO meeting. Scott Borg informed the Polar Subcommittee that they can interact with previous COV chairs and members to learn more about what others have done in the past in relation to conducting COVs. Kelly noted that each COV should have at least one member from the current AC GEO.

IV) Closing Remarks

Kelly Falkner noted the intention to use video capability to enhance the next PLR subcommittee meeting, which will be scheduled prior to the October 21-22, 2015 AC GEO meeting. Additionally, Polar Subcommittee members were encouraged to make suggestions for agenda items for the next meeting. Berry Lyons noted that he will work with the Subcommittee to co-develop the agenda for the next Subcommittee meeting.

Action Items

1. NSF PLR will provide the Polar Subcommittee a link to the Dear Colleague Letter regarding expressions of interest in PLR Rotator Program Officer positions (A. Backe).
2. NSF PLR will provide COV-related links to Polar Subcommittee members (A. Backe).
3. The PLR Subcommittee will provide recommendations for COV membership to the NSF PLR by January 15, 2016 (B. Lyons).
4. NSF PLR will prepare the Arctic Sciences Section full response to the 2013 COV and present it at the October 21-22, 2015 AC GEO meeting (E. Saltzman).
5. NSF PLR will schedule the next Polar Subcommittee teleconference prior to the October 21-22, 2015 AC GEO Meeting and make arrangements to have video capabilities during the meeting (A. Backe).