

Management Plan for Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 132

POTTER PENINSULA, KING GEORGE ISLAND (ISLA 25 DE MAYO), SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS

1. Description of Values to be Protected

This area was originally designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest No. 13 in Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) Recommendation XIII-8 after a proposal by Argentina, because of its diverse and extensive vegetation and fauna, which constitutes a representative sample of the Antarctic ecosystem.

During the XXI Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (Christchurch, 1997), a revised Management Plan was adopted for the Area, following the format established by Annex V to the Madrid Protocol and according to Measure 3 (1997). During the XXV Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (Warsaw, 2002) and once the Annex entered into force, the *Site of Special Scientific Interest* No. 13 became, by virtue of Measure 1 (2002), *Antarctic Specially Protected Area* No. 132.

The original goals for designating this Area are still relevant. The coastal areas host important bird colonies, marine mammal breeding areas and diverse vegetal species. Scientific research programs on the breeding ecology of elephant seals and birds have been carried out in the area since 1982. These include the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) (*Ecosystem Monitoring Program*, as well as basic research that must be developed without interference from other activities. The anthropic disturbance could jeopardize the long term studies carried out there, especially during the breeding season.

2. Aims and Objectives

Management of ASPA No. 132 aims at:

- avoiding major changes in the structure and composition of the flora and fauna communities;
- preventing unnecessary human disturbance;
- permitting the development of the scientific research that cannot be carried out elsewhere, as well as the continuity of ongoing long term biological studies established in the Area; and
- permitting the development of any other scientific research provided it does not compromise the values for which the Area is being protected.

3. Management Activities

The following management activities will be undertaken to protect the values of the Area:

- the staff to be posted at Jubany Base will be specifically trained on the conditions of the Management Plan;
- the circulation will only take place on vegetation-free areas and taking a wide berth from the fauna, except when the scientific projects specifically mention otherwise and provided the corresponding harmful interference permits have been issued;
- collection of samples will be limited to the minimum required for the authorized scientific research plans;
- visits shall be made as necessary to ensure management and maintenance measures are adequate; and
- all markers, signs and structures erected within the Area for scientific or management purposes will be properly secured and maintained in good condition.

II. Measures

4. Period of Designation

Designated for an indefinite period.

5. Maps

Maps 1 and 3 are attached at the end of the present Management Plan as annexes. Map 1 shows the location of Potter Peninsula (25 de Mayo/King George Island) in relation to the Antarctic Peninsula. Map 2 shows the location of the Potter Peninsula in relation to the 25 de Mayo/King George Island and Nelson Island. Map 3 shows the Protected Area in greater detail. Map 4 shows the distribution of bird and mammal concentrations in the ASPA.

6. Description of the Area

6(i) Geographical coordinates, boundary markers and natural features

Geographical coordinates and boundaries

This Area is located on the east coast of Bahía Guardia Nacional/Maxwell Bay, southwest of King George (25 de Mayo/Rey Jorge) Island, between the southern tip of Mirounga Point (Northwest of Potter Peninsula) and the outcrop known as “Spur 7”, on the northeastern border of Stranger Point. The area occupies all of the coastal strip up to the border of the cliff, which reaches heights of 15-50 metres. This coastal strip has a variable width, stretching up to 500 metres from the shore at low tide water levels. The area is mainly made of raised beaches, largely covered with mid-size pebbles, basaltic structures and lateral and terminal moraines. The shoreline is very irregular and it has a number of small bays shaped among rocky headlands.

Natural features

The area encompasses important scientific values due to the presence of groups of breeding elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), and non-breeding groups of Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*) and occasionally of Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddelli*), crabeater seals (*Lobodon carcinophagus*) and leopard seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*). During the breeding season there are around 500 elephant seals around, and during the fledging season, between 200 and 600. The non-breeding groups of Antarctic fur seals can add up to 300 individuals, although that figure may vary considerably from one year to the next.

Also present are significant colonies of gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*) and Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*), each of them with an approximate population of 4,000 pairs. Penguin colonies are mainly distributed around Stranger Point, from the vicinity of Elefante refuge to Spur 7. Within the ASPA, the population of storm petrels (by large *Oceanites oceanicus* and, to a much lesser extent, the *Fregetta tropica*) reaches some 200 pairs. Antarctic terns (*Sterna vittata*), southern giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*) and skuas (*Catharacta sp.*) also breed in the area, although their populations are, in all cases, less than 100 pairs each. Southern giant petrel nesting sites concentrate on the western side of the ASPA. As some of the nesting sites around Potter Peninsula change their position over time, population figures are estimations and may introduce some degree of inaccuracy, depending on the year considered.

Map 4 shows the distribution of mammal concentrations, penguin colonies and southern giant petrel nesting sites in the ASPA. Due to the above mentioned variability of nesting sites, the fact that some of them are widely scattered around the ASPA, and the scale of the map, the position of other bird colonies were not included in Map 4.

There is a relatively abundant development of vegetal communities in the Area, dominated by lichens, especially in the boulder area close to the beaches and mosses, on the flat surfaces of former beaches. The long term research and monitoring programs could be jeopardized by accidental anthropical disturbance, which might end up by destroying the vegetation and the soils, as well as the disturbance of nesting birds and breeding mammals.

6(ii) Restricted zones within the Area

None.

6(iii) Location of structures within the Area

There is a small Argentine refuge (called Elefante) located around 1,000 metres northeast from Point Stranger, often used as a resting area by groups of scientists. The refuge occupies a surface of around 25 m² and its capacity has been calculated for 2.

Outside the Area there is also a small shelter (called Albatros), on the cliff overlooking the eastern shore, around 50 metres high from the beach and less than one km E-SE from the Elefante refuge. As far as Jubany Base facilities are concerned, they are located around 500 metres from the access area to the ASPA, from the inner portion of Potter Cove.

Likewise, there are two signs, both of them on Mirounga Point, warning about the entrance to the Protected Area.

6(iv) Location of other Protected Areas within close proximity

- ASPA No. 125, Fildes Peninsula, King George Island (25 de Mayo/Rey Jorge), South Shetland islands lies about 20km to the east.
- ASPA No. 128, Western Shore of Admiralty Bay, King George Island (25 de Mayo/Rey Jorge), South Shetland Islands lies about 10 km northeast.
- ASPA No. 133, Harmony Point, Nelson Island, lies about 30 km west-southwest.

7. Permit Conditions

Entry into the Area is prohibited except in accordance with a Permit issued by appropriate national authorities.

Conditions for issuing a Permit to enter the Area are that:

- it is issued only for scientific purposes, in accordance with the objectives of the Management Plan that cannot be served elsewhere;
- the actions permitted will not jeopardize the natural ecological system in the Area;
- any management activities (inspection, maintenance or revision) are in support of the objectives of the Management Plan;
- the actions permitted are in accordance with this Management Plan;
- the Permit, or authorized copy, is carried by the main scientist authorized to enter the Area; and
- a report be supplied to the appropriate national authority mentioned in the Permit.

7(i) Access to and movements within the Area

- Any access to the Area will be possible with a Permit delivered by an appropriate national authority, and it will only be issued for activities in agreement with the present Management Plan.
- Access to the Area will preferably be on foot. Access to the area is possible from the northern tip, close to the Jubany base helipad, or behind the southern slope of the Three Brothers hill. Access to the Area by sea onto the beaches should be avoided when there is fauna present, especially during the breeding season.
- No vehicles whatsoever are allowed to circulate inside the Area, with the exception of those indispensable for maintaining the shelter. In such a case, access to the ASPA will be through a gentle slope close to the Albatros refuge, and vehicles should be driven avoiding vegetated areas and bird and mammal concentrations. As far as practicable, maintenance activities should be limited to non-breeding seasons.
- Operation of aircraft over the ASPA shall follow, as a minimum standard, the provisions contained in Resolution 2 (2004), "Guidelines for the operation of aircraft over bird colonies". As a general rule, no aircraft is allowed to fly over the ASPA below 610 metres (2000 feet), except in cases of emergency or aeronavigational safety.

II. Measures

- If deemed necessary, and only based on scientific and conservation reasons, access to certain bird nesting sites and mammal colonies may include more restricted conditions between the end of October and the beginning of December. This period is considered particularly sensitive because it is concomitant with the egg-laying of the penguins and breast feeding of the elephant seals.
- Tourism or any other recreational activity is not permitted. Movements within the Area will be made without disturbing the fauna and flora, especially during the breeding season.

7(ii) Activities which are or may be conducted within the Area including restrictions on time and place

- scientific research which cannot be conducted elsewhere and which will not jeopardize the natural ecosystem of the Area;
- essential management activities, including monitoring.

7(iii) Installation, modification or removal of structures

- No additional structures are to be erected in the Area, or scientific equipment installed, except for essential scientific or management activities, and with a proper Permit.
- Any scientific equipment to be installed in the Area, as well as any research device, shall be approved in a Permit and clearly labelled, indicating the country, name of principal investigator and year of installation. All such items should be made of materials that pose minimal risk of contamination of the Area or risk of disturbing the vegetation or the fauna.
- No research traces are to remain once the Permit has expired. If a specific project cannot be finished within the timeframe specified in the Permit, an extension of the validity of the Permit shall be requested, authorizing those elements to remain there.

7(iv) Location of field camps

- The Parties using the Area will normally be accommodated at Jubany Base.
- When necessary for scientific reasons, the Elefante shelter (located inside the Area) may be used, or the Albatros shelter (outside the Area, though very close).
- Tents will be allowed only to store scientific instruments or equipment or if they are to be used as an observation post.

7(v) Restriction on material and organisms which may be brought into the Area

- No living animals or plant material shall be deliberately introduced into the Area.
- No uncooked poultry products shall be introduced into the Area.
- No herbicides or pesticides shall be brought into the Area. Any other chemicals, which shall be introduced with the corresponding Permit, shall be removed from the Area at or before the conclusion of the activity for which the Permit was granted. The purpose and type of chemicals shall be documented as well as possible for other scientists to be informed.
- Fuel, food and other material are not to be stored in the Area, unless required for essential purposes connected with the activity for which the Permit has been granted, provided it is stored inside the shelter or close to it.

7(vi) Taking or harmful interference with native flora and fauna

- All forms of taking or harmful interference are prohibited, except in accordance with a Permit. Where an activity involves taking or harmful interference, it should be carried out in accordance with the SCAR Code of Conduct for Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes in Antarctica, as a minimum standard.
- Information on taking and harmful interference will be duly exchanged through the Antarctic Treaty Information Exchange system and its record shall, as a minimum standard, be lodged with the Antarctic Master Directory or, in Argentina, at the National Antarctic Data Center (Centro de Datos Nacionales Antárticos).

- Scientists who take samples of any kind will provide evidence that they are familiar with prior taking of samples in order to minimize the risk of a potential duplication.

7(vii) Collection or removal of anything not brought into the Area by the Permit Holder

- Any material of the Area may be collected and/or removed from the Area only according to a Permit. Removal of dead biological specimens for scientific purposes must not exceed levels that deteriorate the nutritional base of local scavengers and with the sole purpose of performing pathological analyses.

7(viii) Disposal of waste

- All non-physiological waste shall be removed from the Area. Wastewater and liquid domestic waste may be dumped into the sea, in accordance with Article 5 of Annex III to the Madrid Protocol.
- Waste generated as a consequence of research activities carried out in the Area may be temporarily stored next to the Elefante shelter awaiting removal. Such waste must be stowed away according to Annex III to the Madrid Protocol, labeled as trash and secured against accidental loss.

7(ix) Measures that may be necessary to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Management Plan continue to be met

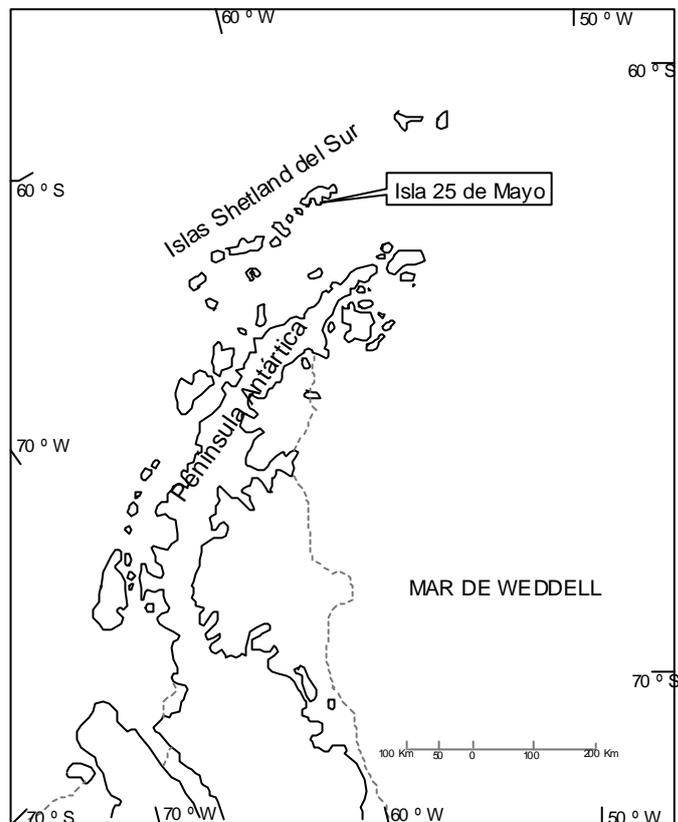
- Permits may be granted to enter the Area to carry out biological monitoring and site inspection activities, including the collection of plant material and animals for scientific purposes, to erect or maintain notice boards and any other management measures.
- All scientific structures and instrumentation, including research markers, installed in the Area must be authorized in a permit and clearly identified by country, name of principal researcher and year of installation.
- Research markers and structures must be removed at or before the expiry of the Permit. If specific scientific projects cannot be concluded within the permitted time, applications must be made for an extension to leave the items *in situ*.
- When it is necessary for scientific purposes, signs can be installed at the locations where experiments are being carried out.

7(x) Requirements for reports

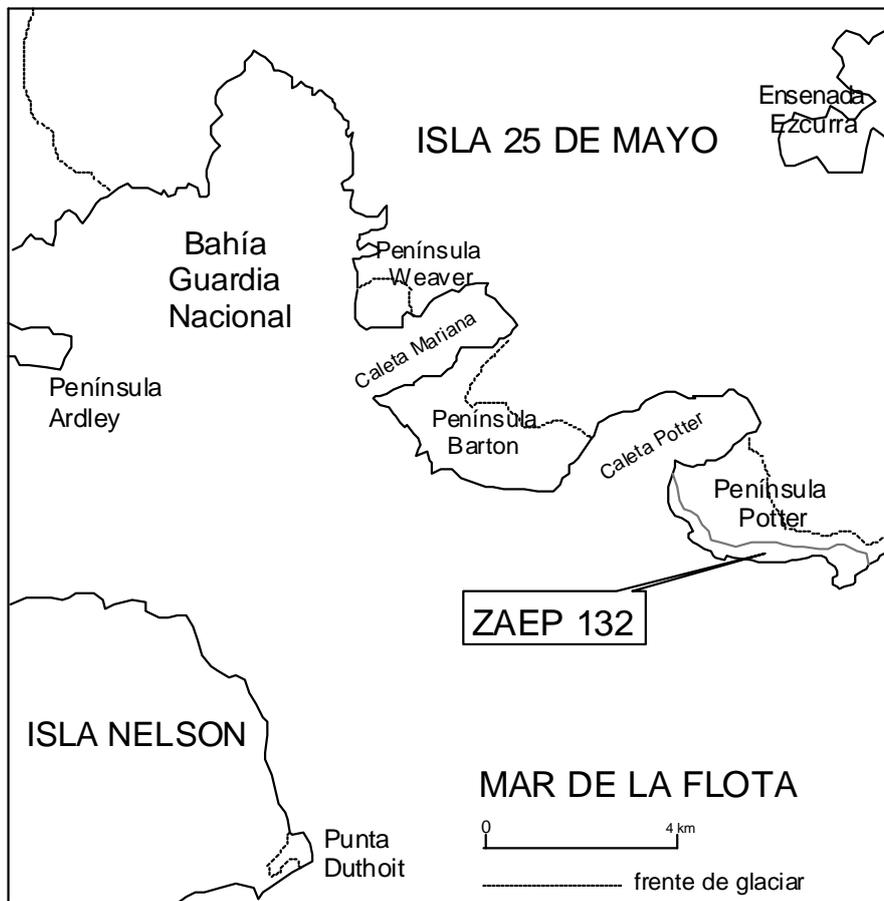
The principal Permit Holder for each Permit issued shall submit a report of activities conducted in the Area once the activity has been finalized. Such a report shall use the form submitted together with the Permit, and then sent to the authority that issued the Permit. The records of ASPA permits and post-visit reports will be exchanged with the other Consultative Parties, as part of the Information Exchange system, as specified in Article 1 of Annex V. Such reports should be stored and made accessible to all interested Parties, SCAR, CCAMLR and COMNAP, to provide the necessary information on human activities within the Area needed for proper management to be carried out.

II. Measures

Map 1: General location of Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 132, Potter Peninsula (King George Island), in relation to the Antarctic Peninsula.

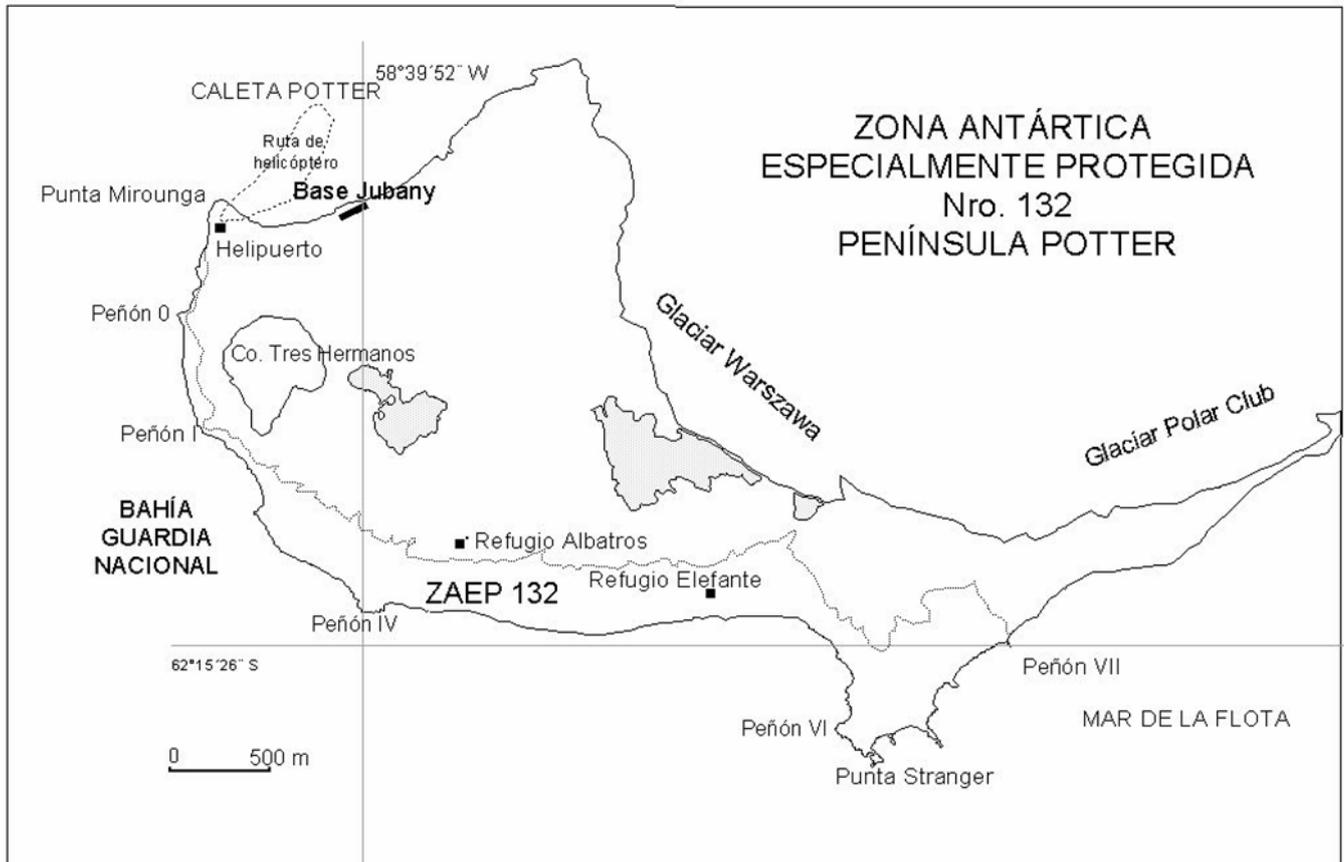


Map 2: Location of Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 132, Potter Peninsula, in relation to King George and Nelson Islands



II. Measures

Map 3: Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 132, Potter Peninsula (ASPA boundaries in finely dotted-gray lines; unnamed lakes in light gray)



Map 4: Distribution of bird and mammal concentrations in the Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 132.

