



IP 7

Agenda Item: 5.2

Person Responsible: S.L. Chown

EXCOM 2013

Barcelona, Spain 22/23rd July 2013

Antarctic Conservation for the 21st Century – A Comprehensive Strategy

Executive Summary

Title: The Antarctic Conservation Strategy

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Introduction/ Background: In recognition of growing use of and environmental threats to Antarctica, as well as something of a piecemeal approach to SCAR concerning various conservation threats, a proposal was made to the SCAR Delegates for a major activity to develop a Conservation Strategy for Antarctica. The last comprehensive approach was the IUCN/SCAR Antarctic Conservation Strategy that predated the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Important Issues or Factors: A comprehensive modern, evidence-based strategy for Antarctic Conservation is not available. This is a substantial problem for conservation of the continent based on the best science. Development of the strategy will also identify knowledge gaps that SCAR could help fill as part of its vision to re-assert international leadership in Antarctic science.

Recommendations/Actions and Justification: SCAR continues to take the lead here in this collaboration with various partners including Antarctica New Zealand, COMNAP, Monash University, British Antarctic Survey and South Africa.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes: A comprehensive conservation strategy that identifies conservation threats, establishes ways to deal effectively with them, and highlights science requirements for effective conservation of the region.

Partners: Antarctica New Zealand, Monash University (PolarWorks), COMNAP, British Antarctic Survey.

Budget Implications: Through its partners, SCAR has managed to leverage substantial funding. This has included contributions from New Zealand and South Africa, as well as personally from S.L. Chown from Martha T. Muse award funds for the 2011 Antarctic Conservation Horizon Scanning Meeting, and has further obtained contributions from Antarctica New Zealand and COMNAP for the development of the strategy and for additional workshops. An amount of \$ 100 000 is committed for 2013 and a similar amount for 2014. Most of these funds (c. \$ 90 000 p.a.) have been leveraged from outside organizations.

The Antarctic Conservation Strategy

Introduction

A modern, evidence-based conservation strategy is not available for the Antarctic. Indeed, the current approach is largely piecemeal, with little integrated assessment of threats or integrated development of appropriate, evidence-based responses. While some of the more major problems are recognized, often they are considered separately rather than part of an interconnected set of challenges.

The Antarctic Conservation Strategy aims to address this substantial gap in current conservation knowledge. It has already begun to do so and this paper provides an overview of activities and of the strategy itself, which is under development. It also provides a timeline for completion of the work.

Progress

To date the following has been achieved

- A Conservation Threats Horizon Scanning meeting was held in South Africa in 2011, financed by SCAR, New Zealand, South Africa, and S.L. Chown. It resulted in a paper published in *Science* in 2012 which is appended (Appendix 1).
- In 2012 the outcomes of that meeting were presented at the Open Science Conference in Portland at a discussion session. They were also presented at a COMNAP Symposium. The outcome of that presentation was agreement by COMNAP to co-sponsor the activity and two meetings.
- Solicitation of support from major partners New Zealand, COMNAP and Monash University to support full-time work on completion of the strategy.
- A review of the conservation biogeography of the Antarctic that will form the basis for conservation planning and biosecurity in the region. The Antarctic Conservation Biogeographic Regions have been adopted by the Antarctic Treaty Parties by means of a resolution. The research paper is also appended here (Appendix 2)
- Work is in progress to deliver the full range of elements of the strategy (a draft contents page is presented in Appendix 3).
- The Antarctic Environments Portal partnership (see IP 8) has been entered into as a vehicle for delivery of the strategy as a whole, though parts thereof will also be delivered through the primary literature and in various papers to the Antarctic Treaty meetings.

Future developments

- In 2013 a small workshop will be held to set out the potential ways in which National Antarctic Programs can address the Conservation Challenges. This will be hosted in Cambridge, supported by BAS, COMNAP and SCAR. The goals of the workshop are: 1. Identify by means of a triage-type approach, those conservation challenges listed in full by Chown et al. (2012, *Science*, supplementary data) that can be addressed, how this can be done and what might be the current most cost-effective means to do so; which challenges are within close range of being addressed, but might be prohibitive from a technical or financial perspective, and which lie outside the scope of being addressed in a local context. 2. Set out clearly a list of priority actions for national Antarctic programs and others operating in the Antarctic region to take to start addressing the conservation challenges immediately. 3. Examine the major elements of the Antarctic Conservation Strategy and indicate what the logistic implications might be of implementing such a strategy with a view to including implementation requirements in the strategy, so providing a coherent and practicable strategy, rather than one based solely on conservation requirements some of which are not capable of being real.
- At the Open Science Conference in Auckland in 2014 a further symposium will be held to encourage comment on the proposals.

- At the Open Science Conference in Auckland in 2014 a draft of the strategy will be presented for comment by the wider community.

Benefits to SCAR

SCAR's vision is to re-establish its pre-eminence as a scientific advisor to the Antarctic Treaty System and to re-assert its international leadership in Antarctic science. The Conservation Strategy provides a means to contribute substantially to both in the conservation sphere. It also provides a means to direct outcomes of the new Biology SRPs that have substantial conservation implications.

Budget

The Strategy is being funded as a consortium collaboration between SCAR, Antarctica New Zealand, Monash University, COMNAP, the British Antarctic Survey and South Africa. The budget is approximately \$ 200 000 over two years of which the large majority (\$ 90 000 per year) has been leveraged from outside.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Challenges to the Future Conservation of the Antarctic
- Appendix 2: Conservation biogeography of the Antarctic
- Appendix 3: Draft contents page for the Conservation Strategy