

Svalbard Science Forum

By **Monica Sund**

Svalbard Science Forum (SSF) is a forum which informs and coordinates all research in Svalbard. Our objective is to contribute to the development of Svalbard as a platform for arctic research, in accordance with our strategic policy documents. SSF promotes cooperation between the different institutions in Svalbard, but is not involved in the internal affairs of these institutions.

Organisation & structure

The following institutions form the SSF board, which is chaired by the Research Council of Norway:-

- The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- The Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI)
- The University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS)
- King Bay AS (KB)
- Ny-Ålesund Science Managers' Committee (NySMAC).

The Governor of Svalbard and a representative from the Polish Polar Station–Hornsund, and from the research community in Barentsburg, participate in the board meetings as observers.

SSF reports to the Research Council of Norway through the Norwegian National Committee on Polar Research. The Research Council in turn reports on the activities of SSF on a yearly basis to the Interministerial Committee on Polar Affairs.

Mandate and terms of reference

In 2005, SSF was reorganised and given new tasks related to the coordination of research in Svalbard.

Strategic tasks

- Implement scientific coordination in accordance with strategy documents (including policy documents from the Research Council of Norway);
- Initiate new – and update and revise – science plans as well as other documents related to the coordination of research in Svalbard;
- Promote the interests of science in matters that will influence scientific activities in Svalbard;
- Award ear-marked funds for field research in Svalbard.

Facilitation tasks

Information

- Inform about the availability of

infrastructure, including logistics, laboratories, field stations, observatories, office space, necessary applications and permissions, etc;

- Maintain a web portal with important information for both Norwegian and foreign scientists;
- Communicate the societal significance of science in Svalbard.

Meetings

- Arrange relevant workshops, conferences, etc, and organise networking and 'meeting place' functions.

What's in it for me?

SSF web portal & database

During 2006, SSF launched a web portal. It provides overviews of infrastructure as well as information on logistics, research bases, safety

measures, application procedures for permits and permissions, weather forecasts and ice conditions, etc. News articles about research in Svalbard are regularly published. The web portal can be found at ssf.npolar.no.

One of the main tasks is to develop databases to make data accessible to the Svalbard research community and for further enhancing coordination. By the end of 2006 the web portal will be supplemented by the first part of the SSF research database. This part is the expansion of the publication *Research in Svalbard* and will facilitate searches for research data on different topics in different areas.

A 'part two' of the database is also planned. This future expansion will be to allow project leaders use a single format for submission of all relevant information to the databases. The information will then be automatically distributed to the Governor of Svalbard and appropriate logistics service providers for their consideration. The plan is also to integrate a Geographical Information System (GIS) module in the future.

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Kong Karlsland, west Svalbard.