

Palmer Area Users Committee (PAUC)

Recommendations from the Annual Meeting 13 June 2006

The full meeting report is available online at
<http://www.usap.gov/conferencesCommitteesAndWorkshops/userCommittees>

Recommendations

Lab Noise

After replacing the ventilation fans, RPSC measured noise levels in the labs, which were below OSHA thresholds for a safe working environment. However, scientists have still noted high levels of background noise, including mechanical noise, music and equipment noise from other groups, etc., which is sufficiently distracting and annoying at times to make it difficult to work.

Recommendation #1

RPSC will perform a preliminary assessment of options for further reducing noise in the Palmer labs, to be reviewed with the NSF. The PAUC will be informed of any possible changes to the labs.

NSF Response: Musical noise is a human management issue. The NSF will consider recommendations to reduce noise, but will not remodel laboratories extensively.

Terra Lab

The BSI UV monitoring equipment was moved into the Terra Lab annex. A number of improvements in the design and construction of the annex have been suggested by BSI and RPSC for safety, ease of maintenance, and improved instrument performance. These include changes to the outside ladder and deck, rooftop surface, and internal instrument access. Additionally, an air sampling mast is required for transition of the Keeling project to the Terra Lab.

Recommendation #2

RPSC will write up Configuration Change Requests or Minor Project Proposals for submission to the NSF to address science requested changes to the Terra Lab.

NSF Response:

The NSF requests further background on the Keeling air sampling mast requirement. NSF will review RPSC's Configuration Change Requests or Minor Project Proposals for safety access.

Seawater Intake Maintenance

Background

Grantees have expressed concern about the reliability of the seawater intake system. Maintenance for the ocean side of the system has been irregular. RPSC performed major maintenance this past season and currently both seawater intakes are in good shape. Procedures for the shore side of the system are in place and appear to be functioning well.

Recommendation #3

RPSC (Steve Wickins) will work with grantees (Langdon Quetin) to review existing maintenance procedures for seawater intakes at other marine laboratories. RPSC will then establish a suitable maintenance procedure for the Palmer Station seawater intakes.

NSF Response: NSF concurs.

ARSV re-bid update

Background

The Antarctic Research and Supply Vessel contract expires in January 2008. An advisory committee of science users has been formed to help RPSC and NSF develop technical specifications to be put in the request for proposals prior to re-competing the contract, and input is being solicited from the entire community of ARSV users.

Recommendation #4

RPSC will establish a web site to solicit feedback and inform the community of the status of the ARSV re-bid project.

Note: the web forum has been established at:

<http://www.usap.gov/vesselScienceAndOperations/arsvsection.cfm>

NSF Response: NSF concurs. NSF supports the contract extension of the LMG at the convenience of the government. For the ARSV project RPSC is directed to not grow the vessel; the vessel is to remain basically a resupply vessel with some research capability (e.g. LTER annual cruise).

New PI Orientation/Information for Palmer Station

Background

Grantees have noted that even with currently available materials (e.g. USAP Participant guide, Field Manual, POLAR ICE SIP help) it is very difficult for a new PI without experience at Palmer Station to plan for the working and living environment. RPSC discussed potential additional resources, such as: virtual tours of station, equipment photo archive, station plan, "life at Palmer" synopsis; and methods for information distribution such as email or the usap.gov web portal.

PAUC noted the possible value of an experienced PI from a similar discipline as a mentor to new PIs.

Recommendation #5

RPSC Palmer staff will review available resources and requirements for inclusion in the USAP web portal, then provide a short summary of options to the NSF. As new investigators are funded, RPSC will request potential PI mentors from PAUC.

NSF Response: NSF concurs. RPSC should use the Palmer Station web portal as a beta test for other stations. RPSC should include Kim Silverman as a key stakeholder in this effort.

South Anvers Island ASMA

Background

The South Anvers Island area is being considered for submittal as an Antarctic Specially Managed Area. A draft proposal is currently being written by Colin Harris based on previous input from grantees and the NSF; its' current status was discussed by Bill Fraser and the PAUC.

Recommendation #6

Bill Fraser will be the lead person for PAUC regarding the draft ASMA, and will distribute an updated draft to the PAUC as it becomes available.

NSF Response: NSF concurs.

Meteorology

Background

RPSC updated the PAUC on the status of Palmer area weather data collection systems. The PALMOS (main Palmer weather station) has recurring problems with the optical sensors, which may require relocation. The AWS (part of the network of automated antarctic stations) at RACER Rock and at Hugo Island are currently not functioning, but replacement systems are in the queue at U. Wisc. Science input is needed for the prioritization and support of these maintenance tasks.

Recommendation #7

A meteorology working group was formed to include Kathie Hill (RPSC), Germar Bernhard (PAUC), and Langdon Quetin (PAUC). The working group will solicit science community input to prioritize Peninsula Marine AWS maintenance as well as the possible relocation of PALMOS optical sensors.

NSF Response: NSF concurs and looks for RPSC to update with status (e.g. establish milestone dates).

Diving/Boating

Background

RPSC provided updates to the PAUC on diving support. USAP dive safety and operations are governed by the Scientific Diving Control Board, which met recently. A topic of particular interest was the safety of diving in areas with leopard seals, as well as equipment availability and maintenance. Palmer dive support is operating within current SCDB regulations; equipment and

the dive compressor have undergone recent inspection and maintenance.

Grantees expressed concern about boating orientation and training, which does not always take into account different levels of experience and skill of researchers. RPSC noted that procedures for boat training are already established to account for experience level.

Recommendation #8

A diving/boating working group was formed to include Rob Robbins (RPSC), Tracey Baldwin (RPSC), Bill Baker (PAUC), Langdon Quetin (PAUC), and Bill Fraser (PAUC). RPSC will provide a list of all known dive sites in the Palmer Area. RPSC will research the options for procuring and using larger tanks than currently available. RPSC will review boat training procedures and guidelines to Boating Coordinators to ensure all researchers receive appropriate levels of training.

NSF Response: NSF requests clarification of what the diving/boating working group are tasked to achieve. NSF requests RPSC clarify to the NSF the procedures and guidelines being reviewed as a term of reference.

Scientific Equipment

Background

Scientific equipment available both at Palmer and on the vessels has not kept up with lifecycle replacement plans over the last few years because of insufficient funds. In some cases there are also insufficient backups and overlapping requests for limited equipment.

Recommendation #9

RPSC (Tracey Baldwin, Steffi Suhr) will work with PAUC (Bruce Sidell) to provide science input to the Peninsula equipment inventory and lifecycle replacement plan. Recommended priorities will be forwarded to the NSF (Roberta Marinelli, Al Sutherland).

NSF Response: NSF concurs.

Committee Business

Background

Current committee member terms are out of cycle, and in some cases overextended. PAUC also would like to establish a tentative recurring annual meeting date.

Recommendation #10

PAUC will establish a membership rotation for existing members, and suggested replacements to RPSC, who will inform the NSF. Tentative date for next year's meeting is 12 June, 2007.

NSF Response: NSF concurs.