



NORTH SLOPE SCIENCE INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER JUNE 2017

Message from the Executive Director

North Slope Science Initiative News



Almost six months have passed since January when I joined NSSI as the new Executive Director. Also in January, BLM Public Affairs Specialist Lisa Gleason joined the team to provide support for NSSI communications functions. In March just before the Fairbanks STAP meeting, new NSSI Deputy Director Mark Miller arrived to contribute additional capacity. Together with long-

standing core contributor Jess Grunblatt (University of Alaska), our new NSSI team finally is complete and busily engaged in listening, learning, and re-visioning.

Here we introduce a new series of quarterly newsletters that is intended to ensure that NSSI member organizations and other key partners are informed and up to date on activities of the NSSI team. As these newsletters are intended to serve you as our internal NSSI stakeholders, we welcome your suggestions for improving newsletter format, content, and overall effectiveness. - Sara Longan

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The NSSI team has dedicated meaningful time to reaching out and engaging with various NSSI OG, SSC, and STAP members as well as with other partner agencies, non-government organizations, and industry. The goal of these outreach efforts has been to listen and hear contributors’ and user groups’ perspectives on NSSI’s efficacy, relevancy, and priority North Slope issues and science needs that warrant continued focus as well as inform NSSI next steps. The outreach efforts will continue and will evolve as NSSI works to implement participant feedback and perspectives, developing them into NSSI action items and agenda topics for future OG and STAP meetings. The outreach efforts have been invaluable as we work to introduce the new NSSI team and get better acquainted with all NSSI members and partners. Since January, NSSI team members separately or together have engaged in literally dozens of outreach activities and discussions. All of these have been informative and important, and we highlight several below.

NPR-A Working Group Meeting

UTQUIAGVIK, Alaska: During 19-20 Apr, Mark Miller attended a meeting of the NPR-A Working Group in Utqiagvik. The NPR-A Working Group is an advisory body to the BLM consisting of the elected leaders of North Slope Borough (the North Slope Borough itself, Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation), the Mayor of each incorporated city, the President of each Tribal Government, and the President of each village ANCSA corporation in the North Slope Borough (NSB)¹. The Working Group was established by BLM as directed by the Feb 2013 Record of Decision (ROD) for the NPR-A Final Integrated Activity Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) based on input from the NSB government, other North Slope communities, and regional organizations. The primary objective of the Working Group is to provide a forum for ongoing input regarding implementation of the IAP/EIS, including oil and gas leasing, land use conflicts, and infrastructure projects. The Working Group may also serve as a forum to collect additional scientific information and Traditional Knowledge pertinent to IAP/EIS implementation, and the 2013 ROD specifically indicates that BLM and the Working Group should work closely with NSSI. The Working Group reports to the BLM Authorized Officer, currently defined as Stacie McIntosh, Manager of the BLM Arctic District. In addition to engaging with North Slope entities such as the NPR-A Working Group, NSSI is seeking opportunities to work more closely with the BLM Arctic District to address science information needs for IAP/EIS implementation in NPR-A.

North Slope Oil & Gas Industry Roundtable

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA: On 3 May, NSSI team members Sara Longan, Jess Grunblatt, and Mark Miller met with several North Slope oil & gas industry representatives during an environmental compliance roundtable held at the BP Exploration (Alaska) office in Anchorage. Purposes of the meeting were to re-introduce NSSI to industry representatives, and to encourage and discuss opportunities for information sharing and other forms of collaboration.

BLM Alaska Leadership Team Face-to-Face

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: On 17 May, Mark Miller gave an NSSI presentation during a face-to-face meeting of BLM’s Alaska Leadership Team, consisting of BLM managers and senior staff from Field Offices, District Offices, and the State Office. Key points of the presentation were NSSI’s origin in the Oil & Gas Title of the 2005 Energy Policy Act, and ways in which NSSI mission activities can directly contribute to accomplishing DOI priorities related to energy production and resource stewardship.

DOI Alaska Advisor Briefing

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: On 9 June, Mark Miller represented NSSI in a BLM briefing session for Steve Wackowski, DOI’s new Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs. Mr. Wackowski had specifically requested that NSSI be included on the briefing agenda, and he expressed support for NSSI’s science coordination mission. Sara Longan and Mark met again with Mr. Wackowski on 20 June for further NSSI – DOI discussions.



¹ Description of the NPR-A Working Group is adapted from BLM’s NPR-A Working Group Fact Sheet, accessed at https://www.blm.gov/get-involved/resource-advisory-council/near-you/alaska/npr-a_working_group.

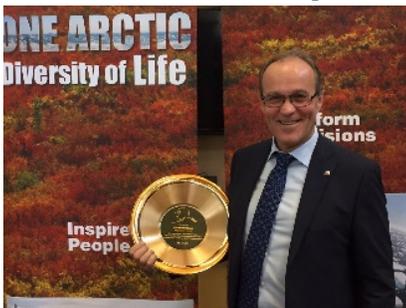
In addition to outreach to internal partners and stakeholders, NSSI staff have been very active in public outreach and science coordination efforts. Much of this work has focused around participation in Arctic science conferences and contributions to Arctic Council working group activities, outlined below.

Arctic Science Summit Week

PRAGUE, Czech Republic: In late March, Sara Longan traveled to Prague to attend the 2017 Arctic Science Summit Week. Sara attended multiple plenary sessions led by key subject matter experts on topics including Sustainability & Resilience, Long-Term Monitoring, Community Engagement, etc. as it relates to Arctic science priorities & coordination as well as responsible resource development. Sara promoted NSSI while participating in breakout sessions dealing with integrating Traditional Knowledge (TK) into decision-making and working to enhance effective collaborations among local residents, government agencies, and the scientific communities. Collaborative relationships were re-established with key NSSI partners who were also attending the meeting, including University of Fairbanks (UAF), Arctic Research Consortium of the U.S. (ARCUS), Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) and others, and made plans were made to hold follow-up group meetings to help advance key NSSI interests and working efforts. One new connection resulted in an invitation from SEARCH to speak at the Arctic Encounter Symposium, Seattle.

ONE Health, Arctic Interchange

FAIRBANKS, Alaska: Sara Longan participated in a 2-day meeting where science collaborators, rural educators, local health experts, and practitioners discussed the topic of “One Health” while working in groups to help identify priorities as it relates to enhancing the health of Arctic populations in a dynamic and changing environment. Working group efforts aimed at developing policy recommendations or science priorities that could better



Reidar Hindrum
Outgoing CAFF Chair
Courtesy Photo by B. Kleven, Fort Knox Gold

inform decision-makers managing issues that relate to food security, the expansion of zoonotic diseases, and economic opportunities and considerations in a developing Arctic.

Arctic Encounter Symposium

SEATTLE, Washington: Sara Longan participated as a panel speaker in the “Engaging the Science and Communities” panel, where she gave an NSSI educational overview and described the key roles NSSI and its member groups play as it relates to integration of Traditional Knowledge (TK) into agency decision-making in Alaska. Other panel speakers included local experts, indigenous knowledge holders, and UAF. Key outcomes from the panel discussion and audience dialog helped underscore, if not advance, mutual priorities shared among key science groups, government agencies, and local residents.

International Conference on Arctic Science

RESTON, Virginia: During 24-27 Apr, Mark Miller attended the 2017 International Conference on Arctic Science in Reston, VA. The primary sponsor of the Conference was the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), one of six Arctic Council working groups. Conference attendance provided for in-depth exposure to the current state of scientific research concerning the Arctic, including biophysical and social implications of rapid warming. It also provided opportunities for meeting and interacting with current and potential NSSI collaborators.

International Congress on Arctic Social Science

UMEÅ, Sweden: Sara Longan participated in the ICASS IX meetings where experts representing multiple disciplines, which included local experts, indigenous knowledge holders, and Permanent Participants from the Arctic Council, shared updates as it relates to social science and decision-making processes that could impact and benefit populations across the Arctic. Themes such as community-based science, TK integration and co-production, food security, resiliency, economic development, and effective Arctic reclamation and rehabilitation ideas were especially helpful, underscoring or informing many of the NSSI’s recent emerging issues or science coordination priorities.



Photo by Sara Longan

For many years, NSSI and BLM have been significant contributors to the Arctic Council’s biodiversity working group, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), and especially to CAFF’s cornerstone program, the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP; www.cbmp.is). This BLM / NSSI engagement with CAFF is similar to BOEM’s engagement with another Arctic Council working group, Protection of Arctic Marine Environments (PAME). High-quality science products generated by Arctic Council working groups including AMAP, CAFF, PAME, and others, are highly relevant to many pressing North Slope issues.

Terrestrial Expert Workshop

AKUREYRI, Iceland: Sara Longan traveled to Akureyri, Iceland in March to represent NSSI and BLM CBMP Co-Lead at the CAFF/CBMP Workshop, which re-established NSSI’s CBMP co-leadership role with the CAFF Secretariat and the Kingdom of Denmark. Sara developed outreach strategies to plan for the incoming U.S. leadership of CAFF, chaired by Cindy Jacobson, U.S. FWS. The team advanced efforts to develop a CBMP Communications Strategy and Strategic Plan and worked with the CAFF-CBMP Terrestrial Expert Group to advance development of science focused journal articles. The team also advanced thematic groups, and SME input via break-out sessions to continue identifying a framework for the CBMP Terrestrial Biodiversity Plan. Lessons learned and outcomes were reviewed from the State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR) as a way to help inform future reporting efforts. The working group received updates from on-going land cover mapping and remote sensing project efforts, largely informing BLM and other agencies in Alaska on key North Slope variables and trends.

Conservation of Arctic Floral & Fauna

WASHINGTON, DC: Sara Longan traveled to Washington D.C. with the CAFF team, representing the CBMP as Co-lead. Several meetings were held with key partners representing agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry. The CAFF team shared updates on the U.S. Chairmanship of CAFF, explained key priorities under the U.S. Chairmanship, and offered opportunities for meeting participants to express interest in forging and maintaining collaborative relationships with local, national, and international partners.



Cynthia Jacobson, PhD
CAFF Chair
Official CAFF Photo

NSSI Partners



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NSSI Advisory Organizations



Planning and Compliance Activities: Mark Miller currently is providing technical support to the BLM Arctic District and BLM Alaska State Office by preparing Acoustical Environment sections in NEPA documents associated with ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc. summer activities in NPR-A and the GMT-2 development project. In addition to assisting BLM with needed technical support, this has provided an opportunity for Mark to become educated and actively engaged in the issue of aviation noise impacts on the North Slope.

Oversight Group

FAIRBANKS, Alaska: The NSSI team participated in the March 21 OG meeting in Fairbanks. Meeting notes have been prepared and will be posted on the NSSI website once final. The next OG meeting is scheduled for July 19, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM in Anchorage.

Science Catalog

Catalog Overview: The NSSI Science Catalog (<http://catalog.northslope.org/>, managed by team member Jess Grunblatt) continues to be a heavily used online source of North Slope data products and other project information. The Catalog currently provides free public access to 3003 database records that describe 1408 reports, 1272 ongoing and past projects, and over 320 data sets. Based on GINA reporting, the Catalog has provided over 25,000 downloads since Sep 2016 and currently is averaging over 150 downloads daily.

Top Data Downloads: The 10 data products that have been most frequently downloaded since Sep 2016 are listed below (**items in bold are the result of collaborative NSSI data development supported by partner funding**):

1. Beaufort and Chukchi ice draft data (ice keel depth, ice velocity, ocean current profile measurements, and related data)
2. Hydrology for major rivers (fluvial-geomorphic evaluations, discharge, and related data)
3. **GIS data associated with NSSI Scenarios project**
4. **NSSI Scenarios reports**
5. Ice drift buoy data and reports
6. Meteorological and ocean buoy data
7. **Permafrost database and ecological mapping products**
8. Beaufort and Chukchi seas freeze-up studies
9. **Winter lake water availability mapping**
10. Beaufort and Chukchi onshore/nearshore coastal baseline studies.

Industry Data Sharing: NSSI's long-term relationships with industry have resulted in data sharing agreements with Shell and Hilcorp. Environmental data that were developed as part of their exploration activities on the North Slope have been made available through Catalog (see [Shell data](#) and [Hilcorp data](#)) and have been well received by Catalog users.

Science Technical Advisory Panel

FAIRBANKS, Alaska: The NSSI team participated in the 19-21 Mar STAP meeting in Fairbanks. Meeting notes have been prepared and will be posted on the NSSI website once final.

The STAP meeting planned for 20-21 June in Utqiagvik was cancelled due to the ongoing review of DOI advisory committees.

Appointments for six STAP members (Robyn Angliss, Jerry McBeath, Robert Meyer, Jeff Organek, Robert Shuchman, and Liz Snyder) expired in April. Solicitation for new member nominations/applications was suspended in late April due to the DOI review, but the process was reinitiated in early July. We anticipate that the call for nominations will be published in the Federal Register on or about Aug 1.

Communications

Communications Plan: Lisa Gleason has edited the draft NSSI Communications Plan to include a structure for goals, key messages, talking points, targeted audience, outreach, and an action plan. Reviews were received from Lorene Lynn on the NSSI Communications subcommittee and Mark Miller, NSSI Deputy Director. Recommendation from at this stage is to proceed with a face-to-face working group to strengthen the content in each area of the revised structure.

Website Rebuild: With Lisa Gleason's arrival on the team, NSSI is fortunate now to have in-house capacity for website development and maintenance. With Lisa's leadership, and in partnership with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), the NSSI is in the process of assuming responsibility for redesign and content maintenance of NSSI's website NorthSlope.org. A mockup of a potential WordPress-based website was developed and sent via Jess Grunblatt to Timm Nawrocki with UAA's Alaska Center for Conservation Science. Migration of the existing NorthSlope.org site to the updated WordPress-based site are tentatively planned for early September 2017.

NSSI Activities to be Featured in National BLM Update: A BLM Daily detailing Executive Director, Sara Longan's participation at "People and Place," the Ninth International Congress on Arctic Social in Umeå, Sweden was written and approved. The article is scheduled to run on the internal BLM national intranet and may also be condensed for social media distribution.