

Chapter 4

Standards of Conduct in the Field

The Principal Investigator (PI) or field-team leader of each research group is responsible for ensuring that his/her group acts responsibly in the field. All field personnel should read the *Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978* (Document No. 95-154) and the *United States Antarctic Program (USAP) Participant Guide*. Both documents are available from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

When the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty enters into force, Specially Protected Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and some historic sites will be combined into a single category of protected area, Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPA's).

An additional category, Antarctic Specially Managed Areas (ASMA's), will be created for areas where activities pose risks of mutual interference or cumulative environmental impacts. This category will also include sites of recognized historic value that do not require strictly controlled access. Entry into an ASPA will require a permit, while entry into ASMA's will not.

Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) are areas of unusual scientific or historic interest. Entry into these areas is

prohibited unless there is a scientific purpose. To enter an SPA, you must obtain a permit from the NSF. To apply for a permit, contact the NSF/OPP prior to departing for Antarctica. Allow three to four months for processing the necessary permits.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are sites where scientific work is being conducted (or planned) and there is a risk of interference. Permits are not always required for entry into these sites and, in some cases, permission may be obtained in McMurdo or at Palmer Station from the NSF. However, you should apply for permits before leaving for Antarctica. All entrants must read and comply with the management plan specific for each site.

Violation of the regulations for Specially Protected Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest may result in a \$10,000 fine or imprisonment for up to one year.

4.1 Appropriate Field Conduct in Antarctica

USAP scientific and operational teams that are deployed to sites remote from USAP main stations should conduct their activities in a safe manner. The field-party leader will be responsible for the conduct of all team members in the field and shall ensure that each team member is familiar with the risks involved and proficient in dealing with those risks.

4.2 Environmental Conduct in the Field

Research in Antarctica must always be carried out in a way that minimizes impacts on land, water, and ice. Be prepared to make this extra effort. You have an important responsibility to maintain the integrity of Antarctica for the future.

Guidelines for Personal Conduct

- Respect Antarctic flora and fauna. Interfering with any native mammal or bird without an ACA Permit is prohibited. If an animal reacts to your presence, then you are too close.
- Prevent spills or drips of any kind. Take materials with you for this purpose.
- Report any spills, and clean them up using Spill-response Kits.
- Track all releases to the environment during field work, including wastewater discharged.
- If an Environmental Assessment was prepared for your field work, follow all mitigating measures.
- Minimize your impact from walking and camping. Leave nothing behind.
- Do not take rocks, crystals, or other geologic specimens as souvenirs.
- Sort, label, and carefully store all solid and liquid waste.
- Set up your human waste facility early during camp set-up.

- Stay out of Specially Protected Areas that exist near your field activities, unless you have a permit.
- Do not introduce plants or animals into the Antarctic.
- Do not litter.
- Store your gear and supplies in a way that prevents release to wind or water.
- If you need information, supplies, or other environmental support while in the field do not hesitate to contact the contractor Environmental Representative in McMurdo.

After Your Field Season:

- At your out-brief provide all information about environmental releases, as required by the ACA.
- Provide suggestions for better environmental management and support of field operations.