

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative
Activities from October 6 through December 7, 2010

The 2010 NSSI Report to Congress got off to a rough start this year. The report was delivered on time to the Department of the Interior but it seems the transmittal memos were never forwarded. This came to light in early November, but has since been corrected with the help of Pat Kennedy at DOI. The report is now on track and has been submitted for review to all of the Assistant Secretary's Offices at DOI.

Since the last Oversight Group meeting on October 5, 2010, substantial effort has been put into two priorities: the STAP connectivity paper and the upcoming NSSI Barrow workshop.

Weekly conference calls with STAP members have been held throughout November and are continuing as the NSSI workshop plans solidify. The North Slope Borough has been very active in helping the NSSI organize and plan the workshop, and several STAP members have been fully engaged. The workshop is planned for March 29-31, 2011, in Barrow and will have a unique setup in its organization (more later).

The STAP connectivity paper is coming along nicely. As with any activity planned and written by a collective body of people, it has been a challenge keeping the paper on track. A complete rewrite of the paper was accomplished in late October and the draft presented at the December 8th Oversight Group meeting will lead to the final document. Thanks to all of the STAP members, and especially Bill Streever for their continued dedication in developing this important paper.

The STAP is also working on new emerging issue papers that include: reclamation, fisheries and cultural. Drafts of the reclamation and cultural will be presented to the Oversight Group on December 8th. The fisheries emerging issue paper will be developed at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in January, and then presented to the STAP membership at the January 2011 meeting in Fairbanks. Thanks to Robyn Angliss for her action is getting this one moving.

The North Slope and 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 productive field season with some 700 field sites collected. A meeting of the principals listed above was held at the Ducks Unlimited Region Office in Sacramento, California during the week of November 15th. All of the field sites were reviewed for accuracy, and planning for the completion of the field work began.

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. The first data analysis was completed in November 2010, with a final product due in late summer 2011.

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.

NSSI Public Website

The NSSI public website (www.northslope.org) went through its third revamp. The site is now far easier to use and is based on new software. A training video has been posted on the website.

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. The NSSI has been selected as the co-lead with Denmark on the Terrestrial Monitoring program for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, a subgroup of the Arctic Council. The first joint meeting between the US/Canada/Denmark will be sometime during the summer of 2011 in Anchorage with a second, and final meeting planned in Denmark in 2012.

Meetings and Coordination

I attended both partner-at-large sessions of the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Many good suggestions came from the meetings that are currently being coordinated between the Arctic LCC and NSSI. I also attended the Arctic LCC Steering Committee meeting in Anchorage to review submitted projects. There were 32 project submissions to the Arctic LCC for 2011 funding. However, selection of the projects was delayed while a system for prioritization is developed. Greg Balogh, Arctic LCC Coordinator and I have been communicating on a regular basis as we identify ways we can work together to gain synergy.

NSSI was invited to participate in the annual Sea Grant meetings held in Anchorage. Bill Streever and I made a joint presentation to the Sea Grant committee. We are seeking opportunities to work together in the future.

The Second United States and Canada Oil and Gas Research Forum is scheduled for Calgary, Alberta, Canada, November 30 through December 2, 2010. A full report will be available at the December 8th Oversight Group meeting.