

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative
Activities from August 18 through October 26, 2011

The Oversight Group Retreat was held August 24 and 25, 2011 at the ADNR facility in Palmer. The Udall Foundation, Environmental Conflict Resolution team provided the facilitation for the retreat. A report was completed and forwarded to the Oversight Group that set the overall direction for the North Slope Science Initiative for the future.

The "connectivity" paper was published in the September issue of Arctic. It has also been posted on the NSSI website (<http://www.northslope.org>). This is a significant accomplishment and will be used to help guide (per the Oversight Group retreat) the NSSI into the future. This is an amazing piece of work...look at the author string, and realize this document represents a significant cooperative activity between the Oversight Group, STAP and senior staff. It also summarizes many of the needs identified in the emerging issue summaries.

The Barrow workshop report: "Working Together to Understand Our Changing Arctic," is now final and is available in both hard copy and on the NSSI website (<http://www.northslope.org>). The draft workshop report was released for independent review in late June. A total of ten individuals volunteered to review and comment on the report. The result is a significant accomplishment of a dedicated STAP and is a model for future place-based workshops.

The 2011 Report to Congress is now complete. The report was intentionally delayed so results from the Oversight Group retreat could be incorporated. This has now been transmitted to the Secretary of the Interior.

The Deputy Director and Staff Assistant positions are in the process of classification. The classification for the Staff Assistant position is complete and an announcement will be forthcoming. This position will be shared with the BLM State Director's Office (as a backup) and NSSI. The position will be full-time and announced as a GS-6 full performance level. The Deputy Director is still at the classification stage. Once classified, it will be announced as a GS-13/14 permanent position. An intergovernmental agreement has been established between the NSSI and the North Slope Borough. The NSB will fund a significant portion of the positions' salary and benefits, as well as travel.

The North Slope land cover project field validation is complete. The field work around Barrow was completed in late July and the crew moved to Point Hope on August 9th. What remains now is the image processing and stitching together of the satellite images that will provide the first highly accurate, digital land cover classification for the entire North Slope that has been field validated. This has been a significant effort with support and participation from the Bureau of Land Management, Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, The Alaska Natural Heritage Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Spatial Solutions, Inc., Alaska Fire Service, LandFire and NSSI. Final products should be available in mid-2012.

The call for nominations for the Science Technical Advisory Panel closed on October 24, 2012. Packets are being developed for the Oversight Group and the nominations will be discussed in Executive Session at the October 27, 2011, Oversight Group meeting.

I was invited to provide the close-out module for the BLM Leadership Academy in Phoenix, Arizona in September. The module I provided was entitled "Building Coalitions." The focus was on communication

and establishing trust in leadership positions. Most of BLM's senior managers were in attendance, including the Director, for the final closeout.

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. Significant progress was made in moving forward, including a draft of the background paper. This publication will be available soon on the CAFF website (<http://www.caff.is>). A second workshop in Alaska is planned for the spring of 2012. The Nordic Council of Ministers has provided significant funding toward the terrestrial monitoring program.

NSSI has been asked to co-chair the organizing committee for the upcoming U.S. Arctic Observing Coordination Meeting with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This coordination meeting is scheduled for late spring 2012. 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. More information can be obtained at the Arctic Council website (<http://www.arctic-council.org>).