

NSSI Oversight Group Meeting  
March 15, 2007  
1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Fish & Wildlife Service

**Oversight Group Members Present:**

Tom Lonnie (Chair)  
Bob Winfree (for Marcia Blaszak)  
Tom Melius  
John Goll  
Dick LeFebvre  
Brent Sheets  
Karla Kolash  
Ken Taylor (Executive Director)  
Lawson Brigham  
Jon Kurland (By phone)

**Staff Committee Members Present:**

Tim Jennings  
Cleve Cowles  
John Payne

**Representatives:**

Hans Neidig, DOI  
Sharon Warren, DOI  
Tom Heinrichs, UAF GINA  
Craig Dorman, UA (By Phone)  
Buck Sharpton, UA (By Phone)  
Steve Franzell

**Visitors:**

Lon Kelly, BLM Arctic Field Office  
Bob Schneider, Northern District Office  
Amalie Couvillion, The Nature Conservancy  
Martha Levensaler, Sunrise Non-Profit Consulting

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

Tom Lonnie (Chair), State Director of the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself to the group. He will be the Chair until May 2007, when Dick LeFebvre will assume the Chair.

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

The minutes from the November 14, 2006 OG meeting were reviewed and approved.

### **Transition Plans for Executive Director Position:**

Ken Taylor submitted his letter of resignation. He will be resigning as NSSI Executive Director, effective April 1, 2007. Tom Lonnie discussed the upcoming transition period, resulting from Ken Taylor's resignation as Executive Director, with the group. The general consensus of the group was the need to keep NSSI going and the need to quickly fill Ken's position. Tom Lonnie informed the group he was prepared to advertise for Ken's position: Tom Melius stated he supports Tom moving forward on this.

Previously, the position was announced both government-wide and as an IPA. Tom asked the group what the consensus is on this. The group consensus was to act quickly in filling the position. Ken Taylor outlined the process used the last time. The position description was sent to WO for a GS 14/15 position. Two announcements, one for federal government employees and one for IPA were used. The registers were concurrent and both lists were reviewed to find the best qualified. John Payne said the announcement was limited to Alaska residents to keep moving costs down and so the candidates would be familiar with Alaska issues. DEU, Merit and IPA are the recommended method. This was a term position not exceeding four years. A question was posed to the group whether the position should be filled prior to a finalized budget or if it would be better to wait for the final budget numbers prior to filling it. Tom Lonnie answered, stating the NSSI funds have not really changed, but other numbers have with the earmarks etc.

Summarizing, Tom Lonnie asked the group if they supported recruiting in a variety of ways, a term position, putting together a hiring team, comprising of at least three members of the group (OG), and to keep the position confined to Alaska. The group was in agreement that the candidates be intimately familiar with Alaska and felt that recruiting nationwide would be a lot of extra work and take too much time. They were also in agreement to having a hiring team, advertising in the ways described above, and a term position of two years with the potential two year extension. John Melius made the motion to approve, Dick Le Febvre made the second motion and the group approved the motion unanimously.

Brent Sheets suggested John Payne act during the transition time while the recruitment process takes place. Tom added the BLM presently covers 50 percent of John's salary and NSSI covers the other 50 percent. Tom Melius made a motion to allow John Payne to serve as Executive Director of NSSI until a permanent selection is made and Bob Winfree made a second motion. The group decided unanimously to let John Payne take over until the position is filled. Ken suggested it would take more than one person to accomplish the tasks of NSSI as John has other job duties aside from NSSI and suggested that staff from other agencies assist John with the work. Tom Lonnie summarized the transition of John Payne as NSSI Executive Director to be effective April 1, 2007 and expressed his hope for some support from other agencies.

### **Status of NSSI:**

Ken Taylor gave a PowerPoint presentation on the status of the NSSI. The November meeting was reviewed and up to date priorities were identified. The STG meeting information was

reviewed to include: GINA progress and direction, FY 2007 budget offshore activities, and action items.

Approval for a remote sensing/GIS workshop was granted and held February 6-7, 2007, in Fairbanks, Alaska. There were approximately 25 participants.

An NSSI sponsored North Slope Caribou Research and Monitoring workshop was held in Fairbanks, February 21-22, 2007. Approximately 50 participants attended this workshop. Research activities of monitoring herd health and the disparity between state and federal stipulations were discussed. A lot of progress was made.

Special thanks goes out to Craig Dorman for supplying the coffee and snacks during this workshop.

#### Project List:

A project browser is being created. Projects will be put into this site when it is complete. The layout of the site was revealed to the group.

#### **University Presentations on IPY, Introduction:**

Craig Dorman, Vice President of Research, joined by telephone to present the various studies being conducted by UA/UAF. He also briefed the group on the University of Alaska IPY Forum for local and global perspectives on the North. He stated that climate change is occurring and has been occurring up here and it is important to understand them and their effects. Numerous studies have been conducted on this subject, outlining the effects on communities and the average citizen, infrastructure and the state.

The EPSCOR program was discussed. The National Institutes for Health and Science Foundation are assisting in these studies. These studies are to understand the changes the effects and how to deal with them effectively. Other campuses have been assisting with these studies.

#### **North by 2020: Implementing a Forum for Local and Global Perspectives on the North at the University of Alaska during the International Polar Year 2007-09:**

Hajo Eicken of UAF discussed a PowerPoint on ISER. Fran Ulmer was unable to attend. Hajo Eicken gave the presentation, Background in Sea Ice Studies. This study involves students from all three campuses. MMS has assisted with some of these studies as well. This involves comparison studies of how the slope was in the 70s and now. The information is put into a useful form for the using stakeholders. There are a lot of activities happening on the North Slope and a lot of different perspectives on those activities. The specific timeframe for completing this study is 2020. UAF is also chairing a nationwide group observing global change of climate. For additional information on this study and others being conducted by UAF, go to the following website: [www.uaf.edu/ipy](http://www.uaf.edu/ipy).

A PowerPoint on the Arctic Observing System was shown and a discussion ensued. This studies the environmental arctic change. There will be a workshop in Boulder, CO next week. There are various data streams coming in and there has not been that much coordination in completing all this data. This is what the IPY-4 will do. This shows the impacts on all aspects of the environments, persons, etc. The seven core themes are: 1.) Broad spectrums look at these activities. 2.) There may be a lack of information and an uncertainty associated with available information. 3.) Some data is modeling based and some based on actual observation. 4.) Looks at taking a more systemic approach at looking at the information. 5.) The North by 2020 Themes came out of various studies. 6.) Traditional know ledges role and complex systems role. 7.)

Be sure to address key questions that Alaska will face by 2020. The international component will become very important. Foreign exchange students from other countries will be brought in. This group of various students met in January. The way information is managed is crucial, as well as, how local expertise plays into some of the planning activities. There are contacts with Russia and Japan. They are looking at the Sakhalin and Barents Sea as a model of what the Alaska seas will look like in a few years.

A question was posed about system science and synthesis. Some variables are unpredictable, but have properties that are applicable. This study will separate areas that are unpredictable from the ones that can be predicted. There are several research projects going on at this point and they are being linked together. The National Park Service will have an Observation Network Meeting two weeks from now. Lawson Brigham said the success of this is contingent on everyone's cooperation. Drilling, bowhead whales, noise, etc. are parts of the whole study. John Goll, MMS, said that they have the responsibility when they are actually doing the drilling in the sea. Cleve Cowles, MMS asked why there was not a specific theme, as exploration sometimes does not come up with much and wondered why the group focus was on coastal development instead of offshore production. Mr. Eicken said this comes from not only the offshore perspective, but also on shore. This study focuses on everything happening on the waters.

### **Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy:**

Dan White, Institute of Northern Engineering, UAF, provided a PowerPoint on the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment & Policy (ACCAP). This center was designed to look at regional climate change issues and how they affect land managers, business owners, etc. and it assists in planning for upcoming climate changes. It identifies the needs, sets a research agenda, and produces products and services to prepare and adapt to the changing climate. There is some funding from NOAA and some is donated from other agencies. The projects to be funded were outlined. The following areas of concern were discussed: Sea ice conditions affecting coastal Alaskan communities.

This center is exploring whether we are planning for the coming changes, looking at the significant impact of arctic storms in Barrow due to disappearing sea ice, and lakes disappearing due to the permafrost melting. This is having an impact on subsistence use. The reduction of availability to resources due to snow cover in some areas, significantly earlier snow melt off in the North Slope, effects of climate change to roads, and current measures designed to protect

permafrost, such as refrigerating the ground in a warmer climate. Water resources and their impact on the tundra and wildlife are being looked at and ice roads being critical for tundra travel. Tundra travel was opened in 1970 and since then the window of opportunity for tundra travel is shrinking. We have very little knowledge about the hydrologic cycle in the North Slope. Water resources are a large issue. ACCAP's role is to focus the effort on climate tools needed to better plan for North Slope activities.

### **Scenario Networks for Alaska Planning (SNAP):**

Scott Rupp, UAF, presented a PowerPoint on Scenario Networks for Alaska Planning (SNAP) In a UA Wide initiative, various researchers got together and decided one thing we were lacking was synergy. Employees from various agencies attended a visionary session to map out what we want to do with this. SNAP is a pragmatic plan to facilitate integration of the UAF specific to high latitude research capabilities and deliver timely information and interpretation of climatic, ecological events. SNAP will tie all the products together to address the various problems stakeholders may have. It is a collaborative effort with various agencies, NGO's industry partners, and UAF.

| The primary products are linking geographically defined time series (maps) to past and present conditions and Metadata that clearly describe the methods used. The SNAP Integration Team consists of six fully funded positions. These will provide true synthesis by providing the critical missing link.

SNAP is currently looking at developing a Science Advisory Committee. They want to get involvement from the stakeholders to get this implemented. They provide supporting climate products that would be good models for research efforts. The Ecosystem Services can be divided into several categories. The focus is on the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. This involves looking at current vs. future ecosystems, system regulations vs. government regulations. SNAP provides important funding to ISER. Example: Dynamic Vegetation models: They develop maps of projected risk that can be provided to the various agencies. How changes in climate regime affect plants. Network status: \$1.5 million start up funding, in process of hiring the SNAP integration team, establishing the Science Advisory Committee in the near future, seeking partners and input and launching demonstrations. For further questions regarding SNAP, please contact Scott Rupp at [Scott.rupp@uaf.edu](mailto:Scott.rupp@uaf.edu).

Craig Dorman added that Tim Flannery, author of the Weather Maker, is part of the activities in Fairbanks. When looking for the models that represent Alaska best, none of them are American models. (NPS) asked how far affects can be projected. SNAP is fairly confident they will be able to produce down scale products.

Ken Taylor asked Dr. Rupp how he envisioned NSSI assisting in this effort and he replied that it is up to NSSI what role they want to play in this. He also said that NSSI has done a good job partnering with us and understanding our research studies and suggested that it would be helpful if a NSSI representative could dial into future calls, etc. This would assist in keeping abreast of what is going on. The State Committee on Research would be another good cross committee. The matrix of priority research has already been developed. He suggested the idea of rotating

committees and said the Alaska Ocean Observing System would be a good one to tie into NSSI etc. Hajo Eichen is the contact for that one. Hajo said the Arctic Observing system could provide a great opportunity to be in a collaborative effort. The goal is to provide useful data to the scientific community and stakeholders.

#### **Discussion-Potential UAF/NSSI IPY Collaboration:**

Ken Taylor discussed the IPY and said NSSI has been asked to support this proposal. Buck would be the liaison for this. The IPY will look at the impacts of High-Latitude Climate Change on Ecosystems Service and Society. There are some reservations because it is unknown what it competes with. Scott Rupp said he was unaware of any competing studies in this area and said that SNAP will be used as a leveraging device when writing proposals. John Goll, MMS, expressed concerns with regard to budgeting SNAP and such projects and asked what the cost is or if the University doing this par gratis. Downscaling and the costs related were discussed, as well as, the need for funding to keep the studies going. The University, to a degree, would continue to provide some funding. To adequately meet the needs of stakeholders and users, some support would be needed. Dan White said it is critical that they know which projects NSSI has identified as top priority. He further stated the ACAP will have some money and there will continue to be money down the line for projects identified as having the need. Partnering and synergy is needed on these projects. Funding amounts from the partners varies. There may be an NSF to get the funding needed. At this time, there will not be a federal initiative.

#### **NSSI Budget, FY 2007-2009:**

The budget summary, including a three-year budget cycle breakdown, and various projects were discussed. A request to estimate, which agencies will benefit, the most/least from any existing project was made by the Secretaries Office in the past, but Ken Taylor felt this would not be relevant in the budget discussion as there is a specific breakdown of the costs. This is by position, phones, etc. Administrative costs for 07 would be 253,000. it is closer to ( I will get the figures from the sheet when John sends it to me.) This does not include any projects discussed by the agencies at the staff contacts levels.

The February 5, 2007 NSSI Staff committee meeting was an informal to discuss budget and project recommendations. Unity or potential for collaboration between the agencies was explored. Funding levels will dictate how quickly to react and if it comes through at the levels predicted there would be money to fund a lot of the programs. The question of whether funds for the various projects would have to be fought for each year was posed. We may want to look at some of the projects and ensure the funding will be there during the out years. It would be wise to keep the studies going during the out years. Another question was posed whether the agencies would be taxed to continue some of these projects if the budget does not come through as some agencies have provided more money than was initially thought for some of the studies. Tom Lonnie stated it is not a concern for FY 07, but could be in the out years, but noted that in the past, the monies for NSSI have been fairly consistent.

Tom Melius asked if the group feels the twelve identified projects are the ones they want and if they are in the appropriate prioritized order, as the agencies have to work through their budgets

for the money for these projects. It was suggested that most agencies have committed non-appropriated money. Ken Taylor said the first five things on the list are prioritized and a lot of money has been spent on them. Ken suggested not going too far down the list if the money is limited and said NSSI might want to concentrate on those first few items. John said some of the early ones are the contractual ones we need to look at first. John Goll stated that the agencies have to make sure the studies they are putting their money toward are gathering the information needed. Tom asked how the suggestions for the agency chief scientist went. John Goll said when NSSI was founded, the chief scientists were an important part of it and he does not feel steps have been taken to tie together all the work the various agencies are doing. He also suggested the Chief Scientists sit down and make a list of the priorities and see where the paths cross, how they can be tied together to prevent duplicate work, and to get a clear picture of where each agency is going with their studies. If an agency is already studying something, the other agencies should study something else. Karla Kolash agreed this would be a good collaborative effort and could result in money savings. Scientists would also be able to assist with the prioritization of the projects as well.

Tom Melius asked where the shortfall was. Ken said mostly the administrative portion. Ken said there would be some cost savings from his job not being occupied and John Payne's being partially funded by BLM. The bottom line is who will pay the money, is this a combined agency effort? John Payne said the BLM was going to get the base increase to fund the position, but did not get it during the CR. This was unexpected and we had to solicit contributions. If we did not get the money we are asking for in the budget, then we would have to ask for contributions. Tom Lonnie said that if the funding comes through as planned, a portion would be provided to go toward this effort.

A question was posed, should we try and return funding to the agencies that provided it or should we seek funding from agencies that did not provide. Ken clarified that NPS and USFWS supplied funding, but NSSI did not solicit for it. DNR did give some money, but most of the money has come from BLM to date. Tom's assumption is that we will take this money from what we get on the NSSI budget. Tom Melius wants to get a feel of what is going to be needed so he will be able to plan accordingly. Earmarks in the budget have created the slow down. The shortfall would actually be in projects if there were a shortage of funds. Hopefully. If there is a shortfall, the various agencies will be asked to cover some of the administrative costs.

Agencies will discuss how their budget processes work. John Goll asked if, in the future, everyone could explain how their respective agencies come up with their projections and get together for a meeting to better combine budget efforts. Each agency has created lists of their studies and there is a need to look for areas of synergy so that some of these studies may be combined. John Payne further suggested this be done every year, as it will allow for better planning. This is to increase coordination and synergy and will assist in showing the hill we are spending the money wisely. Cleve asked if it is possible for the Bureaus to have a provisional sense of their priorities list for future years and the ability to compare priorities between the Bureaus. John Payne stated that most Federal Agencies do prioritize and hopefully the state agencies are too. He suggested a list be put together to see what the commonalities are and see where they fit together. BLM is in the process of developing FY 08 budgets and FY 09 priorities. It was suggested this should occur fairly quickly as FY 08 budgets are pretty much

done. John Goll said that now that the projected amounts for the top ten projects have been identified, they would be forwarded to the scientific group for consideration. It was suggested this would be a good place to start when coordinating with the State on their budgets.

The need for more coordination between the federal and state agencies on their budget processes was discussed. The State's budget is already being worked on by the legislature, but there is still time for the federal budgets. John Payne said at this point, the starting point would be what has been submitted for 08 and prioritize them. John Goll suggested the existent projects list needs to be updated. Cleve , MMS, said their decisions are finalized closer to the beginning of 08. John Payne suggested a meeting in early April, possibly April 9 or 10 to discuss this further. Each agency would bring in what they have and move from there. Each agency would need to list their priorities. Lon Kelly, BLM, said there is great opportunity to look at other studies being done outside of NSSI at some point.

The group consensus was that it should be only the voting members at the table at this point. At a later date, other agencies could be included. Karla Kolash suggested the meeting be held in Barrow as there is already a meeting going on in April or May. IWC is in May. John Goll made a motion for John Payne and Ken Taylor to put together an outline proposal of whether the meeting could be held. Tom Melius made a second motion and the group voted for this motion unanimously. Using the projects list format may be useful. Karla Kolash said the Barrow Open Water Meeting will be held April 9-10, 2007, and the request for budgeted projects would be useful in doing this. John Goll said he would like to keep this task relatively low, a low number like five.

#### **Agency Chief Scientists Meeting:**

A Stakeholder input meeting was held Feb 6-7, 2007. Representatives from UAF, Brent Sheets and Dan White were present. They are currently working on water quality studies and are looking for synergy between these programs and the ones being conducted at the University of Michigan. There may be a way to make the two databases communicate with each other. A request for budgeted agencies did not get good response, probably because many of them did not have budgets at the time of the request.

#### **Endorsement of a product:**

IPY NSF Grant: Impacts of High-Latitude Climate Change on Ecosystem Services and Society.

Ken Taylor asked the group if they wished to endorse this project and reiterated that this is not normally something the group does because of the competition. Tom Lonnie said he did not think NSSI would want to get caught up in a review process. NPS suggests a strong letter that we would use this product and the group was in agreement.

Marcia Blazack sent Ken Taylor a letter of appreciation for his work on NSSI.

The NOAA report by Lawson Brigham: State of the Arctic, was discussed. This may be done annually. This is the observed record of climate change from one year to the next. Tom Melius said we are moving forward with a proposal in relation to the Polar Bears.

Tom Lonnie introduced Hans Neidig, DOI, Office of the Secretary. He discussed the budget request from the Secretary's office, stating the information was really to answer some of the Lynn Scarlett, Assistant Secretary's questions. He further stated that Lynn is very serious in supporting NSSI and is exploring ways to do this. FY 09 is looking better as we are looking at using the secretary's capital fund to fund NSSI, thus taking the burden off the agencies. Tom Melius expressed the support of this effort and expressed the importance of pursuing it in the correct manner. Hans congratulated Ken Taylor and appreciated his efforts for NSSI.

**Public Comment:**

None

The motion to adjourn was made by Bob Winfree and Dick LeFebvre made the second motion to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned by Tom Lonnie at 4:25 p.m.