

**North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI)
Oversight Group (O.G.) Meeting 12/10/19
Meeting Start: 10:30 AM**

Attendees: Sara Longan, DNR O.G. Chair
Jim Kendall, BOEM
Scott Guyer, BLM
Dee Williams, USGS
Faith Martineau, DNR
Chad Padgett, BLM, O.G. Vice Chair
Leigh Welling, NPS
Cheryl Rosa, USARC
Amy Holman, NOAA
Scott Marsteller, DOE
Gwen Robinson, BOEM
Jess Grunblatt, NSSI

On the Phone: Robin Angliss, NOAA
Dave and Captain Hilbert, USCG
Kaia Brix, NOAA

NSSI Program Review

The meeting opened with a discussion of the report prepared by Jennifer Werner (NPS-HQ) during a deep dive into the NSSI program by reviewing historical documents, processes, and interviewing 50 NSSI stakeholders and partners. It was unanimous that the report was very well put together. The report brought to light a number of weaknesses; however, it also included a number of unfortunate omissions which is expected in a review conducted by an outside entity.

Sara Longan noted that one option from the report would be to move NSSI to the Alaska-based Secretary's Office which may facilitate communication between DOI bureaus.

The NSSI program has been administered through BLM since it began in 2005 and has received funding for supporting the program (funding chart provided to the group). The point was raised that NSSI (operationally) should be funded by all the members involved not just by a singular agency. For example, following the relationships used in the past where multiple bureaus and agencies provided funding and resources to help achieve the NSSI mission.

Steve Wackowski spoke about the Secretary's knowledge of NSSI and its possible move to his office. He is hoping to get the report (review) to the Secretary sometime around January 10. A concern was raised by Steve that he is a political appointee and this move may make NSSI move susceptible to the political ebb and flow of administrations. He also requested the analytics of how the NSSI database is used and, if possible, who is utilizing the information.

Dee Williams brought up the possibility of returning the program to status quo or sunseting NSSI all together. However, if we want to move forward with the program, he would recommend the relocation

of NSSI to another agency and refining the scope of the program. Also, to define deliverables and narrow the research scale of the NSSI. Maybe there is a need to evaluate the program every 5 years? The concern of whether NSSI still needs a FACA committee (the STAP) was raised and discussed. Steve Wackowski would take the lead of running the STAP questions and hopefully be able to provide guidance from the Secretary's office at a later date.

The issue of past critical deliverables not being met was discussed. The annual Report to Congress (Report) has consistently been produced by the NSSI O.G. However, the final submission of the Report has not been consistently received by Congress, resulting in frustration among NSSI partners and contributors. The current year Report was discussed and the O.G. agreed finalizing the Report and utilizing the DOI Secretary's Office for transmission to Congress was appropriate. Scott Guyer explained that this year's Report has been drafted, is currently under-going formatting, and would soon be ready for O.G. review.

Questions were raised about past NSSI projects and the lack of deliverables, for example, the "2011 Barrow Workshops Report". It was pointed out that there were multiple products from the workshop and some efforts have been completed and are available, but a lot of ground was covered at the workshop and many of the participants have moved on. Sara Longan recognized that some deliverables were completed but misunderstood and there has been miscommunication and a significant degree of transition among the NSSI OG. All NSSI deliverables and reports are published and available on the NSSI website.

The point was raised that in bringing the information/question to the Secretary, we must keep it simple and focus on the issue at hand. The O.G. does not need to get into the weeds with the Secretary; the actual premise of why NSSI was created, its original intent and whether this is a priority is what we need guidance on in order to choose a path for the future. Bottomline, the O.G. was in agreement that, in this situation, the program was in need of a top down decision. The report reflects another long-standing need, full NSSI staffing and consistent support by the administering agency.

Some important points about NSSI were raised:

- Communication and teamwork are a priority to reduce duplication of effort. NSSI is a venue created to foster partnership (i.e., coordination, cooperation, and collaboration). Like the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), NSSI was not created to be a source of funding; it is a venue for discussion and to develop partnerships. NSSI is an entity that addresses the entire landscape of the U.S. North Slope Arctic: terrestrial, coastal, marine, and community levels. Local/community level support is critical for NSSI's success and this support is dependent on local/community engagement. NSSI and the data catalog are already providing a direct line of information to the North Slope communities; for example, the Nuiqsut Environmental Information Website developed by NSSI in 2018. The program may need to be reorganized – at least for the sake of optics. NSSI supports the only centralized data catalog with a direct link to the communities, industry, and State and Federal government entities. Outreaching the NSSI catalog could be a great way to address community needs.

Status of the STAP

Scott Guyer addressed the group with the nominations to move forward in the appointment of staff to the NSSI:

- Lorene Lynn
- Linda Brewer
- Sheyna Wisdom
- Annmarie Jenson

The next meeting of the STAP was proposed for Utqiagvik early next calendar year; however, there needs to be discussion between Steve Wackowski and the Secretary's office.

All were in agreement that the O.G. should have another, local meeting (i.e., Anchorage) prior to a STAP meeting in Utqiagvik

12:15 pm: Meeting Adjourned