

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 Lauberstein 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, the greater issue is AOOS is a statewide initiative and the NSSI is regional. This division sets up some level of difficulty in discussing system maintenance. The NSSI has provided all of our off shore information with AOOS through using the developed through GINA. The issue of sharing information is not with the NSSI, but rather with how AOOS can recover some maintenance cost for their projects in the Arctic. Molly and I agree to look into the possibility of developing a memorandum of understanding that addresses information sharing.

Both Denny and I attended Senator Murkowski's Arctic Policy hearing at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus on August 20th. 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.

NOAA requested manpower help from the NSSI staff to help with the NOAA/CEQ public hearings on Ocean Policy on August 21st. The interagency ocean policy task force heard testimony from 66 individuals during the public session. The task force was seeking information on the following:

1. **National Policy:** Recommendations for a national policy that ensures the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources, enhances the sustainability of ocean and coastal economies, preserves our maritime heritage, provides for adaptive management to enhance our capacity to respond to climate change, and is coordinated with our national security and foreign policy interests.
2. **Framework for Policy Coordination:** Recommendations for a framework for policy coordination of efforts to improve stewardship of the oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes among Federal, State, tribal, and local authorities, including regional governance structures.
3. **Implementation Strategies:** Recommendations for an implementation strategy that identifies and prioritizes a set of objectives the United States should pursue to meet the objectives of a national policy for the oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.
4. **Marine Spatial Planning:** Recommendations for a framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning that is a comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based approach that addresses conservation, economic activity, user conflict, and sustainable use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources.

5. **Emerging Issues on Ocean, Coasts and Great Lakes Policy:** Comments on the implications of other emerging issues for ocean, coasts and Great Lakes policy, such as offshore renewable energy development and climate change.

The Interim Report was issued on September 10th 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 (there has not been a principals meetings since the administration change) IARPC principals meeting sometime this fall. 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 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 have kept the STAP going in positive directions. 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.

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). On September 15th, 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 16th 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 with climate change.

Bill Streever (STAP Chair) made a presentation at the Arctic Chapter of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Juneau on September 15th. 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 17th 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 was in Anchorage on September 17th and I had the opportunity to meet with her and discuss many topics related to Arctic science. Kate has been recently appointed as a Senior Policy Analyst for the Office and Science and Technology Policy in Washington, DC. Her focus will be on developing Arctic science policy for the White House.

Also on September 17th I met with U.S. Navy Ensign William Eucker. Ensign Eucker has recently graduated from the Naval Academy and is continuing his education as a Gates Cambridge Scholar focusing on Arctic Ocean Geopolitics. I am looking forward to continued contact with Ensign Eucker as he begins to gain a greater knowledge base about the Arctic.