

COMNAP UPDATE: April 2020

A few words

from COMNAP Chair, Dr Kelly K Falkner & the COMNAP Executive Secretary:

Borrowing a quote from Carl Sagan, “We live in an extraordinary age”...in a... “vast universe in which we are imbedded like a grain of sand in a cosmic ocean”. We suspect that all of you, like us, have been living extraordinarily - whether that be in isolation, or living with a family member who may need extra care at this time, you may be working from home or maybe operating from your office (or even not be able to work at all at this time). Certainly, we are all thinking about people from our communities that are being impacted right now by the pandemic, about people that will be impacted in a few months and thinking especially about people who have lost lives and loved ones to the virus.

Who would have believed, even six months ago, how extraordinary things would be right now.

Against this extraordinary background, we, as national Antarctic programs, must continue to think about the welfare of the expeditioners that we have in the Antarctic and the Arctic, about the continuity of our programmes into next season, and of our science and how we are going to maneuver about safely and efficiently in this new, constantly evolving, global situation. Let’s do what we always do and find ways to get this done together.

It is not an easy time for many of us and the global situation is forcing us to make difficult choices. For COMNAP, the decision to cancel our AGM 2020 was difficult, but we did so to provide certainty to our community-all of you. It was the first cancellation of a COMNAP AGM in our 32-year history and we recognise that our AGMs are our annual, singular opportunity to all meet face-to-face and that this is now lost for 2020. We are, therefore, personally grateful that many of you (22 programmes of our 30) have already taken the opportunity to participate in one of the four COMNAP On-line ZOOM Townhall Meetings. It was great to see everyone’s smiling faces, no matter what time day or night. We hope the next two rounds of on-line meetings will see even greater participation as we all move closer to the decisions we need to make for our 2020/2021 Antarctic research season.

Looking to 2021, we are very pleased to announce that we have rescheduled the COMNAP Antarctic Aviation Workshop that will now be held alongside our COMNAP AGM 2021 in Toyama, Japan. We really appreciate the positive response from our National Institute of Polar Research hosts to this suggestion and so we look forward to being in Japan in July 2021 for the AGM and the workshop. Rescheduling a workshop is perhaps, a little step, but one that continues to move us in a positive direction.

Working under polar conditions has made us resourceful problem-solvers. Or maybe, being resourceful problem-solvers is what attracted us to our polar jobs in the first place. As individuals, we can get through this. As a collaborative community we can likely solve our problems quicker and better - working together - and become more resilient for it.

Thank you all, stay in communication with us and keep well,

Dr Kelly K Falkner, COMNAP Chair & Michelle Rogan-Finnemore, COMNAP Executive Secretary

COMNAP On-line ZOOM Meetings

The Round 1 “Townhall Meetings” were held in early April with four separate opportunities to join in the conversation. These were a general, open chat about current situations, an opportunity to review the gateway city situations, and begin discussions in regards to the next Antarctic research season. A broad summary of the opportunities, concerns, issues and actions that were identified across all four sessions is available from the Members Only webpage, under the Current & Working Documents table, or from one of the MNAPs/DMNAPs that participated in any of the four sessions.

The Round 2 “Advanced Planning Forums” will begin on 9 June 2020.

The Round 3 “Regional Break-out Group Sessions” will begin on 3 August 2020. For these, we will ask national Antarctic programs to complete the information exchange templates, before these sessions, and then will share in advance those via Dropbox and the Member’s Only webpage (just as we do before an AGM).

We have identified a need for some additional on-line discussions: 1. With our medical community; 2. With other operators, such as those from the non-governmental community that are contracted by or operate with national Antarctic programs on a regular basis for Antarctic operations and logistics; and 3. With our scientists. Information about these additional on-line meetings will be made available soon.

COMNAP COVID-19 *ad hoc* sub-committee

On 9 March, 2020, COMNAP EXCOM established a COVID-19 ad hoc sub-committee led by Dr Tim Heitland (AWI) with Dr Pradip Malhotra (NCPOR) and Dr Fabio Catalano (ENEA) and in collaboration with Dr Anne Hicks (JEGHBM Leader) and participants within the JEGHBM. The sub-committee developed the *COMNAP SARS-CoV-2 / COVID-19 Recommendations (non-mandatory) in the context of Antarctic Operations Working Paper* which was distributed to all COMNAP MNAPs on 16 March. The Working Paper will be kept under review and will continue to be available from the Member’s Only webpage, under the Current and Working Documents table.

COMNAP Symposium 2020 “Antarctic Station Modernization: Future-proofing Infrastructure to Support Research and to Reduce Environmental Impact”

The Symposium, planned for 2 August 2020 in Hobart, is canceled. However, “modernization” and the need to exchange information on that topic remains very relevant. Therefore, we are keeping the **Call for Abstracts** for oral and poster presentations **open** with a deadline for submission of **1 June 2020**. The abstract submission form can be downloaded here: [Symposium Abstract Submission Form](#). If there is interest from our community, the intention would be to hold the Symposium as a series of “on-demand” (watch them at a time/date that is convenient for you) video webcasts of the oral presentations and as an on-line downloadable file of poster pdfs and ppts. Symposium Proceedings (pdf and printed) would be published later in 2020.

Note the NEW DATES of 15 & 16 July 2021 for the COMNAP Antarctic Aviation Workshop

Work continues on the COMNAP Antarctic Aviation project. The new venue for the workshop component of the project is the Toyama International Convention Center, Toyama, Japan, with the workshop being held on the two days immediately prior to COMNAP AGM 2021 (same venue). Details can be found here: comnap.aq/projects/antarctic-aviation/.

COMNAP Website Upgrade

The COMNAP Secretariat launched the new website on 9 March 2020. The project manager has made contact via email with everyone on a national Antarctic program list and, by now, you would have received your new username and initial password to access the Members Only area of the website. We are still working to make improvements to the new website, and occasionally have to put the site in maintenance mode we are trying to do so with minimal disruption. Any problems or concerns-please let us know.

We also now have a COMNAP Twitter account and are following all national Antarctic programs that also have an account. You can follow COMNAP on Twitter **@COMNAP1**.

COMNAP Antarctic Fellowship, the IAATO Antarctic Fellowship, the SCAR Fellowship & the CCAMLR Scholarship: Application Round 2020 OPEN!

COMNAP, SCAR, CCAMLR and IAATO have opened their early career persons' opportunities. Deadline to apply for COMNAP and IAATO Fellowships is 31 May 2020. Check eligibility criteria and find full information here: [Fellowship Information](#).

Welcome to Professor Walter Mac Cormack, Head of the Argentine Antarctic Institute, who is the new DMNAP for the Argentine National Antarctic Program. **Welcome** also to Admiral Antonio Cesar da Rocha Martins, Secretary of the Interministerial Commission for Sea Resources (SECIRM), who is the new MNAP for the Brazilian Antarctic Program (PROANTAR). **Sincere thanks** to former MNAP Admiral Sergio Gago Guida who has agreed to stay on in his role of COMNAP Vice Chair until August 2020.

National Antarctic Program Updates

From PROANTAR: The Opening Ceremony of Comandante Ferraz Antarctic Station

On 15 January 2020, the opening ceremony of the new Brazilian station was held in the presence of the Brazil Vice President and the Science and Technology Minister, among other guests. The opening ceremony was streamed live on Facebook and you can see a video of the station here: <https://www.facebook.com/marinhaoficial/videos/315701069350960/>.



The new station is built on the site of the previous facility, which was established in 1984 and largely razed by fire in 2012. The new station consists of 17 laboratories, 4500 square meters of floor space and accommodation for 64 people. The base will be occupied and become fully operational in the 2020/21 season.



From Turkey's Polar Research Institute: Turkish Scientific Research Camp 2019–2022



Our Observer national Antarctic program from Turkey, the newly established Polar Research Institute (TUBITAK), under the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey, announced the installation of a seasonal camp on Horseshoe Island. The camp can host up to eight people.

From the British Antarctic Survey (BAS)

BAS notes that discussions are currently underway regarding the level of support that may be available to non-BAS aircraft transiting through Rothera Research Station in the 2020/21 Antarctic season. A formal letter from BAS will be sent through the COMNAP Secretariat to all COMNAP Member national Antarctic programs. The letter requests that any operator planning to use Rothera for transiting aircraft in the upcoming season contact them at the earliest opportunity. The BAS point of contact is Dave Wattam, BAS Operations Programme Manager dwat@bas.ac.uk.

Other News

International Ice Charting Working Group (IICWG) Meeting 2020

The IICWG is continuing to plan for its 21st meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 21–25 September 2020 hosted by the Argentine Naval Hydrographic Service. The meeting will have a focus on hydrographic services in the Antarctic Treaty Area. Information will be available from: <https://nsidc.org/noaa/iicwg/meetings.html>.

Request for volunteers for two external (non-COMNAP) research projects

Research Project 1

Researcher, Denise Ferravante, a member of the JEGHBM, has reached out to COMNAP as she is seeking volunteers to participate in a survey (open until 15 May 2020) looking at the isolation and confinement conditions experienced by people currently working and living in Antarctica, compared with those not living in Antarctica right now who are under COVID-19 diffusion prevention measures.

If your national Antarctic program expeditioners wish to participate, there is a web-based questionnaire at: https://psicologiagenerale.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3pXw3sJORx4fOxT. No identity information will be acquired that could potentially lead to the identification of the participants.

Research Project 2

Professor Klaus Dodds, from Royal Holloway, University of London, and Honorary Fellow of the British Antarctic Survey, is seeking national Antarctic program volunteers to participate in a survey to inform academic research on “thinking through change”, especially in the context of COVID-19. If you wish to participate, please contact Professor Dodds directly at K.Dodds@rhul.ac.uk.

If you have any National Antarctic Program news, photos, or other information you would like included in the next COMNAP Update send it to sec@comnap.aq by 15 June 2020.