WOEFUL START TO WORLD CUP

Team Procedures is well on top of their Group after one week of competition at the annual ANTARCTIC FUTURES World Cup, this time happening in the sunny environs of Edinburgh.

In the Area and Species Protection Group, highly favoured Team Southern Giant Petrel took an unexpectedly hard tackle from right-ﬁelder SCAR, playing like a champion for Team Procedures. Team SGP has tumbled to the bottom of their Group, and are unlikely to recover for several years. ECO hopes that good preparation will assist Team SGP to fly in 2007.

Team Ardley Island ASPA jettisoned its top players borrowed from Team Southern Giant Petrel when their outspoken coach Mr Tourist threatened to dump them. They managed to hang on for a victory albeit with a smaller margin than punters had predicted.

Team Fildes Island ASMA came into the competition with an incomplete team. They had some dissension in their ranks, but are slowly but surely recovering. With their new game plan, ECO hopes they sort out their differences before New Delhi.

Team Fur Seals had a massive win in their fourth outing, despite strong deﬁence from Team Kiwi. They now face a diﬃcult draw against Team Annex II Review but are optimistic.

The CCAMLR-Cooperation Team is travelling well, and while clearly out of contention in this year’s Cup, are a team to watch in 2007.

In the Shared Bases Group Team Larsemann Hills was fouled and retired injured. Despite strong support from numerous fans, they are now out of the Cup. Indeed the World Cup appears to be stuck in the ‘every nation for itself’ approach of the past 50 years. Some Teams are defending these goals for dear life, when a more strategic game plan would lead to a win-win for all.

There was lively play in the EIA Group. Team Vostok stuck to their game plan despite its obvious obsolescence. It worked—they are still on target for a massive penetration in 2007. Team Polar Road exhibited a bullish focus on its pre-prepared game plan, sticking rigidly to its ‘no-interviews’ approach, sideling several promising new players, and again winning out. And the meticulous work of Team High Tech Belgian Base also appears to be paying oﬀ, although they will need to get their flora and fauna baseline data completed soon if they are going to maintain credibility.

The Other Issues Group was not playing to their pre-play hype. As in 2005, Team Marine Acoustics were unable to make the most of their potential and ended with a creditable draw. We look forward to some improved play in 2007. And Team Other Party almost downed Team Climate Impact Assessment in a not unexpected strong forward attack.

ECO expresses disappointment at the quality of play and the scores. Team Procedures is a methodical team but lacks inspiration and creativity and doesn’t look like it has the strength to keep the Antarctic Future World Cup alive over the next 10 years.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY POSITIVE LEGACY

ECO, like others, looks forward to the International Polar Year (IPY) and the major new scientiﬁc insights it promises. We expect these to signiﬁcantly improve our capacity to wisely and sensibly manage our common efforts in the Antarctic Treaty
Area. The very high quality scientific presentations here in Edinburgh by IPY and SCAR have well conveyed the intellectual charm and practical relevance of Antarctic research.

ECO believes that the Antarctic Treaty System, the child of the International Geophysical Year, can be reinvigorated by IPY. After 50 years, the ATS, despite its manifest successes, sometimes looks rather tired. More substantially, in the past decade in particular, the historically major Antarctic activity (scientific research) has seen its primacy challenged by commercial activities. For those of us who believe that Antarctica represents something more than a place to make a buck, a reinvigorated science, predicated upon freedom of scientific exchange and international intellectual and logistic cooperation, is a welcome reaffirmation of nobler purposes.

Lest you think ECO is getting starry-eyed about all this, we should say that we know quite well that science can be the handmaiden to vested interests. But ECO is positive about the enhanced scientific mission in the Antarctic that IPY underpins.

ECO hopes we won’t be viewed as churlish in expecting that this work is conducted in an environmentally rigorous manner, and that part of the legacy of IPY will be a strengthening of the environmental principles and practices of the ATS.

Clearly, with IPY commencing next March, many of the major projects are already in train. Each of these projects already should have EIA processes completed or well advanced. If there are projects for which this is not the case, we hope that this is corrected in short order.

IPY promises not only a lifting of the scientific game, but a very public and global flagging of the value of polar science. It is a reasonable expectation that the highest environmental standards are met. We might expect too that the lessons of IPY projects will feed back into environmental management in the ATS. So, in relation to EIA, not only does one hope for rigorous compliance with the present Protocol standards, but a strengthening of those standards as new methodologies and capacities are developed through IPY.

Science claims a privileged role in the Antarctic: it was a major impetus to the creation of the ATS and the glue that holds it together; science also plays a globally critical role in alerting us to the existence and parameters of climate change, ozone depletion, krill conservation, and much else. ECO hopes that today’s Antarctic scientists have a similarly grand vision to their forebears in IGY, and that IPY’s legacy is one we can all be proud of.

RETURN TO THE PRE-CEP WORKSHOP

ECO was pleased to learn about the pre-CEP workshop organized by the United Kingdom. Prior to the workshop itself, the workshop’s Steering Group distributed a non-paper titled “Options for a CEP Strategic Plan: Antarctica’s Future Environmental Challenges”. This was an interesting paper that was very helpful to stimulate discussion. ECO endorses many of the points expressed in the paper—in fact, if we had to write about those topics we would have written a fairly similar paper ourselves. We encourage all delegates to read this paper.

After interesting keynote speeches, the workshop discussions were stimulating, and participants were divided into a number of working groups that addressed some of the key issues facing the future of Antarctica. From that discussion a range of excellent ideas and action points emerged. ECO liked the proposal to extend the Antarctic Treaty Area to the boundaries of the CCAMLR area. In addition, there were a number of posters that discussed a wide range of topics. Some posters focused on specific issues, while others discussed the bigger picture, and most put forward thought-provoking ideas.

Collectively, the pre-CEP workshop represented an enormous investment of intellectual energy that we hope does not go wasted. ECO was pleased to see the report so soon after the workshop, though it failed to convey a sense of the texture of the debate. In particular, we hope that some of the ideas discussed in the workshop are realized—starting from articulating a common vision for the future of Antarctica that gives priority to the protection of the Antarctic wilderness, prioritizes science for the good of humankind, and fends off commercial pressures. Many of the ideas discussed during the workshop could be put into action fairly easily if the Parties had the political will (and courage) to do so.