

Fiscal Year 2008: Report of Activities of the Science Technical Advisory Panel

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Report to be posted on the North Slope Science Initiative website: www.northslope.org

The uncertainty of funding experienced in fiscal year 2007, continued into fiscal year 2008 with follow-on Continuing Resolutions. Two official meetings were called for the North Slope Science Initiative, Science Technical Advisory Panel (STAP): May 9, 2008 and September 18 and 19, 2008. The minutes of both meeting are posted on the North Slope Science Initiative website: www.northslope.org.

One additional subcommittee meeting was held on February 6 and 7, 2008, to participate in the Senior Staff Committee process of reviewing the Oversight Group general categories of information and data needs over the next two, five and ten years.

The STAP has been significantly challenged to bring forth recommendations on large, generic issues such as permafrost, coastal erosion, depleted sea ice, changing arctic fire regime, species of interest, lake drying, etc. Likewise, the Senior Staff Committee has been challenged with identifying member agency/governments information or data that they will collectively need to increase the confidence in their decisions for the future. While no recommendations have come forward to the STAP Chair by the end of this fiscal year (2008), it is expected, as the various subcommittees investigate the subjects and management needs, the outflow of recommendations will be considerable. As always, the STAP is advisory to the DFO and the Oversight Group and any advice or recommendations forwarded are for the consideration of the membership of NSSI as a whole.

Significantly, the STAP reviewed and provided advice on three specific projects that are coordinated through the NSSI. The remote sensing/GIS subcommittee has been made a standing subcommittee to provide continuing feedback on the development and implementation of the Geographic Information Network of Alaska. The advices they provide are carefully considered during the design phase of this important decision support system. This same subcommittee has been instrumental in providing input to developing a consistent and user friendly land cover database for the entire North Slope. This particular project is due to be completed in the winter of 2010.

The hydrology subcommittee provided advice on the placement of two new hydrologic gauging stations on the North Slope that are sponsored by the NSSI and USGS. These stations became operational during the summer of 2008.

Finally, the largest fire ever recorded on the North Slope of Alaska was during the late summer and early winter of 2007. This fire consumed nearly 260,000 acres and was more in total size than all of the recorded fires on the North Slope. A subcommittee reviewed a project proposal jointly put forth by several members of the NSSI. The advice from this subcommittee led to a successful study being implemented the summer of 2008.