

**NORTH SLOPE SCIENCE INITIATIVE  
DEPARTMENTS OF THE INTERIOR and COMMERCE, STATE OF ALASKA,  
ARCTIC SLOPE REGIONAL CORPORATION, AND NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH**

**CHARTER**

**NORTH SLOPE SCIENCE OVERSIGHT GROUP**

**1. Official Designation:** North Slope Science Initiative, North Slope Science Oversight Group (hereafter the Oversight Group).

**2. Background and Need:** Alaska's North Slope and adjacent seas provide important terrestrial, estuarine, and marine habitat for a wide range of fish, migratory birds, terrestrial and marine mammals (for example, caribou, seals, whales), and other species that are culturally important to many Alaska Natives and their communities. This area is also believed to have some of the largest remaining oil, gas, and coal potential in the United States. As production from these reserves becomes more economically feasible, the strategic and economic importance of the North Slope's energy resources will be even greater. In sustaining these resources and planning for safe energy exploration and development, managers also face the challenge of a rapidly changing Arctic climate. The domestic and international scale of these challenges, opportunities, and changes are of such magnitude that there is federal, state, and local consensus that enhanced, coordinated, and sustained inventory, monitoring, and research are vital to supporting an integrated ecosystem-based management approach. In response, federal, state, and local governments collectively formed the North Slope Science Initiative, which was formally authorized under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-58, Sec. 348).

**3. Mission:** The mission of the Oversight Group is to enhance the quality and quantity of the scientific information available for aquatic, terrestrial, and marine environments on the North Slope and to make this information available to decision makers, governmental agencies, industry, and the public. This mission will be accomplished through a coordinated and integrated approach to conducting inventory, monitoring, and research activities on the North Slope.

**4. Goals:** The Oversight Group directs and facilitates a coordinated approach to information gathering and analysis on the North Slope and its associated marine environment, including the integration of contemporary and traditional local knowledge. Specifically, the Oversight Group will:

- Develop an understanding of informational needs for regulatory and land management agencies, local governments, and the public;
- Identify and prioritize informational needs for inventory, monitoring, and research activities to address the impacts of past, ongoing, and anticipated development activities on the North Slope;
- Coordinate ongoing and future inventory, monitoring, and research activities to minimize duplication of effort, share financial resources and expertise, and assure the collection of quality information;
- Identify priority needs not addressed by existing agency science programs, and develop a funding strategy to meet these needs;
- Maintain and improve public and agency access to accumulated and ongoing research, and to contemporary and traditional local knowledge; and
- Ensure through appropriate peer review that the science conducted under the oversight of the NSSI and by participating NSSI agencies and organizations is of the highest technical quality.

**5. Membership:** The Oversight Group consists of the following member agencies with voting privileges: the State Director of the Bureau of Land Management; the Regional Directors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management; the Commissioners of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation President; and the Mayor of the North Slope Borough. These represent the principal agencies at the regional, State, and Federal levels with management responsibilities for public lands, fish, and wildlife on the North Slope. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey, National Weather Service, and U.S. Arctic Research Commission will participate on the Oversight Group as the primary advisory agencies on science issues related to the North Slope, but will not have voting privileges.

## **6. Summary of Agency Missions and Roles:**

### **A. Federal/Voting**

1. Bureau of Land Management collaboratively manages its Alaska lands and its uses on the North Slope to promote healthy and productive ecosystems for present and future generations, in accordance with the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (NPRPA). The NPRPA encourages oil and gas leasing in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A), while requiring protection of important surface resources and uses, including any activities related to the protection of environmental, fish and wildlife, and historical or scenic values.
2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is one of the primary natural resource-management agencies on the North Slope. The mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance the fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Fish and Wildlife Service manages the 19-million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northeast Alaska and has primary management authority for migratory birds, certain threatened and endangered species, polar bear, and Pacific walrus. The Service also cooperates with other Federal and State agencies and various industries to minimize the effects of development on fish and wildlife resources. To accomplish this mission, the Service is involved in a variety of research, monitoring, and management projects on the North Slope and in the adjacent coastal waters of the Beaufort Sea.
3. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management manages the exploration and development of the nation's offshore resources. It seeks to appropriately balance economic development, energy independence, and environmental protection through oil and gas leases, renewable energy development and environmental reviews and studies. Functions include: Leasing, Plan Administration, Environmental Studies, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Analysis, Resource Evaluation, Economic Analysis and the Renewable Energy Program.
4. National Park Service preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

5. NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems. NMFS activities on Alaska's North Slope include consultation and coordination regarding federal water development projects under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and other laws, consultation regarding the effects of federal actions on species listed under the Endangered Species Act, and authorizations for the unintentional take of small numbers of marine mammals under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. NMFS also conducts research concerning marine mammals and fish under NMFS jurisdiction. NMFS assesses populations of bowhead whales, ribbon seals, ringed seals, spotted seals, and bearded seals, and works routinely with partners in Alaska Native Organizations such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and the Ice Seal Committee. Additionally, NMFS staffs the U.S. delegation to the International Whaling Commission.

## **B. Federal/Ex Officio**

1. U.S. Geological Survey serves the Nation as the Department of Interior's lead science agency by providing scientific expertise responsive to important natural resources issues and natural hazards assessments. The mission of the USGS Alaska Science Center (ASC) is to provide scientific leadership and accurate, objective, and timely data, information, and research findings about the earth and its flora and fauna to Federal and State resource managers and policy makers, local government, and the public to support sound decision making regarding natural resources, natural hazards, and ecosystems in Alaska and circumpolar regions. To meet the specific information needs of resource-management agencies for the marine and terrestrial ecosystems of the North Slope of Alaska, the ASC will combine and enhance the Center's diverse science programs, capabilities, and talents with capabilities of USGS from across the nation to strengthen its scientific capacity and contribution to the resolution of the complex natural resource issues associated with change within the North Slope region.

2. NOAA/National Weather Service Alaska Region provides weather, hydrologic, climate forecasts and volcanic ash and tsunami warnings for the state of Alaska and its surrounding waters to protect lives and property and enhance the economic interests of our Nation. Alaska Region offices and facilities include the Weather Forecast Offices, Weather Service Offices, Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center, Alaska Aviation Weather Unit, Anchorage Center Weather Service, and the Alaska Region Headquarters.

3. U.S. Arctic Research Commission principal duties are (1) to establish the national policy, priorities, and goals necessary to construct a federal program plan for basic and applied scientific research with respect to the Arctic, including natural resources and materials, physical, biological and health sciences, and social and behavioral sciences; (2) to promote Arctic research, to recommend Arctic research policy, and to communicate our research and policy recommendations to the President and the Congress; (3) to work with the National Science Foundation as the lead agency responsible for implementing the Arctic research policy and to support cooperation and collaboration throughout the Federal Government; (4) to give guidance to the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) to develop national Arctic research projects and a five-year plan to implement those projects; and (5) to interact with Arctic residents, international Arctic research programs and organizations and local institutions including regional governments in order to obtain the broadest possible view of Arctic research needs.

## **C. State of Alaska**

1. Department of Fish and Game protects, maintains, and improves the fish and game resources of the State, and manages their use and development for the maximum benefit of the people of the State, consistent with the sustained yield principle. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has a responsibility to collect biological information necessary to evaluate land-development activities, present this information to decision makers so they can make informed decisions, and provide options for development activities that will minimize or mitigate negative impacts of development.
  
2. Department of Natural Resources is the lead resource-development agency for the State of Alaska. Several divisions in DNR have major responsibilities regarding North Slope developments.
  - (a) The Division of Oil and Gas develops and manages the State's oil and gas leasing programs. The division staff identifies prospective lease areas; performs geologic, economic, environmental, and social analyses; develops a five-year leasing schedule; and conducts public review of proposed sales. The division conducts competitive oil and gas lease sales and monitors collection of all funds resulting from its programs.
  - (b) The Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) generates, analyzes, and interprets data on geologic resources and natural conditions and maps and inventories mineral and energy resources on State land for use by government, private industry, scientists, educators, and the public.
  - (c) The Division of Mining, Land, and Water is the primary manager of Alaska's land holdings. Responsibilities include ensuring the State's title; preparing landuse plans and easement atlases; classifying land; leasing and permitting State land for commercial and industrial uses; and coordinating needed authorizations for major developments on the North Slope. The division allocates and manages the State's water resources on all lands in Alaska, adjudicates water rights, provides technical hydrologic support, and assures dam safety.
  - (d) The Office of Project Management and Permitting administers the State of Alaska's Large Projects Team which is responsible for coordinating State agency participation on major resource development projects throughout Alaska.

## **D. Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC)**

The ASRC is the Alaska Native-owned regional corporation representing more than nine thousand Inupiat Eskimos of Alaska's North Slope. The shareholders of ASRC own surface and subsurface title to more than four million acres of North Slope lands. By virtue of this title, the ASRC represents the largest private landowner on the North Slope. The ASRC ownership stems from an earlier claim of aboriginal title, covering the entire Alaskan North Slope, that was eventually settled in part by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). The mission of ASRC includes actively managing its lands and resources in order to enhance Inupiat cultural and economic freedoms. ASRC is involved with a number of North Slope resource development activities, and has a variety of subsidiary companies that are active in North Slope resource development and other sectors.

## **E. North Slope Borough**

The North Slope Borough's responsibilities include planning, zoning, and permitting; coastal management; wildlife research with a focus on subsistence; and support for the traditional culture of the North Slope. The Borough's planning and zoning authority through its Home Rule Charter mandates active land use management across Federal, State, Native and municipal lands. The Borough has a coastal management plan which stresses the health, safety, and cultural welfare of

NSB residents and compliance with environmental policies of local concern. The Borough monitors and conducts scientific research on marine and wildlife resources to ensure healthy population levels and to sustain a continued subsistence harvest for its residents. All of the Borough's planning and research activities are conducted in part to guarantee strong local input into subsistence resource management, with a special emphasis on the blending of contemporary and traditional local knowledge as a mechanism to sustain the resources and the local indigenous culture.

## **7. Officers and Organization**

**Chair and Vice Chair:** The Oversight Group shall designate a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair shall alternate annually between Federal and non-Federal voting members. The Chair may participate in discussion and debate at the meetings and may vote on all questions before the Oversight Group. The Vice Chair shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence. The Vice Chair shall be the Chair Elect for the annual rotation. The Chair will hold the position from July 1 through June 30 of each year.

**Designees:** Oversight Group members may appoint designees to act on their behalf in their absence.

**Advisory Groups:** The Oversight Group may recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the establishment of formal advisory groups, such as the North Slope Science Technical Advisory Group, as appropriate. Charters for any advisory group must be reviewed and approved by the Oversight Group and forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior following the guidance provided by the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

**Staffing and Budget:** Base staffing and budget will be provided through the BLM, as the administrative agency of record. For operations and/or salary beyond the base budget provided by BLM, this Charter, along with an interagency, intergovernmental, assistance agreement, or other legal instrument will be established through the Executive Director. Salary and/or operational funding provided through such process shall have overhead expenses waived by BLM.

The Executive Director will report programmatically to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Oversight Group. Annual performance evaluations of the Executive Director are completed by the BLM with input from the Chair and past-Chair (both are required as the Chair rotates based on a State fiscal year of July 1 through June 30, while the performance evaluation period is based on a Federal fiscal year of October 1 through September 30).

**Committees:** The Oversight Group may establish other ad hoc and standing committees as deemed necessary, and will specify the purpose and duration of each committee. Any ad hoc committees established would automatically expire upon completion of their committee assignment. The Oversight Group will establish a standing staff-level committee composed of one member from each representative Oversight Group member agency or organization. Staff committee members will advise their respective Oversight Group members on issues prior to each Oversight Group meeting, and will provide assistance to the Executive Director of NSSI, as appropriate. Salary, travel or other expenses incurred by staff committee members are paid by their respective supporting organization.

## **8. Oversight Group Meetings and Procedures**

**A. Notice of Meetings:** Reserved.

**B. Conduct of Meetings:** Oversight Group meetings will be open to the public and will be generally conducted according to *Roberts Rules of Order*. The Oversight Group shall provide a reasonable opportunity for public comment.

**C. Voting Procedures:** A quorum of Oversight Group members, or their designees, shall be convened prior to any voting (a quorum shall consist of at least three Federal members and two non-Federal members). All decisions shall be made by the voting members by consensus. Oversight Group members may participate by telephone or teleconference. The U.S. Geological Survey, National Weather Service, and U.S. Arctic Research Commission will not have voting privileges. The use of a proxy by voting members is not permitted.

**D. Recusal:** Oversight Group members may recuse themselves from voting, if necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

**E. Records:** Meeting minutes and summaries of key decisions will be posted on the NSSI website. Hard copies will be available upon request.

**F. Closed Meetings (Executive Sessions):** The Oversight Group members, or their designees, and the Executive Director may close meetings, or portions of meetings, on matters pertaining to confidential personnel issues, litigation, confidential information such as archaeological information, and other matters included under applicable State and Federal laws and Borough ordinances. Ex Officio members, or their designees, may participate in Executive Sessions by permission of the Oversight Group Chair.

**G. Frequency and Location of Meetings:** The Oversight Group will meet a minimum of two times per year—preferably once in Anchorage and once in Barrow.

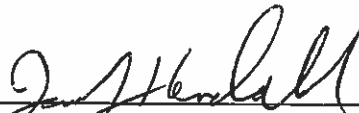
**H. Expenses for Oversight Group:** Expenses related to salary, travel, lodging, and per diem for Oversight Group meetings shall be borne by the representatives' respective member agencies.

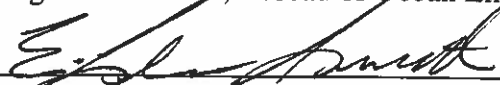
## **9. Availability of Funds**


This agreement shall not be construed as a commitment by any Federal agency signatory to expend funds in excess of available appropriations. However, it does suggest the sharing of funds, without direct or indirect overhead, to accomplish the collaborative mission of the NSSI.

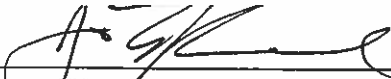
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Voting Members

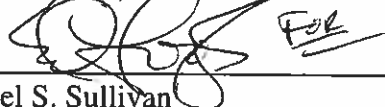
  
James J. Kendall  
Regional Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Alaska Region  
11/09/12  
Date

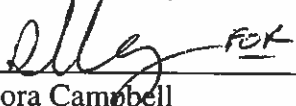
  
Geoffrey Haskett  
Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region  
12/4/12  
Date

  
Sue Masica  
Regional Director, National Park Service, Alaska Region  
10/31/12  
Date

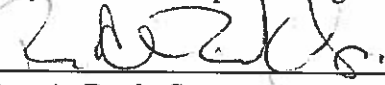
  
James W. Balsiger  
Administrator, NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region  
11/15/12  
Date

  
Bud C. Cribley  
State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office  
12/5/12  
Date


  
Daniel S. Sullivan  
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
11/7/2012  
Date


  
Cora Campbell  
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
4 DEC 2012  
Date

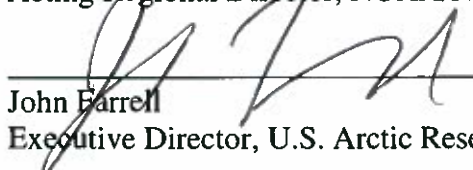
  
Charlotte E. Brower  
Mayor, North Slope Borough  
6<sup>th</sup> - May 2013  
Date

  
Rex A. Rock, Sr.  
President, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation  
6/12/13  
Date

**Ex Officio Members**

 6 Dec 2012  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
Leslie E. Holland-Bartels  
Regional Executive, U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Area

 12/13/12  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
Aimee Devaris  
Acting Regional Director, NOAA/National Weather Service, Alaska Region

 11/13/12  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
John Farrell  
Executive Director, U.S. Arctic Research Commission