

Alaska Regional Director Staff
Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2017

Aimee Devaris
Mark Shasby
Dawn Bundschuh
Tom Murray
Chris Zimmerman
Dee Williams
Durelle Smith
Matt Sexson

Aimee Devaris – Regional Director (RD)

– Director’s Staff Meeting, Updates, and “Good of the Order” Announcements:

- At Tuesday’s Director’s staff meeting, Bill Werkheiser, Acting USGS Director, briefed that he met with Jim Cason (acting Deputy Secretary) and the DOI Office of Policy Management and Budget (PMB) on the FY 19 budget submittal; no information was readily available.
- **On the RD Call today, Cindy Lodge, Associate Director for Budget, Planning, and Integration, said the FY 19 Briefing went really well. She commented her general feeling is the Department is starting to value some of our science and Jim Cason seemed to be happy with the submission. No details are available on the FY 19 proposal.**
- Bill Werkheiser instructed the new mock allocation be made available for the upcoming ELT F2F meeting July25-27, 2017; this information is ‘close hold’ and this particular meeting will not offer the opportunity to dial-in for those unable to attend in person.
- These areas are using the FY 18 Proposed Budget mark-up: Core Science, Land Resources, and Energy & Minerals; however, Hazards may have different instructions. This guidance has not been released.
- Bill has a meeting scheduled next week with Scott Cameron (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget and Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science) and Jim Cason on Bureau re-alignment plans.
- *Breakfast with Bill Werkheiser* meeting received a question on the re-alignment plans; Bills’ comment is he expects the re-alignment to happen October 1, 2017.
- Bill Werkheiser planned to hold a Town Hall next week on the House mark-ups, however, that meeting has been cancelled as the information is not available. Justin Pressfield is tracking and will provide an update once details are released from the committee. Currently the USGS budget is \$46million under the FY 17 enacted; however, does include language for Landsat and Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) funding levels.
- Aimee has been working with the FWS Regional Director, Greg Siekaniec, to ensure they are moving our permit request along for the Unuk River hydrological gauge. This gauge is a transboundary monitoring issue mentioned in the FY17 appropriations bill. We are getting a categorical exclusion for it, which requires a few internal reviews and a two-week public scoping period. This gauge was explicitly mentioned in the FY17 appropriations bill -- for a transboundary river in Southeast Alaska downstream from a proposed mine in Canada. We have purchased equipment, are setting up a project page to provide the data, and are hoping to install the gauge before this fall.

- Aimee coordinated a conference call with Dave Houseknecht, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Regional office here, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge management last week to discuss the assessment work under [Secretarial Order 3352](#). The FWS and ANWR have been helpful in identifying other ways to get samples for the assessment (they can't grant helicopter access to the wilderness areas this summer, however, have offered a boat to help move gear). Dave submitted the permit application last week.
- IT Email from Rob Davies on Enforcement of Encryption and Pre-Boot Authentication Compliance by October 16, 2017; there is general confusion surrounding this message, what it is actually requesting staff to do, and the complications that may be encountered due to older equipment challenges. We are PIV enabled, however, Durelle will follow-up with Rob Davies for clarification of the 'next steps' and Tom Murray will follow-up with Ed Brown.
- Aimee, Dee, Durelle, and Matt had a discussion on Wednesday on the Emergency Response Plan for USGS and the upcoming ACPG meeting on July 27, 2017.
- Aimee received an email with questions from Lisa Branum of DOI. Aimee, Dee, and Matt have a clarification call next Tuesday, July 18, 2017, with Lisa and Greg Shelton to discuss these questions that appear to revisit the DOI disaster response plan; these questions may be influenced by Steve Wackowski.
- Lisa Branum, Kevin Misenheimer, and Greg Shelton, Emergency Management Coordinator, will meet with Dee and Matt on July 25, 2017 either on the call or here at the USGS office. Aimee will be attending the ELT F2F in Reston that week.
- The Emergency call down list includes Phil Johnson however, his name will be removed October 1 and replaced with the DOI Watch Office and call traffic; Tom Murray will follow up on his concerns about the number of calls the Watch Office may receive. This is a collective 24/7; the Watch Office disperses alerts for volcano, hurricane, floods, and wildfires. Tom and Michelle Coombs plan to meet with Kevin Misenheimer while he is in Anchorage.
- The Department is making a lot of data calls for the Ecosystems program areas down to the programs and people to see if [REDACTED] (b) (5) [REDACTED]
- Difficult to fill some of the GS-15 acting positions. The current trend is to advertise 5-year Term position for center directors to try and fill the Texas Water Center. Vacancies can't be maintained for ever and we do not have enough inventory of GS-14's for 120-day rotations.

Dee Williams

- Juliana Litigation Case
 - Increasing the request for specifics for documentation.
 - Increasing concern for the legal strategy and approach.
 - Questions on impacts from climate change
 - May need assistance from Chris within the next week.
- Received email from Transboundary monitoring on the Unuk River Gauge from Terri Lomax, State of Alaska. Dee will put them in direct contact with Jeff Conaway.
- Productive exchange with Bruce Richmond from Santa Cruz; John Pearce was very helpful. There is a substantial program using thermal red imaging to identify cryopegs in the terrain to try and map threats on Barter Island.
- Requested and approved Janice Kerns proposal with the Parks Service. Chris is allowing for a review, however does not consider the study plan approved until he has reviewed. Chris and Dee will discuss further as there needs to be an approved study plan for all projects moving forward.

Matt Sexson

- Offered background on the DOI Watch Office.
 - Kevin Misenheimer, Chief of the DOI Watch Office will also be in Anchorage the end of July
 - The DOI Watch Office provides the warnings
 - SPOT reports from the DOI Watch Office – current volcano advisory and spot reports for elevated and downgraded items. There is a question where this information generates.
- At the Alaska Science Center (ASC) management meeting, Matt and Chris expressed concerns surrounding the new aviation procurement, payment process, and the end of the Office of Aviation Services (OAS) Alaska Pilot Program beginning FY 18.
- Only ~two months until the current system changes and there is no traction on how the new system will work; Pam Kutsko, Office of Accounting and Financial Management (OAFM), is Matt's contact. Pam is waiting for details from AQD – Office of Acquisitions Services.

Durelle Smith

- Business Leadership Team (BLT) call meeting update. New AD for Administration, Roseann Gonzales-Schreiner, has taken Jose Aragon's place.
- BLT call also included Katie McCulloch is planning a meeting with Bill Werkheiser on the Bureau Burden request.
- Durelle will follow up with Scott Morton, Chief of Office of Acquisition and Grants (OAG), on Matt and Chris' OAS questions.

Chris Zimmerman

- Expressed concern about the AQD and the OAS process; Aviation procurement has become very cumbersome and is NOT efficient use of a scientist's field time.
- DeeDee Bohn received a call from Steve Wachoski regarding her salary paid by Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) for project coordination; Michael Johnson was the Trustee and Steve may have taken his place.
- EVOS does not have a science coordinator at this time.
- Ecosystems Center Directors call: FWS has a backlog of listing decisions; Carol Schuller was on the call. Mission area staff Anne Kinsinger and Bill Lellis were not available for this call. Questions were posed about the Decision List; Alaska is curious about program funding and mission communications.
- Ecosystems have five bins to make decisions on examples are Decision This Month, Decision this Year, Decision within a couple of years and Need More Information. For Alaska we are looking at Walrus, Yellow Cedar and Little Brown Bats.
- Ecosystems Mission area has been asked for more guidance. Chris is hoping to have a frank conversation with Bill and Anne.
- Chris was in Cordova last week.
- Chris will be on the RGE 2nd level panel in July 2017.

Dawn Bundschuh

DTS status report – no outstanding DTS items.

Congressional Tour

- Chris, John Pearce, Durelle, and Dave Houseknecht have a meeting tomorrow to tighten the agenda. Specific details and what science to highlight; mostly North Slope portions.
- Lee Erickson was asked for the best geographic locations to highlight science work.
- Chris, John Pearce and Durelle will talk about the South Central portion.
- Logistical questions have been followed up on
- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) responded, Cathy Coon or Jim Kendall will attend.
- Department of Transportation (DOT) Partner for the Southcentral portion.
- In process - Deadhorse Charter and the Motorcoach
- Northslope conversation with Dave Houseknecht; priority places to land and talk about science. Barter Island was mentioned. Plan is to spend approximately four hours at Alpine (CD5) project.
- John Pearce is preparing some materials for the tour group.
- Tom Murray is preparing some materials for AVO – similar to Craig Crutchfield's visit.
- Brief at AVO will be from 8:30am – 11:30am; this briefing moved from Sunday, August 13 to Wednesday; August 16.
- Wednesday, August 16, the group will visit the Geological Material Center (GMC) that afternoon.
- Working with Michelle Coombs for overflights of Cook Inlet if there is a weather issue and the North Slope portion has to be scrubbed.
- North Slope Partners do not have lodging rooms.

Actions OR Follow-up:

- Durelle will follow up on IT email from Rob Davies
- Tom Murray will follow up on the IT requirement with Ed Brown.
- Tom Murray is requested to follow up on the DOI Watch Office during Kevin and Lisa's visits.
- Durelle will follow up on OAS with Scott Morton
- Durelle and Matt will follow up on OAS discussions and brief Aimee.
- Dee is following up on Juliana Litigation
- Dee will follow up on Field Plans with Chris
- Matt and Aimee are following up an accountability focused disaster response plan.

On Leave/Travel

Meeting Schedule for the Next Three Thursdays:

Thursday, July 20, 2017 – yes for staff meeting.

Thursday, July 27, 2017 – Aimee will be in Reston for the ELT F2F. Staff meeting will be cancelled.

Thursday, August 3, 2017 – yes for staff meeting.

*Note: Alaska Leadership Team members:

The Regional Director, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, Alaska Science Center Director and the Volcano Science Center Director.