

**North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI) Oversight Group**  
**April 21, 2005 Minutes**  
**DRAFT**

**Executive Oversight Group Attendees:**

Ken Taylor, Executive Director  
Henri R. Bisson, BLM, Chair  
Wayne Regelin, ADFG, Co-Chair  
Marcia Blazzak, NPS  
John Goll, MMS  
Rowan Gould, USFWS  
Karla Kolash, NSB  
Jon Kurland, NOAA / NMFS  
Dick LeFebvre, DNR  
Doug Buffington, USGS  
Brent Sheets, DOE  
Lawson Brigham, USARC

**Staff Committee Attendees:**

Cleve Cowles, MMS  
Kim Kruse, DNR  
Larry Peltz, NMFS  
Robert Winfree, NPS  
Tony DeGange, USFWS  
Robert Suydam, NSB

**Guest/Public:**

Joe Kurtak, BLM  
Bruce Hollen, BLM  
Dave Howell, BLM  
Rachel James, AK Coalition  
Ann Rappoport, USFWS/CPAI  
Caryn Rea, ConocoPhillips  
Robert Schneider, BLM  
Stan Senner, Audubon

**Chair Henri Bisson called the meeting to order at 1:25 p.m.**

**Update of NSSI activities:**

After introductions, Henri Bisson discussed the April 4, 2005 letter he received from The Wildlife Society (TWS). Each group member received a copy of the letter. It addressed specific concerns of TWS regarding the NSSI. Henri urged everyone to read the letter.

Ken Taylor briefed the group on the Report from the Executive Director handout. He stated that the response from the Washington, DC trip was generally positive, and that people were receptive to the Initiative. The draft language for the proposed legislation to establish the NSSI was distributed to the members.

Henri Bisson mentioned that he, Wayne Regelin and Ken Taylor are planning a trip to Washington, DC to present a briefing for 07 through 09 funding in the President's budget. The trip may take place as early as May. They are working with Lynn Scarlett, DOI Assistant Secretary Policy Management and Budget. The long-term goal is to receive a dedicated stream of funding rather than appropriated dollars. Letters and expressions of support from interested NSSI group members may be helpful. Henri suggested that a subcommittee could assist with the effort.

**Presentations:**

Member agency presentations on their agency's research, inventory and monitoring activities on the North Slope included:

- USFWS by Tony DeGange
- BLM by Robert Schneider
- NSB by Robert Suydam
- MMS by Cleve Cowles

The presentations will be available on the NSSI website at [www.northslope.org](http://www.northslope.org).

The presentations resulted in a discussion regarding partnership opportunities. There are studies that many of the member agencies are currently engaged in that could be worked on together. Ken Taylor has now received a few of the study spreadsheets he has requested from each agency. These will be combined into one spreadsheet identifying all the research, inventory and monitoring activities currently being conducted by the member agencies. This should help the Oversight Group in identifying data gaps and setting NSSI priorities and to look for opportunities for shared funding. Sharing information may help prevent agencies from duplicating efforts.

It may be beneficial to have a speaker educate the NSSI in the areas of socio-economic impact. Caution should be used not to overwhelm the villages with the same questions that they have been asked over and over.

#### **NSSI Priorities:**

The Research and Monitoring Team identified caribou research and bird disturbance studies as their two top priorities. Disturbance of molting geese was a topic of discussion during the Washington, DC trip, and there may be some potential for a collaborative study with additional research funding. Further discussions with agencies, industry, Ducks Unlimited and others indicated a consensus that this work would be important prior to any development in the area northeast of Teshekpuk Lake. Henri Bisson voiced support for conducting disturbance studies prior to any development occurring in this area.

The Central Arctic Herd Research project was identified by the RMT as crucial to providing information on caribou herd dynamics prior to development in NPRA (important to the Teshekpuk caribou herd) or the ANWR 1002 Area (important to the Porcupine caribou herd). This multi-year project is \$50,000 short of funding for this calendar year. The Oversight Group will review funding alternatives to meet this need.

Ann Claerbout has been hired as an intern to work on NSSI activities. She will begin her position June 13<sup>th</sup> and will provide the administrative and organizational support necessary to ensure the NSSI continues to develop and meet its goals and objectives.

#### **Election of Vice Chair:**

Henri Bisson's year as Chair will expire in May. As Vice Chair, Wayne Regelin will move into the position of Chair. Because Wayne is from a state agency, the Vice Chair position will need to be filled by someone from a federal agency. Election of the Vice Chair will occur at the June meeting.

**Future Meetings:**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Location will be announced at a later date.

The charter states there will be a meeting in Barrow annually. With the concurrence of the North Slope Borough, the Barrow meeting will be held in late July or the first part of August. Karla Kolash will work with the Mayor to schedule this meeting

**Action Item:**

Rowan Gould will find out how the USFWS is dealing with the OMB peer review guidelines. He will pull together some guidance for the science committee. The Department of the Interior has drafted some guidance. Each of the science agencies are developing manuals.

**Public Comments:**

Robert Suydam commented that he realizes the NSSI is new, but he hopes the group will regularly bring in representatives from state, university and industry to stay informed about what they are doing.

Caryn Rea mentioned that industry has a lot of research that this group should be aware of. She'll fill any requests Ken Taylor sends her.

**Adjourn 4:39 p.m.**