Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guides for important historic sites in the Ross Sea region

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Working Paper submitted by New Zealand and the United States

Summary

The “Heroic Era” sites of Cape Royds, Cape Evans, Hut Point and Cape Adare are important historic sites in the Ross Sea region. They also receive regular and increasing numbers of visitors. New Zealand and the United States have identified the need to manage the potential impacts of increasing numbers of visitors coming to these four sites. They have taken proactive steps to review the Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guide No. 21 Cape Royds and draft new Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guides for Cape Evans, Hut Point and Cape Adare.

Context

1. Four sites in the Ross Sea region from the ‘Heroic Era’ of Antarctic exploration are designated as Historic Sites and Monuments (HSMs) and as Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs): ASPA No. 155 Cape Evans (HSM No. 16, HSM No. 17), ASPA No. 157 Backdoor Bay (HSM No. 15), ASPA No. 158 Hut Point (HSM No. 18), and ASPA No. 159 Cape Adare (HSM No. 22).
2. These sites are of exceptional historical importance and interest to visitors, and are visited regularly. It is relatively uncommon for ASPAs to be visited for educational or outreach purposes and these four ASPAs are therefore unusual in this respect. All of these sites are vulnerable to human disturbance, and strict measures are set out in the ASPA management plans to ensure protection is comprehensive and effective, including conditions for regulating access.
3. People responsible for visits to these sites, including tour operators, guides and leaders of national programme visitor groups, are required and expected to be fully conversant with the detailed management plans and to ensure that all visitors comply with their provisions. All entry to these sites is strictly by permit.
4. However, the ASPA management plans are relatively detailed and lengthy documents. There is a need to provide the broader audience of visitors with key information and policies in a simpler form that communicates the most important guidance and is more easily accessible for use on-site.
5. This need was recognised at Cape Royds when, in accordance with Resolution 5 (2005), New Zealand and the United States prepared a Visitor Site Guide for Cape Royds (ATCM XXXII - CEP XII (2009), WP013), which was adopted as Site No. 21 through Resolution 4 (2009).
6. The Cape Royds Visitor Site Guide covers the area of ASPA No.157, which includes Shackleton’s historic *Nimrod* hut, as well as the adjacent area surrounding ASPA No. 121 which is designated to protect the local Adélie penguin colony and into which access is prohibited except for scientific and management purposes.
7. Recognising that Antarctic tourism has continued to grow in recent years and that the historic huts in the Ross Sea are of significant interest, New Zealand and the United States have taken proactive steps to manage potential impacts of visitors coming to the Ross Sea by first revising and bringing up to date Visitor Site Guide No. 21 Cape Royds, and secondly by preparing new Visitor Site Guides for the other three important historic hut sites within the Ross Sea that are designated as ASPAs: Cape Evans, Hut Point and Cape Adare.
8. We note that the ASPA management plans for all of the historic sites listed above, as well as that for ASPA No. 121 Cape Royds, have been revised in accordance with the regular reviews required under Annex V Article 6(3), and have been submitted for consideration at this meeting. We further note that the guidance provided in the draft Visitor Site Guides attached to this Working Paper has been based faithfully on the provisions set out in the revised management plans for these sites to ensure they are fully consistent with the requirements that are established by the ASPAs.
9. Maps to support the Visitor Site Guides are based on those used in the corresponding ASPA management plans, adapted in colour for a more general audience.
10. New Zealand and the United States are happy to modify the Visitor Site Guides attached to this Working Paper in accordance with the adoption of any changes to the ASPA management plans for the corresponding sites, or with adoption of other recommendations on Visitor Site Guides that may be made by the Committee for Environmental Protection.

Recommendation

The attached revised Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guide No. 21 Cape Royds, Ross Island, and the new Antarctic Treaty Visitor Site Guides for Cape Evans, Hut Point and Cape Adare, are recommended for consideration by the Committee for Environmental Protection and adoption by the ATCM.