

McMurdo Area User Committee (MAUC) Annual Meeting Minutes Raytheon Polar Services Office/Telecommute

Thursday, July 21, 2011

Welcome and Introductions

National Science Foundation (Jessie Crain)

- Thanks to the committee for taking the time to have this meeting.
- No new contractor has been named at this time, but the transition is going to happen this year. Grantees should contact Raytheon for all transition-related questions.
- New hires at NSF
 - Tim McGovern is the new OPP manager for Marine.
 - Paul Shepherd is Dave Breshnahan's new replacement. He will be starting September 2011.
 - AIL division director is now Brian Stone.
 - Roberta Marinelli (Organisms and Ecosystems Program Manager) and Lisa Clough (Integrated System Sciences Program Manager) are leaving NSF.
 - Kelly Falkner has been hired as Deputy Director to Karl Erb.
- Selection for the Blue Ribbon Panel is currently in process. They will be conducting a site visit to McMurdo Station in November. Norm Augustine will be chairing the committee.
- The Oden icebreaker will not be going south this year. NSF is currently assessing other options and hoping to have a resolution on this soon.

National Science Foundation (Scott Borg)

- Welcome to all the members of the MAUC.
- Providing further clarification on the icebreaker
 - The Oden is not available to support the program this year.
 - Without an icebreaker, the normal station resupply can not be accomplished. Some resupply can be done by air, but fuel can not be delivered this way.
 - The biggest user of fuel is the LC-130 fleet. Without a fuel resupply this season, fuel conservation measures will need to be put in place to provide sufficient fuel to support the infrastructure requirements of McMurdo and South Pole until the next fuel resupply is available in January 2013.
 - The NSF is still looking at options on what to do, but it's clear that deep field programs will be impacted in this situation. There is not much detail available at this point in time; however if no icebreaker is available, then beginning October 1st, 2011 austerity measures will be put in place. Any projects that require Herc

support will be impacted; however fuel flights to South Pole will continue as planned.

- In response to the question – “if all programs will be looked at equally,” Scott noted that the decisions regarding the austerity measures will be driven by where significant fuel savings can occur.
- If the NSF is able to obtain another icebreaker then the season should be able to go forward as planned.
- Responses by the MAUC regarding the possibility of no icebreaker:
 - Stacy Kim noted that there should be austerity measures put into place for McMurdo station management and limits on DV trips to preserve fuel. She also asked the question, “have the science PI’s who will be most impacted been contacted about these possibilities?”
 - Per Scott Borg - a letter will go out next week to the science community regarding the icebreaker issue.
 - Stacy Kim also offered that PIs may be able to contribute to this planning effort by identifying fuel saving measures within their projects and within USAP operations.
 - Jeff Severinghaus noted that individual projects can look at cutting some field positions; however Scott Borg stated if the program has to go into austerity mode then they will be looking for large fuel saving measures.
 - Sridhar Anandkrishnan suggested that putting fuel into West Antarctica via the James Clark Ross which is going into the Amundsen Sea this season may be a possibility.

Raytheon Polar Services (Sam Feola)

- Thanks to everyone on the committee for their guidance and recommendation to RPSC throughout the years.
- RPSC is working hard on planning a smooth contract transition, and is currently working very hard internally on contingency plans for the possibility of no ice breaker this season.
- Deploying through Christchurch will not be “business as usual” for USAP participants this year due to the earthquakes and continuing after shocks. Because of the limited hotel space in Christchurch, Sam asked that individuals assigned to a hotel - please plan to only stay a maximum of 2 nights.

Review of 2010 MAUC and *ad hoc* Meeting

Summary of 2010 Issues and Recommendations (Stacy Kim)

- There has been significant progress made over the winter to improve staging space and everyone should be hearing more about that soon.
- Regarding the degradation of McMurdo tracked vehicles – the MAUC would like RPSC to pursue a bridge for tracked vehicles. Consideration should be given to

refueling vehicles at the sea ice runway and restricting - but not excluding - driving track vehicles through town.

- Infrastructure: the MAUC committee continues to request clarification of the management structure of Raytheon.
- The MAUC feels that IT info sec is extremely restricted, and that connectivity in the science dorms is still an issue.
- The committee feels that any trainings that can be done online - should be. They understand that holding trainings in Christchurch this season may not be an option now, but still believe that streamlining these trainings is possible.
- Direct deployment from Christchurch to field camps is an idea that the MAUC would like to investigate, along with the option of delivering fuel direct to the field.
- Any topics which need to be communicated with the science community should be sent to Steve Kottmeier.

NSF Medical PQ Requirements (Jessie Crain for Polly Penhale)

- There are new medical forms on the USAP website for the PQ process. It is very important to use these new forms rather than copying the old forms so that you do not inadvertently provide family history information that is no longer being collected by USAP in response to the new Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA.)
- The medical program is looking into instituting healthy food choices and fitness options to help address community health needs.
- A project will be undertaken next year to revise the USAP medical screening guidelines; the last revisions to these guidelines were made in 2010. Attention will be focused on improving communication regarding the PQ process and increasing access to PQ information.
- Pregnancy tests for winter-over participants are now required; having a healthy work force in Antarctica is the goal of this requirement.

Related to the dental PQ process, MAUC members noted that a common complaint of the grantee community is the yearly requirement for bitewing x-rays.

Trainings (off-ice and online) (Brian Johnson, Al Martin, Jim Karcher)

- Brian Johnson looked at the training recommendations made by the MAUC in 2010. He noted that no trainings will be held in Christchurch this coming season due to earthquake-related concerns. He also had discussions with Polly Penhale and Jim Karcher at the NSF, regarding putting some training on line; however it was agreed that a majority of the required trainings will still need to be done in person.
- Consideration is being given to reducing the time required for the trainings and making the scheduling more efficient for those involved.
- NSF is re-evaluating the 5 year rule for Happy Camper and reconsidering the training value of shakedown trips for individual projects.

- The full time FSTP supervisor, Karen Hilton is assessing how to make field safety training more efficient and recognizes that there is a difference between skill vs. knowledge.
- Jim Karcher stated that implementing online training is very costly and time consuming, and that the success rate of these trainings can be limited. He also acknowledged that keeping the training information up to date on line can be difficult.
- Stacy Kim stated that it is also expensive to feed and house people in McMurdo and feels that people are less interested in doing their science after completing these extensive trainings. At the very least, she feels that the video portions of the existing trainings should be accessible from each individual's institution. She also stated that it takes 6 days for her to complete all of her trainings, and she feels that she should be able to accomplish this tasking in half that time.
- Leigh Stearns stated there have been several complaints in the science community about not being able to test out of FSTP training, especially for people who work in Greenland and on the Antarctic Peninsula. These individuals feel that their field experience in these environments should count towards their USAP FSTP training requirements.

Volunteer Pool(s) in McMurdo (Brian Johnson, Al Martin)

- Brian Johnson spoke with Al Martin and feels that they are doing a good job managing the volunteer pool thus far, and that having just one pool of volunteers is the best option for being able to meet the grantees' needs for assistance quickly and efficiently.
- He noted that there is a new crew at Crary Lab this season, and that the Crary Lab Admin will be coordinating the use of the volunteer pool with the grantee community.
- Stacy Kim noted that with only one volunteer pool in operation, the science community is reluctant to ask for help with mundane tasks in the vicinity of the station for fear that they will inadvertently deprive an individual of a more exciting volunteer opportunity elsewhere.

Housing (advisory committee; internet access) (Lisa vonFumetti, Al Martin)

- Lisa vonFumetti stated the housing guidelines are being revised and reviewed.
- Al Martin noted that he is working with George Blaisdell to develop an NSF housing policy that will apply to all USAP participants – all agencies and all subcontractors.
 - Because there will be only one housing policy, there will be consistency on how rooms are assigned, and the policy will be posted publically and readily available to the entire community.
 - Al and George are using historical data to formulate the policy, and then will post it publically for a period of time to allow all parties to make recommendations.
 - The draft Housing Policy will be provided to the MAUC for review by the grantee community.

- Housing and NSF are working to manage the rooms and buildings that are currently available; no new construction is planned for the next five years.
- Lisa VonFumetti is working with a goal of a 1000 person cap for McMurdo population this season; the population cap last year was 1137.
- Housing had hoped to purchase commercial hotel management software for use this coming season; however this purchase was not approved by NSF. .
- The primary housing for grantees will be 203 A, B, and C, and there will be one LAN jack available in each room. Wireless is available for PIs housed in dorms 208 and 209.
- Stacy Kim mentioned that dorm lounges are multi-use spaces with people watching movies, hanging out, and grantees having meetings, and noted that it would be great to have LAN jacks in the lounges for this reason.
- A housing committee will be formed at Winfly to look at ways to improve current living conditions, and grantees are welcome to participate on this committee.
- Dave Nelson stated the population pressures last season were atypical and should be much less this season.
- Sridhar Anandkrishnan stated those who are in the deep field are often housed in building 155 which is fine, but that this became a problem when the crud spread to several people in the building last season. He suggested that science groups be allowed to move into another room or area when the crud hits, to help protect grantees from getting sick ahead of their deployment to the field.
 - Lisa VonFumetti, Al Martin, and Steve Kottmeier offered to look into this prior to the start of the 2011-12 season.
- Transient housing is also being assessed in terms of when it is needed and the number of beds available; 4 -5 person rooms will not be filled to capacity.
- The MAUC noted that with the high population numbers last year, PIs were willing to throw up a tent and sleep wherever; however they were told they could not do this. This will be a recommendation of the MAUC in the future.
- Chad Naughton stated that people who are with UNAVCO and PASCAL are treated more like grantees and they are placed in transient housing; however he believes that due to their extended deployments, they should be treated like RPSC folks who are on station for a longer periods of time.
 - Per Lisa VonFumetti there is no distinction between RPSC or grantees; all housing is assigned based on the point system currently in place.
 - Al Martin will discuss the point system with George Blaisdell.

Science Cargo (flight weights; sample shipments) (Michael Davis)

- Michael Davis stated there are no new requirements about weighing cargo for flights.
- Stacy Kim mentioned that in previous years grantees have been able to use standardized cargo weight lists for flight manifests; however last season a grantee was told that these lists are no longer available and that they had to weigh their own cargo, which gets to be difficult at times.
 - Per Michael Davis there has never been a standardized list. Science cargo weighs every item individually including snowmobiles, generators, etc.

- Michael Davis also noted that the outside scale did not work properly last year which made this difficult to do; however the scale is being repaired now and will be operable this season.
- Sridhar Anandkrishnan suggested that it would be nice to be able to ship cargo directly to the field from his home institution
 - Michael Davis explained that they tried this at WAIS Divide one year and it did not work very well; however they are trying it again with cargo for PIG camp this season. The cargo will be assigned a TCN in Port Hueneme and sent directly to Byrd camp and then traversed to PIG.
 - Depending on the outcome, this approach may be expanded to other shipments in the future.
- Regarding a sample shipment failure last season, Michael Davis provided the following information:
 - Last year the cargo department handled the greatest number of sample shipments in the past 12 years.
 - Samples shipments are prioritized based on need and items marked as “live sample” have always been top priority and get shipped right away; however there has been no official designation for this in the MOCHA system.
 - They have added a new button in MOCHA titled “live” now to capture this information correctly.
 - Entering this information into MOCHA will ensure that this information is available for all parties to review, and it will produce the documentation required to ensure the proper handling and processing of all live samples.
 - Michael Davis emphasized that he continues to strive for a 100% success rate with all of their sample shipments – “to be perfect with every shipment.”

Grantee Cargo Storage and Staging Space (Dave Nelson)

- Dave Nelson stated that building 156 will be available in the near future for grantee cargo storage and staging space.
 - The area which will be used for this has been remodeled as a single large open space.
 - Security issues related to government regulations for warehouse space will dictate how this space can be used initially until a physical separation between ANG and science space has been constructed. This building modification should be complete at the start of main body and will allow the space to be used as overflow storage space for science projects.
 - A New Project Proposal (NPP) is required to fund the additional modifications required to allow the open space to be used as a staging area for science. This second phase effort will be completed by the new contractor and will include installing a bathroom, providing garage access, benches and shelving, and upgrading the power distribution in the open space.

Video Conferencing (Karen Joyce, Ross Rutherford)

- Currently there is 20 MB of bandwidth available for this and NSF policy requires that a request for Skype be included in the project SIP.
- If Skype is indicated in the SIP, then it is approved for use.
 - Ross Rutherford explained that typically NSF approves other types of conferencing in addition to Skype provided these are also identified in the SIP. Once the grantee has made a formal request, then IT will assess supportability on a case to case basis.
 - Stacy Kim suggested it would be nice to have a blanket approval policy for science to use video conferencing for business purposes.
 - Because NSF and RPSC IT are required to track the use of video conferencing, a blanket approval process is not allowed.

McMurdo Vehicle Management Policies (Tony Buchanan)

- Tony Buchanan stated that the SOP for McMurdo vehicle management policies has been submitted to the NSF, and these policies will be very similar to those put into place last year.
 - RPSC has requested that both warm and cold storage space be provided at the vehicle sea ice staging area; however they have not received an answer on this from NSF.
 - Stacy Kim feels that having the capability to rinse and clean gear is an essential requirement for this storage area, along with internet connectivity and 24-hour shuttle service.
 - Per Tony Buchanan, these requirements have not been included in the SOP; however he does recognize that there will be exceptions to the rule barring track vehicle usage in town for these reasons. The exceptions will be granted by the MEC and will be handled by the honor system.
- Once the SOP is approved by the NSF, it will be distributed to the grantee community, and a fuel tank will be positioned on the sea ice for refueling the track vehicles.
- Steve Kottmeier stated that a request to reopen the VXE6 road is included in the RPSC track vehicle management plan currently under review at NSF. This road will access the sea ice below the helicopter hanger and phase 3 of Crary.

Science Infrastructure Requests collected by RPSC (Leslie Blank)

- Leslie Blank reviewed the list of these requests. This list was distributed to the MAUC members ahead of the meeting and is also uploaded as a supporting document on the usap.gov web site.
- Stacy Kim requested the name(s) for the RPSC point of contact regarding infrastructure issues.
- Steve Kottmeier offered to discuss this with Al Martin and inquire about distributing a contact list for this.
- Al Martin responded that he will have an RPSC org chart made available to the science community on station in pdf format and posted in the Chalet this season.

Informational Updates, New Topics and Discussion

Christchurch Deployment (Lynn Dormand)

- There are changes to the Christchurch deployment process this season due to the earthquake and continuing aftershocks, and the USAP meet and greet services have been reestablished to help coordinate the deployment effort.
- The Christchurch city center area remains closed.
- Hotel assignments will be made by the contractor.
 - Grantees will still receive an email from Christchurch identifying their hotel and itinerary.
 - DSG will provide hotel rates if you plan to arrive earlier or stay longer and will assist you with your planning, but there may be limitations on what they can do this season compared to past years due to the limited hotel space availability.
- Please bring your own AC adapter to Christchurch as these are no longer standard issue in the hotels.
 - This request will be reiterated in the DSG email that goes out to grantees.
 - There will be a drop box for AC adapters at the CDC to allow folks to share these with other participants, in case someone forgets one.
- DSG has created an emergency card which will be included in all the travel documents you receive from DSG.
- Please check to see that your passport is in good condition well in advance of your deployment date to be sure that it is accepted by the airline upon departure.

Science Cargo Tracking System (Mike Raabe)

- A new science cargo tracking system is being implemented through Polar Ice and will be available later this summer.
- A new position has been funded in Port Hueneme (PTH) to serve as the point of contact for science cargo shipments. This person will identify a TCN for each shipment received in PTH, and will document this on the spreadsheet the grantee has made available to him through the new cargo tracking system.
- The anticipated release date for this cargo tracking system is August 1, 2011.

South Pole Centennial (Bill Coughran)

- This season marks the 100th year anniversary of explorers reaching South Pole.
- There will be several people visiting South Pole in December 2011 for the Norwegian celebration, and in January 2012 for the British celebration.
- Norway hopes to conduct a live broadcast from South Pole station as part of their ceremonies.
- South Pole is also anticipating approximately 100 people arriving on site via private expeditions supported by ALE during the celebration time frame.
- The USAP is not planning to provide fuel support for any of the visiting parties.
- Stacy Kim suggested that the NSF could ask the Norwegians to bring in some fuel to help if there is no icebreaker.

Field Camp Operations (Liz Kauffman, Cara Ferrier)

- There will be eight field camps plus a traverse going out to Pine Island Glacier (PIG) this season.
- Typical opening/closing dates are expected for all camps except Lake Hoare and Lake Bonney. These are opening a week later than usual; however this slight delay should have no impact on the science projects deploying to these camps.
- KBA support for USAP this season will include four Utility Twin Otters, one Survey Otter for CREsis, and one Basler, plus additional Basler time on a second aircraft early in the season which will support Antarctica NZ program activities.
- Liz Kauffman noted that flight support for this coming season will be busy, but manageable.
- Susie Lyons noted that helicopter activities will commence in early October, and that two A-Stars dedicated to the PIG project will depart McMurdo for the field in early December and return ~ January 26th.
- Regarding flight operations and weather forecasts - Sridhar Anandakrishnan asked if there is a better way to utilize historical information in weather forecasts than is currently employed.
 - Per Liz Kauffman, this is a question for SPAWAR.
 - Liz also advised that field records tying weather forecasts to flight operations data is useful information for groups to present at their outbriefs when discussing their concerns about the weather service. She will reiterate this during her presentation at science in-briefs this season.
 - Mike Carmody added that weather observations collected from the field provide ground truth for the forecasts, and noted that weather observers also use other tools along with these observations for building their weather forecasts.
- The MAUC committee requested that flight determinations not be based exclusively on morning weather forecasts for areas of the Antarctic that predictably have better weather in the afternoon and evening time periods.
- Liz Kauffman explained that crew-day calculations begin when the crews check weather and that typically there are not enough aircraft crews available to support delayed starts for daily flight operations; however she is willing to consider this on a case-by-case basis. She also noted that weather forecasting is on-going 24/7.

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New Topics/Open Discussion Forum (Stacy Kim)

Automated Weather Stations (Stacy Kim for Matthew Lazzara)

- Stacy Kim requested information from the science community on behalf of Matthew Lazzara and noted that Matthew wants to do what he can to meet the community's needs if possible:
 - Is there a need for additional weather data collection in the McMurdo area?

- How valuable is the historical weather data collected by the existing weather stations?
- Are new weather stations needed, and if so, and at what locations?
- Nikolas Sinkola stated he runs weather stations in McMurdo which collect data in 1 and 3 minute intervals, which Terry Deshler has been using for his balloon launches for many years. He also explained that the Automated Weather Stations installed by Matthew run at 30 min intervals.

Small Boat Operations at McMurdo Station

- Currently no small boat operations are scheduled for this coming season; however the MAUC recommends that a committee be formed to develop standard operating procedures to support small boat operations in McMurdo in the future.
- Brian Johnson noted that input from Palmer and marine operations will be very helpful in assessing the potential for this in the McMurdo area.
- Rob Robbins noted that Antarctica New Zealand currently supports small boat operations at Scott Base.
- Stacy Kim would like to move forward with forming a planning committee to address this need.

Fish Hut Allocations

- Woody Haywood clarified the current process for allocating fish huts to groups has been in place for 10 years.
 - Field support works with the RPSC science planning group to look at long term issues related to fish hut use and to confirm that the allocations assigned to the groups match their SIP requests for this resource. Rob Robbins and Steve Rupp provide additional direction on this if needed.
 - Ongoing grants get priority over new science groups.
 - Science needs are always prioritized ahead of any operational use for this resource; however if fish huts are not needed for science then they will be made available to other departments as needed.
 - If a project's needs are not being met by the fish huts assigned to them, then these allocations will be reassessed once science construction has been made aware of the problem
- Related to alleged problems with fish hut allocations last season, Woody noted that he was not made aware of these potential issues until after the sea ice was closed; therefore he was not able to address these concerns, which was unfortunate.

Single Airfield Operations

- The question was asked if it would be possible to conduct Twin Otter operations from a location closer to McMurdo than Pegasus after the sea ice runway closes.
 - Williams field was proposed as an alternate site by the MAUC; however RPSC clarified that Willy field no longer has the infrastructure to support daily flight operations.
 - RPSC also noted that all airfield operations are directed by NSF.

- MAUC questioned if KBA crew can commute to Pegasus by helo to help off-set the loss of crew hours that results from commuting that distance via ground transport; Liz Kauffman offered to research this further.

Direct Deployment to Antarctic Field Sites

- Stacy Kim stated it would be nice to go directly into the field from New Zealand.
- The MAUC committee would like NSF to investigate the option of direct deployment from New Zealand to the deep field and asked if this is an appropriate topic for consideration by the Blue Ribbon Panel.
- Jessie Crain noted that the committee is being formed now and plans to visit McMurdo after Thanksgiving, and offered to investigate how this item might be added to their agenda.
- Leslie Blank researched Australian Antarctic program aircraft capabilities in response to a 2010 MAUC suggestion regarding direct deployments to the deep field from NZ and Australia and noted that currently AAD or USAP aircraft do not have the range and landing capabilities to deploy directly to the field from these locations.
- Stacy Kim requested additional information from RPSC on aircraft capabilities and USAP program requirements for deep field operations including the number of science projects working in the deep field and the volume and weight of their cargo.
- RPSC noted that a record of flight operations in/out of established deep field camp may include this information and Dave Nelson offered to work with Michael Davis and Liz Kauffman to research this further.
- Diana Wall noted that the NRC report may also address this issue of direct deployment to the field, and suggested that the MAUC review this report before approaching the Blue Ribbon panel.

Batteries for Communication Equipment

- The MAUC noted that there are performance issues with many of the different types of batteries associated with field communication equipment
- Kelley Speelman noted that old batteries are being replaced by ones with higher storage capacity whenever possible, and that different types of radios are available to help meet this need as well.
- Kelley also noted that all iridium phones of the same type should use the same batteries, and that a system for reconditioning these batteries has been put in place by Joe Harrigan.

SIP Information and USAP Medical Narrative Form

- The MAUC noted that it would be helpful if their selection of certain items in the BFC section of the SIP triggered automatic reminders to order associated materials - similar to what happens with other on line ordering programs such as

Amazon.com. They were advised to send any suggestions they have for improving Polar Ice to Leslie Blank.

- The MAUC also noted it would be helpful to understand the purpose of any additional requests for information outside of the SIP required by the contractor, particularly in regards to the new Medical Narrative form requirement.
- Dr. Freer stated the new medical narrative forms are required to address issues of accountability relating to the narcotics they contain, and to allow Medical to tailor the contents of the kits to the group's specific needs.

Communication Plan: Transition to the New Antarctic Support Contractor

- Steve Kottmeier noted that NSF OPP will be handling communications with the science community regarding the support contract transition.
- The end of the RPSC support contract is 31 March 2012.
- The MAUC committee noted they would like for the transition process to be as transparent as possible and feel that information related to the transition should be disseminated via email and web-based communications if possible.

MAUC Committee Business and Wrap-Up (Stacy Kim)

2011 Recommendation Review

- Sridhar Anandkrishnan suggested that requesting clarification on the required level of support for deep field projects is a priority for the MAUC.
- A short summary of other MAUC priorities include:
 - Purchase of new software for managing McMurdo housing
 - Continuing to work on storage and staging space issues
 - Streamlining on-ice trainings and making all required training videos available off-ice
 - Addressing crew day requirements for Twin Otter pilots operating from Pegasus
 - Better communication options for relaying USAP information to the grantee community

New Membership

- Organisms and Ecosystems representative will be Adam Marsh (replacing Stacy Kim)
- Organisms and Ecosystems LTER: Mike Goseff will replace Diana Wall
- Aeronomy and Astrophysics: Steffan Koutu will replace Steve Barwick
- Matthew Lazzara will replace Stacy Kim as the MAUC committee chair for the next three years
- It was suggested that someone from UNAVCO and/or PASCAL participate on the MAUC, and Sridhar Anandkrishnan suggested Joe Pettit fill this position.

Next Meeting(s)

- Suggested date for the 2012 Annual meeting - June 2012.

- Suggested date for the 2011 ad hoc MAUC - November 2011 with Matt Lazzara