

NSB/Shell Baseline Studies Program
Steering Committee
Preliminary Meeting - Teleconference

6/23/11, 10:00 a.m.

Purpose:

- Introduce participants to the collaborative agreement and each other
- Explain the basics of the agreement between NSB and Shell
- Discuss current and proposed study projects
- Set up an “in-person” meeting later this summer
- Q & A

Department of Wildlife Management Director Hepa welcomed attendees and gave a brief overview and review of the Baseline Studies Agreement, steering committee, goals, etc.

Introductions (attending):

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Don Nungasak	Barrow	Michael Macrander	Shell
Ray Koonuk	Pt. Hope	Robert Suydam	NSB DWM
Bill Tracey, Sr.	Pt. Lay	Craig George	NSB DWM
Sue Moore	Independent Scientist	Taqulik Hepa *	NSB DWM
Brandon Southall	Independent Scientist	K.C. Miller *	NSB DWM
Tom Weingartner	Independent Scientist		*not on committee

Background & Basics of the Collaborative Agreement:

This agreement came about in large part due to the dramatic increase in interest in offshore development since 2006. Mayor Itta sent a letter to Shell saying that the NSB had serious concerns about the lack of baseline science in US arctic waters. Shell agreed to assist with funding baseline research in a cooperative program with the NSB. Many long and sometimes difficult discussions were held to work out an agreement to develop a “transparent” program that both entities were comfortable with. Shell views this as landmark agreement, an opportunity to do business in a different way, and a unique opportunity to learn.

Local residents have repeatedly expressed concern that “we don’t have enough background information to make good decisions”, and these concerns were taken into account in crafting the agreement. The importance of local input was stressed repeatedly. Past research and information, including traditional knowledge, will be available and used to guide the decisions reached in this project. The goal was to have the NSB & Shell work together, with strong representation from coastal communities as well as input from independent scientists. This agreement was purposefully written to allow other entities to participate. The focus is mainly on, though not limited to, projects in the marine environment. Priorities are transparency, quality & availability of data. The term of the initial agreement is five years, but the hope is that it will continue longer, depending on the level of Shell’s activities in the arctic.

The collaborative agreement was signed in September of 2010. A copy will be sent to all committee members. The NSB is in the process of building capacity to do the work (increasing staff, office space, etc.) The Steering Committee is an important component of this agreement.

Current and Proposed Study Projects

Prior to the selection of the Steering Committee, NSB & Shell agreed on some studies to begin in 2011. These projects were prioritized by the NSB Dept. of Wildlife Management, based in large part on the following community concerns: availability of animals, food safety, and oil spills. They are:

- Near Shore Surface Current Study
Conducted by Leandre de Sousa & Todd Sformo @ NSB DWM w/Tom Weingartner
Enhances existing radar monitoring
- Archiving of Tissue Samples
- Bowhead & Beluga Whale Hearing Study
Working w/ Dr. Hans Thewissen
Concern re: affects of industrial activities on marine mammal hearing
Opportunity to collect fresh tissues from animals that are landed by local hunters
- Ring Seal Satellite Telemetry Tracking
Keystone species; proposed to be listed as endangered
Jason Herreman from NSB DWM leading
- Subsistence Harvest Documentation
- Contaminants

A complete list and summaries of these projects will be sent to all committee members.

The committee will work on selecting the projects for 2012. The Steering Committee is in a position to determine what types of studies should be done. One possible project suggested was baseline marine fish studies (important in relation to the potential for commercial fishing in the arctic, and oil & gas industry as well), but the actual choice of projects will be up to the Committee. Don Nungasuk agreed to share some of the concerns raised by NW Arctic Borough area whaling communities last December. Committee member Sue Moore is part of a team developing a “distributed biological observatory”, an international effort to gather data in the Bering/Chukchi/Beaufort area, and she intends to bring some of that information into this effort.

Michael suggested that the process to be gone through when designing studies should be: 1) start with a question; 2) identify data needed to answer the question; and 3) make sure data are collected and handled correctly.

Transparency and being able to fully document the quality of data, “QA” (Quality Assurance) and “QC” (Quality Control), were stressed. The exact methods for collecting data will be determined on a case by case basis. One committee member commented to the community members that some science questions will be straight forward and relatively easy to answer, but most will not. For ecological questions, years of studies are needed, so we should not expect clear cut answers for all questions in the near future.

First “In-Person” Meeting

The agreement calls for the committee to meet quarterly, in person as much as possible. The preferred meeting location is Barrow, though meetings may be held in Anchorage or in one of the coastal communities. There is money in the budget to cover travel costs and honoraria for the committee members, and possibly for representatives from the villages to communicate with their communities.

The first “in-person” meeting was tentatively scheduled for late August or early September. K.C. will poll committee members online or by phone and notify every one of the results. She will also be sending each member a copy of the research agreement, plus a list and brief abstracts of the 2011 studies.

Taquilik Hepa requested that we create the following references:

- A glossary of scientific terms used
- A summary of stakeholders, players, etc.

Meeting adjourned at 12:02