

NSB/Shell Baseline Studies Program

Steering Committee Meeting

Wildlife Conference Room

July 25, 2012 2:00 p.m.

**July 25, 2012, 2:00 p.m.**

MAIN PURPOSES OF MEETING:

- (1) Village concerns and observations, (2) Science concerns and observations, (3) Shell or Industrial Plans, (4) Opportunities for collaboration and (5) Next teleconference and/or In person meeting.

Members Present:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Robert Suydam	NSB	Craig George	NSB
Enoch Oktollik	Alternate AIN	Sue Moore	Independent Scientist
Michael Macrander	Shell	Willard Neakok	Pt. Lay
Hajo Eicken	Independent Scientist	Brandon Southall	Independent Scientist
Qaiyaan Harcharek	City of Barrow		

Members Not Present

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Ransom Agnasagga	AIN Primary	Ron Oviok, Sr.	Pt. Hope Primary
Tom Weingartner	Independent Scientist	Victoria Broje	Shell

Non Members Present:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Malissa Langley	NSB Wildlife	Janell Kaleak	NSB Wildlife
Ryan Klimstra	Wildlife Biologist		

CALL TO ORDER

INTRODUCTIONS: New employees introduced, Ryan Klimstra and Janell Kaleak.

INVOCATION: Enoch Oktollik

OPENING REMARKS: In May it was suggested that we do teleconferences more frequently to exchange information and keep everybody informed of what is happening.

### **Village Concerns and Observations**

Enoch: We had a good harvest of Bowhead Whale in Wainwright we harvested four whales; the ice this year is unusual because it has stayed close to the shoreline and it is still here. We have the best ice conditions in the last seven years. We had a good whale harvest, walrus harvest, bearded seal hunting, and good mosquito harvest season, the average temperature is 55 degrees and a few times it got to 67 degrees. We always expect good communication of all the people that is doing projects around AIN and it is very hard to have good communications with the people doing the projects. We seek your help in finding good ways in communicating with the people who are doing the projects around Wainwright.

Michael: I think you are aware that we have a subsistence advisor program and we have two calls a day with people and I want to say its Michael Tagarook that is the AIN representative on that. I know we have done some Helicopter work around AIN this year and a little bit of offshore work with the Takpuk. Do you have a sense of how the community is participating in providing information to that and getting information back out in terms of what Shell is doing, are there any conflicts.

Enoch: I attended one meeting in the winter time and I think some of the workers from UIC that subsistence reports and what not and their numbers did not compare with how we collected our information from the NSB. I think some of them from the Shell program were falsely informed and I hate to say this but they were not up to par of NSB collects their information.

Michael: Thank you Enoch that is good to know I would like to talk more about that.

Robert: you mentioned people doing work in the vicinity of AIN or other villages need to make sure that they keep folks informed.

Qaiyaan: Majority of the public are pretty much in the dark on the activities going on with Shell locally but also the other entities with the Coast Guard and so. There is a lot of traffic in and out of Barrow but the residents are quite aware of the day to day activities and what they may be doing. The subsistence hunters that are out hunting in Barrow are not reporting what they caught or saw to Shell or to the coordinator. We have had the best Ice conditions in years.

Michael: We are not collecting any information on harvest levels but that is not the main role of the subsistence advisors. The main role is so that we know where people are hunting or interested in hunting and any reports of interaction or interference between the hunters and Shell. So when we have our twice daily teleconference our subsistence advisors are hopefully talking to people and the community and getting information. For example the herds started showing up south of Barrow our subsistence advisors told us that there were caribou in the area and people are hunting you need to be very careful about your helicopters. We use this information to re-

route and reconfigure our programs so that we try to stay out of those areas. So the more we have people talking to our advisors the better information we will be getting.

There was discussion regarding what will happen on land if the offshore drilling is successful.

With the Baseline studies program, we can spend time in Barrow, AIN and Pt. Lay go talk to people. We can go to the villages and talk to people and find out their concerns and try to find out additional information about studies would be appropriate and needed for onshore terrestrial areas. Shell could hold village meetings and get feedback regarding oil and gas exploration.

Craig: Compiling reports from local hunters about Bowhead sightings and there have been several plus the ring seal tagging team has noted several animals as well. It seems one of those summers that the Bowhead is here early and are hanging out and feeding.

Hunters seeing bowhead, gray whale with calves are being sighted.

Robert: Pt. Lay landed another Bowhead this spring, the Beluga season has not been very good for Pt. Lay they have only gotten 14 Belugas this year. Pt. Hope had a good Bowhead season this spring a perfect record 5 strikes 5 landed and they are happy.

### **Science concerns and observations**

Sue: The last of the pilot Distributed Biological Observatory (DBO) year is underway now. The XueLong has come up and sampled these regions that stretch from the Northern Bering up to the Barrow area through the Chukchi Sea. The Laurier has also passed through and they disembarked near AIN because of the ice at Barrow. The first leg of the Rusalca Cruise has been complete and Kate Stafford was on that cruise and saw a lot of gray whales and many calves and she recovered some recorders which two out of three recorded very well. She has some excellent Bowhead calls from December. This would be an area out in the middle of the South central Chukchi Sea. So going forward from now we anticipate the Araon, which a Korean Ship coming up, I will be coming on the Healy on the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup> of August. There is a host of other ships, 12 ships in all that will participate in the DBO this year, ending up with Bob Pickart's crew on the Healy from 5<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, so that is what is happening with the DBO.

Hajo: We are keeping track of ice conditions with the Radar that we have running in Barrow. We are going to be generating animations with the ice conditions in the next week or so on a regular basis. The larger scale ice conditions I assume that Shell probably have the best picture because they have a whole bunch of people on the job with this. I can contribute brief mention that earlier this year a number of different groups completed a set of ice thickness measurements in the early April time period and that data then was released soon enough to allow several groups that were running forecast models. In general the sea ice outlook shows that this year we don't have the typical pattern of sea level pressure that in past years has not just pushed ice away from the shore but also brought in warm air, that of course helps the onset of melt and just a few days ago I was talking with Jim Oberland about this, and it is very difficult to say when or if at all the current large scale air pressure pattern is going to break down and if it doesn't then of course the further we get into August the less likely we will have the amount of heat from the sun put into the upper ocean and sea ice and that of course can really impact the way the Ice goes

out later. If you don't have enough sunny weather later you push the ice into the year it is quite difficult to melt ice because the weather is too cloudy, the sun angles so you don't get enough solar heat.

Michael: The ice and weather forecasting group are right outside my office. The ice persistence this year is a perfect storm. We have been talking since March or April this being an analog to 2006 with a lot of persistence of the arctic isolation and winds that are not favorable particularly to moving Ice away from the coast. It is down on top of the coast, we have had a lot of cold weather that generated 1st year ice and we have seen a lot of multi-year ice and ice that maybe of some other kind of origin in the Northern Chukchi. We have been watching it very closely as you might imagine, optimistically there were hopes that we would be drilling by mid-July and we are not really close to that at this point. Globally there is a big ice retreat but not in Chukchi and Beaufort because how things have shifted during the year.

Brandon: I would like to update the committee with two things.

1. We recently put white into the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee this Fall there is going to be a summit on the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) we put a paper in on Passive acoustics and its integration in IOOS and one of the points was made in there was integration of IOOS with efforts that were regionally based in important biological areas specifically Alaska being one of the two or three mentioned. (Distribute)
2. There was a briefing in Washington DC this morning and the house oceans caucus, within the briefing which was about ocean acoustic impacts the same point about ocean observing and integration and potential partnerships with federal supported programs and industry programs was discussed at length and the paper that Sue, Robert and I were with others came up and the importance of the Arctic context was mentioned as well. The Arctic continues to be at the forefront of the discussions in Washington.

Enoch asked if there is going to be activity on shore with the ships?

Sue: The ships are science cruises for research activity and they will be offshore, The Healy people will disembark in Barrow using the Helicopter on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August. There is a crew change for the CHAOZ a few days later in August.

### **Robert and Craig gave brief summaries of projects that are on-going.**

Ring Seal telemetry project it has been going on for three weeks, they have working 12 hour days, they caught 21 seals last year and this year they have not caught any ring seal yet, they are pretty frustrated. The conditions are very different from last year and they are just not seeing a lot of ring seal.

Surface Current Drifters, some drifters were deployed last year and actually sent signals, many of the drifters didn't function well and so Leandra and Todd are in a position to deploy more this year. Starting with Wainwright, there is concern about putting them out near Ice because they may get crushed. So because of the ice Leandra may have drifters deployed by hunters in Pt. Lay instead of Wainwright, so Willard you and other people may hear from Leandra sometime

soon. The Ice being pushed off of AIN is good news for Leandra. She has 24 oil spill drifters and another set of drifters that are the one meter drifters, they all should be deployed here within the next month. They should overlap with Weingartner's high frequency radar work.

Bowhead and Beluga Hearing Study, this study is being conducted by Hans Thewissen, he is making good progress. They have the method now for doing the inner ear preparations; they now think that they can identify pathology in the inner ear auditory trauma and separate recent pathology from auditory trauma over the life of the whale. The preparation of the samples is tedious but Hans has about 10 Beluga and 12 Bowhead ears for sampling, and he is making good progress with good preliminary results.

Stress in Bowhead Whales, Raphaela a new wildlife vet is taking the lead on and she is working with New England Aquarium and they are looking at Stress Hormones in Bowhead Feces and also in Bowhead Baleen. The Baleen technique is a new one and we are hopeful that we can measure stress levels in Baleen back to 15 years or so. That project has begun and hopefully some results in the next 6 or 8 months.

Bowhead Ship Strikes and Line Entanglements, the objective is to look at as many of the photographic data of landed whales and the exam sheets from biologists and other hunters and quantify the number of landed whales that have various types of trauma and that ship strikes (propeller injuries) and line entanglement injuries. The plan is for this summer is to get all the old slide scans and go back to the 70's of landed whales that have scarring and to get the database organized and then score them as to scar type. We are hoping to have data by Christmas to show the committee. We do have preliminary results based on just the exams made here but we want to verify it as much as possible.

Beluga Contaminants and Biomarkers, the ten Belugas that were taken by the hunters in Pt. Lay this were well sampled for science, including blubber to look at contaminants related to oil and will be analyzed over the winter time.

Discussion of human health concerns from eating marine mammal products is definitely an issue between Willard and Robert.

### **Pending Projects**

1. Sea and Ocean Currents workshop, we will be getting a proposal from Hajo in the next week or so.
2. Tide gauges.
3. Prioritize projects

### **Shell's Plans for the Summer**

The aspiration is still to drill in the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea. There were hopes we would be there by mid July but that is delayed. Our fleet is standing by in Dutch Harbor, we did send an Ice Breaker to do Ice scouting. It arrived in the Chukchi Sea yesterday and it passed through the Bering Strait Monday. It there being as unobtrusive as possible, we are anticipating to begin

drilling operations if things continue along the current trend, the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of August in the Chukchi Sea and not sure about the Beaufort.

We have been participating since June in on shore studies program that initially was operated out of AIN and Atqasuk, early work out of AIN for coastal stability and hydrology work getting high flow levels during break up in some of the streams there, that's been demote to points easterly in the last two weeks there have been some coastal fisheries observations and bird transects run by the small vessels out of AIN. Most of the work out of Atqasuk has been habitat mapping.

Greenpeace vessel is offshore in Pt. Hope and we understand that it is their intentions to visit all the coastal villages.

Discussion of the Inupiat Language and words being pronounced correctly.

Shell update on your offshore baseline ecological studies out near Prospects, that's going to occur again this year it was suppose to sail from Nome from today because of the Ice conditions that has been put back until the 5<sup>th</sup> of August heading northward. The whole program is very similar to what it has been the last several years CP, Shell and Statoil are all participating which will include laying out the acoustic array in both the Chukchi and Beaufort. It will include Benthos plankton, physical oceanography, bird/mammal observation and detail work at all three of the Prospects. Last year rather than visit all three of those prospects we started to each of them one time and then visited a much larger Hanna Shoal grid, so we are repeating that again this year. We have three ocean buoys that will be in the Chukchi and one in Beaufort as well as other sort of instrumentation like ADCP, and other deployments.

Michael is working on a notification when and where we are going to be doing our sound source characterizations, so be looking for that toward the end of the week.

## **Meeting Plans**

Another teleconference at the end of August.

Anchorage Meeting at Shell last part of September

Closing Comments:

Robert: Thank you for participating

Meeting Adjourned