Prior assessment of a proposed Antarctic Specially Protected Area on Farrier Col, Horseshoe Island, Marguerite Bay

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**Working Paper submitted by Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom**

Summary

A prior assessment for a proposed Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) on Farrier Col, Horseshoe Island, Marguerite Bay, has been carried out by Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The proponents recommend that the CEP: (1) agrees that the values within the proposed ASPA merit special protection, (2) endorses the development of a Management Plan for the area, and (3) encourages interested Parties to work with the proponents informally during the intersessional period in the development of a Management Plan for potential submission at CEP XXV.

Introduction

In accordance with the provisions in Annex V to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom would like to propose the establishment of an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) on Farrier Col, Horseshoe Island, Marguerite Bay.

The proposed ASPA would protect a range of values including:

Scientific values. The area contains lakes that are of outstanding scientific value as sediment cores from one of the lakes contains material radiocarbon dated to 36,000 years old, with unequivocal evidence of biological occupation from 29,000 years ago for aquatic mosses and 21,000 years ago for zooplankton. This is the longest known biological occupation of any lake in the Antarctic Peninsula region, most being less than 9000 years old.  Thus, these lakes were likely refugia for species through the last glacial cycle – one of very few locations like this.

Environmental values. The area contains five freshwater lakes that are representative of the small number of similar water bodies found in the region. Oligotrophic lakes of the southern Antarctic Peninsula are not currently represented in the protected area network. The lakes also contain the freshwater shrimp *Branchinecta gaini* (the largest freshwater invertebrate in Antarctica), which is at the southern extent of its range.

***Prior assessment***

Following discussions at CEP XX, the *Guidelines: A prior assessment process for the designation of ASPAs and ASMAs* were updated to include a non-mandatory ASPA prior assessment template to facilitate the provision of information consistent with the Guidelines. Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom have completed the prior assessment template for the proposed ASPA (see: Attachment A), which includes a map, a satellite image of the site and a list of relevant publications.

If the CEP agrees that the area merits special protection, Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom intend to develop intersessionally a Management Plan for the proposed ASPA in collaboration with all interested Parties with the expectation that this will be submitted for consideration during CEP XXV.

***Recommendations***

Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom recommend that the CEP:

1. agrees that the values within the proposed ASPA merit special protection, as described under Annex V to the Protocol;
2. endorses the development of a Management Plan for the Area, led by Belgium, Turkey and the United Kingdom; and
3. encourages interested Parties to work with the proponents informally during the intersessional period in the development of a Management Plan for potential submission at CEP XXV.