

South African Polar Research Infrastructure (SAPRI): launch of the Preparatory Phase

The SAPRI team is pleased to inform you that the contractual agreement for the starting of the SAPRI implementation phase is being finalized between the DSI and NRF. We have now entered the Preparatory Phase of SAPRI's operationalisation and interim measures are being put in place to ensure progress is made. Until the formal signature of the contract, the SAPRI cannot officially initiate Phase 1, but in the interim the Preparatory Phase will continue the conceptual design of the RI and predispose priority actions with the support of the community.

This is the last step of a long endeavour that went through a series of important milestones. We would like to summarize in the table below the progress done up to now and the joint actions of the community.

Date	Description	Outcome
15 August 2019	First open consultation organized by DSI in Cape Town, CSIR Rosebank, for the preparation of a new proposal for the SA Marine and Antarctic Research Facility within SARIR	The attendees proposed an initial drafting group and indicated the champions Marcello Vichi (UCT) and Tamaryn Morris (SAWS)
November 2019 - February 2020	Formal nomination of the champions and start of the meta-analysis process. Request for expressions of interest for hosting the infrastructure and proposals for new infrastructures.	The champions engaged physically and remotely with the community of reference. Partners and focal points were identified. More than 20 infrastructure proposals were received and two EoI for hosting the RI. The proposed name was amended to the South African Polar Research Infrastructure (SAPRI). DSI approved the consortium model and the hosting at SAEON
March 2020 - February 2021	Proposal preparation period; conceptual design of the RI and its components. The team included the champions and the SAEON representatives Johan Pauw and Juliet Hermes. The process involved dedicated engagement meetings with DFFE and the other consortium partners.	The proposal is completed and submitted to the SARIR panel for evaluation. The full list of contributors is included in the submitted document: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1DU3F_ijTmw75nAlypiShNL98COppbdJv&authuser=marcello.vichi%40uct.ac.za&usp=drive_fs

3 March 2021 - 16 March 2021	SAPRI Presentation to the SARIR panel	The proposal is recommended for funding. The panel recommended improvements to the transformation plan and a more close engagement with DFFE
April 2021 - August 2021	Preparation of the business plan for the implementation phase (3 years) and budget negotiations with DSI. Establishment of a joint drafting group between DFFE - Oceans & Coasts (Tarron Lamont and Jimmy Khanyile) and the SAPRI team. Consultations with stakeholders (SANAP-NRF, SAIAB, ALSA, SEAmester) for the design of a multi-phase transformation plan for polar sciences	Business plan submitted to DSI and approved by the DG. The BP includes a list of priority actions and the transformation plan: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yFOJ0pmgrU9Rh1yCKNDI2fMq0740oTi6/view?usp=sharing
June 2021 - July 2021	Fundraising of the Polar Lab building, to be hosted at UCT. Consultations between DSI and DHET to ringfence funding for building constructions not linked to specific submissions from HEIs. Letters of support from multiple universities	Successful application to the DHET panel. The Polar Lab will be considered for funding in the next cycle as a national priority action. UCT provides the initial seed funding to initiate the design of the building
27 August 2021-	Contractual phase between DSI and NRF	The contract is being finalized, the interim SAPRI manager will then be appointed

These achievements would not have been possible without the trust demonstrated by the scientific SANAP community towards the SAPRI team, the contribution and constructive support of the DFFE Oceans & Coasts Branch managing the SANAP logistics, and the commitment to collaborate offered by other institutions that have not been historically involved in the polar sciences. This gestation and birth of SAPRI is a major advancement to streamline, consolidate and grow the South African polar sciences, and represent a systemic innovation to maximize the investments of the various governmental institutions involved.

The SAPRI will officially start from the advantageous position of being incubated within SAEON, which will fast-track the establishment of the governance and of the consortium agreements.

We are pleased to hereby announce the launch of the SAPRI Preparatory Phase via a webinar and a Q&A session to illustrate the main aspects of SAPRI, its organization into integrated facilities, and the first steps of the implementation phase listed in the business plan. To accelerate the implementation phase, it is proposed to initiate an informal Preparatory Phase of SAPRI and to discuss the following actions with the community of stakeholders:

- Establishment of the User Fora overseeing the requirements of the integrated facilities;
- Implementation of the Task Team for the reorganization of SANAP within the NRF;
- Consultation and discussion on the implementation steps for the Polar Science Transformation Plan
- Establishment of the DFFE-SAPRI Task Team for assisting with science-related logistics. This will include discussions around the SA Agulhas II dry dock scheduled for November 2021, and while contributions cannot be made directly to this yet, plans around what could be facilitated in coming months should be addressed.

The webinar will take place on 29th September 13:00-15:00

Zoom Meeting

<https://uct-za.zoom.us/j/96467209964?pwd=ZUNqRXltbklzVXZqOW9wYjUxQm9lUT09>

Provisional agenda

- 13:00-13:25 Overview of SAPRI (Morris and Vichi)
- 13:30-13:55 Current status, Business Plan priorities and presentation of the transformation actions (Hermes and Pauw)
- 5 minutes comfort break
- 14:00-14:20 Q&A
- 14:20-15:00 Preparatory phase - informal actions before the official starting of SAPRI

The SAPRI team

Tamaryn Morris, Marcello Vichi, Juliet Hermes, Johannes Pauw