

APPROVED MINUTES
Minutes Approved on March 15, 2007 by Oversight Group

NSSI Oversight Group Meeting
November 14, 2006
National Park Service
Anchorage, Alaska

The Oversight Group (OG) meeting was convened at 10:30 a.m. by Julia Dougan, acting Chairperson.

Members Present:

Julia Dougan, Chair (BLM)	Tom Melius (FWS)
Ed Fogels, Vice-Chair (ADNR)	Teresa Imm (ASRC)
John Goll (MMS)	Brent Sheets (DOE)
Leslie Holland-Bartels (USGS)	Vic Knox (NPS)
Via Phone:	
Wayne Regelin (ADFG)	Jon Kurland (NMFS)

Science Technical Group Present:

John Kelley, Chair
Robert Shuchman

Staff Present:

Hans Neidig Office of the Secretary	Sharon Warren Office of the Secretary
Bob Winfree NPS	Adam Mehlhorn NSSI
Tim Jennings FWS	Bob Schneider BLM
Tom Heinrichs UAF, GINA	Ken Taylor NSSI

November 14, 2006:

Note: All PowerPoint presentations referenced in these notes are available for viewing at the following website: www.northslope.org

Julia Dougan welcomed the group to the meeting and announced Tom Lonnie, BLM-AK's new State Director will be arriving at the end of November and will serve on the OG. All meeting participants were introduced.

Review of priorities:

Ken passed out the OG's review of priority objectives for NSSI and the following were discussed.

- Priorities are listed in order of importance.
- Organizational staff needs to be engaged in addressing issues.

- A formalized funding process needs to be established. The general consensus of the OG was that the budget process needs to be simple and the NSSI should not be another grant organization.
- Organizational staff should have access to agency reports.
- Data base development. Adam Mehlhorn has been working on the web portal.

Ken asked the group if a refresher of agenda items from the previous meeting would be beneficial to the group and the general consensus was that it would be.

Review of October STG Meeting:

John Kelley reviewed the minutes from October 11-12, 2006 as follows:

- There were nine agency attendees and two public guests, Pam Miller, Northern Alaska Environmental Center and Wendy Loya, Wilderness Society.
- The group charter was discussed. The need for agency staff from the various user agencies to develop a list of needed items for the database was discussed.
- The importance of collaboration between the various agencies was discussed. Agencies should share data to avoid duplication and should identify overlap of various programs.
- Climate change was discussed and is a major issue for resource management planners.
- Most of this meeting focused on monitoring and the need for the various agencies to collaborate in these efforts. The need for a clearly defined process to identify priority activities was also discussed. Bruce Hollen gave a presentation on the NPR-A draft monitoring strategy. He stated the process will be contingent upon how the models turn out. He also stressed the need for long term monitoring and said agency buy-in is important to the database's success.
- The remote sensing and GIS sub-group met with GINA of UAF and will present information on this topic. A database with remote sensing capability will require a management component and funding will have to be built in for the long term. John Kelley recommended to the OG that Bruce Hollen serve on the GIS sub-committee.
- Caryn Rea gave a presentation regarding on-shore development. The industry is involved in numerous studies and would be willing to share Q&A data, but not raw data. Their concern is that there needs to be more strategies for the whole North Slope, not just the NPRA.
- Alison Cooke gave a presentation on monitoring in BP oil fields. Compliance monitoring plays a major part in the process. They are involved in studies on the Bowhead Whale, Seals and climate change issues. John Payne asked about air quality testing, namely CO, CO₂ and Methane. BP does monitor air quality, and the method of monitoring was discussed.

- During the public comment period, Pam Miller, Northern Environmental Center presented a map of the NPRA she had created. The map was added to the minutes.
- Tom Weingartner gave a presentation on monitoring efforts in the ocean. CODAR, an instrument that is being used at Prudoe Bay to get wave data was explained. There is interest in putting a cable monitoring system in the sea, but ice gouging is a major concern. He also discussed monitoring needs in the Chukchi Sea.
- John Kelley spoke about the Endicott monitoring program. He reiterated that the cost for a research based system can be very high. A sub-group focused on monitoring was formed, consisting of Robert Suydam, Dirk Derksen, Caryn Rea and Alison Cooke.
- TEK was discussed. It was suggested that communications be viewed as part of the process to work toward predictive models and to review the draft Science Strategy portion regarding TEK. A letter was drafted and will be reviewed by the STG at the next meeting. Robert Suydam gave a brief review of RMT and its relevance to the NSSI, The letter will recommend an implementation plan be developed as soon as possible.
- Caribou and molting Geese were discussed. It was suggested the Canadian CARMA program be reviewed for information.
- The STG recommends the OG identify resources necessary to address high importance issues as the cost for addressing all 10 issues identified by the RMT at one time would be too expensive. These need to be prioritized and would be subject to change, given changing circumstances on the North Slope.

Discussion:

A question was posed as to who the sponsor for the Center for Climate Change is. It is the International Arctic Research Center. This is still being developed and the STG will keep the OG apprised of developments.

The 10 monitoring priorities were discussed, and it was suggested that caribou be the first one addressed. This will be recommended in the letter the STG will be presenting to the OG. All monitoring programs should be in place, in the NPRA, by the summer of 2007.

Julia Dougan asked if a caribou workshop is held, would it bring all the agencies responsible for monitoring together to discuss the process. Ken Taylor said it would. It is felt that a consistent approach to monitoring would be beneficial and prevent data gaps, etc.

Progress of the GIS sub-committee:

The members of the GIS sub-committee are: Bob Shuchman, Doug Kane, John Kelley, Bill Streever, Kim Titus and Tom Heinricks. The following progress has been made:

- A secure workroom within the NSSI web portal has been set up.
- A sub-committee meeting was held at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to the OG meeting. GIS study steps and functionality were discussed.
- There are 75 GIS's dealing with the Arctic which have been identified and are listed and linked on the NSSI website. Using all the available data, a system can be implemented that is both diverse and specific to certain needs.
- Conducting a stakeholders meeting was recommended by the STG to aid in forming an information sharing system for NSSI. It was suggested that a larger audience stakeholders meeting be held in January or February to recommend parameters of the database.
- The GIS sub-group recommends a requirements document be developed prior database development. This needs to outline remote sensing study steps and what types of information will be needed. Only items vetted through a proven scientific process will be allowed in the database.
- Methodology and baseline data layers were discussed. A new updated GIS list of data layers will be circulated Monday to staff and managers.
- A partially centralized data architecture will be utilized. It will look like a completely centralized database to the user. Certain data will be password protected due to proprietary issues. There will be two categories, one for monetary and one for regulatory issues.
- Remote sensing on the North Slope will provide a means to go back in time and get a historical record. Various data types will be used and the NSSI database will have a method of taking baseline data and pre-determining a grid to work off. For example, a person may be able to click on an area of the Slope and be able to get all available data for that area.
- Landsat images were discussed and the fact that once an image is purchased, it can be legally shared with other scientific colleagues. Agencies will be able to buy different Landsat images and share them within the database.

Discussion:

Ken discussed data sets in relation to various questions, stating questions can be addressed by the GIS in an efficient manner. He also pointed out that the workshop will focus on stakeholders who are not GIS experts; they will be the actual users of the database. It was reiterated that it is important to know exactly what is needed out of the database because of potential cost. A question was posed about how to sign into the NSSI website. It was suggested that Adam Mehlhorn assume responsibility for the database log-in passwords.

GINA Progress & Direction:

Tom Heinrichs, of UAF, presented a PowerPoint presentation on GINA, demonstrating accomplishments and the role GINA will serve for an NSSI database if chosen as follows:

- He outlined the reasons NSSI needs a system and what sets it apart from other databases.
- He showed MODIS data that Alaska Fire Service gets from GINA and listed other clients of GINA, and demonstrated mapping capabilities.
- GINA is currently working with state and federal partners on a statewide mapping program. A prototype will be released by December 2006 and will be served out through services like Google maps. A request for increased funding will be presented to the legislature in January 2007.
- Base layers may be put into the system that can be easily ingested into various “decision support systems”. Using an open source client application can bring all the layers together. The database will be designed specifically to meet NSSI’s needs and will be broader than one agencies’ goals. It will lead to the service of larger statewide goals. It will be an agenda-less source of information, and there will be an audit trail for litigation purposes.

Discussion:

A question was posed whether GINA is similar to other mapping systems and if it would be a duplication of effort. It was explained that any existing data would plug into GINA to avoid any duplication of effort. The cost of GINA and the importance of understanding what GINA entails were discussed. The funding NSSI has estimated to start development would be approx. \$250,000.00. The continuing resolution and its effect on the budget were discussed. The need for a funding oversight position was also discussed. Because budgeting will be such a long term investment on the agencies’ parts and there is currently a continuing resolution in effect, the budget will be revisited at a later meeting.

NSSI Staff Contacts Meeting:

Ken Taylor briefed the OG on the NSSI staff contacts meeting which involved staff from DNR, DFG, NSB, MMS, BLM, FWS, USGS., and NPS.

- The NPRB database and glitches to be fixed were discussed.
- Data entry was discussed as was the issue questionnaire. Issues need to be identified at the staff level and go up the chain of command before being presented to the STG through the OG.

- Filters for determining priorities and funding recommendations were discussed, and an email with suggested filters was sent out to the NSSI staff.
- Multi-agency projects would be given extra consideration. It was also stated that any projects would have to have subject annual reports.

Discussion:

John Goll asked if the money used would be NSSI money. Ken said it would be NSSI money and it would be important that staff look at it first before they decide what course of action to take. Ed Fogels said it would be helpful to see what was filtered out. Dr. Winfrey stated the priorities should be recommended by the field staff. It was mentioned that even though there is a reluctance to refer to this as a grants process, there still needs to be collaboration to decide where this process is headed. It was also suggested that key personnel from the various agencies should meet regularly to decide what their needs are. The proposed process was discussed and it was decided it would work best if agencies had an all day meeting to compare notes on budgets. Thus far, all discussions have been general, nothing detailed or specific. A multi-agency meeting would allow a time to look for synergies between the agencies. The question was also posed if agency staff should be brought into the discussion or just members of the OG. It was decided it would be beneficial for staff to be involved first as they are more knowledgeable about the various programs. Ed Fogels mentioned that he would like to see NSSI visit with DNR staff and the other agencies involved. Information gathered from these meetings could be consolidated into a proposal. Ken Taylor agreed and said he would need a list of staff to visit from each agency. February was discussed as a possible meeting period due to federal budgetary issues. It was also mentioned that a lot of projects will be ongoing from year to year, requiring future collaboration between the various agencies. The use of a spreadsheet was suggested as a method of tracking which projects are one year projects versus which ones are on-going. The RMT priorities list was distributed, and the possibility of annual workshops was discussed. It was also mentioned that the subject matter could be different each year. Ken Taylor requested an agency staff contact list to make it easier to contact the appropriate staff for the meetings. The group agreed that an updated contact list would be necessary.

FY 2007 budget, priority identification and allocation processes:

Ken Taylor provided the group with a handout regarding projects NSSI is working on or will begin working on when the budget is passed. The group discussed the various projects and made the following suggestions:

- Projects need to be identified as single or multi-year projects.
- Ownership of the project needs to be stated.
- Projects need to be plugged into the project database.
- A GIS workshop might be helpful.

- A land cover workshop might be helpful to address making new maps of the North Slope.
- Legacy data sets should be discussed and a study profile created, indicating who, what, when and where.
- A finite list of prioritized spending needs should be created with enough background information provided to the OG so they can make an informed decision.

Off-Shore activities, Shell Oil:

Susan Childs presented a PowerPoint regarding Shell's off-shore activities, highlighting the following points:

- Shell's demographic data and history in Alaska.
- Shell's principle approach to business and commitments.
- Shell's off-shore vision for the Chukchi Sea and Bristol Bay.
- Impact of ice condition on off-shore drilling.
- Seismic activity in the Chukchi Sea.
- Shallow hazards survey done in the Beaufort Sea.
- Shell's support of local hiring on the North Slope.
- Plan for increase of vessels from 6 in 2006 to 18 in 2007, provided they secure their drilling permits.
- Upcoming study 16 miles off-shore in April to determine if seismic studies may be performed in the winter, based on requests from citizens.

Discussion:

Ken Taylor asked about water depth in the area seismic studies may be conducted. The water is 30 meters deep. The increase of vessels was discussed. Shell plans to drill three wells. Each well will require two ice breaker vessels. Ken Taylor brought up the point that the ice breaker vessels are rarely available in those waters and asked if Shell had considered supporting various agency/university studies consistent with industry information needs. Although Shell has not historically done that, there is huge potential for that type of collaboration in the future. The idea of a workshop was suggested to identify agency needs and how industry might coordinate with them to assist. Susan agreed and offered to present the idea to Shell, but also commented that it is often hard to define the pathway for funding from a Corporation to the federal level. Susan said there will still be the opportunity to collaborate. It was mentioned that the trend to go off-shore will be increasing in the upcoming years and NSSI should pay attention to those needs.

The oil spill response plan was discussed as was the upcoming Marine Site surveys to be conducted August-October 2007. John Goll suggested in future studies one ship could be sent out to gather information on various marine mammals and could be funded by the various agencies. At that time, geotechnical borings will be done. There are a total of 21 projected off-shore lease sales to be completed between 2007 and 2012. The need for increased information on ice movement was also discussed.

Public Comments:

None

Review of action items and decisions:

- There were no changes made to last meeting's minutes and they were adopted by the group.
- Ed Fogels re-capped the statewide digitized map idea. DNR received 2 million dollars to contribute. The MOU was signed. The Department of Military Veterans Affairs is collecting the funds, but Ed Fogels is the OG contact.
- Wayne Regelin will be retiring and expressed his enjoyment at serving on the OG. Julia Dougan and Ken Taylor thanked him for serving on the OG and wished him well in his retirement.
- A Caribou workshop will be scheduled, possibly at the Campbell Creek Science Center or the National Park Service. Advance notice of the workshop will be given to the OG and participants. It will be an NSSI sponsored event, but participants will have to absorb their own travel costs.
- A remote sensing/GIS workshop was approved to bring potential users together to discuss possible uses for the database. This workshop will consist primarily of agency staff, but industry and education contacts may be invited. This workshop will be contingent on available funding. Video-conferencing was suggested as a cost containment measure to consider. A larger stakeholder's meeting may be held at a later date.
- Ken Taylor will contact agency staff to create a list of budgeted agency projects for FY 2007 and 2008. The deadline given to this task is January 15, 2007.
- Ken Taylor will send the current staff contact list out to the agencies, requesting it be updated. He will cc the OG.
- NSSI projects will be further broken down into single or multi-year projects for budget purposes.
- Adam Mehlhorn will continue to expand the information provided on the NSSI website and will take over the responsibility for issuing passwords to users of the system.
- Ken Taylor will provide a detailed and prioritized list of NSSI priority projects.

The next meeting was not scheduled at this time due to the various projects to be completed by the STG. Meetings of the OG will be on as needed basis from this point on. A transition meeting for new OG members will be scheduled at a later date. This meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

