

NSSI STAP/Staff Committee Meeting  
National Park Service, Fairbanks, Alaska  
September 18, 2008

**Present**

NSSI Staff: John Payne, Denny Lassuy

Oversight Group: Bob Winfrey, NPS  
STAP:

Bob Shuchman, MTRI  
Doug Kane, UAF  
Matthew Sturm, USACRREL  
John Kelley, UAF  
Caryn Rae, Conoco Philips

Robert Suydam, NSB  
Bill Streever, BP  
Dan Reed, Alaska F&G  
Gary Kofinas, UAF  
Wendy Loya, Wilderness Society

Staff Committee:

Tim Viavant, ADF& G  
Deborah Rocque, FWS  
Robyn Angliss, NOAA  
Tom Liebscher, NPS

Gary Schultz, ADNR  
Dave Yokel, BLM  
Noah Ashley, NSB

**Call in:**

Dee Williams, MMS (Staff Committee)

Dirk Derksen, USGS (STAP)

**Guests:**

Dan Fehring, Ducks Unlimited

All handouts (agenda, list of tasks, etc.) and presentations referenced in these notes will be posted on the NSSI website: [www.northslope.org](http://www.northslope.org)

**Welcome and introductions, John Kelley, John Payne**

John Kelley and John Payne greeted the group. Members of the group stated their names and affiliations.

**Election of '08-'09 STAP Chair & Vice-Chair, John Kelley**

John Kelley announced the end of his and Matthew Sturms' terms as Chair and Vice-Chair. Bill Streever and Robert Suydam were nominated for incoming Chair.. A call for additional nominations from the floor was made, but none were received. Robert Suydam stated he would not be able to commit to the Chair position, but said if the group approves, he would serve as Vice-Chair and Bill Streever as Chair. A voice vote was approved. All members were in favor

of Bill Streever and Robert Suydam serving as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. Their terms will run through September 30, 2010.

John went over the duties of the STAP Chairperson. He emphasized the need for regular communication between the Chair and the Director and Deputy Director. He also said the Chair would be responsible for setting up sub-committees to address assignments. The Vice-Chair will need to be kept apprised so he may step in during the Chair's absence. John reminded the group of their role as an advisory group to the OG and said that he would be responsible for taking suggestions to the OG, but could not guarantee their support on all of them. He stressed the importance of the sub-groups. He also reminded the group that notes have to be kept for open meetings of the full STAP and that under FACA rules these notes have to be posted. Notes will be provided to the Chair and Vice-Chair and must be received back for posting within 30 days. Travel reimbursement was also discussed. There are presently two standing sub-committees, GIS and Landcover.

**Comments/Questions:**

None

**Action:**

None

**Director's Report and Status of Report to Congress, John Payne:**

John Payne went over the Director's Report with the group. Much of his recent activities have involved the preparation of the NSSI's first Report to Congress. John handed out the draft report to the group. Once it is signed by the Secretary, approximately 535 copies, one for each Member of Congress, will be made and distributed to the Members or their staff. John suggested Senator Murkowski will likely request a follow-up meeting due to her interest in NSSI. It is hopeful that the report will generate enough interest to secure stable funding for future NSSI operations. John also mentioned that there had been some talk of funding support from offshore lease sales, NOAA, and other sources. The budget for FY09 is not enough to head in any new significant directions

John mentioned the upcoming U.S./Canada Oil & Gas Conference. He also mentioned the North by 20/20 Conference. NSSI has gotten involved in workshops in both direct support and advisory capacities.

**Comments/Questions:**

Dirk Derksen asked what the funding for FY09 will be. It is proposed at \$1.376 million, but could change. The group was reminded that the funding has gone from \$2 million in FY07 to \$1 million in FY08. A lot of the fluctuation was due to the Continuing Resolution in 07. In April 2007, NSSI was allocated \$2 million, but in FY08 Congress rescinded roughly half of the BLM line item that had supported NSSI and Legacy Wells. Most recently, there has been some thought of moving various funds, perhaps even including NSSI funds, to instead support increased polar bear expenditures. However, this decision has not yet been made and NSSI appears to have strong support within DOI.

Caryn Rae asked if the money is already allocated. John said it is allocated, and is primarily for the website, GINA, landcover, ALWAS, and gauging stations.

Robert Suydam asked if the budget is posted on the NSSI website. It is not, but John will send the group a copy of FY09 Operating Plan.

Bill Streever asked if NSSI STAP can be used as a forum to raise money, for example by identifying opportunities for leveraging partner funds. John said they could, but cautioned the group to involve the Senior Staff Committee in those decisions.

Bill Streever asked if any of the projects have deliverables. The Landcover project does, and that GINA has functionality goals but is more open-ended. The database was discussed. NSF and AON have Cadis now and GINA is working with them to integrate their data. At this time, there is a demo of GINA on the NSSI website. Bill reiterated the need for NSSI to produce products that can show success. The water quality study will be presented tomorrow and it is a NSSI product.

Matthew Sturm asked how the activities NSSI engages in end up in the Report to Congress. He feels the need for more feedback on the outcomes of the projects from the OG. Bob asked if the STAP would like to read future drafts first before it goes to the OG. The group feels this would be beneficial as it would allow them to understand the context of the information before it is presented to the OG.

Dee Williams mentioned the upcoming U.S./Canada Oil & Gas Conference. Registration is located on the NSSI website. There is no fee for the conference and a full venue is expected.

Tom Liebscher stated there is a great deal of state interest in the NSSI Congressional report. Hopefully it will be approved before the upcoming White House Conference. John spoke to Henri about it this morning and he thinks the Secretary will sign it as is.

Wendy Loya and Robert Suydam suggested putting a lease map in the report. John said it originally had one, but it was taken out.

Denny Lassuy noted that there was OG interest in Gary Kofinas' proposed sub-committee on accessing, analyzing, and using traditional local knowledge (TEK, or community knowledge), but that the OG felt their 'endorsement' was not needed because this was essentially a STAP matter. They did emphasize, however, that should such a STAP subcommittee be formed, they would want to see some form of practical summary, or even training options, produced that would help NSSI and its affiliates better understand the "how to" part of accessing, analyzing and using TEK. A lengthy discussion on this topic ensued.

**Action:** Bob Shuchman moved that the STAP task Gary Kofinas to form a sub-group to address the role and use of community knowledge in monitoring, research, and decision making on the North Slope. The motion was seconded by Robert Suydam. A voice vote was presented and it was unanimous that the sub-group would be created. The results of the sub-group's work will be vetted by the STAP and Staff Committee, presented to John Payne, and he will present it to the OG. The next STAP/Staff Committee meeting will be February 4-5, 2009 in Fairbanks.

John Payne will send STAP members a copy of the FY 09 Operating Plan.

### **Status of STAP Appointments, John Payne**

John Payne gave an update on the STAP appointments. Wendy Loya and Scott Pegau were appointed. Thus far none of the members have received their appointment letters, but John Payne does have official notification. Those members who have three year appointments should receive an appointment letter in January. Members will have to reapply. An updated bio will also be needed and the necessary forms will be emailed to the affected members. Sue Moore's appointment has not been officially made yet. These all left the Department and went to the White House Council for review for the first time ever. Dirk Derksen's appointment is up at the end of this year.

#### **Comments/Questions:**

None

#### **Action:**

John will mail the necessary reappointment forms to the affected STAP members.

STAP members reapplying will have to provide John Payne with an updated bio.

### **Upcoming US/Canada Oil and Gas Research Forum**

The U.S./Canada Oil and Gas Research Forum will be held October 27-30, 2008, at the downtown Marriot, Anchorage, Alaska. There will be 14 Canadian talks and 14 U.S. talks, including talks by members of the STAP.

#### **Comments/Questions:**

None

#### **Action:**

None

### **North Slope Land Cover-Coordination & Progress Summary, Dan Fehringer, Ducks Unlimited**

Dan Fehringer presented a Powerpoint presentation on the status of the landcover project. He recapped the protocol workshops held in Anchorage and Fairbanks. As a result, the protocols changed significantly to reduce duplicating the efforts of other products already available for landcover analysis. Landfire was a specific one addressed. There was concern whether Landfire would be able to address NSSI issues with sufficient specificity. Coordination with Landfire has progressed well since the workshop. The necessity of a new North Slope map was also

discussed. The resolution used to map the coastal plane was discussed. The group felt going beyond the current range of monitoring would be necessary to be effective.

**Comments/Questions:**

Bob Shuchman asked for a rough estimate of the vegetation classes that will be addressed. There are up to roughly 42, but actual may be more like 20 to 25. A pilot project of one area of the North Slope was used to identify the Landfire classifications being addressed for that area, identify which areas need to be improved upon, and what data sets should be added for monitoring. The field session was completed at the end of July and Scott Guyer presented the results to the OG. A draft classification scheme was released in August. This document was passed out to the group. A field site crosswalk is being done at this time and should be finished by the end of December. Clustering and modeling will then be done to address any distortions in the data and improvements will be made based on that information. A final project map for the pilot project area will be presented at that time. Landfire will also be evaluated to see if there is improved accuracy. If there is, the data gathered can be used to fill in what gaps there may be. If the pilot program goes well, the entire North Slope may be addressed during the fall/winter 2010.

Matt Sturm also mentioned that USGS had conducted field studies this past summer and the information was ingested into NLCD. He asked if this information was in Landfire. Dan Fehringer answered that although these programs are not tied together, they do communicate.

Matt asked if tall willow and birch were separated or combined. It was found that there is only 50-60 % accuracy in separating the two. In some areas general elevation and slope may help in differentiating the two.

Bob Shuchman asked what was used for the truth in establishing the data sets. Mostly field data sets. Bob Shuchman suggested being careful how the classifications are established as there is a per class accuracy that will vary. The more classifications that are monitored, the less accuracy there will be.

Doug Kane said if it is done on a weighted average it would be more helpful. The accuracy figures are usually shown in a matrix.

**Action:**

None

**“Emerging Issues”-- Review progress & process, Denny Lassuy**

Denny Lassuy gave some background on three emerging issues that were identified during the last STAP meeting (sea ice/ocean conditions; increasing marine activity; and marine mammals). At this point, the science needed to address these issues needs to be identified. The group looked at the report outlining the questions posed. Three groups will be established during this meeting to address them. Each group will have someone taking notes. A summary of what science is needed to deal with the issues will be presented to the entire group today and later a white paper of research priorities will be developed and then taken to the OG.

**Comments/Questions:**

Bob Winfree mentioned the overlap between the subjects that exists. It was agreed and decided that those are things that will be addressed during the reviews.

**Action:**

The STAP/Staff Committee were divided into three groups, each of which met separately to consider the science needs associated with the three respective areas of management concern.

**Breakout Group Discussions of Science to Address Management Needs:**

Group1: Species of Interest-Marine Mammals & Their Prey

Leader: Robyn Angliss

Rapporteur: June Lowery

Members: Dee Williams, Dan Reed, Wendy Loya, Dave Yokel, Dirk Derksen, Noah Ashley, Caryn Rea, Dan Feirengher, and Tom Liebscher .

Group 2: Increasing Marine Activity (OCS Shipping/Transport):

Leader: Bill Streever

Rapporteur Denny Lassuy

Members: Bob Winfree, Gary Kofinas, Robert Suydam, and Doug Kane

Group 3: Changing Sea/Ocean Conditions:

Leader: John Kelley

Rapporteur: Maggie Castellini

Members: Bob Shuchman and Matt Sturm

Breakout Sessions

**Reconvene Breakout Groups-continue & wrap-up discussion:**

**Presentation of breakout groups:**

Due to time constraints, each group leader gave a brief synopsis of their group discussion. It was decided that a more concise written report will be submitted to the STAP Chair and presented as subgroup report by November 1, 2008.

**Questions/Comments:**

Bill Streever commented on the need for standards of measurement to be established when looking at ship movement impacts.

Robert Suydam also said that disease transmission between terrestrial and marine animals needs to be addressed.

John asked the STAP how many meetings they feel they need in FY 09. He also asked if the meetings need to be kept out of field season time and how long they need to be. Robert Suydam suggested that the STAP have at least one meeting per year on the North Slope as the OG does. The consensus of the group was to do that sometime during the summer. Matt Sturm suggested fewer, but longer face to face meetings and more conference calls between meetings to keep apprised of what is going on. The group agreed as long as the conference calls are not too long in duration.

Bill said the NPS has video conferencing at all their parks, in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Action:

Each group leader will provide a concise list of items addressed today in the breakout session to the STAP Chair by November 1, 2008.

The STAP will have fewer face to face meetings in FY 09, but they will be longer in duration. One of the meetings will be held on the North Slope. There will also be more conference calls.

**Public Comments:**

None

**Meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.**