

North Slope Science Initiative

Interim Report

Ken Taylor, Executive Director

November 14, 2006

The Science Technical Group (TG) Charter was submitted to the Secretary's Office for approval of minor amendments to conform to the language in the Energy Policy Act, 2005. The new Oversight Group (OG) Charter was signed by several members, and remaining signatures will be obtained at the November meeting.

At the conclusion of their last meeting, the STG requested another meeting which was held October 11 & 12 in Fairbanks at the BLM conference room. It was apparent at the previous meeting that some education related to required and voluntary monitoring by industry at various phases of exploration and development is necessary, and much of the agenda was devoted to this. A sub-group to address socio-economic and traditional ecological knowledge issues as requested by the OG was established with Gary Kofinas as chair. A monitoring sub-group was also established to prioritize the issues previously raised by the RMT and suggest possible venues for addressing them (see draft minutes).

At the request of the OG, a response to the STG critique of the NSSI draft Science Strategy was drafted by the Executive Director, signed by the Chair of the OG and presented to the STG and discussed at this meeting.

Members of the Remote Sensing/GIS sub-group met the following day with Tom Heinrichs, GINA Director, to discuss the preliminary recommendations of the sub-group, the GINA architecture, and potential costs and timelines.

Several issues surrounding monitoring activities during the summer 2006 seismic work in the Chukchi Sea were discussed at the Open Water Meeting. It was generally agreed that planning for required monitoring needs to begin earlier than it could for the 2006 season, and a new time schedule was adopted for the 2007 season. Monitoring activities that were of questionable value will be reviewed and other options considered.

The NSSI agency staff met as a group for the first time to review what we have accomplished to date and to discuss identified priorities. Populating the new project database software with current projects is an agency staff priority. Some modifications to the software must be made before this can occur. Two options were identified for agency staff to utilize to input their projects.

Agency staff discussed the questionnaire developed by the STG for formulating questions from the OG to the STG and providing a framework for timelines and expectations. Questions will be generated at the agency staff level and forwarded through the NSSI staff contacts to their respective OG members for OG consideration.

Several questions arose regarding the NSSI budget and whether there will be funding available for NSSI projects. A process for prioritizing NSSI funded activities is needed, and agency staff will work to develop a process for consideration by the OG.

Conferences

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, September 18-20, Snowmass, CO.
The Wildlife Society, September 26 & 27, Anchorage.

Meetings/Briefings

American Association for the Advancement of Science (Arctic Conference), Fairbanks (NSSI presentation).

NSSI Science Technical Group meeting October 11 & 12, GINA meeting October 13, Fairbanks.

Briefing on NSSI given to Sharon Warren, Sec. of Interior Office, October 5, Anchorage.

NSSI briefing presented to new BLM staff at their Local Perspectives Conference, October 19, Alyeska.

NMFS, MMS, NSB, AEWC and industry Open Water Meeting, October 23-25, Anchorage.

NSSI update presented at Alaska Oil and Gas Association Annual Projects Conference October 26, Anchorage.

NSSI agency staff contacts meeting held at BLM Anchorage Field Office, October 27, Anchorage.

USGS EROS Data Center project briefings and information sharing, November 1, Sioux Falls, SD.

NSSI update presented to Dept. of the Interior Regional Directors and Secretary's office at quarterly meeting, November 7, Anchorage.

Science Technical Group Remote Sensing/GIS sub-group meeting, November 13, Anchorage.