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SCAR Code of Conduct for Activity within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica

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Summary

Recognizing the broad and extensive consultation that has been undertaken in the development of SCAR's *Code of Conduct for Activity within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica* (available at Attachment A) SCAR recommends that the CEP considers the Code of Conduct and, if agreed, encourages its dissemination and use when planning and undertaking activities within terrestrial geothermal areas.

Introduction

- 1) SCAR has produced several Codes of Conduct to help guide scientific practice within the Treaty area, including:
 - the SCAR *Environmental Code of Conduct for Terrestrial Scientific Field Research in Antarctica* (ATCM XXXII IP04) that provides guidance on practical measures to minimize impacts by scientists undertaking fieldwork in terrestrial environments and, more recently,
 - the SCAR *Code of Conduct for the Exploration and Research of Subglacial Aquatic Environments* (ATCM XXXIV IP033) that provides guidelines for operations and scientific activities in pristine subglacial environments.
- 2) At CEP XVIII, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States submitted ATCM XXXVIII WP35, which presented a draft *Code of Conduct for Activities within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica* for the CEP's consideration.
- 3) The Working Paper highlighted the scientific value of Antarctic terrestrial geothermal areas to a wide range of disciplines (including geologists, glaciologists, botanists, microbiologists and atmospheric scientists) and stressed that, following further review, the proposed Code of Conduct would be intended as a non-mandatory guide to 'best practice' within geothermal environments. Consequently, its implementation at any particular location would be a matter for National Programmes to consider in consultation with each other and appropriate experts.
- 4) The co-authors also recognised that some terrestrial geothermal sites in Antarctica have already been visited frequently (e.g. Deception Island and some areas on Mount Erebus) and that permanent installations, which require regular visits and maintenance, may be required to monitor geothermal activity for reasons of safety. Therefore, it was not proposed that the Code of Conduct should be applied at sites where little scientific or environmental benefit would result.
- 5) The Working Paper included the recommendation that the Committee invite SCAR, in consultation with COMNAP, to review the draft Code of Conduct and consider endorsing it as a SCAR Code of Conduct. It was further recommended that SCAR submit a final version of the Code of Conduct to CEP XIX for potential endorsement by the ATCM by means of a Resolution.
- 6) The Committee expressed strong support for the proposed recommendations, and welcomed SCAR's offer to review the draft Code of Conduct and to submit a final version to CEP XIX for consideration by the Committee (CEP XVIII Final Report para. 208). The Committee also asked Members to encourage their own relevant specialists to participate in the intersessional review process.

Development and review of the Code of Conduct

- 7) Comprehensive and broad consultation has occurred throughout the development of the *Code of Conduct* and is summarised below:
 - In 2014, New Zealand and the United States convened a workshop to discuss the need to develop guidelines for working in geothermal areas in Antarctica. The workshop was held prior to the SCAR Open Science Conference XXXIII, Auckland, New Zealand in August 2014, with

attendance by 20 scientists and policy makers from eight Treaty Parties (Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom and United States) (see ATCM XXXVIII IP24).

- Following this, a preliminary draft Code of Conduct was prepared and circulated for review to participants in the workshop, to SCAR, and other scientists with an interest in geothermal environments. This initial consultation involved a group of 43 scientists and environmental managers from a wide range of institutions worldwide, including in particular the SCAR Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System (SCATS). Detailed feedback and valuable comments were received from more than 30 respondents.
 - During the 2015/16 intersessional period, SCAR has undertaken another comprehensive review of the draft Code of Conduct, involving SCAR subsidiary groups, the SCAR Executive Committee and SCATS. The review process was also undertaken in close collaboration with COMNAP.
- 8) The resulting SCAR *Code of Conduct for Activity within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica* is found at Attachment A to this Working Paper. The Code of Conduct will be made available, alongside other existing SCAR Codes of Conduct, on the SCAR website: <http://www.scar.org/codes-of-conduct>. It is anticipated that the Code of Conduct will be updated and refined as new scientific results emerge and reports on activities become available.

Recommendations

SCAR recommends that the CEP:

- 9) recognizes that broad and extensive consultation has been undertaken in the development of the Code of Conduct, including with policy makers, environmental managers, scientific experts, SCAR and COMNAP.
- 10) considers SCAR's *Code of Conduct for Activity within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica* (Attachment A) and, if agreed, encourages the dissemination and use of the Code of Conduct when planning and undertaking activities within terrestrial geothermal areas.

Attachment A: *SCAR Code of Conduct for Activity within Terrestrial Geothermal Environments in Antarctica*