

SITREP 2, November 18, 2009

Bruce Vaughn, SCO Rep

Written at McMurdo Station

As most of you know, the WAIS Divide 09-10 season was off to an early start with high hopes. After 10+ days of weather delays, the put-in crew of 10 led by Teresa Tran arrived at WAIS Divide on Nov-2 via the Basler and were greeted by a cold (-49 deg C) camp that appears to have wintered well. The core-processing end of the arch was at least partially exposed and equipment on the berm was accessible. The wooden basement floor in the core-processing side of the arch appears to have fared well, with no major heaves. Bad weather hampered progress through Nov-17, allowing only one LC-130 flight shortly after the Nov-1 put-in. On Nov-18 our luck changed, and as of moments ago, we have had one successful LC-130 mission to WAIS Divide with science construction crew and another LC-130 to Byrd with put-in crew and skiway drag! In addition, the Basler also flew to WAIS Divide today with cargo of ice core boxes. We have an additional LC-130 mission (for WAIS Divide) at 1700 departure with cargo of the Piston Bully and ice core boxes, which if successful, means we'll have two full pallets of ISC boxes (64) on site. Weather at WAIS Divide looks promising for next 10 to 12 hours, but will likely close down for the next system moving through.

All time tables in our season planning hinge on the arrival of science construction crew to build out the camp. We estimate that it will be possible for NON-RPSC personnel to be queued for flights to WAIS Divide beginning ~7+ days from today (Nov-18). The critical infrastructure in camp necessary to support any science and drilling personnel is the galley. We will be in very close communication with camp to insure that we get some portion of our core handling/drilling teams on site as soon as it is physically possible, but not a moment before, so we don't impede camp construction. Obviously weather will play a large role in this timing. Once on site, NICL/SCO will immediately focus on packing and staging brittle ice, and drillers will prepare the arch and winch for drilling. An optimistic start date would be Nov-25.

Given these significant weather delays and the fact that many projects in West Antarctica can, and will, be affected a large meeting was held here (McMurdo) Tuesday morning, November 17. Participants included representatives from NSF both on site and several from Washington DC via telecon, all pertinent RPSC staff (science coordination, fixed wing coordinator, science construction, etc.) here in McMurdo, as well as Matthew Kippenhan in Denver. Everyone is trying to collaborate to achieve the maximum field success given the delays. While all projects acknowledge that setbacks will occur, we are going to optimize flights to both WAIS Divide and Byrd when weather windows occur. We agreed that this is a critical week, and we will re-convene as necessary to mitigate issues as they arise.

The SCO/NICL personnel arriving McMurdo Nov-9 included:

Bruce Vaughn
Geoff Hargreaves
Bess Koffman
John Fegyveresi
Ryan Banta
Bo Vinther

Since housing in McMurdo is extremely tight (most science groups are being berthed in larger bunk rooms), we made the decision to delay the 2nd wave of SCO personnel 5 days, arriving McMurdo Nov-18 (today).

This includes:

Maria Banks
Thomas Bauska
Tommy Cox
Peter Neff

Heidi Roop

A significant portion of IDDO personnel arrived McMurdo Nov-17, and will have ample time in McMurdo to prepare for the field.

The crew here is healthy (mostly) and in good spirits. We hope to stay that way, and are anxious to get to work in the field.