

Minutes
NSSI OVERSIGHT GROUP MEETING
August 3, 2005

Barrow, Alaska
Inupiat Heritage Building

In attendance:

Board Members

George Ahmaogak, NSB	Rowan Gould, FWS
Henri R. Bisson, BLM, Co-Chair	Teresa Imm, ASRC
Marcia Blaszak, NPS	Karla Kolash, NSB
Lawson Brigham, USARC	John Kurland, NMFS/NOAA
Doug Buffington, USGS	Wayne Regelin, ADF&G, Chair
John Goll, MMS	Brent Sheets, DOE
	Ken Taylor, Executive Director NSSI

Staff/Public

Marla Berg, NSB	Dave Mills, NPS
Donie Bret-Harte, UAF/Toolik Lake Field Station	Gust Panos, BLM
Harry Brower Jr., NSB	John Payne, BLM
McKie Campbell, ADFG	Caryn Rea, CPAI
Ann Claerbout, NSSI	Nora Rojek, USFWS
Craig George, NSB	Glenn Sheehan, BASC
Richard Glenn, BASC	Bob Shuchman, Altarum/University of Michigan
David Hardniee, NSB	Bill Streever, BP
John Haugh, BLM, D.C.	Robert Suydam, NSB
George Helfrich, NPS	Frank Toomer, CAC Spt
Leslie Holland-Bartels, USGS	Dave Trudgen, OASIS Env
Adeline Hopson, BP/BRW	Brian Waidmann, Dept. of Interior, D.C.
Tim Jennings, FWS	Nancy Welch, DNR
Mark Kosiara, Shell Oil	Steve Wiles, CAC
Michael Macrander, Shell Oil	Bob Winfree, NPS

Wayne Regelin, Chair, opened the meeting at 10:30 AM with introductions of those in attendance.

Mayor of the North Slope Borough, George Ahmaogak, welcomed the Oversight Group to Barrow. This was Mayor Ahmaogak's first attendance at an Oversight Group Meeting, and he was grateful for the time that officials and staff took for this important

face to face meeting. He noted that partnership is important to the North Slope, since the community must pull together in the harsh environment to reach common goals. He pledged NSB support for NSSI goals and activities, as they are in this same cooperative spirit.

Major Ahmaogak was critical of how social and cultural impacts of oil and gas development have been addressed in EISs. He would like to see ways and means established to address issues such as suicide, alcohol, drugs, and deflection of bowhead whale migration. Also, offshore drilling is not supported by NSB, since the effects on traditional hunting are substantial.

Major Ahmaogak commended ADF&G for its long time presence on the North Slope, where biologists stationed there for several years have gained more respect as they become a part of the community. He also noted BLM's commitment to establish a local hire position within the North Slope Borough.

Several issues important to the NSB were presented as suggested priorities within the NSSI. NSB has a comprehensive oil and gas plan and would like to see a similar plan involving all federal and state agencies. The need for baseline data is immense as is the need for research on the social and cultural impacts of oil and gas development. The NSB has financially supported this effort by applying for and receiving an NPR-A Impact Assistance grant to NSSI for baseline data. There is also a need for an archived database for research priorities serving as a vehicle for researcher collaboration.

Brian Waidmann, Chief of Staff to the Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., thanked the Oversight Group for the opportunity to be at the meeting, and noted the NSSI has the attention of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. He celebrated the upcoming signing of the Energy Bill, by the President, which will formalize the NSSI's existence. The message conveyed was that the Administration is committed to responsible energy development, and the NSSI is a step in that direction.

Ken Taylor updated the Oversight Group on the activities of NSSI during the last month. Hydrology was listed as top priority for research needs, and summarized his recent trip to the North Slope with USGS hydrologists. NSSI has compiled a list of Research, Inventorying, and Monitoring Projects and will send it out to those individuals listed as project contacts. He also summarized NSSI trips to meet with UAF researchers with Institute of Arctic Biology and Toolik Lake Field station. The Director's August 3rd report (on NSSI website) provides more detail of recent NSSI activities.

Action: Doug Buffington asked Ken to provide summary of water monitoring needs.

Robert Winfree presented NPS's studies and research on the North Slope (presentation on NSSI website).

Caryn Rea presented ConocoPhillips' studies and research on the North Slope (presentation on NSSI website).

Bill Streever presented BP's studies and research on the North Slope (presentation on NSSI website).

A lunch break was from 12:30 PM until 3:30 PM. During the break, there was a demonstration of Native dances and a blanket toss at the Inupiat Heritage Building.

Richard Glenn presented Barrow Arctic Science Center's studies and research on the North Slope (presentation on NSSI website).

Donie Bret-Harte presented studies and research of Toolik Lake LTER (presentation on NSSI website).

The Oversight Group addressed whether it would be appropriate for NSSI to endorse groups applying for funding of North Slope related projects. A recent request from the University of Alaska Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) was sent to Ken Taylor for NSSI endorsement. ISER was submitting a proposal focusing on effects of warming on tundra to NOAA's Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA). At the time, Ken drafted a letter of support and asked the members of the Oversight Group for approval before the letter was sent to RISA. The Oversight Group decided that NSSI should not provide blanket endorsements. The requests for endorsements will first go to Ken, and if he decides the request is relevant, he will forward the request to the appropriate agency(ies) of the Oversight Group. The agency(ies) will decide if the request is appropriate for individual agency endorsement or for NSSI endorsement. If the agency feels NSSI endorsement is more appropriate, the topic will be discussed at an Oversight Group meeting.

The Oversight Group discussed the relevance of the Energy Bill to NSSI. The Energy Bill authorizes the concept of NSSI but does not appropriate funds to NSSI. Henri Bisson suggested there is a need for Ken Taylor and other Oversight Group members to go to Juneau and inform state legislature on the NSSI. Wayne Regelin noted that NSSI needs to have a joint meeting with both the State Senate and House resources committee members. He volunteered to arrange such a meeting.

The Oversight Group considered future funding strategies for NSSI. It was decided that Oversight Group Members should commit key staff to establishing funding priorities for NSSI. The group should go through NSSI project list and identify the funding priorities while considering the previous synthesis of data by the RMT and Altarum (NSSI Data Gap Analysis), which identified research priorities and data gaps.

Action: Ken Taylor will work out the details on a science staff gathering.

Action: Agencies staffs will take NSSI project list back to those who developed the list and make additional updates and changes. These changes should be sent to Ken Taylor.

Action: Ken Taylor will develop proposed budget for his office next year including funds to support science group, meetings, and travel. He will be in contact with the members of the Oversight Group to see what each could contribute to NSSI for next year.

The Oversight Group decided there is a need for a University of Alaska liaison to NSSI. Representatives from the Oversight Group will go to Mark Hamilton, University of Alaska Chancellor, and present the objectives and goals of NSSI, emphasizing the need for University involvement. The Chancellor will be asked to select an appropriate University liaison to NSSI.

Action: Ken Taylor will set up the meeting between NSSI and the Chancellor.

The Oversight Group examined the need to establish a selection process and criteria for nominations to the NSSI Science Technical Group. A sub-committee of the Oversight Group consisting of the Chair and Vice Chair of OG (Henri Bisson and Wayne Reglin), Karla Kolash, Doug Buffington, Rowan Gould, and Lawson Brigham will decide the criteria for the selection of the Science Technical Group. Ken Taylor suggested that nominations should be required to meet specific qualifications such as arctic experience, but the criteria should not exclude individuals without specialist degrees. Another suggestion was made to contact other FACA groups to inquire about their selection criteria for scientific positions. Selection criteria should allow for the exclusion of individuals involved in NSSI funded projects.

Action: Ken Taylor will prepare a document that will help the sub-committee formulate the selection criteria for Science Technical Group nominations. Ken will organize a 3 or 4 hour meeting of the subcommittee to determine criteria. Other suggestions or models from agency science strategies must get it to Ken well before Sept. 1, 2005.

The next NSSI Oversight Group Meeting will be the first or second week of October.

Action: Ken Taylor will work with the Oversight Group Members to finalize the date, time, and location.

Jon Kurland made a motion for the approval of the June 2, 2005 minutes. The motion was seconded by Rowan Gould, and there were no objections.

Robert Suydam and Karla Kolash provided comments as representatives from the public. Robert noted that collaboration between researchers on the North Slope offsets some of the difficulties of expense and limited resources. The NSSI should make sure all of staff down the line, not just agency heads, are aware of the expectations for collaboration between agencies. Karla emphasized appreciation of the Oversight Group meeting in Barrow and extended an invitation for future meetings to be held in Barrow during the spring or fall whaling season.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.