

**NSSI Oversight Group Meeting**

June 15, 2007

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Fish & Wildlife Service

**Members Present:**

Tom Lonnie

John Goll

Marcia Blaszak

Ken Taylor

Tom Melius

Dick LeFebvre

Lawson Brigham

**NSSI Personnel:**

John Payne

Adam Melhorn

**Staff Committee:**

Bob Winfree

Tim Jennings

Carl Markon

Dee Williams

**STAP Group:**

John Kelley (via phone)

Bob Shuchman (via phone)

**Others:**

Sharon Warren

Steve Franzel

Note: All PowerPoint presentations referenced in these notes are available for viewing at the following website: [www.northslope.org](http://www.northslope.org).

Dick LeFebvre, Director of Department of Natural Resources, Alaska and newly elected NSSI Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself to the group.

**Review of the March meeting and activities:**

The minutes from the March 15, 2007 OG meeting were reviewed and approved.

**Election of Vice-Chair:**

Motion to nominate Tom Melius. Motion approved.

**Status of Executive Director Position:**

There is a panel established to interview the candidates, but this has been postponed due to John Kelley having some health issues. There is a good selection. An executive group meeting will be held in July to discuss the results of the panel. A 30-day extension will be granted for the selection.

### **Director's Report:**

The most significant event since last meeting was a meeting with Lynn Scarlett. She is very supportive of NSSI and its work. Also met with Pam Hayes about the FY 09 budget. They are looking at funding NSSI out of their Capital budget. (Secretaries office budget) Met with Jen. Jen is now in another position and Henri is acting in that pos now. We are trying to get the charter back from WO. It expires by January 2008. We should have the charter by September and it should be posted. A question about term lengths was posed. The terms vary. One year terms can turn into three year terms. The charter was sent in for amendment of some of the language to make it fall in line with the Energy Policy and for a call for nominations.

Spent a day with John Kelly going over NSSI projects and it was very productive. The project status report will be presented later during the meeting. Went to a GIS meeting in Portland.

### **UAF:**

John Kelley presented an update on UAF activities. He also stated the NSSI STG is available to assist the OG and needs to be utilized on a regular basis to keep interest. Doug Kane n the field and two good workshops were conducted. John Payne asked if the Hydrology recommendations could be expedited. John Kelley said this is actively under discussion at this point. There is a potential contract with DOT once the recommendations are presented. This is a hydrology project. John Goll: Suggested a more organized list of what the STG has done so we are aware of their activities. John Payne said it is an agenda item for today. John Kelley would appreciate any guidance the OG can give him.

### **Caribou Workshop:**

Adam Mehlhorn discussed the Caribou Workshop held in February with the stakeholders. It was a two day conference to follow up the 2002 conference. An open discussion of current stips and reg. between feds and state was held. Adam presented a spreadsheet on the items discussed. It is hopeful that this information may be used in the future when updating the Stips. He also highlighted the various presentations that were given at the workshop. These presentations are located on the NSSI website. It was decided a Caribou working group would be a good idea to continually track progress. Tom Lonnie asked to go through the spreadsheet. The group went through the spreadsheet together and discussed inconsistencies in the spreadsheet. Ken Taylor clarified the focus was specifically on Caribou. A 1998 report said a 5 ft. clearance on the pipeline would sufficient, but BLM and state regs say 7 foot. This is due to the possibility of climate change and for subsistence reasons. The no is from a subsistence point of view, not a biological point of view. Dick LeFebve asked if the Borough requirements were considered as they were requesting 10 feet. Gary said it is not stipulated, but the oil companies are willing to accept the 7 feet. Tom Melius asked who determined the results. Adam said it came from group

discussions. Tom also asked if they were specifically asked if the stipulations were accomplishing their goals or not and if the product has been distributed. No. John Goll said most of this was not science based. What kind of research is going on to look into this. Dick asked how things are presented to the OG by the STG, a working draft or final? John said so far as drafts to be approved by the OG. Dick suggests approval by the OG prior to dissemination. John Goll suggested that the agencies involved in the study decide what they want to do with the information and ensure its accuracy. They want to see the process involved in coming up with their determination. Adam said the document is just one step in a multi-step process. It is just a guideline. Were there stakeholders involved who were more policy based? Ken said there were some, but most were from a scientific background. Tom Lonnie said that science is often used to determine what the policy should be. Adam also suggested the spreadsheet be used for future discussions. John Goll said it could be used as a summary to see what areas scientific research need to be used to establish the stips. John Payne suggested an internal approach to the process within the NSSI STG/OG groups. Tom Lonnie said it does need to look at by staff specialists. Jim Jennings expressed concern with the OG looking at this. It was suggested that staff groups look at the information. Dick said he would like to hand the spreadsheet over to his staff as a draft and let them look at it and provide feedback. Ken suggested the heading of stip effectiveness be changed to see if the further research should be done. John said the columns could be modified and marked draft. We can take the effectiveness column totally out. It could be taken to the appropriate field level for review. John Goll asked what the charge of the group was. Adam said it was just to get the people from the four herds together to discuss their research. Ken said what they wanted to do is update everyone and the information collected since the 2002 workshop. A tremendous amount of data had been collected since the last workshop. We were looking at the varied approaches taken by the herds and their effectiveness. Most of them were unaware how their inconsistencies effect the overall oil production on the North Slope. Data gaps were looked at. The spreadsheet was created from the information gathered. Ramp crossings were discussed. They are not the solution for Caribou migration. Buried pipelines were also not effective. The Convoying Stip. Was discussed and deemed to be non-effective. Gary also suggested different people have different opinions on the height stips. Ken said the Borough stips were not considered because they do not have a lease.

### **GIS/Remote Sensing Subcommittee Report:**

Bob Shuchman presented the GIS/Remote Sensing Subcommittee Report. Members: Bob, Doug Kane, John Kelley, Bill Streever, Kim Titus, Tom Heinrichs, John Payne, Adam Mehlhorn, Ken Taylor and various ad hoc members. Secure workroom on NSSI website so all STAP members can view, only subgroup members can edit. The activities to date were presented. Will have a written report out in August 07. The NSSI STAP GIS study steps were discussed. Compatibility of hardware between GINA and state, federal and academia was discussed. There is synergy between the GIS system and the Remote Sensing Data. A comprehensive list of what data sources are available on the North Slope both on the web and by hard copy. National Technical Mean Data Sets are Department of Defense derived. These are provided locally through Elmendorf. BLM, AVO, USGS have access. Stakeholder participation was effective and efficient, but industry participation was disappointing. State, federal and academic participation was excellent. Findings: An extensive and comprehensive remote sensing data set exists for the North Slope. An updated high resolution land cover map derieved

from remote sensing data is of very high priority to community. Data dating back to the 70s offers the ability to study land cover change over time. Extensive sea ice cover data and maps exists from 1970 to the present. Near real-time sea state (wind, temp., wave and height\_ and ice cover is readily available. Ocean color data (MODIS, MERIS) offers insight into productivity as well as mapping frontal boundaries. GINA will retrieve the data sets from the various entities. John Goll asked the Alaska Ocean Observing system would be linked into GINA also. Bob said yes. USGS is putting out a 30 meter based land status map. When NSSI gets ready to do the land cover activity they need to tighten up the data sets. Key findings on Remote Sensing: Extensive coverage of the North Slope exists for uickBird (1m) and inSAR go through clouds and rain (DEM) Satellite derived products such as NDVI, (vegetation index) EVI, snow cover, etc. are of use to the stakeholders and will be delivered via GINA> Shoreline and lake bathymetry changes are observable on remote sensing data and should be quantified. (Look at shoreline erosion) SAR data of North Slope lakes can be effectively used to determine lakes that completely freeze. (this affects fish populations ) How are satellite images converted into a product that can be used. Question: Would these findings be coherently based? Yes. We should start from the requirements, not what is used in the lower 48. The stakeholders need to sit down and a compromise has to be made. Key Findings on GIS: UAF GINA is cost effective and logical choice for NSSI GIS. 88 existing North Slope geographic information systems were identified but content and functionality do not satisfy NSSI requirements. Two focus groups identified and prioritized 128 data layers. Authority and ownership for each data layer identified, Biota layers will need further refinement. GINA functionality was formalized based on stakeholder input, GINA data projection was agreed upon by stakeholder consensus discussion (Alaska Albers) Role of decision support systems within GINA was limited due to cost and stakeholder concerns. Focus group workshops were used to generate initial GINA statement of work The living thing layers need a lot of refinement. This includes not only animals, but plants, including invasive species. Ken recalled discussion during the GIS meetings. There were difficulties in determining collecting protocols for the data sets. How much data do we want to put in and how to make sure it is current and accurate. Good news on physical properties and weather. We need to decide where the data is going to sit. GINA functionality chart is included to outline this. How to project the tremendous amounts of data. How to compare your data to published data. Raw data. There is a mechanism within GINA to do that. Cost efficiency is an issue with this. Role of decision supports systems: GIS based activity where there was an equation programmed into the decision support that help a manager make a decision. There was a lot of pushback on this. Each agency may need their own. GINA may not be able to support all of these things. If there are some, they would have to be used by multiple agencies. The focus group workshops used to establish the initial statement of work was a consensus of the group. Next steps: Remote Sensing Report, GIS data and Functionality Document, and Executive Summary with Supporting Appendices. Lawson Brigham asked what percent of the layers are individually based. About 10-12. This is changing. Bob said the Biologists are typically more protective of their data than others.

Lawson Brigham distributed the U.S. Arctic Research Commission report and a copy of an article in the Chicago Tribune on the North Slope. Dick LeFebvre asked what they meant by Arctic human health. Lawson said NIH will not establish a category for indigenous people in the Arctic. They are trying to work through AnArpik to get this done. There is not a medical representative on the board. There needs to be one. Dick suggests a discussion on this at some

point. Lawson said there is a disconnect between Washington policy makers and persons in the field on this issue.

### **Formalized Staff Committee Names:**

These need to be turned in if they have not been yet. (Get this list from John Payne for the notes)

DNR:

BLM:

MMS:

USGS:

NPS:

FWS:

### **Process Recommendations for Future Projects or Initiatives (OG Charge to Staff Committee):**

John Payne is in the process of developing a 5-year business plan. This will include how we fund projects, pick projects, etc. He is requesting for the group to decide how to develop the process and come up with a draft for the next meeting. This was approved by the group for John to go ahead and develop the draft proposal and present it to the group. Funding that NSSI receives is seed money. We should take advantage of any synergy we have with the various players. Lawson asked what has happened to the idea of having the agency chief scientists getting involved in the scientific aspects and picking of projects. John will take that charge with the staff committee once it is formed.

### **Report by Staff Committee on Sharing of Resources in FY 2008:**

We went through all the projects to look for synergy or duplication of efforts. There were 8 potential areas we can share agency resources, ie: staff, logistical. Etc. We did not have a lot of off-shore resources. The matrix is being completed and will be distributed to the group for your input. John Goll asked what they are looking for on the off-shore stuff? John Payne said from a social sciences standpoint there is opportunity to share information. This could clear up confusion for people on the North Slope. It would create a united approach. Remote Sensing will be included on the matrix. It has the broadest capability..

### **Budget Outlook:**

Good meetings with Lynn Scarlett, Jen Thomson and Henri Bisson. They are working on finding a strong source budget for NSSI. They really liked the NSSI Newsletter. Lynn said it was good to have the newsletter to show where the money is being spent. Next year, BLM is the administrative agency for NSSI. We are in a budget for a million in FY 08, 2 million in FY 09. Tom said it is probably due to the covering of the legacy wells in the North Slope. John Payne said there may be an opportunity for more funds. We know we have atleast 1 million. We have approximately 375,000 left in the FY 07 budget. This group should look at how to spend the money. Should we allocate it or rollover it?

## **Status of Current Projects:**

John Payne reviewed the status of the 12 NSSI approved projects. A discussion of support costs ensued. If NSSI was fully staffed, \$600,00 would go to staff salaries. Recognizing our budget shortfall for FY 08 it may be more prudent to rollover the funds left from FY 07 to FY 08. Some of the projects are still under review. Digital Hydrology Database by Sept. USGS put up 70,000 and BLM 70,000. We will hold back on the Land Cover project due to the project needing a contractor who would have to bring in very divergent data sets. There would have to be a lot of prework. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to take on the pre-work for us to develop the requirements for the projects in FY 08. This committee will work within the GIS/Remote Sensing Committee as a sub-committee. Carl will assist. They will likely give TNC about \$25,000 for this. The Water Quality Assessment has been contracted and BP and Conoco Philips have agreed to assist with the costs. Discussion ensued on the remaining FY 07 funds. John Goll asked if the figures had been adjusted from the 2 million to the 1 million actually funded. Not yet. The Black Brant Study will be sunsetted. GINA will be fully funded for FY 07. The water studies have been fully funded. FY 08: Project Database will continue, Website is fully funded, Fisheries Workshop may not happen in FY 08 as it is more involved than originally thought, Cultural and Subsistence Workshop, suggested we do another Caribou Workshop (2 day) This will likely wait until FY 09 and cost more than the original estimate of \$30,000. The gauging stations will be continued, Hydrography is completed, The \$300,00 was held as a placemaker. Lawson said NPRB (**ask John what this stands for**) might partnership on the Fisheries Workshop. NOAA might even be willing. MMS has agreed to help too. Tom Melius said he feels holding back the money has value due to the current budget. What effect does this have on breaking even for the year. If we hold back we will be fine for FY 08 as long as a new and immediate need does not show up. Tom Lonnie said he feels the money should be carried over. He also mentioned fire issues. Will they take it if we do not spend it? There has been no indication they would take NSSI funds if they are not spent. John Payne talked to Pam Hayes at DOI and they understand we got the money very late in the year and he does not feel they will take the money away. Lawson asked if the commission should ask Henri about why the NSSI budget went from 2 to 1 million dollars and if more funding can be obtained. Tom Lonnie said AK-BLM has the second highest oil and gas budget in the BLM. There will be an up hill battle getting more oil and gas money in AK. The support is there in WO for NSSI. We are 15 years ahead of other countries in the climate change arena. It was decided to carry over whatever money is left in the NSSI budget to FY 08.

## **Other Business:**

The feedback from Inaprkuk was overall very good. (**Lawson, ask John what he is talking about**)

Staff groups: John Goll asked if all the agencies are on the same planning cycle? This is an issue that can be overcome. We are not all on the same planning cycle.

The next meeting date was discussed. Dick proposed a October meeting date. A late October meeting would work best. John Payne will send out a reminder to check calendars for last two weeks in October. A meeting date and time will be established from the received feedback.

Climate Change committee has three subcommittees, Land Adaptation, Policy and Science. All of this fits into NSSI. Sent an email requesting to give a presentation of a formal infrastructure that could work well.

Sharon Warren brought up some budget issues. She thought in FY 08 NSSI would have 2 million. She will look into this.

**Public Comment:**

None

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Marcia Blaszak and seconded by Tom Lonnie.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.

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Dick LeFebvre  
NSSI Chairman