

NSSI OG Meeting
Alaska State Office
February 29, 2008

Present:

John Payne
Tom Melius
Thomas Lonnie
Tim Jennings
Tom Melius
Hans Neidig
Dave Yokel
Bob Winfree

Dick Le Febvre
Tim Jennings
Karla Kolash
John Goll
Brent Sheets
Lawson Brigham
Leslie Holland-Bartels
Denny Lassuy

Participants by Phone:

Jon Kurland
Deb Rocque

John Kelley
Gary Schultz

Absent:

Ken Taylor

All handouts and PowerPoint's referenced in these notes are located on the NSSI website,

Introductions and Chair Discussions, Dick LeFebvre

Dick called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and greeted the group.

Approval of January 28th meeting minutes, Dick Le Febvre

The group reviewed the January 28th meeting minutes.

ACTION: Tom Melius moved to accept the minutes and Karla Kolash seconded the motion. Meeting minutes were approved.

Director's Report, John Payne:

John gave the Director's report. He reported on the activities of the Staff Committee and STAP at their last meeting. He presented the group with a project matrix. About 50 different projects had been reviewed by the Staff Committee, a subset of about a dozen that received particular attention for partnering opportunities was presented on the matrix. There was a request for support from NSSI and other agencies from MMS on a social science study in Nuiqsit. This study would look at the effectiveness of mitigations used there. They are looking for a committee to head up this project.

Landfire and associated partnering opportunities were discussed.

The NSSI charter is being routed.

ACTION: None

STAP Reports, John Kelley

John Kelley briefed the group on the STAP task as follows:

- **GINA-System** is sound and STAP encourages the OG to adopt the use of GINA for depositing metadata and current project data. They also encourage developing collaborative relationships with other data collecting entities to gain access to data they would otherwise not have. The STAP feels GINA could be an effective NSSI outreach tool for the public through the use of online instruction modules. John Payne added that it would be beneficial if the OG would encourage their staff to upload their data into GINA. Of the 135 layers available, about 70-75 layers would be relatively straightforward to ingest, but the remainder may be too costly to feed into the system. It is important to be selective of which data sets should be ingested.
- **Stream gauging-**The STAP was to look at less expensive methods of obtaining this information since gauging stations are so expensive to maintain. John Kelley said the STAP feels that the fresh water in these regions is very important. They do feel areas should be classified as fresh water rich or poor and studies done in priority order. This could be accomplished by agency staff attending a workshop with the hydrologic community to determine the needs. Looking into alternate methods to be used, possibly in conjunction with stream gauges or to replace these methods should be addressed. A report would result from the workshop with short and long-term recommendations to address this issue. John Payne added that each gauging station costs about \$60,000 per year to maintain. He further clarified the scope of the workshop. Tom Melius asked about the timeframe and John said they are looking at early May. Brent Sheets was in support of the idea of having a workshop on this subject and volunteered to assist with the agenda. Leslie added that the way the information is structured in the business process plan was very good. She did say it would be very important for the end users to take part in this process. This would mean agency staff in that area should attend.
- **Landcover-**The STAP was briefed on this project and the information during the meeting indicated that a landcover map is not only essential but way overdue. They recommend it be finished as soon as possible and ingested into GINA. They feel that the focus on landcover classification should then be moved to mapping for change detection. They recommend that NSSI, using GINA, investigate methodologies used in other areas to adopt an effective method. John Payne

added that they asked Landfire to slow down their efforts of creating a landcover map on the North Slope so they can gather better data. Henri Bastien, of Landfire, suggested using NSSI funding and making a joint effort with USGS to speed up the data gathering process since the Landfire project cannot be slowed down. He realizes Landfire may not meet all the needs, but it is a good start. This would be better than everyone doing their own landcover projects. Denny Lassuy will be coordinating with EPA to incorporate their studies also. There are four landcover projects, Landcover, GAP, NSSI and EPA. NSSI is the common link. It was suggested that NSSI staff create a matrix of the coordination on this effort. Some coordination is already underway in this effort. The GAP system creators will be in Anchorage in May to meet with Landfire. John Payne revisited the December landcover meetings where a lot of the similarities between the programs were discussed. Dick LeFebvre asked if NSSI should send a letter of encouragement to each of these entities for their coordination so that we may have one good product. The group consensus was that a letter of interest would be a good idea. Bob Winfree said it would be interesting to see if the classifications for the program are different and if so why. John Payne feels the classifications would probably be very similar. Tom Melius said we should understand what the possible benefits could be before sending any letter out. The matrix would accomplish this. Brent Sheets suggested the STAP do this.

ACTION: NSSI staff will create a matrix outlining the functions and commonalties of each landcover project for the OG to review prior to sending a letter of support.

- **Tundra fire proposal-**The STAP looked at the MTU prospectus on fires on the North Slope and their possible relation to climatically driven tundra fires. The group feels the outlined methodologies are not mature enough at this time to detect a change. They feel the authors should develop a more rigorous plan of action involving those who live on the North Slope. This would be most beneficial to the stakeholders and agencies that have a vested interest in the North Slope. They recommend that a focus core group be facilitated to coordinate studies to be done during the summer of 2008. This group would also help develop the plans on how to deal with future fire studies. John Payne said Denny Lassuy have taken the lead and have begun to coordinate with Brian Person of the North Slope Borough, Nancy French of Michigan Tech University, Randi Jandt of BLM Northern Field Office, Donie Bret-Harte of UAF, and Karen Murphy, FWS Regional Fire Ecologist. Dick LeFebvre asked what the group is going to address, John said the group would look at the potential relationship of climate change and fire and see if these changes are permanent and progressive. They would look, for example, at the effects on the active layer. Leslie Holland-Bartels said the use of the one fire is a good start of a continued study. Karla Kolash also said that the North Slope Borough was very interested in pushing this study forward. NSSI's role would be in technical support and coordination efforts.

- **Nuiqsit Study-STAP reviewed MMS-approved study** to look at mitigation measures used in the community of Nuiqsit after oil and gas exploration. This study would be a good vehicle for NSSI to be involved in social science efforts. The STAP recognized the need to verify and refine mitigation activities and they feel the study is worthwhile. John Kelley will draft a letter of support and suggest a panel of persons from various studies to assist in this study. John Goll said their internal process has approved it, but MMS would need the support of other agencies in this project. This would entail employee assistance in the study. Dee suggested assistance with the statement of work and overseeing the principle investigator of this project. Tom Lonnie said BLM is in full support of the project. He will commit a staff from the Arctic Field Office. Dee suggested Stacey McIntosh to be on the steering committee. Tom Melius was also supportive, but wanted to know what type of reports they would get back. Since this would be a long-term study, would they get reports back throughout the project that they could use for new projects. Dee said he would expect interim reports to be available by the second year and the final report by the end of the third year. He further elaborated that there would be specific areas targeted that would assist in understanding the dynamics of what social impacts there are. Tom Melius subsequently provided the name of Dr. Polly Wheeler (FWS/OSM) to be the FWS representative on this study. John Payne suggested that the letter of support go forward and other representative names be gathered so contacts can be made. Karla Kolash said that because there have been so many past studies done there, it may be difficult to gain their cooperation. Dee Williams said they are very aware of the public burden of research efforts and he has presented the idea to the community and it was well received. Karla Kolash offered the Borough's assistance in this process. Brent Sheets suggested a member of the community be involved also, but it is felt that the community is a stakeholder and due to objectivity it may be better not to have representation. John Goll said that decision should be made by those conducting the study and the community would be allowed to view the end result of the study before they implement it. Dick LeFebvre recommended keeping the scope of the study narrow. John Payne wants the list of staff contacts sent to him so he can share the list with Dee Williams and Gary Kofinas.

ACTION: The OG members will present the staff names to work on this project by the end of March to John Payne. John will send out the proposal to the OG group.

- **Fisheries Workshop-** STAP suggests moving forward with the idea of a Fisheries workshop in FY 2009. A sub-committee headed by Dan Reed would be formed to scope out interest in the workshop and plan for how it may be run in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.
- **NSSI outreach efforts-**This is addressed in the business plan and the STAP does not feel further outreach efforts should be pursued at this time.

- **Oil and Gas Best Practices Forum in Alaska**-A request from Canada for industry and NSSI to host such a conference was made. A sub-committee would be developed to look into this.
- **NSSI Monitoring Activities**-Gary Kofinas will develop a white paper on this topic for the OG. It is recommended that the group take advantage of their Director's points of view.
- **Emerging Issue Monitoring and Data needs**-The STAP understand the broad and differing monitoring needs of the various agencies and the various methods used to obtain data. The panel recommends rather than taking on the full list of about a dozen emerging issues, the STAP take two of these issues and address them through the STAP and Senior Staff committee prior to making recommendation to the OG on monitoring needs and processes. The following questions would be asked: who is already studying this issue on the North Slope, what questions are being asked, what are the management questions on each of these topics and look ahead 2-, 5-, and 10-years down the road for what the future needs may be. The STAP and Staff Committee should work on this together. Some of the members of the OG expressed concern with why the STAP only picked two items to address at a time. The STAP decided to take two at a time to avoid being overwhelmed. The purpose was to narrow the scope down before looking at the broader issues. Karla Kolash recommended a third issue (either caribou or migratory birds, from among the "species at risk") be added. The OG questioned what the timeline looks like for this process. The goal of the group to move quickly in this process. It was suggested that they would have a good timeline and matrix developed by the time they complete the two subjects. Leslie Holland-Bartels suggested one of the two items be changed to one of Karla Kolash's suggestions; the remainder of the OG agreed.

Comment [d1]: I don't recall this item & do not understand what is meant by "take advantage of their Director's points of view."

ACTION: The OG wants the STAP to add one more item to the monitoring and data needs that would be of interest to the NSB.

- **Proposal process through NSSI**-The STAP would like a transparent process for approval of projects to be adopted. There are an increasing number of unsolicited projects being given to NSSI.
- A timeline and matrix will be developed for this process.

Comment [d2]: Not sure what this bullet refers to – is it the proposal process? I don't recall this piece.

After further discussion, the OG decided to form a sub-committee comprised of Lawson Brigham, Leslie Holland-Bartels and Brent Sheets to work on the four topics given by the STAP to come up with what areas they want looked at.

Comment [d3]: I do not understand what this is – I do not recall this "sub-committee" being formed & thought that we (John & I) were simply tasked with working with Karla to define which piece she wanted to add to other two the STAP is to review. I started this, but have not heard back from Karla.

Executive Session (OG Members only)

ACTION: None

The OG reviewed the information presented from the STAP report earlier during the meeting.

Review and Approval of Annual Workplan, Dick LeFebvre

Dick presented the OG the Annual Workplan. He noted that there had been several suggestions from the group and that they had been developed into a comprehensive plan. The group went over the plan.

Discussion/Questions:

Dick asked the group for approval of the plan. John Goll suggested that in future plans the outyears should be addressed along with the in budget years. He also suggested that the format for future meetings be carefully monitored to ensure they take place as outlined. These should be carefully thought out. Brent Sheets suggested they be put out as approximates if needed. Bob Winfree said due to the increased amount of meetings, it might be difficult for participants to make them all. He suggested future use of video-conferencing. Leslie Holland-Bartels suggested the group define how many meetings are going to be held ahead of time so they can be on the participant calendars. The OG needs to provide more guidance on who should attend what meetings due to budget constraints and the drain on employee time. John Payne agreed there has been an increase in meetings and a more prudent approach would be necessary in the future. Brigham Lawson said he did feel it is important for NSSI presence in person to some of the meetings. He also said that in table seven there was no mention of an increase in marine activity. This may be need to be added. The group agreed it should be added. This table was developed through individual interviews with the OG. It was suggested to change the title from strategic to emerging issues for future plans. Bob Winfree also suggested an area on contaminants be added and that the budget items need to be added. Karla Kolash asked if any items addressed today should be on Appendix One. John said the GIS sub-group, digital mapping, and fire should. She suggested they be added to the Appendix One as it will become the annual report to Congress. John Goll said those items will also be summarized for the annual report. Bob Winfree asked if the documents would be on the NSSI website. They will be on the website.

Comment [d4]: Note – this was added to Table 7, per my edits sent to June on 03/07. The additional issue box for contaminants was also added, as was the name change to “emerging” issues.

ACTION: John will add the budget items to Appendix One , add the two boxes (contaminants and marine activities), change the title on Table 7, change the title on Appendix Three, add a disclaimer to page three on the budget page, and re-bind the book. With those changes, the group consensus was that the plan will be sound and should be approved.

Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Projections, Dick LeFebvre

Dick LeFebvre suggested that there may be an area that shows what the various agencies are doing, maybe under coordination. John Payne said this topic was discussed during the Staff Committee Meeting. A spreadsheet can be created to demonstrate that. This could be incorporated into the plan. Brigham Lawson agreed and said it may be able to be put into the table. Leslie Holland-Bartels also said the OG needs to be very clear to the STAP of what the needs are that(?) will help. Brigham Lawson asked if his attendance at the Staff Committee

meetings would be beneficial. John Payne said both groups have asked for some OG presence at some of their meetings.

ACTION: The group agreed that OG presence at some of the STAP meetings is a good idea.

Oversight Group Washington, DC Visit, Dick LeFebvre

This subject was discussed during the Executive Session. The effort would be to solidify support for NSSI.

Questions:

Karla Kolash asked if the members who are going should meet prior to the trip to make sure everyone is on the same page. John Payne asked if he should draft a white paper for information purposes. Dick LeFebvre suggested the subject stay where it is.

ACTION: John Payne will look at scheduling the OG trip to DC on March 21. Dick LeFebvre suggested it would be nice to have Borough representation on the trip. Dick LeFebvre, Tom Lonnie, John Payne, Leslie Holland-Bartels and possibly Tom Melius are planning to attend.

Comment [d5]: ?? thought we agreed on early April, or does this refer to the date when John will be able to start working on it (if so, no need to cite it).

Comments:

Dick LeFebvre liked the items as they were presented at this meeting and would like to see more of the same. This would show tangible progress. He would like to see more of this type information in future workplans. Tom Melius agreed this has value, especially in the budget out years. He also commented on the importance of an established timeline to keep money flowing to the projects. He also emphasized that as more projects are identified and we become more organized we will have to have staff to do the work. This will have to be addressed in the future. John Goll brought up the earlier comment of unsolicited proposals. He said there would need to be initial buy in and sponsorship by the agencies before coming to NSSI. Karla thought that the STAP may feel that they have a more active role in the process now with the current activities. John Payne agrees that the interface is getting better. The feedback after the last meeting was mostly positive, but there are still questions.

Setting of Next Meeting (April 24, UAF, Fairbanks, AK), Dick LeFebvre

John Goll said that possibly May 7,8,9, the **Outer Continental Shelf Science Advisory Committee** ? will be in Anchorage. He will not be able to attend next OG meeting because he will be attending the national DOI_Ocean/Coastal Retreat the week of April 24. Tom Lonnie will be at the ELT and cannot attend.

Comment [d6]: I think??

ACTION: (did not get what was decided on this one)

Public Comment, Dick LeFebvre

Dick LeFebvre asked for public comments and there were none.

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

DRAFT