McMurdo Area User Committee (MAUC) Annual Meeting Report

Thursday, July 21, 2011 (Teleconference)

The MAUC charter states that MAUC meeting reports will contain the following information in this order:

1. Topics and recommendations of the committees

2. List of attendees and their contact information

The 2011 MAUC Annual Meeting Minutes are also available as a supporting document on the USAP web site.

1. Topics and Recommendations

Meeting Topics – listed in order of presentation

NSF information presented by Jessie Crain

- USAP Support Contract award status
- NSF staffing
- Blue Ribbon Panel
- Oden icebreaker update

NSF information presented by Scott Borg and Brian Stone

- Additional icebreaker updates and fuel conservation information

Contractor information presented by Sam Feola

- Contract transition
- Christchurch deployment

Review of 2010 annual and ad hoc MAUC meeting topics by presenter

- NSF medical PQ requirements – Jessie Crain for Polly Penhale
- Trainings (off-ice and online) – Brian Johnson and Jim Karcher
- Volunteer Pool(s) – Brian Johnson and Al Martin
- Housing (advisory committee and internet access) – Lisa VonFumetti and Al Martin
- Science Cargo (flight weights and sample shipments) – Michael Davis
- Grantee Cargo Storage and Staging Space – Dave Nelson
- Video Conferencing – Karen Joyce and Ross Rutherford
- McMurdo Vehicle Management Policies – Tony Buchanan
- Science Infrastructure Requests – Leslie Blank, Steve Kottmeier, and Al Martin

Informational Updates

- Christchurch Deployment – Lynn Dormand
- Science Cargo Tracking System – Michael Raabe
- South Pole Centennial – Bill Coughran
- Deep Field Camp Operations – Cara Ferrier, Liz Kauffman, and Susie Lyons

New Topics

- Automated Weather Stations – Stacy Kim for Matthew Lazzara
- Small Boat Operations at McMurdo Station – Brian Johnson, Rob Robbins, and Al Martin
- Fish Hut Allocations – Woody Haywood
- Transition Communication Plan – Steve Kottmeier

New Topics/Open Discussion Forum

- Single Airfield Operations
- Direct Deployment from Christchurch NZ to USAP Antarctic Field Sites
- Communication Equipment Battery Life
- SIP Information and USAP Medical Narrative Form

MAUC Committee Business and Wrap-Up by Stacy Kim

- 2011 Recommendation Review
- New Membership
- Next Meeting Dates

MAUC Recommendations 2011

1. Communication

Enhanced communication and transparency are the highest priority items for improving science support at McMurdo. Changes in standard operating procedures, regulations, plans for future developments, etc. are currently poorly communicated to scientists. Changes that are presented within days of implementation, or after the fact, make planning by researchers a very difficult task. **We recommend that a web page and notification email list be developed and consistently utilized.** Prior warning will allow science input during the development process, and eliminate disagreeable surprises and consequent unpleasant responses. Improved communication plays a large role in many of the following recommendations as well. The web page and email list could be developed and implemented as part of the transition process that is now planned, and continued by the new contractor.

2. Field camp size

Currently once the SIP is submitted the contractor defines the scope of the field camp support without further input from the scientists. This commonly leads to deep field camps that are larger then expected, or perceived to be necessary, by the science teams.

We recommend that the scope of support needed for field camps be clarified in discussion among scientists, NSF, and contractor. We suggest that the NSF and the contractor craft a process in which the consequences (on the ground) of listed science requirements are laid out and the scientists can scale requirements accordingly. In addition, scientists will understand the reasons for the scope. If all interested parties can iterate, the outcome will be more satisfactory. This will require more time and money at the front end but would reduce costs and misunderstandings down the road, and make camp sizes correct for the science goals. For example, fuel use for LC-130 flights could be decreased by relaxing the requirement that temporary shelters at deep field camps conform to building and electrical codes that apply to permanent structures in the continental United States. This requirement in the past has resulted in wasteful and unnecessary deployment of contractor staff and cargo to deep field camps, and has delayed or prevented science from taking place. Instead we recommend a risk-management approach to insuring safety. A possible part of the solution is to grant the Chief Scientist partial authority or approval over the numbers of staff that are deployed to the field camp, averting the need for NSF reps to be cognizant of all the details in a large program with multiple deep field camps, and enabling them to minimize the competition for transportation that arises in an unnecessarily large field camp.

3. Housing

Housing policy is still in flux, and the revised guidelines being submitted to NSF this month were again crafted without science input. We previously recommended that housing rules include scientists and not just be relevant for contractors, and that a committee that includes scientists be formed to draft the new policy. Some of the problems that arise come from selective application of the existing rules, as well as confusion over what the rules are. **We recommend that the housing policy adopted consider science needs as well as contractor requirements, that it is adhered to by the contractor and that it is easily publically accessible so that expectations are reasonable.** At Pole, where environmental conditions are more extreme than McMurdo, temporary housing is successfully utilized to ease population pressures. **We also recommend that temporary shelters be allowed at McMurdo when the station is experiencing crowded conditions.** Other specific areas of concern are internet availability in spaces used for work by scientists, which includes dorm rooms and lounges, and priority use of lounges for work activities. It is clear that the software currently used to support housing planning and tracking is antiquated and inappropriate for the job, and we suggest that purchase and support of specialized software be approved to minimize opportunities for error and client dissatisfaction. We suggest that housing agreements with subcontractors and ANG be modified to alleviate overall McMurdo housing pressures. We note that the housing issue is long standing and temporary fixes are absolutely required but a long term solution should also be sought.

4. Staging space

Good progress has been made on increasing staging space for research. Unfortunately, the project will not be completed during RPSC's tenure and is now at risk of being reassigned for other uses. **We recommend that RPSC continue to work diligently to**

advance this project as far as possible, and that during the transition emphasize to the new contractor the importance of completing this project as soon as possible. Increased staging space remains a very high priority for improving science support at McMurdo.

5. Tracked vehicles

A proposal has been submitted to NSF for tracked vehicle parking on the sea ice, storage, and fueling capabilities. We have previously noted that most science activities will require exceptions to this because of the weight and required maintenance of scientific equipment, and 24 hour activities that are not served by the existing shuttle service. However, we recognize the need to reduce dust impacts on electronic vehicle components. **We continue with our recommendation to build a bridge over the bond strand.** We strongly support the proposal that will be put forward to reopen the old VXE6 road, and will accomplish this.

6. Training

Currently training at McMurdo takes up to a week for each person. Multiply this by the more than 1000 residents and transients and the time required for these trainings is a significant addition to the already overburdened housing situation at McMurdo. **We recommend streamlining the training process to increase efficiency and cut costs, without compromising safety.** Trainings required should take into account recent experience in environments such as the Arctic and other areas of Antarctica, and the option of testing out should be considered. And as suggested last year, many of the training sessions in McMurdo are no more than watching existing videos or PowerPoint presentations, which can be easily and immediately be placed online or shown in Christchurch. A partial list includes trash sorting, outdoor safety lecture, drivers training, dry valleys, and helicopters. The cost of implementing this can be weighed against the cost of all those extra nights for personnel in McMurdo. Where appropriate, additional optional training such as forklift (pickle) could be made available to minimize the wait for trained personnel.

7. Small Boat Ops

Changing research methods have raised the need for small boat ops out of McMurdo (from the ice edge). There is a need to formulate a plan to do this safely and without undue restrictions that happen with a last minute approach. **We recommend forming a committee to develop and submit a plan to NSF for approval.** Suggested committee members include Rob Robbins (chair), Walker Smith, Steve Rupp, Brian Johnson, and personnel from Marine Ops, Palmer, and Scott Base who have had experience with boating in McMurdo Sound as part of the New Zealand research program.

8. PQ process

Medical screening guidelines were updated in 2010 and will be revised again next year to reflect a risk-based approach. Changes are often not communicated to grantees with sufficient lead time to plan appropriately. As we noted in the 2010 recommendations, personnel, including PIs and techs, are often selected years before deployment. **We recommended public posting of the PQ guidelines so that potential science personnel**

can be assessed appropriately. We also suggest that a grandfathering clause be included so that adequate time for planning is an integral part of the process.

9. IT – video conferencing
Skype (or other video conferencing) is now available for use by request in the SIP; this progress is commendable. Video conferencing has become a very common method of communication and collaboration for science groups. **We recommend that Skype be considered general science use and not require special requests and justification.** This will minorly streamline the already large effort required for filling out the SIP. To overcome the current limitations, POCs should always recommend that grantees request Skype use. IT does not track current usage so no useful data on usage frequency is available.

10. Direct deployment
Large deep field camps supported out of McMurdo are becoming more and more common. This shift in science methodology requires a fresh look at how to best support them. **We recommend that direct-from-New Zealand deployments to some bases in the deep field be explored.** This would require additions to the existing USAP air capabilities. However, bypassing McMurdo would help with overcrowding and reduce time of deployment. It would also require staging some of the BFC gear in Christchurch, further freeing up much needed space at McMurdo. It could possibly help alleviate use of McMurdo as an airport for the approximately 260 fuel flights to Pole. This could become more critical with the limited icebreaking capabilities now facing the USAP; the more operations that can be moved to Christchurch the less dependent we are on the limiting icebreaker resource.

2. List of Attendees and Contact Information

Presenters:

Science	Stacy Kim	MAUC Chair
NSF	Scott Borg	ANT Division Director
NSF	Jessie Crain	AIL Research Support Manager
NSF	Brain Stone	AIL Division Director
RPSC	Leslie Blank	Planning Support Manager
RPSC	Tony Buchanan	Supervisor, Mechanical Equipment Center
RPSC	Bill Coughran	South Pole Area Manager
RPSC	Michael Davis	Supervisor USAP Cargo
RPSC	Lynn Dormand	Manager, Deployment Specialist Group
RPSC	Sam Feola	Program Director
RPSC	Cara Ferrier	Assistant Manager of Field Support
NANA	Lisa von Fumetti	General Manager, Station Services
RPSC	John Haywood	FEMC Science Construction Manager
RPSC	Karen Hilton	Supervisor, Field Safety
RPSC	Brian Johnson	Manager, Field Science Support

RPSC	Karen Joyce	IT Manager Crary Lab
RPSC	Liz Kauffman	Aviation Operations Supervisor
RPSC	Steve Kottmeier	Director, Science Support
RPSC	Susie Lyons	Supervisor, Helicopter Operations
RPSC	Al Martin	Area Director, McMurdo
RPSC	David Nelson	Manager, Science Operations
RPSC	Michael Raabe	USAP Logistics Manager
RPSC	Kelly Speelman	RF Engineer

Attendees

MAUC Members

			Contact Information
Stacy Kim, Chair	Organisms & Ecosystems	California State University	skim@mlml.calstate.edu
Steve Barwick	Aeronomy & Astrophysics	University of California at Irvine	barwick@cosmic.ps.uci.edu
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Frank Rack	Earth Sciences	University of Nebraska, Lincoln	frack2@unl.edu
Jeff Severinghaus	Glaciology	Scripps Institution of Oceanography	jseveringhaus@ucsd.edu
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Scott Borg	Brian Stone	Polly Penhale
Jessie Crain	Alex Isern	

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Leslie Blank	Cara Ferrier	Al Martin
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Michael Carmody	Kevin Gibbons	David Nelson
Brian Connell	John Haywood	Samina Ouda
Bill Coughran	Karen Hilton	Michael Raabe
Michael Davis	Brian Johnson	Rob Robbins
Ted Doer	Karen Joyce	Deborah Roth
Lynn Dormand	Liz Kauffman	Steve Rupp
Tom Ellis	Steve Kottmeier	Ross Rutherford
Sam Feola	Susie Lyons	Kelly Speelman