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foreseeable potential effects of a proposed action on the antarctic environment, prepared in accordance with the provisions of § 641.17.

(k) *Preliminary environmental review* means the environmental review described in § 641.15(a).

(l) *Protocol* means the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, adopted on October 4, 1991, in Madrid, at the fourth session of the Eleventh Special Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and signed by the United States on that date, and all annexes thereto.

(m) *Responsible official* means the Director of the Office of Polar Programs, or any NSF employee(s) designated by the Director to be principally responsible for the preparation of environmental action memoranda or environmental documents under this part.

(n) *Treaty* means the Antarctic Treaty signed in Washington, D.C., on December 1, 1959, T.I.A.S No. 4780.

[57 FR 40339, Sept. 3, 1992, as amended at 59 FR 37438, July 22, 1994]

§ 641.15 Preliminary environmental review.

(a) The responsible official shall be notified early in the general planning process of actions proposed by USAP components that may have impacts on the Antarctic environment, so that environmental review may be integrated into the planning and decisionmaking processes. The responsible official shall conduct a preliminary environmental review of each action, including consideration of the potential direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of a proposed action on the Antarctic environment.

(b) If, on the basis of the preliminary environmental review, the responsible official determines that an action will have less than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, he will prepare an Environmental Action Memorandum briefly summarizing the environmental issues considered and conclusions drawn from the review. No further environmental review shall be necessary.

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§ 641.16 Preparation of environmental documents, generally.

(a) *Preparation of an environmental document.* If the responsible official determines, either initially or on the basis of a preliminary environmental review, that a proposed action may have at least a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, he will prepare an environmental document in accordance with the provisions of this part. In making this determination, the responsible official should consider whether and to what degree the proposed action:

(1) Has the potential to adversely affect the Antarctic environment;

(2) May adversely affect climate and weather patterns;

(3) May adversely affect air or water quality;

(4) May affect atmospheric, terrestrial (including aquatic), glacial or marine environments;

(5) May detrimentally affect the distribution, abundance or productivity of species, or populations of species of fauna and flora;

(6) May further jeopardize endangered or threatened species or populations of such species;

(7) May degrade, or pose substantial risk to, areas of biological, scientific, historic, aesthetic or wilderness significance;

(8) Has highly uncertain environmental effects, or involves unique or unknown environmental risks; or

(9) Together with other actions, the effects of any one of which is individually insignificant, may have at least minor or transitory cumulative environmental effects.

(b) *Prior assessments.* Notwithstanding the provisions of § 641.16(a), if (1) An environmental document (including a generic or programmatic CEE) or its equivalent has been prepared for a particular type of action; (2) That document includes an analysis of potential environmental effects that are directly relevant to the potential effects of the proposed action, taking in account factors such as the similarity of the actions and of the locations within which they take place; and (3) There are no potential site specific or other impacts that would require further evaluation, then a new environmental document

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need not be prepared. Instead, the responsible official shall prepare an Environmental Action Memorandum for the proposed action, cross-referencing the previously prepared environmental document.

(c) *Exclusions.* NSF has determined that the following actions will have less than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, and are not subject to the procedures set forth in this part, except to the extent provided herein:

(1) Scientific research activities involving:

(i) Low volume collection of biological or geologic specimens, provided no more mammals or birds are taken than can normally be replaced by natural reproduction in the following season;

(ii) Small-scale detonation of explosives in connection with seismic research conducted in the continental interior or Antarctica where there will be no potential for impact on native flora and fauna;

(iii) Use of weather/research balloons, research rockets, and automatic weather stations that are to be retrieved; and

(iv) Use of radioisotopes, provided such use complies with applicable laws and regulations, and with NSF procedures for handling and disposing of radioisotopes.

(2) Interior remodeling and renovation of existing facilities.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, if information developed during the planning of any of the actions described in this paragraph (c) indicates the possibility that the action may have at least a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, the environmental effects of the action shall be reviewed to determine the need for the preparation of an environmental document.

(d) *Coordination with other committees, offices and federal agencies.* The responsible official shall notify NSF's Committee of Environmental Matters when he intends to prepare an environmental document, and will coordinate preparation of the document with those entities. Responsibility for preparation of the environmental document rests primarily with the responsible official, but, as soon as is feasible, he should

consult with and encourage the participation of other knowledgeable individuals within NSF, and, where appropriate, with other individuals, government agencies and entities with relevant knowledge and expertise.

(e) *Type of environmental document.* The type of environmental document required under this part depends on the nature of the proposed action under consideration. An IEE must be prepared for proposed actions which the responsible official concludes may have at least a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment and for which a CEE is not prepared. A CEE must be prepared if an IEE indicates, or if it is otherwise determined, that a proposed action is likely to have more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment.

(f) *Obligation of funds.* Because of logistic constraints (*i.e.*, constraints due to transportation difficulties, inaccessibility of Antarctic bases for much of the year, and the need to obtain items or materials requiring long lead times), it may not be possible to complete the environmental review of a proposed action before funds must be committed and/or disbursed. In such cases, funds for the proposed action may be committed and/or disbursed, provided:

(1) The appropriate environmental review is completed before implementation of the proposed action in Antarctica, and

(2) Implementation plans for the proposed action will be modified or canceled, if appropriate, in light of the completed environmental review (including public comments, if applicable).

[57 FR 40339, Sept. 3, 1992, as amended at 59 FR 37438, July 22, 1994]

§ 641.17 Initial environmental evaluation.

(a) *Contents.* An IEE shall contain sufficient detail to assess whether a proposed action may have more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment, and shall include the following information:

(1) A description of the proposed action, including its purpose, location, duration and intensity; and

(2) Consideration of alternatives to the proposed action and any impacts