



THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH

SCAR Secretariat
Scott Polar Research Institute
Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER, United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 1223 336550
Facsimile: +44 1223 336549

E-mail: info@scar.org
Website: www.scar.org

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Circular 776

The SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica

Revised 21 April 2008

Dear Colleagues,

This circular is to update members on progress with the SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA) and to request that members of the SCAR Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information (SC-AGI) ensure that their national gazetteers continue to provide input to the CGA. We would strongly encourage countries that have not yet appointed a member to SC-AGI to do so (please contact the SC-AGI chair, Henk Brolsma <Henk.Brolsma@aad.gov.au>).

SC-AGI co-ordinates the provision of a geographic reference for scientific activities in Antarctica and the dissemination of Antarctic geographic information. The CGA is an activity conducted in this framework. The CGA provides the scientific community with two products:

- a compilation of all existing geographic names in Antarctica;
- a set of guidelines to be followed when proposing new names and when selecting one name from a list of synonyms for a given feature.

In general every country has a recognized body which approves the names of geographic features in the country and also has the power to enforce their use. For Antarctica, however, there is no such single naming authority. Individual countries are responsible for their national policy on, and authorisation and use of, Antarctic names.

There is interest in the SCAR CGA by companies such as Google Earth and GEONAMES for worldwide gazetteers. The use of the gazetteer in these products would greatly enhance the exposure of SC-AGI's work to the wider community. If users, however, are to have confidence in the SCAR CGA then all countries must contribute regularly to keep the SCAR CGA up to date and improve its accuracy.

Mike Sparrow (SCAR Executive Officer)

President
Prof C G Rapley
Director
Science Museum
Exhibition Road
South Kensington
London SW7 2DD
UNITED KINGDOM

Vice-President
Prof Mahlon C Kennicutt II
Director, Sustainable Development
Office of the VP for Research
Texas A&M University
Rm 318C Administration Building
1112 TAMU, College Station
Texas 77843-1112
UNITED STATES

Vice-President
Prof Dr Zhanhai Zhang
Director General
Polar Research Institute of China
451 Jinqiao Road
Shanghai Pudong 200136
CHINA

Vice-President
Dr Antonio Meloni
Dirigente di Ricerca
Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e
Vulcanologia
Via di Vigna Murata, 605
00143 Roma
ITALY

Vice-President
Prof Dr Sergio Marensi
Director
Instituto Antártico Argentino
Cerrito 1248
1010 Buenos Aires
ARGENTINA

Past President
Prof Dr Jörn Thiede
Alfred-Wegener-Institut für Polar und
Meeresforschung
Columbusstrasse 9
Postfach 120161
D-27568 Bremerhaven
GERMANY

Executive Director
Dr Colin P Summerhayes
SCAR Secretariat
Scott Polar Research Institute
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UNITED KINGDOM

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Progress Report on the SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica

Since the last meeting on SC-AGI in Buenos Aires in October 2007 the SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA) has been continuously updated. The updated versions have been made available as usual at the web site on: http://www3.pnra.it/SCAR_GAZE

The transfer of the CGA database from the Italian Consorzio PNRA to the Australian Antarctic Data Center (AADC) is very near complete.

At present the CGA contains 18196 geographic features. The total number of geographic names contained in the CGA's database and applicable to those features is 36058. It should be noted that only a fraction of the features, of the order of 10%, have received two or more different names. The difference between the number of names and the number of features is explained by the fact that in many cases a feature is given the same name by more than one country and is therefore counted twice.

There have not been very many recent additions provided by nations to the CGA. This is at least partly because most national gazetteers have now been acquired and therefore most geographic features of Antarctica are already in the CGA. However an additional reason could be that some nations are not active in providing all information where it's still missing, e.g. the description of the features, the approval date of the names. Ensuring national gazetteers submit information to the CGA should be a priority of SC-AGI members.

In the period considered (October 2007 to end March 2008) the additions provided are as follows:

UK has sent information about 6 names: one is the name of a feature which was previously unnamed; two are names adopted by UK for features which had been previously named by other countries, one name was slightly changed; lastly, the coordinates associated to two names were modified.

France has changed one set of coordinates.

Poland sent 2 new names for 2 features previously unnamed.

Norway sent 32 new names for 32 features previously unnamed.

USA sent 57 new names for 57 features previously unnamed. In addition



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USA adopted 43 names referring to features already identified by other countries,

For 12 names it has been held necessary to change the reference number (UID= Unique Identifier). They are: 4 from Australia, 2 from Norway, 1 from Russia, 5 from USA.

Some correspondence has been exchanged with USA in order to clarify the criteria for including field camps and huts or, in some cases, the remains of previous stations. At present some minor differences remain between the CGA and the USA's gazetteer as to the man made features (class 14), a point to discuss at the next SC-AGI meeting.

The work on the harmonization between CGA and GEBCO has been entrusted to Ralf Krockner who started his work at the beginning of February 2008 and will probably complete it before the next SC-AGI meeting (July 2008).

For further information please contact the SC-AGI Chair, Henk Brolsma (Henk.Brolsma@aad.gov.au).

Regards,

Henk Brolsma
SC-AGI Chair

Roberto Cervellati
Manager, SCAR CGA