

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

4201 Wilson Boulevard
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230



OFFICE OF POLAR PROGRAMS

JUL 28 2011

Dear Colleagues:

As you have probably heard, the Swedish government has decided that it is unable to allow the use of the icebreaker Oden for joint research work in the Southern Ocean or to open the channel through the ice that enables resupply of McMurdo Station (and consequently, resupply of South Pole Station and provisioning of field camps in the Antarctic interior).

Unless we can find and engage a suitable replacement by mid-August, we will have to implement contingency plans that would curtail activities in the near term but enable the possibility of resuming normal operations in subsequent years, i.e. we will need to take steps to avoid closing McMurdo and South Pole Stations. Closing the stations would have a substantial impact on subsequent operating seasons.

Without the January 2012 resupply, avoiding these closures requires stretching the available fuel through January 2013. This can be accomplished, but only by significantly reducing our on-ice tempo of operations in the meantime. As a result, a number of science projects and infrastructure upgrades would have to be deferred in order to reduce fuel usage. Most affected would be those requiring LC-130 support.

Together with U.S. government colleagues in the State Department, the White House, the Coast Guard and in other agencies, we are working to identify and engage a replacement icebreaker to meet the U.S. Antarctic Program's needs. A number of our international sister programs have provided promising leads. If we succeed in this search in timely fashion we will be able to proceed with a normal season.

We will keep you all apprised of developments as they occur so that project leaders can make essential contingency plans should we be unsuccessful in securing an icebreaker. Your best source of information will be your NSF program manager but we will also distribute updated information when available via the USAP.GOV web site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl A. Erb".

Karl A. Erb
Director

Distribution

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