

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative  
Activities from July 22, 2009 through October 6, 2009

Considerable time and effort was expended in completing the 2009 Report to Congress. With the help of Vanessa Rathbun and Karen Laubenstein from the Bureau of Land Management's Office of Communications, the report left our office on August 24, 2009. At last status report (September 4, 2009), the report was moving through the surname process in the Department of the Interior.

The Science Technical Advisory Panel nominations have been approved by the White House. Background checks have been completed on six primary nominees, and appointment letters have been prepared and are awaiting the Secretary's signature. These are expected to be sent out to the six nominees by the end of September.

On July 23, 2009, I met with Molly McCammon and Darcy Dugan of Alaska Oceans Observing System (AOOS) to discuss how to better coordinate our individual efforts on tracking projects in the Arctic. At the technical level, the interoperability of the NSSI and AOOS are working. However, because AOOS is a statewide initiative and the NSSI is regional, there remains some level of difficulty in discussing system maintenance. The NSSI has provided all of our off shore information to AOOS through the data sharing tools developed by GINA, but has not at yet received comparable information from AOOS. Apparently the issue is with how AOOS can recover some maintenance cost for their projects in the Arctic. Molly and I have agreed to look into the possibility of developing a memorandum of understanding to address information sharing.

Both Denny and I attended Senator Murkowski's Arctic Policy hearing at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Eight individuals were invited to testify on the status and needs in the U.S. Arctic. Both Mead Treadwell (Chair, U.S. Arctic Research Commission) and Mayor Itta (North Slope Borough) talked positively about the NSSI and the need to secure a stable staff and funding, and Arnie Fuglvog of Sen. Murkowski's staff reiterated the Senator's support for NSSI (referred to her questioning of DOI nominee Anne Castle, which can be viewed at: [http://energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Hearings.LiveStream&Hearing\\_id=64ee896f-ce51-6db7-8991-8653e8138bcf](http://energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Hearings.LiveStream&Hearing_id=64ee896f-ce51-6db7-8991-8653e8138bcf) (minute 67:58 through 70:07).

NOAA requested manpower help from the NSSI staff to help with the NOAA/CEQ public hearings on Ocean Policy on August 21<sup>st</sup>. The interagency ocean policy task force heard testimony from 66 individuals during the public session. The oceans task force was seeking information to feed into their interim report. This interim report was issued on September 10<sup>th</sup>, with a 30-day comment period.

The Interim Report was issued on September 10<sup>th</sup> with a 30-day comment period. The interim report list nine priorities:

- **Ecosystem-Based Management: Adopt ecosystem-based management** as a foundational principle for the comprehensive management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.
- **Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning:** Implement comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning and management in the United States.
- **Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding:** Increase knowledge to continually inform and improve management and policy decisions and the capacity to respond to change and

challenges. Better educate through formal and informal programs the public about the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

- **Coordinate and Support:** Better coordinate and support Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government, and as appropriate, engage with the international community.
- **Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification:** Strengthen resiliency of coastal communities and marine and Great Lakes environments and their abilities to adapt to climate change impacts and ocean acidification.
- **Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration:** Establish and implement an integrated ecosystem protection and restoration strategy that is science-based and aligns conservation and restoration goals at the Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional levels.
- **Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land:** Enhance water quality in the ocean, along our coasts, and in the Great Lakes by promoting and implementing sustainable practices on land.
- **Changing Conditions in the Arctic:** Address environmental stewardship needs in the Arctic Ocean and adjacent coastal areas in the face of climate-induced and other environmental changes.
- **Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations and Infrastructure:** Strengthen and integrate Federal and non-Federal ocean observing systems, sensors, and data collection platforms into a national system and integrate that system into international observation efforts.

Since the last Oversight Group meeting there have been two Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) teleconferences. Both have focused on Congressional reporting of IARPC activities related to the International Polar Year. Member agencies have provided feedback to IARPC on their activities during the past two years and Michael Van Woert (National Science Foundation), IARPC Chair is working with the NSSI on the format of their report. IARPC is also working with the U.S. Arctic Research Commission to set up a much needed IARPC principals meeting sometime this fall (there has not been a principals meetings since the administration change). NSSI will provide a briefing to the principals at this annual meeting.

The Department of the Interior has a monthly conference call to discuss Arctic issues. The NSSI has been an active participant in these monthly meetings. These meetings are not intended to be of a decisional nature, but rather to keep apprised of Arctic Council subjects and other issues that pertain to the U.S. Arctic and the relationship to the greater Arctic community.

The Science Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) met jointly with the Senior Staff Committee on September 9 and 10, 2009, to finalize 13 emerging issues documents. Both days were concentrated efforts by the STAP and Senior Staff Committee to complete the documents. These documents will be presented to the Oversight Group on October 7 and 8, 2009, in Barrow. Both Bill Streever (STAP Chair) and Denny Lassuy (Acting Deputy Director) have kept the STAP going in a positive direction. Bill has been relentless in engaging STAP members in this process while Denny has been the primary driver behind editing and insuring the documents reflect the STAP's recommendations. Denny has also been actively involved in the planning for and will participate in the upcoming NSSI cosponsored International Arctic Fisheries Symposium (<http://www.nprb.org/iafs2009>). He will be presenting a summary of the symposium outcomes at the annual meeting of the Alaska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society this coming November.

I participated in the annual Alaska meeting of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission in Kotzebue on September 14-16, 2009. The first day of the agenda provided an opportunity for local residents and officials to speak to the commission about issues they view as important. The agenda also provided several expert panels to discuss topics that included oil spill in ice research, marine mammals, indigenous languages and cultures, energy and natural resources and declassification of Arctic data. Senator Begich called into the meeting to present his legislation package that includes oil spill prevention and research in Arctic environments, Arctic Ambassador for the U.S., ice breaker construction, Arctic human health, Arctic science and integration, and Arctic adaptation (Senate Bills 1560, 1561, 1562, 1563, 1564, 1565 and 1566). The importance the Senator attaches to these bills was reflected in the fact the occasion of their introduction was the first time he spoke from the Senate floor. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the USARC visited the Red Dog mine and the village of Kivalina to learn about resource development in the Arctic and how coastal erosion can impact villages. September 16<sup>th</sup> I presented the NSSI mission and vision to the USARC and then we boarded a U.S. Coast Guard C-130 to fly the U.S. Arctic domain. We were 160 miles north of Barrow before sea ice was encountered and at 300 miles north of Barrow before high density sea ice was encounter. All of the ice encountered on the flight was single year, we never crossed into multi-year ice prior to our turn-around at 300 miles. We discussed oil and mineral development as we flew over North Slope oil fields. The main purpose of the flight was to continue to familiarize and educate the U.S. Coast Guard on the environmental issues and operational challenges they will face with climate change.

Bill Streever (STAP Chair) made a presentation on the North Slope Science Initiative at the Arctic Chapter of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Juneau on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Feedback he received has resulted in additional contacts and interest in and for the NSSI.

I met with Jennifer Loten, the newly appointed Consul for Canada on September 17<sup>th</sup> to solicit her help in planning the next U.S./Canada Oil and Gas Research Forum planned for October 2010 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Jennifer agreed to participate in the organization of the meeting.

Kathryn (Kate) Moran, who has recently been appointed as a Senior Policy Analyst for the Office and Science and Technology Policy in Washington, DC, was in Anchorage on September 17<sup>th</sup> and I had the opportunity to meet with her and discuss many topics related to Arctic science. . Her focus will be on developing Arctic science policy for the White House.

Also on September 17<sup>th</sup> I met with U.S. Navy Ensign William Eucker. Ensign Eucker has recently graduated from the Naval Academy. We discussed the Arctic ocean geopolitics in relation to the disputed U.S./Canada off shore. Ensign Eucker is continuing his education as a Gates Cambridge Scholar focusing on Arctic Ocean Geopolitics.