

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

4201 Wilson Boulevard
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230



OFFICE OF POLAR PROGRAMS

August 18, 2008

Dear U.S. Antarctic Program Researcher:

All indications are that in FY 2009 (October 1 - September 30) the National Science Foundation will operate, at least until the new Congress and new Administration are in place next year, on a Continuing Resolution that fixes funding at the prior year's level. That budget was, in turn, essentially identical to the previous year's (FY 2007) budget. This means that the 2008-2009 austral summer season in Antarctica will be supported at the level it was in the 2006-2007 season.

To further compound the problem, the U.S. Antarctic Program's fuel costs increased by \$8 million for the 2007-2008 period and our guidance is to plan on a further increase of \$19 million for the 2008-2009 season. Labor costs beyond our control, declines in the purchasing power of the U.S. dollar, and several other factors add to the pressure on our budget.

In light of this situation, we have had to make difficult decisions that will affect all parts of the Program. Examples include: deferring plans to replace the pier at Palmer Station as well as other facility improvements; reducing the intercontinental airlift (particularly in the middle of the operational season); deferring parts of logistically-intensive deep field projects, and consolidating science projects and reducing the length of cruises scheduled on the research vessels.

In addition, on-continent LC-130 operations will be significantly reduced and this, in turn, requires reductions and delays to a range of projects that require LC-130 support. While delays and reductions will be experienced this year, we are committed to eventually meet our existing commitments.

Lack of funding for research support and logistics also means we will not be able to sustain our normal rate of new-project funding this year. The overall proposal success rate will probably slip below 20%, and only a few new proposals requiring 2009 deployment are being funded. In addition, this situation is likely to cause a relatively low success rate for the proposals that are currently under review and would require field support in the 2009-2010 season.

A guiding principle in our approach to this difficult situation has been to leave open the possibility of reinstating activities should the FY 2009 budget be appropriated at the request level.

It is clear that this budget situation has significant impacts on the science program and we appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through these difficult issues. Principal Investigators who are directly affected have already been contacted and are involved in specific discussions. Nevertheless, if you have ideas or concerns, please feel free to contact NSF program managers or us directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Borg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Scott Borg
Director, Division of Antarctic Sciences
NSF/OPP

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Stone". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "B".

Brian Stone
Director, Division of Antarctic
Infrastructure and Logistics (Acting)
NSF/OPP

Attachment

Attachment: Some of the changes in the 2008-2009 Antarctic summer season to accommodate the anticipated budget situation.

- 1) Defer Palmer pier work.
- 2) Defer fuel tank construction in McMurdo.
- 3) Defer facility improvements in McMurdo (building and heating system upgrades).
- 4) Defer demolition work on old South Pole Station.
- 5) Defer completion of siding on South Pole Station.
- 6) Consolidate cruises and reduce time at sea for several planned cruises.
- 7) Defer all new decisions for additional cruise commitments.
- 8) Defer deep field meteorite collection; limit to collection near McMurdo
- 9) No PoleNet (IPY) work in West Antarctica; limit to McMurdo-based work.
- 10) Defer work on the ground shield for 10m South Pole Telescope.
- 11) No LC-130 support for Long Duration Balloon Program; defer payload recovery.
- 12) Defer CReSIS (IPY) airborne and unmanned aerial vehicle work at WAIS Divide.
- 13) ANT funds cryogenics costs to allow BiCEP-2 observations.
- 14) ANT funds cost of deployment airfares and PQ determinations for science community.
- 15) Reduce C-17 missions by 20%; affects airlift from early Dec to late Jan.
- 16) Reduce LC-130s deployed from 8 to 5; reduce LC-130 mission count from 411 to 305 (adjusted for missions lost to weather and mechanical issues).
- 17) Reduce fuel procurement by about 1M gallons.
- 18) Defer plan to top-off South Pole fuel storage tanks.
- 19) Eliminate normal weather planning buffer for all deep field research.
- 20) Reduce success rate of proposals from June 2007 review cycle.
- 21) Reduce science during Winfly 2008.
- 22) Cancel operational aspects of Winfly 2009 (costs of C-17s and labor), impact is reduced science support capability at start of main-body.

IPY activities:

- 1) AGAP, GAMBIT and GAMSEIS, will proceed albeit with reduced scope in FY 2009, creating higher risk of not completing field observations. (International partners include Germany, Australia, UK, China, Japan).
- 2) WAIS Divide Ice Core Drilling will proceed at a level that will allow completion of drilling through the brittle ice interval.
- 3) U.S.-Norway scientific traverse will proceed subject to review and acceptance of equipment modifications.
- 4) CReSIS will only conduct ground-based work in central West Antarctica.
- 5) LARISSA project limited to planning and preparations.
- 6) Planning only for Pine Island Glacier/Amundsen Sea Embayment project.
- 7) Planning to continue for Concordiasi, with final decision dependent on a determination that a science-only Winfly is possible.