

McMurdo Area User Committee (MAUC)
Annual Teleconference
4 September 2012

Attendees:

MAUC Members*:

Matthew Lazzara, Chair
Stacy Kim, ex-Officio
Stephane Coutu
Mike Gooseff
Paul Morin
Joe Pettit
Frank Rack
Leigh Stearns

National Science

Foundation:

Scott Borg
Alex Isern
Peter Milne
Vladimir Papitashvili
James Swift

Lockheed Martin

Antarctic Support

Contractor:

John Rand, MAUC POC
Ester Hill
Debra Roth
Samina Ouda
Beth Watson
Cara Sucher

*Not in attendance, MAUC members: Adam Marsh and Jeff Severinghaus

1. Introductory Comments by Scott Borg

- Comments on input to the contractor via the User committees:
 - Avenues of input from the community to the contractor are not inherited from the old contract.
 - Dialog with the community now, with a specific plan later.
 - The User committees have worked in the past, the process has broken down at times, and NSF has been too close at times.
- NSF desires continued good communication during this transition process.
- Reminder that topics that comment directly on the NSF and NSF policy should be directed to the NSF Office of Polar Program's Advisory Committee. (This group welcomes community input.) The MAUC is to provide comments and suggestions to the what?
- Question on Blue Ribbon Panel comments – this should be directed to the NSF OPP Advisory Committee.
- Comment on prioritization of issues, providing information to the community (teleconference, e-mail, etc.) and similar activity are roles for the MAUC. This is useful and may be looked into further.
- Question – is there a response from NSF OPP on the Blue Ribbon Panel? Not yet, but there will be (and from the NRC study as well). Comments to the NSF OPP Advisory Committee are encouraged here as well.

2. Introductory Comments by Esther Hill

- Denoting the new manager, new contract and seeking the best way to take input and best support for science.

- New e-mail listserv for the community is in the works.
- Discussion of the on-ice POC vs. the Planners now in DC.
- Denoting the exact resources to fit the requests in the SIPs (so no GA pool, etc.).
- Items on the agenda – not all of the contractors mentioned are working for the contractor at this time or are on this telecom.
- Considering changing the User committee input method to go to a working group/subcommittee working on targeted items...with overall feedback from the whole community. Overall, a new structure in a month or two will emerge, as the current contractor is not bound by existing charters.
- Discussion on how no GA pool will add to the size of science teams. The staffing plan will evolve with what is working.
- Discussion on the best way to reach out to the community with changes.

3. Discussion of prior/on-going topics (moderated by Matthew Lazzara)

Housing

The MAUC members consider connectivity within the dorms assigned to grantees to be a significant concern. Status and implementation of the new housing policy are of concern, including overcrowding (more people than rooms are intended for, not enough internet access (wired or better yet, wireless), insufficient bathroom/shower capacity to accommodate the overcrowding, etc.).

Staging Space

Lack of appropriate staging space remains an area of top concern for MAUC. Fire and life safety considerations limit the usefulness (number of building occupants) of the ongoing alterations to Bldg 156. Outcomes of future initiatives to consolidate warehousing, and infrastructure improvements, in response to the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations, are likely to offer the most likely avenues of relief. Hence use of Bldg. 156 for a few projects for a few years is a limited, interim solution until the warehouse consolidation provides more space options for a more long-term solution. Bldg 156 may be available at the earliest in 2013-2014 season for interim use.

Tracked Vehicles

ASC informed the committee that alteration of the piping in front of the Gym/Helo Hangar building is scheduled to be completed during the upcoming season, with roadway improvements to follow. This initiative will allow vehicles in town to drive directly to the sea ice transition.

Training

MAUC continues to be interested in limiting the training in McMurdo and have it on-line, or in the US or Christchurch to limit the length of online time/in McMurdo grantees require. No other discussion.

Management Structure

The MAUC requested that ASC organizational structure and staff responsibilities information be posted online somewhere accessible.

Sea Ice Regulations

The MAUC recognizes the change in conditions at McMurdo. The committee suggested that a review and update of the use policies are in order, taking into account research and studies done by CRREL, and others. As a note one MAUC member is deploying her own Sea Ice Safety person, at extra cost to NSF.

Community Space

No discussion.

IT-video Conferencing

The MAUC noted that video-communication capability from McMurdo, such as Skype, is very useful, beyond traditional educational outreach. It has application in research teams having successful field seasons, etc. As a note, teleconferencing to McMurdo is not very good, but Internet options like Skype seem to be better.

Airfield Transportation/Shuttles

The MAUC noted the need for vehicle transport of persons and cargo throughout town and nearby destinations. It was recognized that policies and processes for the upcoming season are still a work in progress. Also mentioned was a policy of no longer building sea-ice runways in the future, but to use exclusively the Pegasus field facilities for air operations.

SIP Forms

No discussion

Small Boat Ops

Also recognized as a work in progress, with McMurdo area policies and procedures probably most in need of additional work.

PQ Process

Difficulties associated with implementation of the new processes were noted, especially that it was slow at first unless you were due to deploy during WINFLY. Since then the process should be improving. Contact your POC if there are any issues.

Direct Deployment

Further discussion of this topic was deferred to direct contacts between the grantee community and NSF staff, via a more formal NSF Advisory committee.

PolarIce Improvements

The committee recommended that the development of additional resources to assist investigators, particularly new investigators, would be useful. There was some additional discussion on NSF Early Career Webinars, planned revamped solicitation for the Antarctic Call – more clear, what to include and not include, work flow web site, etc.

4. Discussion of new topics (moderated by Matthew Lazzara)

Instrumentation

The MAUC discussed making community instrumentation recommendations. Specific discussion was with regards to a request for a Flow Cytometer for B-247. Apparently there are two on the research vessels, and the NSF will look into the availability of these to the McMurdo Area users.

Additional questions

- Impact from more groups accessing the Ross Sea area (e.g. Norwegian group) was discussed. It was felt this wasn't a specific problem, however NSF did advise the science community to have great care when approached by an NGO wishing to partner with them. NSF requests to be advised of such activities.

- MAUC Chair requesting contact list of our constituents from ASC. This will allow MAUC members to keep in touch with the various communities each MAUC member represents.
- Ex. Officio request for input to contractor – from our constituents... Esther welcomed input from the community.

5. Summary/concluding remarks (moderated by Matthew Lazzara)

Thanks to all participants! No ad hoc MAUC will be planned at this time, pending the plans the ASC in re-organizing input from the community.