

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative
Activities from July 14 through October 4, 2010

Old News + Good News

It's that time of year again, the 2010 Report to Congress has taken up considerable time. I want to especially think the senior staff committee for their input and review of two drafts. Also, thanks to the Oversight Group for final review and acceptance of the final DRAFT in late August. Transmittal memos were signed by the Oversight Group Chair and I then forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior through Pat Pourchot and Kim Elton. The reports were delivered to Pat Pourchot's office on August 31, 2010. As in previous year's, the report will become final upon acceptance by the Secretary. This will likely happen sometime in late October.

The 2010 report would not have been possible without the dedicated help of two Bureau of Land Management, Office of Communications staff: Karen Laubenstein (writer/editor) and Vanessa Rathbun (visual layout specialist).

The Science Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) met in Barrow on September 21-23, 2010. The updates will be presented by the STAP Chair.

The land cover project, a cooperative effort with the National Landfire Program, Alaska Natural Heritage Program, National Resources Conservation Service, Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., and Spatial Solutions, Inc., had a wonderful field season (see handout). Thanks to the coordination and logistical efforts of Project Manager Scott Guyer (BLM), Dave Yokel, Ben Seifert and Cara Staab (BLM) and the many other personnel who helped make this a success.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks received a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to utilize synthetic aperture radar to characterize water bodies across the North Slope. The initial products will be a data layer that uses algorithms developed by other researchers who have characterized lakes on limited areas of the North Slope. This will be the first comprehensive look at freeze/no freeze that covers the entire North Slope. Partners for this include the Alaska SAR Facility, GINA and Michigan Technology University.

Data Integration and Project Tracking

The STAP data subcommittee has been working directly with GINA on cleaning up the data side of the portal and now has the most current records from the various data administrators. Jess has been working to develop a new interface for the data and project tracking sections of the NSSI/GINA program and this is now operational.

On the Project Tracking side, there are over 1400 project records are now available. The NSSI is now working to geo-locate each of the entries. Keeping the project records current continues to be an institutional challenge. Internal to the NSSI membership maintaining records of current projects ranges from a simple electronic "integration" between individual tracking systems to manpower queries and spreadsheets. The annual senior staff committee coordination meetings help the NSSI secure records from those entities that have no internal tracking systems, but such records must be entered manually. External to the NSSI membership, we have complete operability between the National Science

Foundation and the NSSI, but, as with the NSSI membership, there is project discovery that often requires manual query and input.

Department of the Interior – Arctic Communication

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.

Department of the Interior – Arctic Coordination and Planning

Rhea Suh, Assistant Secretary for Budget, Management and Policy, held a meeting, in Anchorage, on September 21-22, 2010. The Secretary's Office is interested in how the various bureaus within the Department communicate across their respective agencies, and how communication and coordination flow between DOI, the state and local governments. The meeting was informational and was attended by the BLM Alaska State Director, BLM National Director, and the Regional Director's of both Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service.

Meetings and Coordination

The Second United States and Canada Oil and Gas Research Forum is scheduled for Calgary, Alberta, Canada, November 30 through December 2, 2010. An organizing committee has been established and the planning efforts are underway. The NSSI is on the organizing committee and is a principal sponsor. The Canadian government has underwritten a substantial portion of the forum by providing \$200k. Budgets permitting, the NSSI will be providing additional funding. The NSSI has contracted with the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (ARCUS) to facilitate the meetings, receive abstracts and registration fees, and provide a final report of the forum. Thanks to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement and the Office of the Federal Coordinator for helping to defray the contact costs to the NSSI. Registration for the forum opened on September 14, 2010, and is available through the NSSI website.