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OPP Office Advisory Committee — Subcommittee on Icebreaking and U.S. Antarctic Program Resupply

Minutes

Teleconference with the Advisory Committee for the Office of Polar Programs (OPP)

August 11 , 2005

1. The Chair of the OAC Subcommittee on Icebreaking and USAP Resupply held a teleconference meeting with the Office Advisory Committee (OAC) upon the completion of the Subcommittee's final draft report. Participants in the meeting were:

Subcommittee Members Present

James Swift, Subcommittee Chair and OAC Chair, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California—San Diego

Sridhar Anandakrishnan, Department of Geosciences & EMS Environment Institute, Pennsylvania State University

Office Advisory Committee Members Present

Kelly Falkner, Chemical Oceanography, College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University

James Hollibaugh, Marine Biology, University of Georgia

Deanna Paniataaq-Kingston, Anthropology, Oregon State University

John Ruhl, Case Western Reserve University

Joshua Schimel, Past Chair, Ecology-Biology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Paul Shepson, Purdue University

NSF and OPP Staff Present

Karl Erb, Director, Office of Polar Programs

Michael Van Woert, OPP Executive Officer

Scott Borg, Head, Antarctic Sciences Section

Ian Biggins, NSF/ U.S. Air Force Liaison Officer

George Blaisdell, Operations Manager, Polar Research Support Section

Marie Bundy, Biology and Medicine Associate Program Manager, Antarctic and Arctic Sciences Sections

Erick Chiang, Head, Polar Research Support Section

Susanne LaFratta, Deputy Section Head, Polar Research Support Section

Altie Metcalf, OPP Budget and Planning Officer

Martha Rubenstein, Division Director, Budget Division, NSF Office of Budget, Finance and Award Management (BFA)

Paul Sheppard, NSF/ U.S. Air Force Liaison Officer

Brian Stone, Research Support Manager, Polar Research Support Section

Alexander Sutherland, Oceans Project Manager, Polar Research Support Section

Other participants

Dennis Holland, U.S. Coast Guard

Jeffrey Mervis, *Science* magazine

Jim Seeman, U.S. Coast Guard

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Tom Wojan, U.S. Coast Guard

2. Chair Jim Swift opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He outlined the purpose for the meeting: to formally present the Subcommittee's report and to solicit feedback from the OAC on the topic of USAP icebreaking and resupply, specifically as it was treated in the final draft report. (The report had previously been placed on a public web site and all OAC members notified of the report's existence and location.)

3. Jim Swift requested Karl Erb to outline the background of the Subcommittee and to review its charge. Karl described how the recent ice conditions in McMurdo Sound (influenced in part by large stagnate icebergs) and the deteriorating condition of the USCG Polar-class icebreakers increased significantly the risk to USAP posed by a single –point failure, should icebreaking not be successful in allowing traditional annual ship resupply of McMurdo. Considering this risk unacceptable, OPP began exploring a number of options for reducing risk. Because the universe of potential options was large, and because they often clearly involved impacts on many elements of the current USAP, Karl asked the OAC to assist in brainstorming and vetting ideas, and ultimately to advise OPP on how to direct its efforts.

4. Jim Swift requested Sridhar Anandakrishnan to briefly comment on the Subcommittee's work. Sridhar noted that many options were discussed (not all were explicitly mentioned in the report) and ultimately homed in on a variety of options that addressed the primary resupply issue while also seeming to be best suited to near- and long-term enhancement of the USAP.

5. Jim Swift asked Karl Erb to introduce the Subcommittee members and briefly review their backgrounds, which Karl did.

6. Jim Swift then opened the meeting up to comments and questions for the Subcommittee by the OAC. Initial comments included

- Joshua Schimel expressed being impressed with the thought and substance clearly demonstrated in the report.
- Kelly Falkner appreciated being allowed to see some of the report's earlier drafts.
- John Ruhl stated that the major issue represents a challenge and that the report lays out a sensible approach for tackling the problem.

Tim Hollibaugh was pleased with the report and felt it adequately addressed all the points of greatest concern.

7. Jim Swift noted that the report is a compilation of all Subcommittee members work. In part, this contributed to the Executive Summary being longer than desirable. Thus, the Précis was developed, which covers the Subcommittee's work as best as is possible in one page.

8. Jim Swift stated that no single change to the current USAP resupply model will solve the primary issues of concern. Several changes, done in concert and in incremental steps is likely needed to fully address the "single-point failure" issue.

9. Karl Erb commented that the report clearly represents a valuable map for OPP to follow. OPP will pursue in earnest the report's recommendations.

10. Jim Swift reminded the OAC that the Subcommittee's charge focused the group's work exclusively on the USAP; no other National interests or issues were considered.

11. Jim Swift invited the USCG representatives to comment on the report and/or the discussion so far. USCG personnel stated that they were attending with the intent of listening only; if the Subcommittee, OAC, or NSF desired comments they could so request in writing.

12. The OAC members renewed their questions and comments. They included the following.

- *Kelly Falkner*: Would SLEP of USCG icebreakers allow those ships to operate in McMurdo Sound without the need for re-fueling? *Jim Swift*: No specifics of what SLEP would entail are in hand, so any answer would be speculation.
- *John Ruhl*: Is the final draft report provided to the OAC the final report? *Jim Swift*: Yes, except for a formal front-to-back format/syntax edit.
- *Sridhar Anandakrishnan*: The "9 out of 10 years" and "no re-fueling in McMurdo" recommendations for a USAP icebreaker likely means something other than the existing USCG Polar-class icebreakers.
- *John Ruhl*: Having a wheeled runway at South Pole could mean considerably less fuel required

at McMurdo. That may counterbalance the need for fuel by an icebreaker and thus remove the need for a no re-fueling requirement.

Jim Swift: The Subcommittee viewed the USAP as it exists now and did not consider a future state where one or more of the recommendations would be functional. *John Ruhl:* But cost for new icebreaker may so large as to look like a poor investment. *Sridhar Anandakrishnan:* A reduction in fuel delivery to McMurdo and consumption in the USAP can only be viewed as a desirable goal under any scenario.

13. Kelly Falkner offered a motion to accept the Subcommittee report. John Ruhl seconded the motion. A minor discussion ensued. The motion was put to a vote and passed unanimously.

14. Karl Erb congratulated the Subcommittee on its hard work and excellent report. He committed that OPP would begin immediately tackling the report's recommendations. OPP will report on progress at the next OAC meeting (late October 2005).

15. Jim Swift closed the meeting by expressing his great appreciation to the members of the Subcommittee for their service.

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Last Updated

October 2005

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