



SCAR Sub-Group

AG Geological
Heritage and
Geoconservation

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Person
Responsible:

Kevin Hughes

SCAR Executive Committee Meeting 2019

Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 29-31 July 2019

Action Group on Geological Heritage and Geoconservation 2018-19 Report

Chair: Marcelo Reguero
Vice-chair: Luis Carcavilla
Secretary: Kevin A. Hughes

Introduction

In 2014, the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) (i) noted that relatively few Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) have been designated to protect geological features primarily, (ii) acknowledged the importance of guaranteeing protection of geological values, and (iii) welcomed further discussion on the matter. The issue of 'Protection of outstanding geological values' was placed on the CEP Five-Year Work Plan to consider further mechanisms for conservation and protection of outstanding geological values, including advice from SCAR. In response, SCAR established the Action Group on Geological Heritage and Geoconservation under the SCAR Geosciences Group, which was charged with considering the systematic protection of geological values.

The Action Group outputs have been the base for the following SC-ATS policy outputs on this issue to CEP:

- ATCM XXXIX IP31. (2016). *Antarctic Geoconservation: a review of current systems and practices*. This paper explored the threats and existing mechanisms for protection of Antarctic geological values.
- ATCM XLII IP50. (2019). *Draft SCAR Code of Conduct on Geosciences Field Research Activities in Antarctica*. This paper asks CEP Members to consider and provide feedback on a draft Code of Conduct intended to help geoscientists minimize the environmental impact of their fieldwork.

In addition to the outputs listed above, and in response to the request for advice on the protection of geological values from the CEP, the Action Group has almost finalised the development of a methodology for identifying and classifying features of potential geological heritage value within the Treaty area. The methodology is based largely on existing methods used to identify geological heritage in other parts of the world, but adapted to the unique circumstances found within the Antarctic Treaty area. It should be noted that an aim of this work is ensure future scientific research is not inhibited, but rather, that the scientific and intrinsic values of geological sites are identified and preserved for future researchers, as appropriate.

Next steps

It is essential that SC-ATS and the Action Group work closely over the coming year to ensure effective delivery of policy advice on protection of Antarctic geological values to CEP. It is intended that several further outputs should be submitted to CEP XXXIII in 2020:

1. The List of National Repositories Housing Antarctic Geological and Palaeontological Specimens
2. The SCAR Code of Conduct on Geosciences Field Research Activities in Antarctica
The Code of Conduct should be finalised, taking into consideration comments from CEP Members, then submitted to CEP XXXIII for possible endorsement by the ATCM through Resolution.
3. The finalised Proposed Methodology for the Identification of Antarctic Geological Heritage Subject to approval of the proposed methodology by CEP, SCAR may be well-placed to deliver advice on elements of the methodology to the Committee. However, carrying out this work, on an on-going basis, would likely involve the establishment of a SCAR Expert Group under the SCAR Geosciences Group, which would be subject to SCAR Delegates approval.

SC-ATS endorses the submission of these outputs. However, the resource implications of potentially establishing a SCAR Expert Group to implement the proposed methodology for the identification of Antarctic Geological Heritage should be noted. Should the CEP see merit in the proposed methodology, following its consideration of the SCAR submission detailing the methodology submitted to CEP XXXIII in 2020, SC-ATS propose that a paper be submitted to the SCAR Delegates meeting in Hobart (August 2020), through the Geosciences Scientific Group, proposing the establishment of an Expert Group to implement the methodology and provide appropriate advice to CEP. While the Expert Group would be proposed under the Geosciences Group the nature of the work would require working closely with SC-ATS, facilitated through the SC-ATS Chief Officer and the Geosciences Group representative on SC-ATS.

Between now and the Hobart meeting in 2020, SC-ATS will work closely with the Action Group on Geological Heritage and Geoconservation to support this work and to further test the methodology that has been developed to identify sites of outstanding Geological Heritage.

Optional additional information

Updates for your group's SCAR web page

Please update the Action Group leadership in the webpage:

<https://www.scar.org/science/geoconservation/geoconservation-members/>

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Notable Papers

Carson, C. J., Atkins, C. B., Hughes, K. A., and Reguero, M. A. (2018). Protecting Antarctica's geological heritage. *Antarctic Science* 30: 1.