

Director's Report, North Slope Science Initiative  
Activities from July 7 through August 17, 2011

The Oversight Group Retreat will be held August 24 and 25, 2011 at the ADNR facility in Palmer. The Udall Foundation, Environmental Conflict Resolution folks will be providing facilitation. The overall purpose of this retreat is to set direction for the North Slope Science Initiative for the future.

The "connectivity" paper has been finalized and will be published in the Arctic in September. This is an amazing piece of work...look at the author string, and realize this document represents a significant cooperative activity between STAP, senior staff, North Slope Borough and NSSI.

The Barrow workshop: "Working Together to Understand Our Changing Arctic," that was held on March 29-31, 2011. The draft workshop report was released for independent review in late June with a final document due in mid-July. However, a number of reviewers have had field season conflicts and this has now been delayed until late August.

Much of the past few weeks have been spent working on the 2011 Report to Congress. Significant reformatting and re-editing has occurred. Much of the individual agency descriptions were removed and the focus is now on the NSSI and its accomplishments.

The Deputy Director and Staff Assistant positions are in the process of classification. Once classification is complete announcements will be released. Both positions will be filled as permanent position under BLM authorities. The Deputy Director will be a GS-13/14 and the Staff Assistant a GS-6. Both positions will be very welcome as the workload for the NSSI continues to increase. The North Slope Borough will be providing one-half of the funding for the Deputy Director. It is expected both positions will be filled by early fall 2011.

The North Slope land cover project is nearly complete. The field work around Barrow was completed in late July and the crew moved to Point Hope on August 9<sup>th</sup>. 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.

#### Data Integration and Project Tracking

The project tracking/data website now has a short self-help video that guides the user through the many aspects of the site. Feedback on the video has been favorable with some reviewers suggesting they could follow the guide even if they knew nothing about how to navigate the site. Good job Jess!

NSSI is a founding member of the Alaska Data Integration Working Group (ADIwg) which is an association of federal, state and NGO entities concerned with addressing the technical barriers in effectively sharing scientific information among participating agencies. Initial efforts have focused on the management and exchange of information describing ongoing projects in order to provide a strategic view of science based research. A technical specification has been developed by ADIwg and is

expected to be implemented with NSSI/GINA infrastructure serving as a central node which provides ADIwg partners and the public with access to consolidated project information.

The data catalog is also moving forward with considerable external linkages. Specifically, it will be linked to the Polar Data Catalog and the National Science Foundation's Circumpolar Arctic Data Information System (CADIS). These linkages will provide the end user with greater access to Arctic data outside of the U.S.

#### NSSI Public Website

Usage of the NSSI website is increasing. Some of this increase is likely due to the constant media coverage about the Arctic, while, hopefully, some of the increase is due to better functionality of the site. An important addition, and one that was recommended at the Barrow workshop, is the aviation tracking tab. This tab will inform the site user of the dates, locations and types of aircraft that are planned for across the North Slope. This is not only a tool for residents, but one that can be used by agencies and scientists for potential collaboration on aircraft.

#### 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 will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark the week of October 11, 2011, with a second workshop in Alaska in the spring of 2012. I am working with the CAFF Secretariat, U.S. Department of State, and Kingdom of Denmark to secure funding for workshop participants. It is expected each country will send four individuals to the first workshop.

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.