

**Minutes of  
The NSSI Oversight Group Meeting  
September 6, 2006**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Mary Smith Conference Room  
Anchorage, Alaska**

Attendees:

Oversight Group:

Tom Melius, FWS  
Brent Sheets, DOE  
Wayne Regelin, ADFG  
John Goll, MMS  
Julia Dougan, BLM  
Jon Kurland, NOAA  
Lawson Brigham, USARC  
Leslie Holland-Bartels, USGS  
Marcia Blazak, NPS  
Ed Fogels, ADNR  
Karla Kolash, NSB

Staff:

Ken Taylor, Executive Director, NSSI  
Pat Galvin, DNR  
John Payne, BLM  
Tim Jennings, FWS

Visitors:

Hans Neidig, Office of the Secretary  
Drue Pearce, Office of the Secretary  
Bruce Hollen, BLM  
Caryn Rea, ConocoPhillips  
Dr. John Kelley, Chair, NSSI Science Technical Group  
Heather Bradner, ADFG  
Amalie Couvion, The Nature Conservancy  
Brad Smith, NMFS  
Dave Howell  
Rich McMahan, ADNR  
Bob Schneider, BLM

10:37 AM Julia Dougan opened the meeting with introductions of the Oversight Group, NSSI Staff, and visitors.

The June 15, 2006 Oversight Group meeting minutes were reviewed and approved with spelling corrections.

Drue Pearce, Office of the Secretary, gave an overview of Secretary Kempthorne's visit to Alaska last week. The Secretary met with Mayor Itta of the North Slope Borough and many borough residents to hear their views and concerns on several topics, including the proposed leases in NPR-A and offshore activities. The Secretary visited the Teshekpuk Lake area with Mayor Itta and then flew to Alpine where he toured the production facility. He went on to Prudhoe Bay where he was briefed on BP spills and gathering line replacement activities as well as the advanced technology BP proposes for developing the Liberty field. He also flew to Kaktovik to hear from village residents on their needs and views regarding potential onshore and offshore oil and gas development.

Drue also mentioned that Mayor Itta had expressed an interest in conducting an Oil and Gas Symposium later this year in Barrow, but no dates have been set yet.

Ken Taylor provided updates on NSSI activities since the last Oversight Group meeting (see interim report). During the discussion of the project database software developed by the North Pacific Research Board for NSSI, Leslie Holland-Bartels expressed her support for the database design and volunteered her staff to participate with BLM and ADFG in the preliminary efforts to populate the database with those agencies' projects to determine the additional workload placed on principle investigators and work out any difficulties with the software.

**ACTION:** USGS will participate in populating the NPRB project database in addition to BLM and ADFG.

A discussion of the amendments to both the Science Technical Group and the Oversight Group charters followed. Ken went over the charters, and at the request of John Goll, provided a review of the administrative amendments to update the charter with its new membership and reflect the wording of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Brent Sheets recommended additional changes to the OG charter to include recognition of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission as an advisory entity and to add its mission to Section 5. Signatures blocks will be corrected and the signature sheet circulated by Ken.

**ACTION:** Ken will make changes and circulate for additional signatures.

No additional amendments or corrections were suggested for the Science Technical Advisory Panel charter.

**ACTION:** Ken will forward changes to this charter through the DOI system for FACA revisions.

Ken conveyed his concern to the Oversight Group that while the agency leaders were well engaged in the NSSI, many agency staff are unfamiliar with its goals and objectives and suggested a need for a staff workshop. Julia asked Ken to clarify what "staff" is

needed and what is expected. Ken gave examples of multi-agency, and agency specific, studies that are occurring where data of a similar nature are being collected with little or no coordination between efforts. Many North Slope investigators are unaware of other investigators with similar projects. For example, the University of Cincinnati has nearly 70 weather stations we knew nothing about until last week. Ken said his goal is to bring together staff working on similar themes to improve everyone's awareness of ongoing work and provide the opportunity for increased collaboration and coordination of efforts.. Karla and Brent suggested using the Forum on the Environment to share information. Wayne suggested a workshop with "mid-level" managers with representation by 4 or 5 folks from each agency. Brent suggested using senior staff to organize such a workshop. John Goll expressed his desire to focus the group on the key elements and objectives of the Oversight Group's charter.

**ACTION:** Ken will contact NSSI staff contacts and meet with them to develop a workshop framework, prioritize discussion topics, presenters and attendees, and determine a time and location.

John Payne gave a presentation on the North Slope pilot study of the Automated Lagrangian Water Quality Assessment System developed by Altarum and the University of Michigan tested July 30- August 4, 2006 near the Alpine facility and in NPR-A. This collaborative study was funded by BLM and DOE with helicopter and facilities support from ConocoPhillips. Altarum and University of Michigan project leaders donated their time as well ([www.northslope.org](http://www.northslope.org)).

Afternoon:

Caryn Rea, subgroup leader of the STG, reported on the STG critique of the draft NSSI Science Strategy requested by the Oversight Group. Their conclusions were that the document contained some valuable information regarding the purpose of the NSSI and how it is designed to function which the STG felt would be valuable for agency staff and the general public. The STG recommended this be compiled in a single document for general use. Much of the information included in the document, particularly in Chapters 2 and 3, however, the STG felt was of limited use and that it should not be titled a science strategy. They recommended splitting it into two documents.

Karla Kolash recommended that NSSI develop two different documents from the draft. Wayne Regelin asked if we shouldn't consider "What are the NSSI goals for the next few years? We have never really spent time at these meetings discussing a common vision for NSSI direction. The OG needs to define where we want to go." Julia Dougan stated that we need to go through a strongly facilitated process to determine where the NSSI is going in the next few years. This will gain us some focus. Until then we cannot provide good direction to the STG. John Goll said the agencies know what their priorities are, but we are less clear on how our individual priorities fit together collectively.

John Kelley reported on the June 26-27, 2006 meeting of the STG. He stated that it is clear from STG charter what the mission of this group is. Communication pathways were discussed by the STG and are reflected in the minutes of their meeting. Communications should be through STG Chair-Executive Director-Chair of OG. A draft questionnaire was developed by the STG for use by the Oversight Group in framing its questions to the STG and putting appropriate sideboards on them to help focus the issue being addressed. A discussion of the questionnaire followed with no clear consensus on its use, however, many of the Oversight Group members thought it was an excellent format. It was suggested that the questionnaire be used to frame Oversight Group requests to the STG in the form of a letter from the Chair of the Oversight Group.

Questions from the STG to the Oversight Group include:

- How does the STG effectively respond to assignments given from OG?
- Can the OG prioritize their needs for NSSI and the STG?
- The STG needs guidance on "monitoring," what are the issues that require monitoring?

Ken Taylor stated that the STG requested an informational meeting to discuss monitoring and has developed a draft agenda for October 11-12, 2006 for this meeting to be held in Fairbanks. The Oversight Group should convey its approval to hold this meeting with some guidance regarding monitoring.

Pat Galvin asked if the Oversight Group could provide some authority to the Executive Director to proceed with scheduling meetings of the STG and other administrative actions without the approval of the entire OG. A discussion followed and it was suggested that the Executive Director work with the Chair and/or the Vice-Chair of the OG to address these needs.

Presentation on Mapping Alaska, Ed Fogels, Deputy Commissioner, DNR and Rich McMahan, DNR (see website).

Lawson Brigham presentation: Arctic marine shipping assessment of the arctic council ([www.pame.is](http://www.pame.is))

At 4:00 p.m. Julia Dougan called for public comments. There were no comments from the public.

Ken Taylor requested that the Oversight Group discuss what they would like to see on the agenda for the next meeting before they adjourn today. The following items were suggested:

- Answer questions from the Science Technical Advisory Panel
- Review issue identification from the Oversight Group and affirm priorities
- Discuss monitoring strategies of member agencies
- Review major science themes that emerged in the project database and the agency survey

- Roundtable discussion of reasonably foreseeable management decisions and related information gaps
- Receive feedback from the Science Technical Advisory Panel on their October meeting
- Report from Executive Director on NSSI staff contacts meeting on workshop design and decide on format, attendees, and issues to be addressed

**ACTION:** Tentative schedule for next meeting, November 16, 2006 (Thursday) 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. with a working lunch. The NPS offered to host this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.