

MINUTES

North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI) OVERSIGHT GROUP MEETING/ SCIENCE TECHNICAL GROUP MEETING April 25 & 26, 2006

Fairbanks, Alaska
International Arctic Research Center, Room 401
University of Alaska, Fairbanks

In attendance:

Oversight Group Members and Advisors

Wayne Regelin, ADF&G, Chair	Leslie Holland-Bartels, USGS
Henri Bisson, BLM, Co-Chair	Teresa Imm, ASRC
Marcia Blaszak, NPS	Tim Jennings, FWS
Lawson Brigham, USARC	Karla Kolash, NSB
Ed Fogels, DNR	Brent Sheets, DOE
John Goll, MMS	

Science Technical Group Members

Arnold Brower, Sr	Dan Reed
John Kelley	Bob Schuchman
Gary Kofinas	Matthew Sturm
Sue Moore	Robert Suydam
Al Ott	Kim Titus

Staff and Others

Brian Allee, UAF	Richard Kemnitz, UAF	Buck Sharpton, UAF
Larry Bright, FWS	Janet Kidd, ABR	Durelle Smith, USGS
Ann Claerbout, NSSI	Steve Lewis, FWS	Ken Taylor, NSSI
Cleve Cowles, MMS	Tom Liebscher, NPS	Bob Winfree, NPS
Dael Devenport, UAF	Stacie McIntosh, BLM	Dave Yokel, BLM
Craig Dorman, UA	Pam Miller, AK Envir. Ctr.	Betsy Young, UAF
Paul Flint, USGS	Dave Mills, NPS	
Pat Galvin, ADNR	Bill Morris, ADNR	
Scott Guyer, BLM	Debbie Nigro, BLM	
Justin Hargesheimer, UAF	George Olemaun, NSB	
Tom Heinrichs, UAF	George Oviatt, BLM	
Dave Howell, BLM	John Payne, BLM	
Lon Kelly, BLM	Bob Schneider, BLM	

April 25, 2006

Prior to the meeting at 9:00a.m., Hale Hawbecker, DOI Office of the Solicitor, provided members of the Science Technical Group (STG) with ethics training required of all Special Government Employees.

In attendance:

Arnold Brower, Sr.	Teresa Imm
Dan Reed	John Goll
Bob Schuchman	Pat Galvin
John Payne	Ann Claerbout
Robert Suydam	Tom Heinrichs
Sue Moore	Matthew Sturm
Ken Taylor	Alvin Ott
Henri Bisson	Kim Titus
Gary Kofinas	John Kelley

At 10:00am, Wayne Regelin, Chair of the NSSI Oversight Group (OG), opened the meeting with introductions of those in attendance. Tom Heinrichs, UAF, provided logistics information of the meeting facility. Dr. Buck Sharpton, UAF, welcomed the OG and STG to the University.

Henri Bisson made a motion for the approval of the February 27, 2006 minutes. The motion was seconded by Marcia Blaszak. There were no objections.

Ken Taylor gave an update on NSSI activities since the last Oversight Group (OG) meeting (see Director's Report on the NSSI website). A recent meeting of NSSI agency GIS and university staff was hosted by the Geographical Information of Alaska (GINA) Program. Base GIS layers were identified, and agencies that maintain the layers will provide invisible links to GINA.

The National Ecological Observing Network (NEON) is considering three ecological monitoring sites in Alaska (one on the North Slope). An effort is underway to develop the Barrow Cabled Observatory, a sea bottom sensor system from Barrow to Prudhoe Bay, which would monitor a variety of physical and some biological parameters in the Beaufort Sea. This effort combined with NEON could provide helpful information to NSSI.

Ken traveled to D.C. and met with ethics officers and solicitors to discuss industry participation on the Science Technical Group. While there, he briefed Alaska's Congressional delegation on NSSI progress.

Ken attended the MMS, NMFS, NSB Annual Open Water Meeting in Anchorage to review ongoing research offshore in arctic and discuss proposed summer seismic and barging activities for 2006. There has been a fair amount of research in the Beaufort but

not much in the Chuckchi Sea. This summer three industry seismic exploration activities are planned for the Chuckchi and one in the Beaufort. These activities require support barges and there will be a considerable increase in traffic this summer. North Slope residents are concerned with impacts to bowhead whale migration.

BLM is working on a monitoring strategy for NPRA concurrent with national wildlife monitoring strategy for BLM lands. These may help provide a foundation for drafting a North Slope monitoring strategy.

NPRB project database: will start work in May and be populated with two trial agencies (BLM and ADF&G) in July. Toolik research station will be using NPRB project software database structure as well.

A packet was provided to those in attendance including background information (OG and STG charters, Energy Policy Act), OG and STG biographies, Research Monitoring Team (RMT) priorities, and a summary of RMT discussion moving towards a final monitoring strategy. (See NSSI website for handouts).

Brian Waidmann, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary of the Interior, welcomed the STG and reflected on his meeting last August with the OG in Barrow. He has worked closely with Gov. Kempthorne in the past (nominee to replace Sec. Norton) and believes if he is confirmed, he will continue Interior's commitment to science. He has briefed him on NSSI with Drue Pearce and Jennifer Thomson. They discussed the meeting in Barrow, the signed charter, and the shared science occurring on the North Slope, including work on migratory birds, methane, sea ice, and glaciers.

Henri Bisson asked if Gov. Kempthorne will be engaged and supportive of NSSI. Brian Waidmann replied that he is a strong believer in science, and as a governor established an office of species conservation to deal with endangered species. Gov. Kempthorne would like to personally attend an NSSI meeting.

Wayne Regelin asked if there will be confirmation hearings, and was told they would be held May 4th. If confirmed he may travel to Alaska in August and would like to attend an NSSI meeting. We should know the Secretary's schedule for AK by mid-June.

John Goll mentioned at a meeting of the AK Oceans Observing network that NSSI is a 1st where collaboration at this level has happened. NSSI needs more funding of course, but the real value is that an agency with a small research budget can rely on other agencies' programs and share that information.

Ken Taylor informed the group that The Oversight Group Charter mentions there needs to be a meeting in Barrow annually. Shall we have the next meeting in August in Barrow? Discussion followed.

10:50 am: 10 minute break

11:00am: Ken Taylor, Introduction to NSSI Oversight Group (presentations of this and all following presentations are viewable on the NSSI website, www.northslope.org)

Additions to Ken's summaries:

Karla Kolash stated that both new and previous mayor are supportive of development, but that they are concerned with how it is done and want socio-economic considerations to be a priority of the NSSI.

Arnold Brower, Sr. discussed the change on the North Slope he has observed it first hand for many years. He observes the weather, background in subsistence, hunting. After 10 years of observing climate change, is it occurring naturally or is it occurring by something we do. Erosion is active. He digs into permafrost to keep subsistence cache. Permafrost is going down another 2 feet. Cone-baring trees are advancing 30 miles north. He thinks bringing in information and discussion groups together would provide insight into the cause of these phenomena. He will be available for answering any questions to these topics.

11:30 Craig Dorman welcomed the Science Technical Group and Oversight Group on behalf of entire University of Alaska. He welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with NSSI. UA will provide support to NSSI on data management, overhead, field research, and museum services.

11:35 Ken Taylor introduction of the STG members

Pam Miller (unscheduled public comment): expressed displeasure on behalf of the environmental community of John Schoen not nominated to STG.

1:00 p.m. Future Expectations, North Slope Borough, George Olemaun, on behalf of NSB mayor.

Where should we start when describing the future of North Slope? Simply stated, there will be more of everything, more research more monitoring and more sharing of resources.

Traditional knowledge: Subsistence hunters are masters of observation, and their work should be integrated into the mainstream scientific information.

Baseline data: NPRA and Teshekpuk, offshore areas are not prepared for development from the standpoint of scientific backing on understanding the impacts. It is important that we can distinguish between impacts from climate change and those from oil and gas activities. Industry cooperation-seismic exploration offshore and onshore will continue, but we must gather as much information as possible to appropriately assign mitigation efforts and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Cumulative Impacts: Village subsistence opportunities and access are often compromised with development. Social-cultural impacts: Attacks on NPRA Impact Assistance program by legislature. This program is mandated in federal/state law and was designed to aid communities that struggle with adverse impacts on subsistence. Coastal erosion: coastal areas of N. Slope are retreating. What can be done to slow erosion and protect areas? What causes it? Research in this area would be useful to locals struggling with this every year.

Agency cooperation: Local presence of agencies on the North Slope would establish closer ties to communities. Presently, the closest tie is with ADF&G who has had a biologist stationed there for many years.

1:25 p.m. Future Expectations of MMS, John Goll, Regional Director

MMS has major programs of regulatory, safety and environmental management (pushing industry to commit to safety throughout all levels, not just in regulation) and environmental protection.

MMS Process: estimate oil and gas resources, set a 5 year schedule, lease areas, review exploration plans, review any applicable development projects, oversight and inspect of production activities.

MMS Research: Oil spill research and response exercises, technology improvements (platforms, pollution prevention, safety systems)

Expectation: There are no existing leases in the Chukchi, but in the future, some areas where wells have been drilled in the past will again be of interest.

Questions:

John Kelly asked how long it takes to bring in a new offshore field? Several years depending on location and adjacent infrastructure.

Ken Taylor asked how long MMS lease terms are, and was told 10 years with extensions of highly productive sites possible. If you get a lease, it is from exploration through development.

Ken Taylor mentioned the draft EA for summer seismic covers four hypothetical shoots in the Chukchi and four in the Beaufort. The actual projects have been scaled down, particularly in the Beaufort in response to borough's comments.

2:00 p.m. Ed Fogels, Acting Deputy Commissioner, DNR Introduction to DNR and North Slope related Divisions.

Pat Galvin: Future Expectations on State Lands.

Pat prefaced his remarks by saying his predictions are largely conjecture and outlined the areas currently in development on a map.

Future development:

1. Oooguruk (offshore island recently completed) drill from island into a number of offshore prospects and pump back to Kuparuk area for processing.
2. Nikaitchuq, proposed by Kerr-McGee. Directional drilling off shore, with three offshore islands connected to onshore for processing.
3. Liberty: offshore in federal waters with some possible overlap onto state, with onshore connection, to be drilled from onshore.
4. Point Thomson on state border with ANWR, permitting hopefully moving forward.
5. Units holding leases beyond initial timeframe due to anticipation of economically feasible development due to intent to explore in near future:
 - a. Offshore area between Oooguruk and Nikaitchuq
 - b. Adjacent to Kuparuk, Whiskey Gulch and Cronus and NE Storms field will have exploration in near future based on prospects and proximity to existing infrastructure.
 - c. Jacob's Ladder, off on its own, no existing infrastructure, will have to balance environmental impacts, costs, etc.

Conjecture: We can use current leases as areas where sometime in the future we will see activity. From trends, south of Prudhoe are off-shoots of haul road and TAPS as well as expansion of current infrastructure near Prudhoe. In the foothills region, most lease interest is in gas, so interest will depend on gas-pipeline access.

2:35 p.m. Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Future Expectations, Teresa Imm

ASRC is the largest Private land owner on North Slope (roughly four million acres). It is a for-profit corporation, giving them a little bit different perspective than the rest of NSSI members.

ASRC is one of 13 regional corporations established by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. ASRC received land with other Native corporations. Their mandate and goals are to move towards resource utilization, and to expand traditional (Inupiat) concepts of land and resource utilization to include corporate land ownership.

Economic freedoms that ASRC provides: dividend to shareholders and jobs.

ASRC structure: Shareholders elect board of directors that hires ASRC. ASRC divided into Energy Sector, etc.

Jurisdiction: ASRC holds title to regional corporation surface and subsurface lands. Holds title to most of the subsurface of village corporation lands within its boundaries.

Philosophy: ASRC, as private landowner, is not generally involved in the scientific research arena, but is beginning to identify research needs to ensure mitigation is in place to minimize impacts to resources.

Areas of potential development (see presentation): Kaktovik, if coastal plain is developed. Barrow, Central Arctic, etc.

3:15 pm: Expectations of the Future for next 20 years in NPRA, Henri R. Bisson, State Director, BLM

NPR-A: vision will be roadless. CD6 and CD7 (Alpine Satellite fields) would be first production out of NPRA. Those pads lie within the selection potential of Kupuk village corporation and would most likely be selected by them if these move towards production.

Gas hydrates in the next 20 years and heavy oil (most likely affecting state leases and lands in Prudhoe Bay). Teshekpuk Lake was deferred from new leasing area. Specific study requirements for goose molting area were incorporated in the new NPRA NE Record of Decision. Alpine facility footprint projected north of Teshekpuk Lake would be same 100 acre footprint. From the time there is a discovery it takes 10 years to get to production. Other than CD-6 and CD-7 there are no discoveries, but we can expect exploration to continue to occur. Lease sale north of the lake: 2.7 million barrels of economically recoverable oil projected in area near and north of Lake.

Teresa Imm stated that Umiat and places like it are getting a lot of attention, BLM has leases there, and the Secretary has self-imposed suspension of leasing until finishing management plan. In northern NPRA where hundreds of acres of land a year are lost due to coastal erosion, what happens to land ownership on submerged lands? It becomes the state's, through an agreement looking at reestablishing the line of ownership if needed. Boundaries are "ambulatory". OCS boundary is permanently fixed with the state, MMS is not creeping landward.

Bob Winfree asked if BLM has looked into sea-level rise and effects on leasing? The reality is that facilities are out there will basically become shallow islands. How will we distinguish these naturally occurring effects (salt water encroachment, etc.) from those of facilities being put in place?

3:45 Expectations of Science Technical Group: Henri Bisson.

The NSSI was a lot of agencies' vision and boils down to those that have to make decisions on land and other resources. We want to do it in the right way, we want to permit O&G leasing responsibly, including collecting appropriate baseline information at the landscape level (agency responsibility) and site specific (lessee responsibility). We must find a consistent way to apply stipulations and mitigation measures that do not conflict across permitting entities. We want to ensure we address priorities on important resource questions-branching from the work of the RMT, but the STG's charge is broader than NPRA. The STG will help us develop a monitoring strategy for something larger than NPRA. They will help us figure out what the significant information needs are so we can collectively go out and seek funding. Henri requests STG to be objective, have a collegiate dialogue and utilize their collective expertise. He hopes a collegial enterprise unfolds to help us make the best decisions and to anticipate the types of questions we will have. We don't want our decisions to lead to listing a species under ESA. The STG needs to sort through what needs to be done from a scientific standpoint and incorporate information from other science groups. As a member of the Science Technical Group, you may express your

personal opinions outside the room as a scientist/individual citizen, but you may not use NSSI as a platform for expressing your personal opinion publicly. Sub-groups branching beyond the 15 STG members are encouraged to address specific issues. Wayne Regelin addressed the STG and said the Oversight Group doesn't want to put excess demands on them. There are many things we don't know, and there are things we need to know before development can occur.

4:20 p.m. Discussion

Robert Suydam expressed his thanks for the presentations and stated the STG is here to set priorities for information needs related to development decisions. Henri's summary was along the same lines. Nobody formally mentioned "climate change" except Arnold and George. It will be difficult to sort this change from that of change related to oil and gas activities. Henri stated there is a lot of climate change research going on and while we want to be aware of it, we wanted to separate the work of the NSSI from that. Robert Suydam asked how we can bring those around as there are few studies going on with impacts on animals. Henri said it will be up to the STG to determine if we need to put more priority on climate change.

John Goll asked that in the future, how will we require companies to design facilities to respond to climate change? We will need to address environmental information in concert with design information.

John Kelly thanked Henri for a clear description of the future for NPRA. Tomorrow we will get specific questions addressed that need help on. What was specific about the red area of Henri's presentation, and Henri replied that it is a "study area" where if discoveries are found then there may be a potential for further study on molting geese in this area before leases are developed.

Lawson Brigham indicated his desire for the STG to help us join forces with NSF funded studies of detecting changes.

Matthew Sturm commented that there are things that can short circuit the STG efforts, things that can come up as a higher priority and suck away money. Henri replied that it is in the national interests of oil and gas and resource protection to fund this initiative.

John Goll mentioned that the federal budget is going consistently down. We won't have money for huge programs. Finding most important issues and finding ways to partner will be key. Henri indicated that industry has given strong support to this initiative. He thinks we need to get to some off-budget way to fund this effort. Perhaps a small portion of the leasing stream should fund the effort. What data streams do we need to start collecting soon to have necessary baseline data before development occurs?

Next OG meeting: June 15, ½ day meeting.

April 26, 2006

Individual presentations for the following may be found on the NSSI website (www.northslope.org).

8:30a.m.	Introduction to Issues and Priorities	Ken Taylor
9:00 a.m.	DOI on the Landscape, Bird Disturbance Studies	Paul Flint, USGS
9:30 a.m.	Socio-cultural Impacts and Incorporating Traditional Knowledge	Stacie McIntosh, BLM
10:00 a.m.	North Slope Stream Crossing Design Challenges, Maintaining Fish Passage and Stream Integrity	Bill Morris, DNR
10:45 a.m.	North Slope Hydrology Needs Assessment	Richard Kemnitz, BLM/Dave Meyer, USGS
11:15 a.m.	Industrial Water Use on the North Slope, Water Quality/Quantity and Fish	Bill Morris, DNR
1:00 p.m.	MMS: Offshore Information Needs	Cleve Cowles, MMS
1:30 p.m.	Ice Road Evaluation	Scott Guyer, BLM
2:00 p.m.	Land Rehabilitation Techniques on the North Slope	Larry Bright, FWS/ Janet Kidd. ABR
2:45 p.m.	Discussion by STG of Issues	

Wayne Regelin provided a summary of the lunchtime, informal discussion. There needs to be a multi-day meeting to put together a work plan to include: 1) establish how STG will work, i.e. work groups 2) the STG's role in the development of a monitoring program 3) how to get started on long-term interdisciplinary studies focused on priority information needs.

John Kelley asked what the function of the OG is, and how does that fit with the STG so that they can better assist? Ken Taylor read the language from the Energy Policy Act regarding the functions of the NSSI.

Dan Reed suggested a facilitator for the next meeting to focus our collective thoughts.

Wayne Regelin said we will provide the STG a more specific list of information needs from agencies. For example, Henri needs a monitoring plan with a subgroup for monitoring fish and wildlife populations on NPRA. How would this monitoring plan fit with the BLM national wildlife monitoring program and how should it fit with the other monitoring needs of the North Slope?

John Kelley said the North Slope Borough science advisory board has an agenda with specific assignments to tackle, and then issues a formal report. Who will develop the monitoring plan? BLM is charged with developing a monitoring plan by the NE NPRA ROD, and a national effort for a framework plan. Wayne Regelin suggested that not all of the STG may be involved in reviewing BLM's monitoring plan, and that perhaps a subgroup will address the structure of an interdisciplinary plan.

Lawson Brigham commented that a "funding strategy" is not happening anytime soon. We should focus now mainly on synergism of the agencies and identify where the gaps information are.

Kim Titus said the monitoring strategy is more of a BLM charge. The development of an implementation plan for monitoring across the North Slope is a need for the NSSI. There needs to be further discussion of this outside of this meeting. The monitoring strategy does need to be jump started, but NSSI should not be bogged down by the whole task, and RMT members should not be left behind in the progress they have made

Ken Taylor commented that NSSI is not just about expanding the RMT's role across the North Slope, but to put science behind the decisions that need to be made. These decisions may not just whether or not lease a certain area, but may be as specific as what stipulations are placed in lease decisions, which are science based and which are gut-feelings. The STG should review past decisions, review stipulations not based on science, and determine what science is necessary. Dave Yokel said the OG should tell the STG what their collective management issues are in order for the STG to help them address these issues.

Wayne Regelin asked where we should focus: on broad scope, future of research or on specific needs? Robert Suydam commented that if the STG is not going to sit down and write products, then agencies need to commit resources to actually make products. The RMT monitoring plan was a lot more than just monitoring populations, but also considered abiotic factors as well. Ken Taylor will circulate the RMT conceptual models and background to the STG prior to the next meeting.

Matthew Sturm said we need all past information and mistakes, so we can get clear-cut goals. The next meeting should focus on specifics.

Dan Reed commented that the STG does not need a big writing chore.

Gary Kofinas provided agenda suggestions for the next meeting:

1. Discussion of term of reference given to by OG: issues (crosscutting),

2. Review of History (models and efforts of other groups),
3. Tour of the database (500 projects entered) link steps with science., within all of that monitoring, assessment, decisions are all intertwined,
4. Discussion of grand vision of STG (talking heads or free standing group with support staff working towards consensus)

Bob Schneider said he is hoping to have the RMT monitoring plan at a place to hand off by the end of June.

Everyone: OG should send top 2 issues/priorities/needs to Ken Taylor.

Next STG meeting: June 15th, the following week, or July.

Certified by: Kenton P. Taylor, Designated Federal Officer and acting Chair, Science Technical Group