

NSB/Shell Baseline Studies Program

Steering Committee Teleconference

Wildlife Conference Room

21 August 2012 8:45 a.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 Oktolik	Alternate AIN	Victoria Broje	Shell
Michael Macrander	Shell	Hajo Eicken	Independent Scientist
Qaiyaan Harcharek	City of Barrow	Ron Oviok, Sr.	Pt. Hope Primary

Members Not Present

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Ransom Agnasagga	AIN Primary	Brandon Southall	Independent Scientist
Tom Weingartner	Independent Scientist	Sue Moore	Independent Scientist
Willard Neakok Pt. Lay			

Non Members Present:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Malissa Langley	NSB Wildlife		

CALL TO ORDER

INTRODUCTIONS:

INVOCATION: Ron Oviok, Sr.

**Village concerns/observations**

*Point Hope* (Ron Oviok ): The spring and summer seasons were good. Five whales were landed in the spring. Many caribou were harvested and they were healthy during the summer. However, very few

walrus we harvested during the summer. Only two or three were caught. The weather has been terrible during the last month. There were no real concerns this summer. All animals that were harvested were in good health. Except for weather, it has been a good summer.

*Wainwright* (Enoch Oktolik): There was some disturbance from a helicopter near Wainwright in the Kuk River area. It was flying at low level and disturbed caribou hunters. The helicopter was being flown by Nuka Research to photograph the coast. Nuka was working for BOEM on the Shorezone Project. Oblique photographs are being taken all along the coast to assist with oil spill response, etc. The disturbance from the helicopters is a big concern to Wainwright. They will continue to have to deal with this issue into the future, especially because of increasing oil and gas activities. Solutions need to be found to eliminate impacts. Other than disturbance, the spring/summer season was good for walrus hunting. Ice stayed close to Wainwright. At most it was only 15 to 20 miles off the coast. Many walrus were near the village and were hunted. Also Wainwright had a good beluga hunt, about 37 whales were landed in the summer. The village is still concerned about possible impacts to Wainwright from the many activities coming toward Wainwright.

Macrander mentioned the subsistence advisors (SA) hired by Shell in each village. When Nuka goes near villages, Shell tries to encourage those types of organizations and projects to work with Shell's SA to help reduce impacts. Oktolik suggested that the SAs need to do a better job. They need to come out with clear advice and understanding about what is happening in the area, both in terms of the various activities occurring in the area and where the village is hunting. Sometimes the harvest data from the SA does not fit with information collected by the North Slope Borough. There is a need to do a better job in reporting activities.

George asked whether many ringed seals were seen in Wainwright. Oktolik stated that relatively few ringed seals were seen this year. Not sure why but this is very unusual. Many bearded seals were around Wainwright.

*Barrow* (Harcharek): There were not many concerns in Barrow this summer. The US Coast Guard has a large presence in Barrow this summer. They seem to be doing a decent job of outreach and keeping the community informed. There have been lots of small planes and helicopters around town. The community would like to have a better understanding of what is occurring. The large yellow helicopter has created some problems because it is flying around late at night. Some concerns have been expressed. As with Wainwright, not many ringed seals were seen around this summer even though the sea ice was good. There was some disturbance to caribou hunters from helicopters. In the Ikpikpuk/Chipp rivers there were research camps and helicopters in area that people didn't know about. Hunters feel helicopters are disturbing caribou. Everyone flying on the North Slope needs to do a better job keeping the communities informed about the projects that are occurring in the area. Walrus were pretty numerous around Barrow this year and quite a few caught.

Macrander said that Shell is flying a large yellow helicopter but have not flown much this year but there has been some activities. Harcharek mentioned that because it is a large helicopter, it is loud and very

noisy. Macrander also mention that today there is an open house at the Shell hanger so people can see the helicopter and better understand how it is being used.

George provided some additional information about one of the projects on the Chipp River. It was a fish project being conducted by the ADFG studying salmon. They used helicopters to transport the crew and gear. They may have also been following radio transmitted salmon to look for spawning area. In 2013, they plan to primarily use boats instead of helicopters.

Oktollik mentioned that lots of agencies issue permits. Maybe many of the helicopter projects inform Barrow but better communication is needed in the villages. Permitting agencies might be a means to make projects keep villages informed. There is a concern about impacts to subsistence species. For example, a week before Nuka Research came to Wainwright there were lots of caribou but the week after Nuka flew, caribou were not as numerous.

Nuiqsut: Suydam mentiond that he had heard concerns about helicopters disturbing moose and hunters near Umiat. Perhaps the helicopters were associated with Shell's on-shore studies or possibly with Alaska's Department of Transportation study related to an Umiat Road.

After discussion about aircraft, Oviok mentioned that there are also concerns in Point Hope about small planes and helicopters flying near the hunting and fishing areas of Point Hope and Kivalina. He also mentioned that helicopter had recently crashed between Point Hope and Cape Thompson. Oviok was not sure who was flying the helicopter but the Point Hope fire department rescued 3 people.

### **Science concerns/observations**

Broje: The Joint Industry Program selected a new contractor for a study on impacts from oil or dispersed oil on Arctic animals and the environment. Newfield and another company will conduct the project. Jack Ward is the US lead. They will be looking for information from Alaska communities.

Eicken: Several colleagues have been in Barrow to deploy instruments related to oceanography and ice thickness. The NSB and USCG helped to get instruments deployed. Weather hampered some of the deployment but the USCG buoy tender was able to work in the inclement weather and helped with the deployments. The sea ice forecast for 2012 suggests that the ice retreat may set a record. Currently the amount of ice is similar to 2007, when the previous minimum was recorded. Even though the total amount of ice in the Arctic is diminished in 2012, there was lots of sea ice near Barrow and in Chukchi Sea. A variety of factors influenced the amount and persistence of ice there. One aspect was the presence of quite a bit of multiyear ice, although it was still thinner than in the past. The multiyear ice in the Chukchi Sea shows that there continues to be a pattern of multiyear ice being transported out of the Arctic Basin.

George informed the committee about a chunk of glacier ice that grounded off of Barrow this summer. The ice had large boulders and soil on it. It might have come from near Ellesmere Island. Boulders on

this type of ice can end up forming substrate on the ocean floor for organisms that might not be in an area otherwise. This is likely how the Boulder Patch in the Beaufort Sea was formed.

George: A pilot study funded by BOEM will be surveying for fish in nearshore waters and lagoons. Beach seines are part of the methods used to examine fish. During the pilot study in the past few days, three new species have been seen. Additionally, salmon smolt, probably chum (n=8), were caught. These are the first smolts that were documented in the area. Also, record seine hauls of capelin occurred. Humpback whales may be in the area because of capelin. Gray whales may also be feeding on them too. Aerial surveys for BWASP and COMIDA have been going really well with lots of surveys and lots of interesting sightings. A project for bowhead tagging is beginning again now. About 10 tags will be deployed this autumn.

Macrander: Shell's aerial overflights began in the last week of July. The plane arrived near Barrow, but there was a problem with fuel coming into the cabin through the camera port. The problem was fixed in Anchorage and is now back and ready to fly. Flights started again last week with a couple of flights near Barrow and several near Camden Bay. Cameras are operating now and collecting data. The cameras may need to be adjusted but the images are looking good. Comparisons will be made between photographs and MMO sightings to better understand the capabilities of the cameras. The Camden Bay overflights have not yet seen any bowheads.

The Chukchi Sea joint studies program is underway. Most of the acoustic recorders are deployed in both the Chukchi and Beaufort seas. Some pre-drilling samples were collected from around the Berger Prospect. For Shell's onshore operations, they are mostly being conducted out of Umiat with some limited operations near Wainwright. Shell only had operations near Wainwright and Atqasuk early in the summer to avoid conflicts with caribou hunters.

Shell wants to integrate its projects with other projects that are occurring in the area.

### **NSB/Shell Science Update**

Suydam provided update. Several seals (a bearded and spotted seal) were captured and tagged. No ringed seals were captured because of the few animals in the area. Surface drifters have been deployed and are providing data. Concurrently, Weingartner deployed drifters in offshore areas. A good data set will be collected in 2012 concerning surface currents in the Chukchi Sea. Other projects that were discussed at the last teleconference are also proceeding.

Oktollik expressed concern that scientific reports were good but more information needs to be shared with the public including North Slope villages. He was not sure how often the information gets out to the public and to the communities. A regular radio talk show in the early afternoon may be a way to help get information disseminated. Suydam mentioned that the NSB will try to do a radio show regularly and also get some information out through the Department of Wildlife Management's newsletter. Oviok agreed with the suggestion. More information is needed in Point Hope.

### **Shell's Plans**

Macrander provided an update of Shell's operations. The Kulluk left Dutch Harbor on 20 August but will take some time to get to Camden Bay. They expect to get offshore of Camden Bay before the bowhead hunting shutdown on 25 August. Once the hunts in Kaktovik and Nuiqsut are completed, they intend to move into location. Anchors have already been set in the area.

The drill ship Discoverer will depart Dutch Harbor in the next couple of days and will likely be in the Chukchi Sea by next week. Shell is in discussions with BOEM about drilling top holes without the containment barge in place. The containment barge is still in Bellingham, Washington. The timing of drilling is still uncertain however, Shell is mobilizing its assets to the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

### **Meeting Plans**

The next meeting will be held in Anchorage on September 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> at the Frontier Building. The committee members will tour the Shell Offices