

North Slope Science Initiative

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North Slope Science Initiative
Science Technical Advisory Panel
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Large Geographic Area



Background, Need and Milestones

- **2002** – BLM and USGS began discussion on how to better integrate inventory, monitor, and research activities across administrative boundaries.
- **2003** – An interagency staff committee was formed to develop a working model for interagency cooperation:
 - BLM contracted for a “data gap” analysis for NPRA – later modified to include North Slope:
Results show over 500 ongoing studies on the North Slope, mostly uncoordinated with each other.
 - Science plan was contracted for “*North Slope Science Initiative*”.

Background, Need and Milestones (continued)

- **2004** – Workshops were held in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Barrow to help set initial direction for the new initiative:
 - Who’s doing what and where?
 - Ability to “centralize” information.
 - Need for North Slope-wide GIS/Remote Sensing Program.
 - **Charter developed for Oversight Group.**
 - **DRAFT Science Plan presented to Oversight Group.**
 - **Information needs assessment completed and submitted to Oversight Group.**
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Background, Need and Milestones (continued)

- 2005 – Executive Director position filled.
 - * Work began with North Pacific Research Board on a project database.
 - * Funding secured for caribou work, hydrologic gauging stations, bird disturbance studies and website development.
- Secretary of the Interior signed *Science Technical Group Charter*.
- North Slope Science Initiative formalized in Federal legislation (Section 348, Energy Policy Act of 2005).

Background, Need and Milestones (continued)

- 2006 – First meetings of the newly appointed *Science Technical Group*.
- First budget submitted for FY 2007 under the authority of the Energy Policy Act.
- *Science Technical Group* Charter changed to reflect legislation to *Science Technical Advisory Panel*.

So, after the “formative years” Where is the North Slope Science Initiative today?

Section 348, Energy Policy Act of 2005 – Goal Statement

- “...shall be to implement efforts to coordinate collection of scientific data that will provide a better understanding of the terrestrial, aquatic, and marine ecosystems of the North Slope of Alaska.”



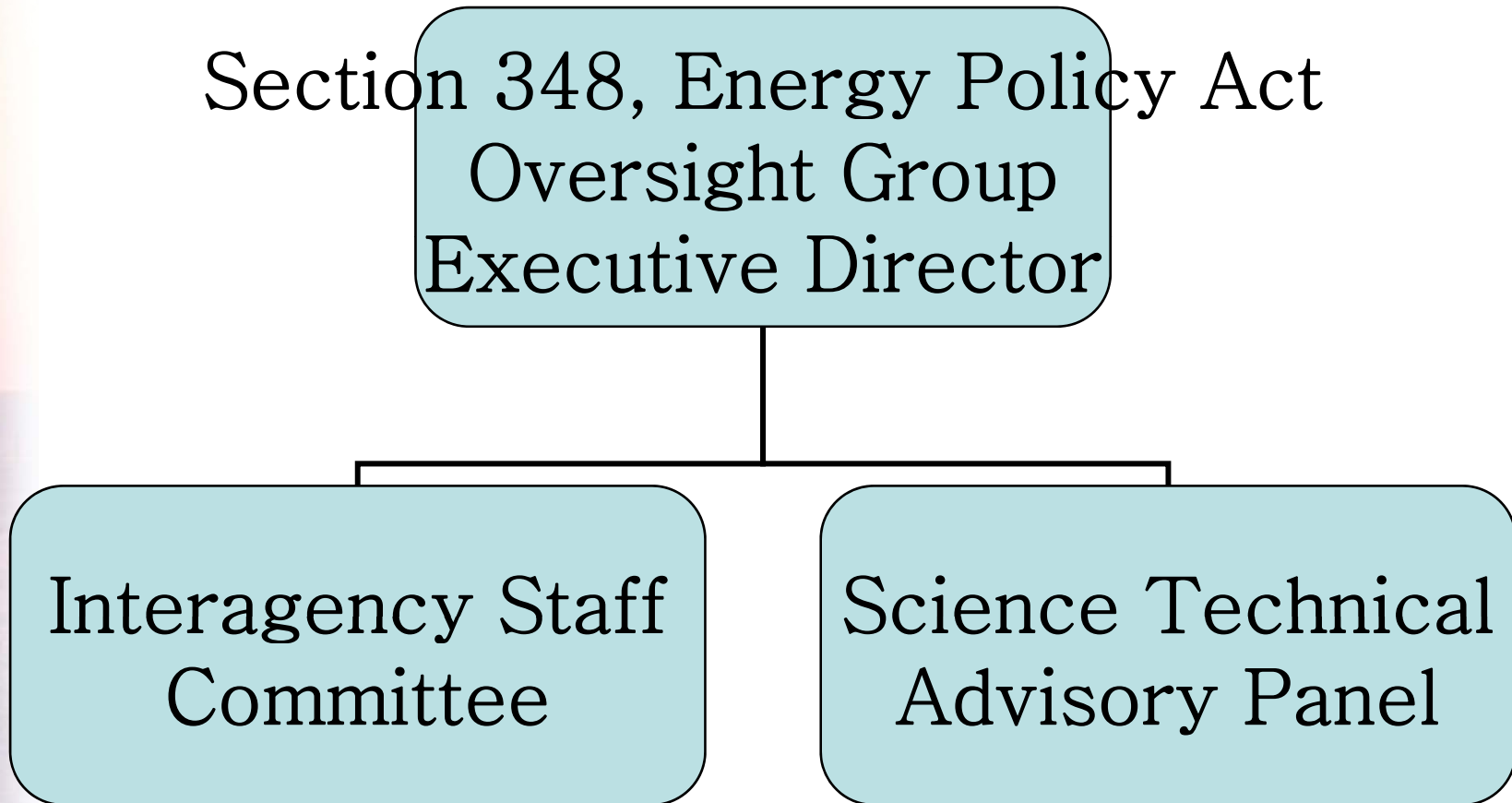
Section 348, Energy Policy Act - Objectives

- *Identify and prioritize information needs for inventory, monitor, and research activities to address the individual and cumulative effects of past, ongoing, and anticipated development activities and environmental change on the North Slope.*
- *Develop an understanding of information needs for regulatory and land management agencies, local governments, and the public.*
- *Focus on prioritization of pressing natural resource management and ecosystem information needs, coordination, and cooperation among agencies and organizations.*

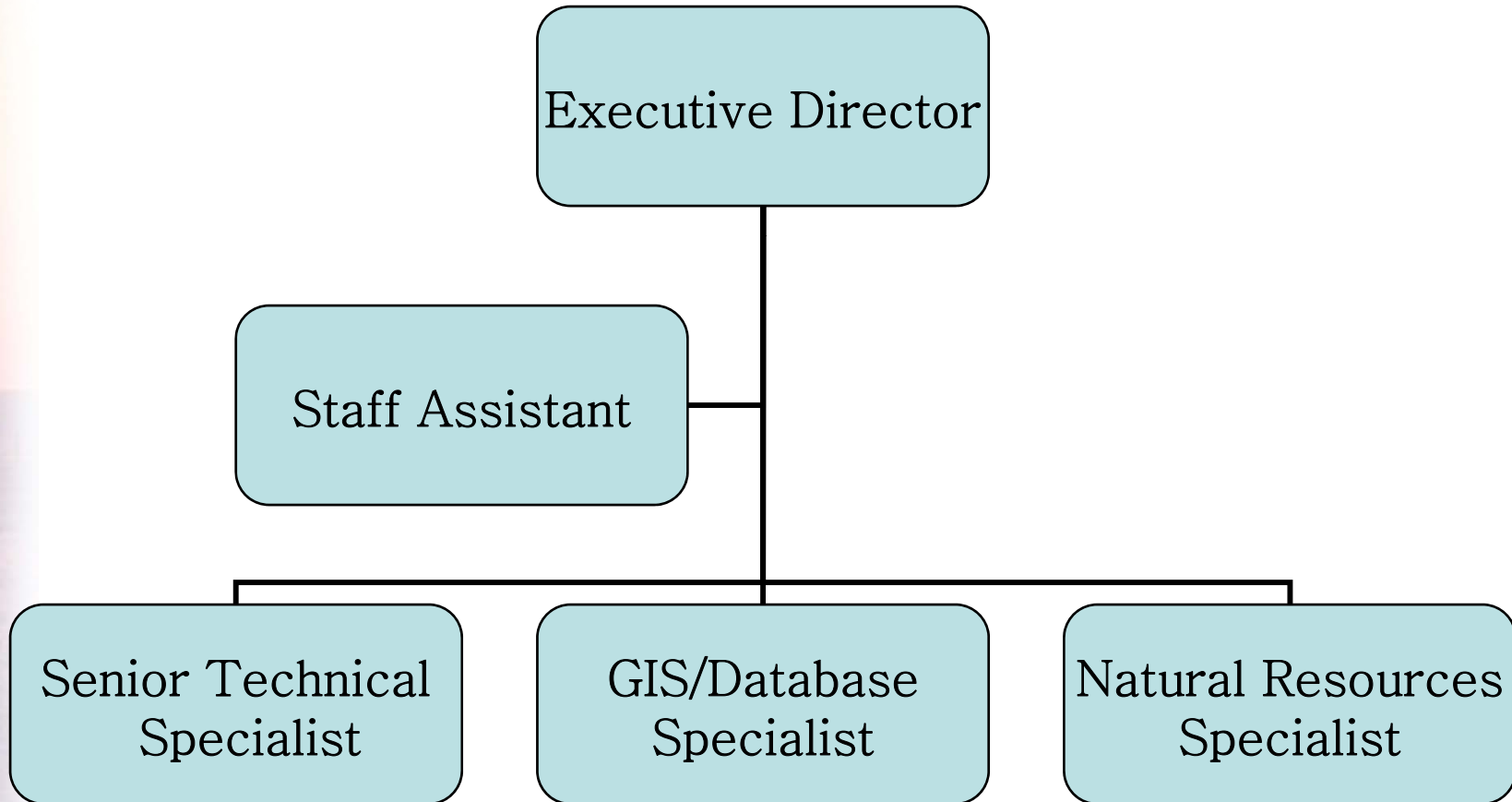
Objectives - Continued

- *Coordinate ongoing and future inventory, monitor, and research activities to minimize duplication of effort, share financial resources and expertise, and assure the collection of quality information.*
- *Identify priority needs not addressed by agency science programs in effect on the date of enactment of this Act and develop a funding strategy to meet those needs.*
- *Maintain and improve public and agency access to accumulated and ongoing research and contemporary and traditional local knowledge.*

Organization: A Success Story



Small Staff: High Motivation!



Meeting the Goal and Objectives of the Legislation

- Four additional hydrologic gauging stations have been placed in NPRA – another three have been funded across the North Slope.
- A project database is currently being developed that will serve as the forum to “share” what is being done.
- The remote sensing/GIS subcommittee developed the requirements to implement an agreement with UAF.
- A land cover change detection program is underway.
- A water quality remote sensing project has been developed.

Other Accomplishments

- Two workshops were held: Caribou and Remote Sensing/GIS.
- Developing a close relationship with the National Science Foundation to understand their initiatives in the Arctic.
- Principle investigator status in the Arctic Observing Network.
- Closer ties with academia to aid in understanding their research results to managers.
- Working with the Interagency Arctic Policy Committee
- Bringing together varied and divergent mandates.

Mapping the Way Forward!

- Identifying multi-jurisdictional opportunities.
- Adding value through all levels of member organizations.
- Coordinating with multiple entities, both inside and outside the member organizations.
- Bringing forward information about the North Slope and activities from energy development to environmental change – making that information available.
- Understanding how to use Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the value it brings to science.

Broadening Perspectives

- NSSI has the administrative infrastructure to address science and management challenges across multiple disciplines and agencies.
- Focus on addressing priority needs not addressed by current agency programs on natural resource programs and ecosystem information needs related to development and environmental change.
- Maintain and improve public and agency access to accumulated and ongoing research and contemporary and traditional local knowledge.
- Understand ongoing and future inventory, monitoring, and research activities to minimize duplication of effort, share financial resources and expertise, and assure the collection of quality information.

Overcoming (Mis)Perceptions

Mis-Perception 1: NSSI was created to fund priority research activities on the North Slope.

Fact: NSSI was established to help coordinate and communicate science (inventory, monitor, and research) activities and to serve as a partner to “bridge and supplement” those activities at the direction of the Oversight Group. The focus of NSSI remains on those science functions which offer the greatest return on investment in terms of information needed to address development and environmental change.

Overcoming (Mis)Perceptions (continued)

Mis-Perception 2: NSSI will eventually take over all of the science programs related to inventory, monitoring and research on the North Slope.

Fact: NSSI has no mandated legislation to absorb any entity's function or responsibility with respect to their individual mandates. NSSI is mandated to maintain and improve public and agency access to accumulated and ongoing research and contemporary and traditional local knowledge.

Overcoming (Mis)Perceptions (continued)

Mis-Perception 3: NSSI funding comes from BLM, therefore BLM has the greatest influence on how the initiative is managed.

Fact: Early in the development of NSSI, it became clear that any staff and funding would necessarily need a “home” place. Rather than have each member agency identify NSSI funding through their respective budget processes, the Secretary of the Interior designated BLM as the “Administrative” agency. Functionally, funding and staff reside at BLM, but direction of the initiative is from the Oversight Group.

Challenges to Success

- NSSI is a long-term initiative and needs to be forward looking with projections of opportunities beyond current budget cycles.
- Contracting and agreement processes are time consuming and are often learned by experience.
- Budget is still a “floating” target and needs to become fixed for long-term planning.
- Current staff is considered “term”, “temporary”, or “detail”, making long-term institutional knowledge base fleeting at best.

Challenges to Success (continued)

- Making efficient and practical use of the Science Technical Advisory Committee without “make do” assignments to the group.
- Getting member agencies and outside groups to recognize NSSI can provide coordination and “bridge” funding, but generally cannot be tasked as a funding entity.
- Understanding, predicting and adapting to environmental change and the related impacts to the terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments.

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide shows a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface.

Questions for the Panel

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