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Dr. Peter D Clarkson
Executive Secretary
SCAR Secretariat
Scott Polar Research Institute
Cambridge CB2 1ER
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Peter,

Subject: SALEGOS recommendation for a subglacial lakes naming convention

SALEGOS recognizes the need for a toponymic standard when naming features in Antarctica. Subglacial lake research is still in its infancy and we appreciate the need to initiate a common standard when it comes to officially naming them.

There are more than 100 subglacial lakes beneath the Antarctic ice sheet and surely more will be discovered in the future. Though several of these lakes have been cited in the literature, we do not believe that an "official" name has been placed on any subglacial lake. Our general view is that the use of descriptors such as "subglacial" is standard practice in the cartographic community and that there are numerous precedents for the use of "subglacial" for features that lie beneath the Antarctic ice sheet and cannot be observed from the surface (except for the ice depression/flatness associated with the surface ice over Lake Vostok). The argument about the addition of a descriptor making a name unwieldy is not relevant. For example, the Gamburtsev Subglacial Mountains or the Aurora Subglacial Basin are both official names (which accurately describe the feature) but for convenience in discussion or repeated use in the scientific literature these are referred to in the shorthand as Gamburtsev Mountains and the Aurora Basin, respectively. To avoid confusion when observing the names on a map, the descriptor "subglacial" is appropriate and should be adopted. The full term should be employed the first time it is mentioned in a manuscript and then the shorthand term (e.g., Lake Vostok) can be used thereafter.

Please circulate to interested parties.

Yours sincerely,

John C. Priscu
Professor and Convener of SALEGOS