Revision and merger of the Management Plans for Antarctic Specially Protected Areas No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait and No. 153 Eastern Dallmann Bay

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| ASPA No. XXX Western Bransfield Strait and Eastern Dallmann Bay | |
| **1. Is a new ASPA proposed?** | Yes, based on a merger of ASPA No.152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay. |
| **2. Is a new ASMA proposed?** | No |
| **3. Does the proposal relate to an existing ASPA or ASMA?** | Yes |
| *First designation:* | Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) No. 35 and No.36 through Recommendation XVI-3 (1991) |
| *First adoption of management plans:* | Recommendation XVI-3 (1991) |
| *Any revisions to management plans:* | Measure 2 (2003), Measure 10 (2009), Measure 11 (2009), Measure 9 (2015), Measure 10 (2015) |
| *Current management plans:* | Measure 9 (2015), Measure 10 (2015) |
| *Any extensions of expiry dates of management plans:* | Measure 3 (2001) |
| *Renamed and renumbered by Decision 1 (2002) as:* | ASPA No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait, off Low Island, South Shetland Islands and ASPA No. 153 Eastern Dallmann Bay off Brabant Island, Palmer Archipelago |
| *Other relevant measures:* | Resolution 1 (1998), Decision 4 (1998), Decision 9 (2005) |
| **4. If the proposal contains a revision of an existing management plan, please indicate the types of amendment:** | |
| *(i) major or minor?* | Major. Merger of two ASPAs into one. |
| *(ii) any changes to the boundaries or co-ordinates?* | Yes. Boundaries generally follow those of ASPAs 152 & 153 but have been updated to reflect improved data on the extent of the shallow marine shelves of scientific interest. |
| *(iii) any changes to the maps? If yes, are the changes in the captions only or also in the graphics?* | Yes. New maps have been made for the Area. |
| *(iv) any change to the description of the area that is relevant to identifying its location or its boundaries?* | The merger of the two ASPAs has changed the boundaries of the Area. However, Site A and Site B occupy the same general locations as the boundaries of the existing ASPAs. |
| *(v) any changes that affect any other ASPA, ASMA or HSM within this area or adjacent to it? In particular, please explain any merger with, incorporation of or abolition of any existing area or site.* | Yes. ASPA No.152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay will be merged into a single new ASPA with two spatially separate components: Site A and Site B which are in the same location as the existing ASPAs. |
| *(vi) Other - brief summary of other types of changes, indicating the paragraphs of the management plan in which these are located.* | The description of the Area merges the text in the existing management plans into a single narrative. The scientific description of the Area has been updated to reflect recent information and results. |
| **5. If a new ASPA or ASMA is proposed, does it contain any marine area?** | Yes, the merged ASPA contains the marine areas of ASPAs No.152 and No.153. |
| **6. If yes, does the proposal require the prior approval of CCAMLR in accordance with Decision 9 (2005)?** | ASPAs No.152 and No.153 are already approved by CCAMLR. However, approval by CCAMLR for the merger of these two marine ASPAs may be considered necessary. |
| **7. If yes, has the prior approval of CCAMLR been obtained?** | Yes. Approval exists for the existing ASPAs. |
| *If yes, please list the CCAMLR Final Report and Paragraph No.* | N/A |
| **8. If the proposal relates to an ASPA, what is the primary reason for designation (*i.e.*, which part under Article 3.2 of Annex V)?** | The primary reason for designation is to protect the shallow shelves in the marine region in western Bransfield Strait and eastern Dallmann Bay which are used for scientific studies of the composition, structure and dynamics of marine communities. Under Article 3.2 of Annex V the main reason for special protection is:  (e) areas of particular interest to on-going or planned scientific research. |
| **9. Have you identified the main Environmental Domain represented by the ASPA/ASMA (Resolution 3 (2008))?** | N/A. The EDA classification is based on terrestrial criteria, and therefore has limited applicability in the marine environment. |
| **10. Have you identified the main Antarctic Conservation Biogeographic Region represented by the ASPA/ASMA (Resolution 3 (2017))?** | N/A. The ACBR classification is based on terrestrial criteria, and therefore has limited applicability in the marine environment. |
| **11. Have you identified any Antarctic Important Bird Areas represented by the ASPA/ASMA (Resolution 5 (2015))?** | There are no IBAs within the Area, although IBAs 057, 058, 059 and 060 are located on Low Island near the boundary of Site A. There are no IBAs near Site B. |

ASPA No. XXX Western Bransfield Strait and Eastern Dallmann Bay

1. The management plans for ASPA No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay were last reviewed in 2015, and review therefore fell due in 2020. Accordingly, the United States has undertaken a comprehensive review of these sites in close consultation with scientists working in the Area. The review verified that the values under special protection at these sites are still valid and that measures for protection of those values are sufficient.
2. The United States notes that ASPA No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay were first designated as SSSIs in 1991, and special protection of these areas has now been in place uninterrupted for over thirty years. These sites are two of the longest-standing fully marine protected areas in Antarctica.
3. The review identified that ASPA No.152 and ASPA No.153 share common purposes, aims, objectives and management policies. Moreover, the scientific interest and activities within these areas are also similar. As such, the review identified there would be considerable benefit to merging the two ASPAs into a single plan covering both sites. The merger maintains the same level of protection while simplifying the plan and eliminating much needless duplication.
4. The revised management plan includes Site A and Site B (see Map 1), which correspond closely to ASPA No.152 and ASPA No.153 respectively. The review considered inclusion of the intervening sea between the two sub-sites within the ASPA and concluded that it did not meet the scientific criteria guiding design of the ASPA boundaries. Therefore the two sub-sites remain spatially separated, and the intervening sea remains excluded from the Area.
5. As part of the analysis of site boundaries, the review concluded that enlargement of Site A (corresponding to ASPA No.152 near Low Island) and a small reconfiguration of the boundary at Site B (corresponding to ASPA No.153 in Dallmann Bay) was justified in order to follow more faithfully the extent of the shallow shelves in the region that are of special scientific and ecological interest. The changes result in an increase in the size of Site A (compared to ASPA No.152) from 916 km2 to 1504 km2, and Site B (compared to ASPA No.153) from 610 km2 to 710 km2.
6. The boundaries of Site A and Site B were thus reconfigured to reflect the shallow shelf environments, although this was achieved taking into account the practicalities of locating the marine boundaries by ships at sea. To the extent practical, simple and straight lines of latitude and longitude are used to define the boundaries, coupled with the use of island shorelines, which together provide a reasonable approximation of the marine geography of special interest.
7. There are several precedents for ASPAs with spatially separate sub-sites. ASPA No.144 Chile Bay (Discovery Bay) and ASPA No.145 Port Foster are marine sites each with two sub-sites, while ASPA No.140 Parts of Deception Island has 11 terrestrial sub-sites. In addition, ASPA No.175 High Altitude Geothermal Sites of the Ross Sea is an example where several spatially separate ASPAs were merged to form one ASPA with three component sub-sites.
8. The review also considered the ASPA boundaries in the vertical dimension. Both Site A and Site B lie in areas where passage of ships and yachts is frequent. The review considered whether such transit by vessels has any implications for, or impacts on, the values of the Area, with the conclusion that – provided the vessels proceed without anchoring or otherwise entering or affecting the deeper waters within the Area – there is no reason to inhibit their passage or to require permits.
9. The review concluded that by defining the upper boundary of the Area at a depth of 20 m, ships and yachts can transit over the Area without raising any concerns and without the need for a permit. The depth of 20 m was selected because it exceeds the maximum draft of all vessels known to operate in Antarctic waters. However, any vessel engaged in activities that enter below the 20 m depth, and hence below the upper boundary of the Area, would require a permit for entry.
10. The United States believes the approach taken to defining the vertical boundary of the marine ASPA offers greater clarity over the conditions under which permits are required at these sites.
11. The United States notes there is a precedent for an explicit vertical boundary of an ASPA adopted in Antarctica. ASPA No.172 Lower Taylor Glacier and Blood Falls adopted an upper boundary 100 m below the surface of the Taylor Glacier, recognising that activities at the surface of the glacier, such as transit of vehicles or on foot, did not pose any risk to the values of the Area; there was no reason to constrain such activities and no necessity for permits. This arrangement has worked well, and the values of ASPA No.172 have been successfully maintained with continued access and activities on the surface of the Taylor Glacier.
12. In addition, the United States notes the accepted principle that a vertical dimension often applies to aircraft overflight of protected areas, with no restriction on overflight or necessity for a permit above a certain height stipulated in the management plan (in most cases this has been defined at 2000 feet (~610 m)). This principle allows for passage over an ASPA above certain elevations without unnecessary restriction or permitting.
13. The United States consulted with IAATO over the revisions to the management plans, including to the changes proposed for both the horizontal and vertical boundaries. IAATO considered the changes proposed to the boundaries are practical and satisfactory and did not pose any issues for the passage of ships or for their members.
14. The principal changes to the provisions of the existing management plans for ASPA No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallman Bay, in addition to their merger, include:
    1. Revisions throughout to achieve consistency with the Committee for Environmental Protection *Guide to the Preparation of Management Plans for Antarctic Specially Protected Areas* (Resolution 2 (2011)), and with new agreements and guidance reached by the ATCM since the previous management plans were adopted, and with other management plans recently adopted by the ATCM.
    2. The scientific name for Imperial shag recently changed from *Phalacrocorax atriceps* *bransfieldensis* to *Leucocarbo atriceps bransfieldensis* (see BirdLife International Data Zone: http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/imperial-shag-leucocarbo-atriceps/text Accessed Sep 2021). The Chinstrap penguin has been renamed from *Pygoscelis antarctica* to *Pygoscelis antarcticus* (http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/chinstrap-penguin-pygoscelis-antarcticus). The management plan has been amended as appropriate.
    3. *Section 2 Aims and objectives*. The provision was added to allow visits for educational and outreach purposes.
    4. *Section 3 Management activities*. The provision was added to make information available on the Area to vessels operating in the vicinity, in particular to raise awareness of the potential for scientific equipment to be deployed within the Area either at the surface or submarine.
    5. *Section 5 Maps*. New color maps have been prepared for the Area, comprising a regional overview and maps for Site A and Site B;
    6. *Section 6 (i) Geographical coordinates, boundary markers and features*. The Area is in the same general location as ASPA No. 152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallman Bay. The boundaries have been revised based on the scientific criteria used for the designation of the ASPA. Vertical boundaries have been defined. Geographical coordinates of the Area have been revised as set out in the management plan. The scientific description of the Area has been comprehensively updated and improved;
    7. *Section 7(ii)* *Access to, and movement within or over, the Area*. Policies on access to the Area have been set out based on the definition of the boundaries, including clarification of the conditions whereby transit by personnel, vessels and aircraft at, or above, the surface is allowed without the need for a permit, and the conditions under which permits for entry to the Area are required.
    8. *Section 7(iv) Installation, modification or removal of structures / equipment*. Policies on deployment of equipment for scientific purposes have been added, in particular to help raise awareness that such equipment and / or instruments may be present within the Area or at the sea surface.
    9. *Section 8 - Supporting documentation*. The reference list has been updated. A table showing tourism data has been included in this section.

Recommendations

1. The management plan attached to this Working Paper, which is a merger and rationalisation of the management plans for ASPA No.152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay, be considered by the CEP for recommendation for adoption by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) as a new Antarctic Specially Protected Area.
2. Subject to (1) above, the management plans for ASPA No.152 Western Bransfield Strait and ASPA No.153 Eastern Dallmann Bay be considered by the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) for recommendation for de-designation by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM).