



**XXXI SCAR Delegates Meeting**

**Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9-11 August 2010**

Agenda Item: 6.5

Person Responsible: M.C.  
Kennicutt II

**Subglacial Antarctic Lake Exploration  
(SALE)**



## Executive Summary

**Title:** Scientific Research Program (SRP) - Subglacial Antarctic Lake Exploration (SALE)

**Authors:** J.C. Priscu and M. C. Kennicutt II

**Relevant URLs or references to other reports:** <http://www.sale.scar.org/>

**Introduction/ Background/Progress:** SCAR has a long history of involvement in the study and exploration of subglacial aquatic environments (SAE). A Subglacial Antarctic Lake Environment Group of Specialists (SALEGoS) was formed by SCAR in 2000. SALEGoS served as a focus for community interests in what was an emerging scientific focus for Antarctic research. SALEGoS disbanded itself in 2004 in preparation for becoming one of SCAR's first Scientific Research Programs. Subglacial Antarctic Lake Environments (SALE) became a SCAR SRP in 2004. SALE proposed and was formally recognized as an ICSU/WMO IPY Program as the SALE Unified Team for Exploration and Discovery (UNITED). The SALE program promoted, facilitated and championed international cooperation to better understand subglacial aquatic environments in Antarctica. SALE was highly successful in keeping SAE on the agenda of funding agencies, in the scientific press, and in the lay press. SALE was at the forefront of promulgating guiding principles for environmental stewardship of these unique settings. These efforts culminated in a Code of Conduct currently being considered by the Delegates. SALE sponsored numerous major international workshops and scientific sessions at meetings. SALE's members are funded by national programs to conduct SALE science and SCAR funding allowed for yearly meetings.

**Progress:** The SALE website contains a history of the program's activities and successes and an archive of all SALE materials generated over a 10- year period (<http://www.sale.scar.org/>).

**Important Issues or Factors:** SCAR SALE met in March 2010 in Baltimore, MD for the sixth time in the margins of an AGU Chapman Conference it co-sponsored. The Chapman conference summarized progress on Antarctic Subglacial Aquatic Environments (SAE) and promoted cooperation and partnerships, particularly among the three major SAE programs (Russia, UK, and USA). At this meeting SALE members concluded that the groups Terms of Reference had been met and voted to disband SALE (see attached meeting report). It was also agreed that SCAR should continue to play a leadership role in SAE exploration and research as national programs entered a phase of lake entry and sampling over the next few years (Subglacial Lake Vostok -Russia, Subglacial Lake Ellsworth - UK, and WISSARD - US). A group of SALE members agreed to form a SCAR Expert Group to assess the state of SAE science, consult with the community, provide a forum for those with SAE interests to interact, and develop plans for the next generation SCAR SAE programs. The details of this effort are provided in the ATHENA proposal.

**Recommendations/Actions and Justification:** SALE strongly recommends that the Delegates approve the establishment of ATHENA to continue the long history of SCAR involvement in SAE study.

**Expected Benefits/Outcomes:** SCAR will build on the successes of SALE and maintain its leadership role in subglacial aquatic environment research which will be a major focus for Antarctic science over the next decade.

**Partners:** COMNAP

**Budget Implications:** SALE will end in 2010. The budget request for ATHENA is contained within their proposal.



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31 March 2010

Mike Sparrow  
 Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research  
 Scott Polar Research Institute  
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 CB2 1ER  
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Dear Mike:

**SUBJECT: SALE Meeting 6 report**

SCAR SALE met on 17 March 2010 in Baltimore, Maryland (USA) following a very successful AGU Chapman Conference that was held from March 14 to 16, 2010. The Chapman conference was planned by the membership of SALE over the past 2 years and was intended to summarize progress on Antarctic Subglacial Aquatic Environments (SAE) and promote cooperation and partnerships, particularly among the three major SAE programs now funded (Russia, UK, USA). The conference had over 80 registered participants and an AGU Monograph on the proceedings will be published and available for sale at the AGU Fall Meeting in San Francisco. The Conference received world-wide press coverage, an example of which was published in the Washington Post on 23 March 2010 (Antarctica shelters abundant microbial life in water miles below the icy surface: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/22/AR2010032202839.html>). It is amazing to think that 10 years ago a small group of SCAR scientists (under the guise of SALEGoS followed by SALE) were able to convince the scientific and lay community that research on these systems would revolutionize the way we think about the Antarctic continent and the Earth System in general.

Following the two day Chapman Conference, it became immediately clear that SALE had completed what was laid out in our Terms of Reference. Each member of SALE voted unanimously to disband SALE as of 1 April 2010 with the caveat that SCAR should continue to play a key role in SAE as three nations plan to sample subglacial lakes over the next five years. A small group of SALE members agreed to form a SCAR Program Planning Group that will assess the state of SAE science over the next 1 to 2 years and propose a way forward for this important element of the SCAR science portfolio. It was felt that the major national programs will take 2 to 3 years to produce substantial new data that will inform decisions about the most productive way to continue the work of SCAR SALE. Peter Doran (USA) and Jemma Wadham (UK) have agreed to lead this planning group with assistance from Carlo Barbante (Italy), and Christophe Mayer (Germany); a draft PPG proposal is attached for your information. The SALE

group believes that a portion of the funds allocated to SALE for the next two years be used to support the proposed PPG.

One issue that was discussed and remains unresolved concerns the fate of the SCAR SALE website. The website contains a unique history of SAE planning activities as well as a wealth of information on SAE science activities. This website will be decommissioned as of 1 April 2010. We request that this website be hosted by SCAR on their server. Alternatively, the PPG could find a new home for the SALE website and continue it under their new terms of reference as a historical reference to the SCAR SALE activities. Chuck Kennicutt indicated that he can provide an html version of the website to assist with this transfer.

As Convener of SALEGoS and SALE since their inceptions, I speak for the group(s) and declare victory! It is now time to enter a new era where ideas put forth by these groups over the past 10 years are being implemented. The entire SALE membership is excited to see us move forward to a new age of exploration and discovery as we unlock the scientific mysteries that these unique subglacial systems offer.

Sincerely yours,

*John C. Priscu*

John C. Priscu  
Professor and Convener of SALE