

NSSI OG Meeting
Alaska State Office
June 10, 2008

Present

John Payne (NSSI)
Tom Melius (FWS)
Bob Winfree (NPS)
Dave Yokel (BLM, for Tom Lonnie)
Ken Taylor (ADFG)
Leslie Dierauf (USGS)
Richard Glenn (ASRC)

Dick Le Febvre (ADNR)
Leslie Holland-Bartels (USGS)
Cleve Cowles (MMS, for John Goll)
Karla Kolash (NSB)
Denny Lassuy (NSSI)
Vic Knox (NPS)
Mayor Edward Itta (NSB)

Absent:

Lawson Brigham (USARC)
Brent Sheets (DOE)
Jon Kurland (NOAA Fisheries)
Laura Furgione (NOAA Weather Service)

All handouts and PowerPoints referenced in these notes are located on the NSSI website.

Introductions and Welcome, Mayor Itta and Dick LeFebvre:

Karla Kolash introduced Mayor Itta and he welcomed the group. The group introduced themselves. Please see Mayor Itta's comments attached.

Annual Change of Chair, John Payne, Dick LeFebvre, and Tom Melius:

Dick LeFebvre announced the ending of his term as NSSI Chairman. He introduced Tom Melius as the new Chairman. Tom thanked Dick for his efforts on behalf of the NSSI OG. John Payne presented Dick with a plaque for his service. Tom introduced Karla Kolash as his Co-Chair.

Acceptance of April 24 Minutes, Tom Melius:

Tom Melius asked the group for acceptance of the meeting minutes.

ACTION: With minor typo edits, the minutes were approved. The approved minutes are posted on the NSSI website.

Director's Report, John Payne:

John Payne gave the Director's Report. The report can be located on the NSSI website.

He covered the following topics:

- Trip to DC
- Emerging issues matrix
- STAP nomination process
- Re-design of NSSI website with MIRI
- Water quality and bathymetry remote sensing
- Anchorage GINA staff position
- NSSI budget
- Landcover mapping and the Landfire Program

ACTION:

The Director's Report was accepted by the group.

Canadian/U.S. Arctic Symposium, John Payne:

John Payne presented the group with information on the symposium. This will be the 3rd such symposium for Canada. The Canadians feel it would be a good time for both countries to present information on oil and gas exploration research and development practices. There is a U.S. and Canadian steering committee in place to help prepare for this. It will be the end of October of this year in Anchorage. In addition to facilitating the international collaboration on agenda development, a specific NSSI role is to serve as local arrangements chair. Industry has been approached about providing a welcome package and they will have an opportunity early in the symposium to outline their research needs. However, this is not an industry forum. There will be 28 speaking slots available, 14 for each country, 7 on ocean issues, 7 on terrestrial issues. John sees this as a great opportunity to learn from top experts from both nations on what is going on in the arctic in relation to oil and gas and how we may best prepare for managing such activities into the future.

Objectives:

- Showcase of current research and development practices
- Future research and development activities

- Identify ways to develop synergy with Canadian partners as exploration activities continue.

Comments/Questions

Tom Melius asked if there would be publication of the abstracts. John said there would be.

Tom Melius asked if the dates were solid and John said yes.

Karla asked if the speakers have been finalized. John said the steering committee would finalize. Karla suggested that the STAP have a role in suggesting speakers.

Dave Yokel asked if there expectations from some of the partners listed in the draft agenda. John said there are no responsibilities identified, but rather the list included in the draft agenda was a list of potential participants.

John Payne said the proposed forum will be held in conjunction with the information transfer meetings held by MMS.

Cleve Cowles commented on the ambitious schedule involved. He said MMS is also on the steering committee to aid in providing topics for the presentation.

ACTION:

The steering committee will continue working on this and work with MMS. A follow up report will be provided to the oversight group at the July 22, 2008 meeting.

Status of First Report to Congress, Dick LeFebvre and John Payne:

The final draft will be out prior to July 22. John Payne sent the first draft to OG subcommittee members to review. There is no set format to follow. The draft report focused on the following:

- Background of NSSI
- Structure of NSSI
- Mission and Objectives of NSSI
- Funding of NSSI
- Accomplishments and Value added through NSSI
- Future direction and Emerging Issues for NSSI

Comments/Questions

Tom Melius asked about the process used for reports going to Congress. John Payne discussed this with Henri Bisson and was told it was to be delivered directly to the Secretary.

ACTION:

John Payne will send the draft out to the full OG for comments.

The report will be delivered to the Secretary by the end of August.

Dick LeFebvre asked if the Chair or all OG members should sign off on the report. Denny Lassuy noted that in some cases, for example as with the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, once the full group had reviewed and approved the report, the Chair, Co-Chair and Executive Director will sign the report for the entire group. Tom Melius said that would be taken under advisement.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Krystyna Wolniakowski, Director, Western Partnership Office:

Krystyna Wolniakowski gave a PowerPoint presentation on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its activities in Alaska generally, and the North Slope in particular. The presentation is posted on the NSSI website.

Comments/Questions:

Richard Glenn asked how a researcher would compete for funds. Krystyna said they will issue a statewide request for proposals this fall. Once they are received, they will review them and recommendations will be made for funding. There will be a 30-day notification of proposed funding and grants will be issued sufficiently early in 2009 to enable summer 09 studies to get underway.

Karla Kolash asked if the North Slope Borough is allowed to take grants from them. Krystyna said anyone may apply for a project related grant but that NFWS is not allowed to fund indirect costs.

Ken Taylor asked if settlement procurement funds are considered non-federal; Krystyna noted that this was correct; they are considered non-federal and could thus be used as matching funds.

Ken Taylor asked why the Borough or the State was not consulted on how the settlement funds were to be spent. Krystyna said the study areas come down from the court decision. Tom Melius also said that FWS is open to all proposals for federal funding. Ken suggested partnering in some priorities for both the State and FWS for collaboration purposes and meeting agency missions. Tom Melius said there will be opportunities for collaboration on projects.

Denny Lassuy asked how else NSSI may assist NFWF in meeting its mission within our geographic area of concern. Krystyna said she feels it is important when developing requests for proposals that NFWF be very clear about what is needed and that therefore maybe having a member of NSSI on the committee may be helpful and that another critical way NSSI might be able to help would be to help identify key experts to review these proposals.

ACTION:

None at this time.

NOAA Regional Collaboration and the Arctic, Carven Scott, NWS:

Carven Scott introduced Kathleen Cole, Sea Ice Forecaster, Anchorage Forecast Office and John Draggomir, Director of the Fairbanks Weather Forecast Office. He suggested to the group that they review NOAA's Integrated Service Plan as it outlines their goals in the Arctic. He gave an overview of NOAA. It consists of:

- National Weather Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- National Ocean Service
- National Earth Systems Research Laboratory

Kathleen gave a PowerPoint presentation on her office's activities on sea ice mapping, tracking and forecasting.

Comments/Questions:

Richard Glenn stated that the Whaling Captains depend on SAR data for their activities and he feels it should be accessible. NOAA does not have money in the budget to pay Canada \$2000.00 per image. There will be access to Japanese SAR data, but it is much smaller than the Canadian data. Kathleen also advised him to call her for needed data.

Richard Glenn asked about weather systems that cause break off events. He has seen weather/ice conditions that blend together to cause these types of problems. Kathleen said those types of events are put into the text on the advisories.

Karla Kolash asked if this information is kept as historical files. Kathleen said the GIS information is, but the rest of the data is in paper form only. They are trying to get them digitized, possibly back to 1972, but this will take at least a year or so.

ACTION:

None

Local/Traditional Knowledge and NSSI, Gary Kofinas, UAF:

Gary Kofinas gave a report on Local Knowledge and the Human Dimension in NSSI through the use of a PowerPoint presentation. The STAP has established a working group for improvement in this area. He also distributed a summary to the group. He stated the representation of traditional knowledge during STAP meetings has been low and the purpose of this internal STAP working group was to find ways to improve on that situation. On behalf of the STAP, he was essentially looking for a 're-validation' of the need for this kind of a working group and any OG guidance they felt may be appropriate for its operations.

Comments/Questions:

Tom Melius commented on the proposal of the STAP to have a working group for traditional knowledge. He stated he appreciated the proposal and feels it is a worthy piece that is needed. He asked the group for their opinion. John Payne said there have been good presentations on traditional knowledge in the past and he feels it could be made even better if people would recognize the value added through the use of community traditional knowledge.

Ken Taylor said the OG tried to come up with two questions for the STAP to address on this subject early on. This has been a struggle, so a sub-group was formed to come up with ways to access and use traditional knowledge. Karla Kolash said the Borough recently had a traditional knowledge workshop and they feel it is something that needs to be moved forward on.

Leslie Dierauf asked if the STAP is interested as a whole in this or would just the sub-group be interested. Gary Kofinas said some of them may, but they may have to incorporate outside experts. Robert Suydam agreed that the STAP does not have enough expertise in this area. John said there is some, but not a high comfort level within the STAP on this subject.

Leslie Holland-Bartels said this is a good example of why the STAP was developed. It seems appropriate to move forward as long as they are clear on what guidance they are wanting from the sub-group.

Vic Knox said the sub-committee would not be effective if the STAP does not agree with them.

Cleve Cowles said they are at a design stage where they could have a good orientation for those sub-committee members. John Payne said that has been done.

Richard Glenn said he liked the approach of starting at the local level first and getting their buy in.

Tom Melius suggested John work with the Senior Staff Committee and Gary Kofinas prior to the next OG meeting with the methodology and possible membership of the group.

Dave Yokel feels having social scientists in the sub-group could be valuable.

Bob Winfree said the other way to go about it is to identify the questions that are to be answered and look at the best ways to answer them are first. For some questions, traditional knowledge will be valuable, others it will not.

ACTION:

John Payne will work with Gary Kofinas and the Staff Committee prior to the next OG meeting to outline the methodology and possible membership of the sub-group. Karla Kolash and Tom Melius will work with John and Gary on the best way to proceed.

Ecosystems Services Project, Terry Chapin, UAF:

Terry Chapin gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Ecosystems Services Project. The presentation is posted on the NSSI website.

Comments/Questions

Richard Glenn asked if changes in permafrost conditions could be used to make these predictions. Terry said questions like that are the ones that the Scenarios Network for Alaska Planning (SNAP) is designed to answer.

Terry is hopeful that SNAP will be helpful when answering subsistence based questions.

Richard Glenn said traditional knowledge is important when reporting changes in the subsistence lifestyle patterns.

Vic Knox asked if the SNAP projections are available to the public. Terry said they are trying to get them available on-line, but at this point a person would have to contact SNAP staff

Tom Melius commented about the fact that SNAP is beginning to mature.

ACTION:

None

Database Integration:

Tom Melius briefed the meeting participants on an earlier OG discussion on the numerous types of databases available. He asked John to give an overview. John Payne told the group that during a number of workshops it was identified that an accessible database was needed for research data. It was decided this would be best accomplished through the use of GINA. There was a total of 134 data layers identified. Those layers were broken down to the most usable layers. Other entities have also been looking at how to bring data together, such as Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), NOAA, and others. The idea is to work collaboratively to bring all these databases together to get the most user-friendly database possible. During the discussion, it was decided that a workshop bringing these persons together would be needed to

accomplish this. Leslie Holland-Bartels commented on the numerous visualization processes available for the various efforts. She feels there may be opportunities to implement integration tools to pull needed data out of these databases instead of one super database.

ACTION: Tom Melius asked for an update at the July meeting on the various databases available, the best practices that have been found, and progress on developing the workshop. He suggested John work with Leslie to develop this update.

Public Comment, Tom Melius, Chair:

Robert Suydam, Wildlife Biologist for NSB and member of the STAP: Robert stated that for NSSI staff to meet on the North Slope is very beneficial and he would like to see more community involvement. He commented on the start of NSSI and how a great deal has been accomplished; especially better communication between the heads of agencies. Aside from that positive, NSSI is taking small steps, but moving in the right direction. As a member of the STAP, and in talking to other STAP members, they are all interested in making NSSI a great success. At the same time, there is frustration within the STAP because there is a concern they are not being used fully. He posed the question to the OG as to how the STAP could be used more fully. He suggested reviewing the STAP charter for possible changes, including more specific direction. Another alternative would be for the OG to ask the STAP how they see their role and how they may better serve the OG. The STAP and OG have only met jointly the one time and he felt it was beneficial. He feels more face to face meetings between the two groups would be very beneficial. He said he continues to be cautiously optimistic that NSSI is going to provide valuable services to the North Slope. There are a lot of opportunities for collaboration through NSSI guidance. In particular, he suggested that the listing of NSSI priorities on emerging issues could provide “powerful advice” to member agencies and others on opportunities for collaboration. He encouraged the OG to use the STAP as much as they can.

Dick LeFebvre said he felt that Robert made some good points. He commented that looking at the work plan would be a good start. Tom Melius said he also feels a joint meeting would be beneficial and suggested that, in order to lighten individual time commitments while more broadly empowering STAP members, the STAP Chairmanship might rotate among its members in a manner similar to how it works on the OG (though perhaps for two-year terms). He sees the STAP as a very beneficial element.

Ken Taylor commented on the difficulty of getting maximum attendance at a joint meeting. It takes a lot of planning.

Richard Glenn thanked the OG for the opportunity to participate in the meeting. Dick LaFebvre noted that as a charter member through ASRC, his participation was welcome at all OG meetings.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 22, in Anchorage, Alaska.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.