

Summary of Questions and Responses

Changing Conditions in the Arctic Strategic Action Plan Webinar - April 19, 2011

The questions are presented in the order in which they were received. The responses have been edited for clarity.

Q: Does the theme arctic mapping just include scientific mapping or does it include subsistence and traditional knowledge mapping?

R: Mapping and charting refers to any kind of mapping. The writing team will take into incorporating subsistence areas into mapping efforts. We are also aware of the reluctance to draw boundaries around subsistence areas, as these are seen by many to be dynamic, especially in the face of climate changes. Many traditional areas are changing.

Q: Can the listening sessions on CMSP and the Arctic be combined?

R: Yes, the listening sessions will cover all of the SAPs, we are sensitive to the issue of meeting burnout.

Q: Are there any plans to enhance Coast Guard capabilities in the Arctic by increasing polar icebreaker capacity? One icebreaker is about to be decommissioned, which will leave us with only 2 icebreakers for patrol, search and rescue, research, etc.

R: The writing team is aware of the need for icebreakers and has included the need in discussions. However, we are limited as to what we can propose based on budget constraints.

Q: The "What is Important" slide missed the most important thing about this ocean, since it is frozen most of the time, that is ice--where is it, when, how old is it, what conditions, etc.

R: We agree – we are considering an action that will focus on collecting data and forecasting sea ice conditions. Top concerns like observations, forecasting, and research on the age (of summer and winter ice) have not been forgotten.

Q: How did you receive these comments? Public comment period on the SAP?

R: We have a website that is collecting initial comments until April 29. We will then be posting draft outlines of proposed actions in June along with hosting listening sessions on all of the priority objectives.

Q: Can you please inform us on how this plan will address ports of refuge or any new developments on port development in the Arctic?

R: Port development in the Arctic is part of the larger transportation issue. There is a review of ports of refuge underway. Port development is a common concern. We know it's a need. We appreciate comments on it.

Q: Do you anticipate any new funding for implementation of the plan, or is it to be achieved through existing appropriations?

Federal agencies are preparing the SAPs and know their agencies capacity and mission. There is high level agency commitment to make sure the SAPs are turned into action. We are working on how to be better partners. We are focusing the actions using existing funding.

Q: What will be the location of listening sessions; will there be tribal consultation?

R: A listening session will be held in Alaska. We are still trying to find out how to reach out most effectively. You can submit comments about what kind of outreach works best.

Q: Any new funding?

R: Most of the work will be done with current appropriations and increased coordination. Maybe there will be increased funding in the future

Q: Will you be addressing pollution concentration in the Arctic and toxic concentrations in the ecosystem and food web?

R: This is certainly under consideration. There is a water quality SAP where this issue may be best addressed. Please submit a comment on how you feel about it.

Q: What can we do to save existing infrastructure in the Arctic for the benefit of all, specifically, how can we make the Navy & Air Force hangers available at Barrow's old Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL)?

R: Existing infrastructure may best be considered under the SAP for infrastructure. We may be able to save money by using existing infrastructure. Please put a comment on this on the website.

Q: Are you considering training of mariners for ice navigation and operation as a near or long term deliverable.

R: This falls under transportation in the Arctic. The writing team is considering many aspects of transportation in the Arctic. Please make a comment.

Q: How does international collaboration fit into the Action Plan?

R: The writing team has discussed coordination within the Federal government as well as international collaboration. This topic may be addressed in the proposed action outline.

Q: Can you give notice for the meetings so people can be included? You seem to be moving fast and out of public view.

R: We know the online comment page isn't ideal, but we are open to suggestions for alternative methods of communication.

Q: What kinds of fleet research support do you envision (through UNOLS or through NOAA)

R: UAF is building a new research vessel. The SAP on infrastructure may be proposing an assessment of the fleet.

Q: Check out new book from Alaska Sea Grant that addresses relationships between scientists and coastal communities on climate change issues – Imam Cimiucia: Our Changing Sea

R: Thank you for sharing this with us.

Q: Will this plan serve as guidance to the N. Pacific Fisheries Management Council (especially Arctic Fisheries Management Plan), or how will it otherwise interface with the NPFMC

R: The Action Plan is for Federal government action. NOAA is the Federal agency responsible for direct interface with the NPFMC. We want to hear from the fisheries council – get their input on this project. We know the council is important to fisheries management.

Q: How closely does the National Ocean Council and the Arctic Research Commission work with or participate in the Arctic Council?
Will the Action Plan be able to address the needs of communities affected by climate change by providing support for needs such as community relocation?

R: The Department of State is a member of NOC, so the link to the Arctic Council is through them. USARC advisors are involved and participate in various related groups. The US will be head of the Arctic Council in the relatively near future and their work is great. Their work will aid us – for example, the Marine Biodiversity Plan. Council members – DOI, NOAA are also on (?) Do you mean the Arctic Council?.

Q: Support for needs due to climate change?

R: All topics are open for consideration both in the SAP for changing conditions in the Arctic and the SAP addressing resiliency and adaptation to climate change and ocean acidification.

Q: Given this week's 2011 budget release that, among other things, defunds NOAA's planned Climate Service, is there a sense of how the National Ocean Policy might be similarly negatively impacted?

R: The purpose of the SAP is to prioritize actions that the Federal government will take. We want to spend limited resources in the best way possible. We must also remember that this is the initial round of SAP development, these plans will be revisited and revised annually.

Q: Research on oil spill response in the U.S. Arctic has been stymied by lack of government approval for field experiments with oil, will the plan address this need?

R: We are aware of the issue. The experiments have support in the communities; submit comments on it. We will try to work it into the plan.

Q: To my knowledge no statements related to this Arctic S.A.P so far have explicitly acknowledged the sovereignty of Arctic Indigenous people or prioritized their rights to access, manage, develop and control the resources they own by rights of traditional use, as confirmed for example in the UN declaration of Indigenous rights. What is the appropriate venue to advocate for affirmation of Indigenous rights, given that this concern doesn't necessarily suggest a specific action?

R: Please raise this as a concern. It will certainly be considered; comments can be under: healthy communities, community adaptation. Please suggest actions if possible.

Q: Can you give notice to come to working meetings. Where meetings are held and where decisions are made?

R: We need to deliberate amongst ourselves and it is not always appropriate to have these deliberations with the public present. Please recognize that the writing teams are not making the decisions about what will be done, they are preparing proposed actions that must be approved by the National Ocean Council. We need input and feedback from you. That's why we have the comment period and this webinar – to share what we are doing and get feedback from you. We will be sharing outlines of our current thinking in June and we welcome your thoughts about the direction we are moving. Please keep in mind that we are operating with no new funding and we need to make tough decisions about how best to spend the limited resources.