

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative
Activities from October 27, 2011 through January 23, 2012

The 2011 Report to Congress is currently going through Department of the Interior review. There was one minor revision noted by one of the reviewers. This was corrected and the report is now being circulated through senior management.

The Deputy Director position has been classified and will be advertised at the GS-13 level. The announcement will be on <http://www.usajobs.gov> and be available beginning on January 31 for two weeks. The Staff Assistant position was advertised in late December 2011 at the GS-6 level. While we had several qualified applicants, the BLM State Director decided to keep the original classification for the position at the GS-7/8 level. We are in the process of preparing to advertise the position at the new grade level.

The call for nominations for the Science Technical Advisory Panel closed on October 24, 2012. The entire nomination package is now in the Office of the Secretary.

At the August Oversight Group retreat it was strongly suggested the NSSI look at the possibility of staffing of a public affairs specialist. Through the BLM's Office of Communication, the NSSI has been able to secure the services of a part-time communications expert that is a graduate student at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage. Matthew Vos will be developing science briefs and the NSSI newsletter.

Arctic Communication and Coordination

The DOI continues to hold monthly conference calls for communicating Arctic information between the various DOI Alaska bureaus and the Washington, DC DOI offices. The majority of these calls are about communicating international efforts with such entities as the Arctic Council. The NSSI participates in these monthly calls.

The NSSI has been selected as the co-lead with the Kingdom of Denmark on the Terrestrial Biodiversity Monitoring Program for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), a subgroup of the Arctic Council. The first coordination meeting was held in Copenhagen, Denmark in early May. All eight Arctic countries and permanent participants will ultimately round out the international team. The permanent participant is also yet to be nominated. However, the international team is moving forward under a very tight schedule with a final monitoring plan due in December 2012. Each country has developed an internal team of experts ranging from four to 12 members. The U.S. team has representation from 8 members as of this writing including several from NSSI member agencies. The first international workshop was hosted by the Kingdom of Denmark, in a small community outside of Copenhagen on October 10-13. Bud Cribley and Cheryl Rosa participated in the workshop. Bud and Cheryl are both Oversight Group members, and both bring senior level expertise for their respective organizations. A background paper has been prepared and accepted by the CAFF Secretariat. Please see <http://www.caff.is> for download.

NSSI is a co-chair for the upcoming U.S. Arctic Observing Coordination Meeting with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This coordination meeting is scheduled for March 20-22, 2012, in Anchorage. The U.S. meeting is considered preliminary to the 2013 International Arctic Observing Summit which will bring representation from all Arctic countries. The organizing committee has been established. It includes one Oversight Group member (Bob Winfree) and representation from the Arctic LCC.

The Arctic Council, at the May 2011, Ministerial meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, agreed to move forward with a proposal by the U.S. to develop an Arctic-wide ecosystem based management program. This significant program advances with the understanding humans and human activities are part of the Arctic ecosystem, and those activities must be part of the overall ecosystem management. The co-leads for this initiative are the U.S., Sweden and Iceland. For the U.S., NOAA has the co-lead for the marine environment and DOI for the terrestrial environment. The first meeting was held on October 18-19, 2011, in Washington, DC. I was asked to be part of the U.S. delegation and participated at the October meeting. Although the October meetings suggested at least two inter-sessional meetings of delegates, none has been planned to date. A full international delegation meeting will be held in the near future (likely late spring 2012). More information can be obtained at the Arctic Council website (<http://www.arctic-council.org>).