Deception Island Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA No. 4) – 2019/2021 Management report

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Information Paper submitted by, Argentina, Chile, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, jointly with ASOC and IAATO

***Introduction***

Deception Island (latitude 62°57’S, longitude 60°38’W), South Shetland Islands, is a unique Antarctic island with important natural, scientific, historic, educational and aesthetic values. An area of 98.5 km2 encompassing Deception Island, Port Foster, and several small outlying islands was formally adopted as Antarctic Specially Managed Area (ASMA) No. 4 by Measure 3 (2005). The Management Plan had its last review by Measure 10 (2019). This paper highlights the discussions held and actions that have occurred during the intersessional period 2019/2021.

Management Group

The Management Group is composed of representatives from the following Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties: Argentina, Chile, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) are advisory members. Argentina currently chairs the Management Group.

Topics discussed during the intersessional period 2019/2021 included the planned ASPA 145 Management Plan Review, the underwater environment in the caldera, the ASMA website and other alternative means of publishing information about Deception Island and the Visitor Brochure.

ASMA Management Plan Review

The Management Group identified the need to continue the discussion during the intersessional period on how to best protect the underwater environment in the caldera.

Spain reported on new research led by Portuguese scientists[[1]](#footnote-1), on qualitative identification of pollutants in the area of the Deception Island caldera, which led to the detection of different substances, especially of pharmacological origin. The dynamics of the caldera water and the presence of these compounds cause them to accumulate in the plankton. In order to quantitatively establish the status of the problem and the possible management measures to be applied, long-term monitoring is needed.

ASPAs

Chile and Spain have worked on the revision of the management plan for of ASPA No. 145 Port Foster, Deception Island, South Shetland Islands, whose current plan is Measure 3 (2005). Both Parties worked on the revision of the ASPA limits and the relevance of the incorporation of a new sub-site. Due to the extensive changes proposed to be incorporated into the revised plan, Chile and Spain submitted ATCM XLIII WP39 *Revised Management Plan for Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 145 Port Foster, Deception Island, South Shetland Islands* (ATCM XLIII), and recommend that the Subsidiary Group on Management Plans be requested to undertake a more detailed review of the revised plan. The United Kingdom and Spain are currently working on the revision of the ASPA No. 140 management plan, to be presented in 2022.

HSMs

The Management Group members who manage the HSMs on the island, have contributed valuable information to complete the new redesigned format for the List of Historic Sites and Monuments - ATCM XLIII WP60 reformatting of the list of Historic Sites and Monuments in line with Decision 1 (2019) - and information was submitted for the new information fields established in Decision 1 (2019).

Station Facilities

During the 2020-2021 summer season, Spain opened Gabriel de Castilla Station and continued with shore stabilisation works due to coastal erosion difficulties. A report of this works was submitted to ATIP 2019/2021 IP003 *“Mitigation of erosion of the coastline at the Spanish Antarctic Base Gabriel de Castilla”*. Because of the COVID pandemic, the Spanish Antarctic campaign has been shortened and the monitoring has been very limited but, the results observed are as expected. Although work has not yet been completed, it is in a final stage.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, the Argentine National Program, decided not to open its summer stations during the 2020/2021 season and only carry out supervisory landings at each location. Due to weather conditions it was not possible to disembark at Argentine Deception Station. During the previous season (2019/2020) it was opened for a few days to carry out maintenance work at the station and all the accumulated waste was evacuated. Argentina and Spain expressed their intentions to open their stations during the 2021/2022 season and offered to collaborate with Chile to support its research projects on Deception Island during this period.

Visitor Information

Regarding the visitor's brochure agreed by members, Argentina noted that the brochure has been available at the two yacht clubs in the city of Ushuaia - since the summer 2019/2020- for distribution to those planning to undertake non-governmental activities within the ASMA. Both clubs reported a satisfactory feedback on the brochure. Due to the absence of tourist activity during the 2020/2021 season, as a result of the pandemic, printed copies are still available for distribution during the upcoming season. Members agreed that from summer 2021/2022, the digital brochure will also be available at the port of Punta Arenas and Puerto Williams (Chile) for distribution to yachts and also will be made available for IAATO members.

Website

Due to some changes to the ASMA website, the Management Group explored different alternatives in which assistance could be requested from the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat. Some of the alternatives considered were:

1. To include a link in the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat (ATS) website, to access the Deception Island (DI) website. This could be done immediately at the request of the ATCM.
2. Ask the ATS to host the Deception Island website, but remain as a link to an external website (Deception Island Management Group members develop the content independently).
3. To suggest that the CEP develop an "attractive" web section to publish ASMAs information on the ATS website.

Also, since there is no unified criterion among the administrators of all the ASMAs currently in force in terms of websites, the members also agreed that they will consult the managers of the other ASMAs on this matter.

ASMA members will continue rounds of discussion and analyse other forms of communication currently in use to provide information about the island.

Safety and the escape plan

The Management Group stressed the importance of analysing alternatives to improve volcanic activity monitoring and carry on providing advice on the escape plan based on the scientific advances. The issue requires further discussion among the Parties and will be further discussed in the forthcoming meetings.

Next actions

Members will continue to work on the issues identified and on any other issue that arises either among the members or at the request of the CEP.

In accordance with the agreed Group coordination rotation system, the next two intersessional periods will be coordinated by Spain.

1. Duarte, B., Gameiro, C., Matos, A. R., Figueiredo, A., Sousa Silva, M., Cordeiro, C., Caçador, I., Reis-SantoS, P. Fonseca, V.& Cabrita, M. T. (2021). First screening of biocides, persistent organic pollutants, pharmaceutical and personal care products in Antarctic phytoplankton from Deception Island by FT-ICR-MS. Chemosphere, 274, 129860. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)