

Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee
Staff Meeting
15:00 – 17:00
21 November 2011

Herbert C Hoover Building
14th and Constitution
Room 5215

Dial-in Number: 1-866-658-4142
Participant Access Code: 8479431

Meeting Notes

PARTICIPANTS

Simon Stephenson (NSF)
Brendan Kelly (NSF)
Shella Biallas (DOI)
Adrianna Muir (DOS)
Mike Kuperberg (DOE)
Lindsey Williams (NOAA)
Martin Jeffries (ONR)
Bill Fitzhugh (SI)
Sara Bowden (IARPC Staff)

By Phone:
Nikoosh Carlo (NSF)
Kathy Crane (NOAA)
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Cheryl Rosa (USARC)
Louie Tupas (DOT)
Jon Berkson (USCG)
Bill Heinz (MMC)
Doug DeMaster (NOAA)
Tom Wagner (NASA)
Mary Lisa Madell (HHS)
Jerry Miller (OSTP)
Joel Parriott (OMB)

1. Introductions – Kelly (5 min)

Self introductions were made including those joining by phone.

Two additional items were highlighted. First, Shella informed the staff group that Deputy Secretary of the Interior, David Hayes, sent an invitation to IARPC principals last Friday inviting them to a December 1 meeting on “Facilitating the Delivery of Relevant Scientific Information to Officials Who Are Charged with Making Energy-Related Decisions in Alaska.” (On Tuesday, November 21, the invitation was forwarded to the staff group so they can follow-up with their principal.)

Second, Lindsey informed the staff group that on December 1, NOAA will release its annual Arctic report card which is an annual status report on the Arctic. This year there are 112 contributing authors from 14 countries and the report card makes the point that there are now a sufficient number of years of data to show that the Arctic is going through a step change. The Report Card is an electronic document hosted on the NOAA website.

2. Recapping the Principals’ Meeting: Follow-up and Action Items - Kelly (15 min)

Brendan guided the group through the action items from the November 7 Principals’ meeting.

Action 1: The Staff Group is asked to develop further the flow chart of Federal agency research in the Arctic.

It was suggested that OMB and the NSTC be added to the organizations on the flow chart and that the chart be linked to the themes of the 5-year plan so that there is more functionality to it. Brendan will ask USARC, who initially circulated the flow chart, to update it with this guidance and re-circulate it.

Action 2: In order to ensure better communication and a sharing of information, prior to the next Principals' meeting, Principals will be asked to provide one or two research activities of critical importance to their agency.

Brendan noted that the November Principals' meeting was better because it included more participation by principals in presenting and discussing agency-related activities. Brendan and Sara will begin keeping a list of activities which might be presented at the next Principals meeting and will ask the staff group for ideas shortly before the meeting. The staff group will select several ideas for presentation and discussion at the meeting.

Action 3: In order to ensure better Federal agency coordination, Principals are asked to consider their staff participation IARPC in order to guarantee that the totality of their interests is represented in the IARPC process.

Brendan pointed out that for some agencies, the staff group could benefit from more participation from agencies, i.e. DOD. Martin noted that the Army may wish to participate and he will take this up within his chain of command to see how this might work within DOD. Some participants voiced concern about the staff group becoming so large it is no longer manageable and that rather than expand membership, staff group members should work within their agencies to make sure that the right people are informed and involved. Additional people may be added as implementation of the 5-year plan begins. Jon Berkson noted that following the principals' meeting, he and his principal have reached out within DHS to ensure all elements are covered.

Action 4: In order to ensure that Arctic interagency activities are coordinated, the IARPC staff group will develop a fact sheet on the various interagency efforts having an Arctic focus. Such interagency activities include, but are not limited to, the National Ocean Council, the Arctic Policy Group, and the Arctic Interagency Research Policy Group. The Staff Group will ensure that there is overlapping participation between IARPC and each of these groups and ensure that activities within IARPC are reported to these groups.

There was agreement in the staff group that a fact sheet defining the IARPC and its duties and obligations and how they compare to other interagency efforts and how the interagency efforts coordinate and communicate would be a very useful document. Shella offered to put together a first draft of the fact sheet and circulate it to the IARPC staff group for discussion at the December meeting. Once it is agreed to within IARPC, it will be shared with other interagency groups for input and revision.

Action 5: Federal Agencies are encouraged to send suggestions and comments to the NRC Blue Ribbon Panel on Antarctic Research within the next the next few months.

Action 6: Begin drafting the infrastructure section of the 5-year plan immediately and develop it in tandem with the rest of the research sections in order to ensure the right synergy between the two sections. Include Department of State review of the infrastructure section to ensure coordination with international partners.

Joel joined the staff group meeting by phone and informed the group that in drafting the infrastructure section, the group should identify gaps in infrastructure but use accompanying language that accepts the fact that there are finite resources and, therefore, any attempt to fill the infrastructure need must come from some other budget item. The text must state clearly that the 5-year plan acknowledges the budget realities and that there will be budget trade-offs. Joel suggested that in the first draft, authors do not limit themselves too much, but make sure that the budget realities are identified. He will then work with the draft and help in the process of finalizing the infrastructure section.

Brendan thanked Joel for this useful advice and then suggested that the infrastructure section be drafted around classes of infrastructure such as ships, satellites, land-based assets and data infrastructure needs. He suggested that the infrastructure section needs to build upon what assets we already have, what we can continue to use and maintain, and what needs to be added in the context of a five-year plan. He asked lead authors to provide the infrastructure needs for their sections by December 9. He will then build a narrative around those needs, linking them together with the sections.

Tom asked again the purpose of the report, suggesting that the infrastructure section would be different for different audiences. He suggested that the report needs to do a better job of identifying sea ice a major issue and that we need to be clear that we need to improve our sea ice forecasting, and for that we have specific infrastructure needs. Others felt that while it is dispersed throughout the report, sea ice is adequately covered.

Action 7: USDA will provide input to sections on human health and resilience of the 5-year plan.

Louie agreed to provide USDA information to HHS and SI in a timely manner. Mary Lisa asked for it to arrive with sufficient time for HHS to review and incorporate it in the human health section.

Action 8: The Staff Group should consider whether a set of overarching scientific questions should be included in the 5-year plan.

Tom reiterated his belief that the report should be written around science questions, not the themes currently identified. Brendan circulated some draft overarching questions for consideration. Martin suggested that putting the overarching questions into “what are the consequences of...” is a good way of framing the questions and is consistent with the wording in the SEARCH science plan. Simon pointed out that it is critical that some of the questions get at impacts on lower latitudes, not just the Arctic. Taking Brendan’s questions and reformulating them, the Staff Group agreed that three overarching questions addressing the consequences of how diminishing sea ice, land ice and permafrost are impacting ecosystems, inhabitants of the North and the global community would be sufficient. Mary Lisa pointed out that there are factors independent of climate change which are having an impact on humans in the Arctic. One additional question dealing with the consequences of social and economic changes occurring in the Arctic on people of the Arctic will be included. Brendan will weave these questions into the introduction. These will be presented as the main drivers of the five year plan. Brendan invited Tom to give the staff group a different structure in the form of an outline for the report if he wishes to do so.

3. Drafting the infrastructure portion of IARPC’s 5-year plan – Kelly and Parriott (10 min)

This item was discussed in section 2.

4. IARPC 5-year Plan revisions based upon outcome of Principals’ Meeting - all (35 min)

Revisions will be made as discussed above and a new timeline will be developed.

5. Review of Arctic Ocean Study Plans: BOEM, NOAA, ONR – Biallas, Calder, Jeffries (30 min)

This item was postponed until after the December 1 meeting being convened by DOI Deputy Secretary Hayes.

6. Linkages to International Arctic Activities – Muir, Kelly (15 min)

Adrianna informed the staff group about a State Department convened meeting on November 8 to discuss access to the Russian Arctic. Agencies are having trouble in every aspect of access and the situation seems to be worsening. Certain action items came up that relate to IARPC.

One suggestion is that IARPC help put together a “best practices” manual. Such a document would acknowledge our problems and share what is successful and what is working. Get tips from scientists that are working in the Russian Arctic and put them all together. For example, expand on the Academy study which identified some best practices and expand on that. This might be done by hosting a web portal or Wikipage on permitting practices.

Adrianna will circulate the notes from the DOS meeting and a brief summary of the Academy report. (These items are attached.)

There was the general sense that taking on this activity is important and that there is no other logical entity to do so.

7. Summary, assignments, and next meeting – Kelly (10 min)

The next meeting will be held on December 12. It will include a discussion of agency 2012 budgets, review of Arctic Ocean Study Plans (ONR, NOAA, BOEM), a scaling briefing by the USARC, an introduction to the budget crosscut by John Farrell and a continuation of the discussion on the 5-year plan. Other items for the agenda should be sent to Brendan.

Attachments