

Media Advisory 19-005

Professional news media invited to apply to visit jointly funded US and UK research on Antarctic Thwaites Glacier

Scientists are deploying to refine understanding of potential glacier collapse and resulting sea level rise



The NSF-managed Antarctic Program is offering an opportunity to report from the field.

[Credit and Larger Version \(/news/news_images.jsp?cntn_id=298676&org=NSF\)](/news/news_images.jsp?cntn_id=298676&org=NSF)

June 7, 2019

The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration (ITGC) are accepting written proposals from media professionals to visit a "deep-field" camp on the remote Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctica in December.

[Please see the section below headed "Deep Freeze" for how to apply to cover only the U.S. military's support to the U.S. Antarctic Program. This process is unrelated to the Thwaites Glacier opportunity.]

NSF, the UK's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and the ITGC Science Coordination Office (SCO) will jointly select a very limited number of media personnel--no more than three people in total--to deploy initially to the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) Divide field camp, which will serve as the hub of the research being carried out at Thwaites Glacier. Media will be free to interview Thwaites research teams as they deploy through that camp. A visit to an additional Thwaites Glacier field camp will be highly dependent on weather and logistical variables, and, while possible, cannot be guaranteed.

There is also a separate opportunity for one person to report from the R/V Nathaniel B. Palmer when a team of ITGC scientists sails for Thwaites Glacier in February of 2020 for approximately 50 days.

These opportunities will allow selected media to convey the global importance of ITGC research, which is supported by NSF's Office of Polar Programs and NERC.

Those selected to cover the land-based Thwaites science projects would visit Antarctica in early December of 2019 for a period of approximately two weeks, not inclusive of time spent in New Zealand prior to the flight to Antarctica. Those flights, while regularly scheduled, are subject to Antarctic weather and other possible delays.

PLEASE NOTE: Thwaites Glacier is located in one of the most logistically challenging environments on Earth, where the remoteness and terrain make supply by air extremely difficult and weather is highly changeable and very difficult to predict. While it is possible that media might be able to deploy to other camps in addition to the WAIS Divide, it is not possible to offer media deployments other than to the WAIS Divide in advance. Deployments other than to WAIS Divide would be discussed, conditionally, as part of the pre-deployment planning process. (See the section "How to Apply" below)

DEADLINE: Electronic submissions equivalent to no more than two printed pages are required, either as an email or as an attachment to an email, by 5 p.m. sender's local time on June 21 (see detailed directions below). The email subject line must read "2019 Thwaites Media Application." The email must also specify whether the applicant wishes to join the ice- or ship-based research expedition or the application will not be considered.

Competitive proposals must include a brief reporting plan, describing in detail in what forms and on what platforms the finished stories will appear—for example, print, online, broadcast or on digital channels or a combination of all-- as well as the circulation or viewership for the outlet in as much detail as possible

Proposals must also be accompanied by a letter of commitment on the outlet's letterhead to publish or broadcast the proposed stories, or they will not be considered.

BACKGROUND: NSF, NERC and the SCO are inviting applications from media to join the first land-based deployment of the five-year program to determine the future of the Thwaites Glacier.

The glacier drains an area roughly the size of Florida or Great Britain, accounting for about 4% of global sea level rise--an amount that has doubled since the mid-1990s. If the glacier were to collapse, the resulting release of fresh water would dramatically increase global sea levels.

Satellite and other remote observations have highlighted the potential problems, but it remains extremely difficult for scientists to predict whether a collapse could come in decades or centuries. Researchers are deploying to the glacier to install a wide array of sensors and other measurements to fill in crucial observational gaps.

The ITGC is a \$25-million campaign that is jointly funded by the U.S. and U.K. -to reduce scientific uncertainty about the likelihood, timing and magnitude of a Thwaites collapse.

REQUIREMENTS: NSF, NERC and the SCO will select journalists whose reporting would help make the broadest possible segment of the public aware of the importance and logistical challenges of mounting the Thwaites research. In addition, competitive proposals would contain both of the following attributes:

- A documented ability to reach the widest possible audience across a variety of platforms (broadcast, web and social media).
- A solid reporting plan designed to report clearly and objectively on the science.

Applicants must be aware of and adhere to the following conditions:

- All proposals must include a separate, written commitment from the applicant's publisher, network or internet outlet - on official letterhead -- to air or publish the stories that are described in the application and to pay the costs of reaching New Zealand, the embarkation point for travel to NSF's McMurdo Station (see sections on "Expenses" and "Medical" below). Proposals that fail to include this information will be returned without consideration.
- Freelancers are encouraged to apply, under the conditions listed above
- This program is designed to support journalists, working to a deadline as commonly understood in the news media. It does not support feature-film proposals, artists or writers.
- Applications to employ unmanned aerial vehicles or drones will require a separate review of that portion of the application to ensure that the proposed use meets NSF's safety and environmental guidelines.

A request for the use of drones as part of the proposed coverage will require a statement indicating the proposed use and objectives of drone-acquired images, and clear documentation of the training and experience of the person or persons who will be designated as the operator of the aircraft.

Review and approval of the proposed use of drones will be parallel to, but independent of, the media-selection process and the request to fly may be declined under the review criteria for that process.

How to apply: Applicants must submit their proposals to NSF with a written expression of interest in participating in the program -- describing the media in which the reporting will appear and a description of the potential audiences. See wording above about supporting materials requiring a commitment to publish, which would be in addition to the reporting plan.

Competition for the opportunity to deploy is expected to be intense. The Thwaites Glacier deployment is even more logistically limited than most; therefore, a great deal of planning with the principals, once selected, will be required to make the proposed visit successful.

This planning will necessitate frequent conference calls and may require interaction-either in-person visits or teleconferences- with planning staff at NSF.

Application deadline: 5 p.m. (applicant's local time) on June 21, 2019. Electronic submissions are required, either as an email or as an attachment to an email. The email subject line must read "2019 Thwaites Media Application" or the application will not be considered.

Selection: A panel consisting of science and logistics staff from OPP and media officers from NSF's Office of Legislative and Public Affairs, NERC, and the SCO will review all proposals and select finalists. The panel will evaluate proposals for an understanding of the nature and challenges of the ITGC's scientific enterprise in the Antarctic as well as the desire and ability to communicate that understanding to the public.

Application: Applications that indicate a solid working knowledge of the nature of the Thwaites Glacier research and its science goals and the ability to communicate the research being undertaken to a wide audience, as described above, stand the best chance of selection. Useful background may be found on the ITGC site here:

[https://thwaitesglacier.org/about/itgc \(/cgi-bin/good-bye?https://thwaitesglacier.org/about/itgc\)](https://thwaitesglacier.org/about/itgc (/cgi-bin/good-bye?https://thwaitesglacier.org/about/itgc))

Peter West, NSF Polar Programs' outreach manager, can discuss with potential applicants the requirements for Antarctic deployment and, in collaboration with the SCO, provide access to ITGC-supported researchers who are scheduled to be in the field during the deployment. NSF strongly suggests that potential applicants discuss their proposed deployment prior to submitting an actual proposal.

Deployment period: Deployment would be scheduled to occur in December 2019 for a period of about 10 working days on-site in West Antarctica. Actual deployment dates are heavily weather- and logistics-dependent. The selected team should be prepared for significantly fewer, or significantly more but unusable, days in the field due to weather and other constraints.

Medical: To deploy to Antarctica, visitors must pass rigorous medical and dental examinations. Applicants' personal or corporate physicians and dentists, using U.S. Antarctic Program medical screening forms, conduct these examinations at the finalists' expense. The medical forms will be reviewed by NSF medical contractors. Medical conditions identified during the physical or dental examinations may disqualify a candidate from visiting Antarctica even if initially selected as a potential media visitor.

Expenses: Media teams selected for the visit, or their employers, pay for round-trip transportation to, and accommodation in, Christchurch, NZ, the gateway to McMurdo Station. Typical length of stay in Christchurch is 2 to 4 days. NSF furnishes at no cost to participants: transportation to Antarctica and on the continent; cold-weather clothing and boots; housing, camping gear, and food while in Antarctica.

Send applications, and pose questions prior to submission, to:

Peter West

Email: pwest@nsf.gov / Phone: (703) 292-7530 (direct)

DEEP FREEZE:

News media that wish to solely cover Operation Deep Freeze should contact MSgt. Miguel Lara, JTF-SFA public affairs, at miguel.lara.1@us.af.mil / (808) 448-3222

JTF-SFA will review applications and make its recommendation to NSF.

Media supported through JTF-SFA process will not be given access to science or to researchers outside the confines of McMurdo Station. They will have the opportunity to highlight components of Deep Freeze, including strategic inter-theater airlift, tactical deep-field support, sealift, cargo handling, and other support to the Antarctic Program.

-NSF-

Media Contacts

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