Outcomes from Ecosystem-based Management Experts Group October 18-19, 2011.

2011

Arctic Council

Arctic Council Secretariat

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October 18-19, 2011

2011 Nuuk Declaration of the Arctic Council Ministers, May 12, 2011

Decide *to establish an expert group on Arctic ecosystem-based management (EBM) for the Arctic environment to recommend further activities in this field for possible consideration by the SAOs before the end of the Swedish chairmanship.*

Senior Arctic Officials Report to the Ministers, May 2011

Ecosystem-based Management (EBM)
Human activities in the Arctic are increasing, and planning and management of these activities on a cross-sectoral basis can assist in reducing conflict among activities and in supporting the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The Senior Arctic Officials recognize the desirability of exchanging information regarding marine and landscape planning and management among the Arctic States, and encouraging compatibility of planning approaches on an ecosystem basis.

We recommend that Ministers convene an ecosystem-based management (EBM) expert group, reporting to the Senior Arctic Officials, composed of governmental experts from the Arctic States and representatives of the Permanent Participants. The expert group should consider developing a common understanding of EBM, consider EBM principles for marine and terrestrial areas, and consider developing Arctic-specific guidelines for applying the ecosystem approach to all relevant areas of work in the Arctic Council. If appropriate, the work of the expert group could be presented at the next Ministerial meeting in 2013.

Arctic Council EBM Experts Group

The first meeting of the Arctic Council Ecosystem-based Management Experts Group was hosted by the United States at the U.S. Department of the Interior headquarters in Washington, D.C on October 18-19. Evan Bloom, Director of the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Magnus Johannesson, Secretary General, Iceland Ministry for the Environment, and Dr Mia Dahlstrom, EBM Specialist, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management co-chaired the meeting, which included nearly two dozen participants from seven of the eight Arctic countries, three permanent participant groups, and representatives from the CAFF and PAME working groups.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar provided a welcoming address and reflected on his experience at the Nuuk Ministerial with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, noting the significance of the achievements at that meeting as well as the unprecedented level of excitement and enthusiasm surrounding the issue and the Arctic in general. He emphasized the importance of the EBM Expert Group as an opportunity for Arctic-wide cooperation on environmental issues and in particular on the shared goal, for all of the Arctic countries, of full inclusion of indigenous people.

In a series of plenary sessions on the first day, the EBM experts presented and discussed existing definitions and guidelines for the application of EBM, including those from within the Arctic Council as well as from other international processes. Experts demonstrated that EBM has been a long-standing Arctic Council element by referencing this concept in foundational documents of the Arctic Council. Through five case study presentations by Arctic Council governments and Permanent Participants, it was also noted that EBM has been mainstreamed in government, private, and NGO initiatives around the world. Due to its broadly-defined scope and adaptive approach to sustainability with stakeholder involvement, EBM has become an accepted alternative to problematic single-sector, single-project, or single-species management approaches.

The experts discussed the current application of EBM in various Arctic Council working groups and the many connections to other Arctic Council initiatives in marine and terrestrial environments. These linked efforts include the marine-focused EBM experts group within the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group; the recently completed report on Best Practices in Ecosystem-based Oceans Management in the Arctic (BePOMar); the foundational principles of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) working group, which include EBM; and the impact assessments related to shipping and energy development provided by PAME and the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme Working Group (AMAP), respectively.

Participants also discussed several science-based Arctic Council initiatives and assessments that will provide important supporting information for the application of EBM in the Arctic. These include the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program; the Arctic Resilience Report; the Arctic Change Assessment, the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment, the Arctic Ocean Review, and the Sustaining Arctic Observing Network.

Through the discussions the following topics emerged as areas worthy of future discussion by the Expert Group:

- The human and socio-economic dimensions of Arctic EBM.
- The role and importance of traditional knowledge in Arctic EBM.
- Identifying the types and availability of science best suited to support Arctic EBM.
- Managing for uncertainty in the absense of information and utilizing risk-based and precautionary management approaches.
- Matching research time scales to different management objectives in a rapidly changing environment.

During the second day of work, the participants broke into two groups to: a) explore the EBM definitions and principles that most closely align with the pan-Arctic perspective of this group and the Arctic Council in general, and b) examine the commonalities and differences between marine, coastal, aquatic, and terrestrial EBM in the Arctic and discuss areas of shared need.

For discussion, the EBM “definitions” group drew upon definitions and principles previously agreed upon in Arctic Council fora, such as the PAME definition and the BePOMar guidelines, as well as definitions developed in other multilateral fora, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was

determined that existing definitions and principles, particularly those already in use elsewhere in the Arctic Council, could be adapted to suit the needs of pan-Arctic EBM.

The "commonalities" group discussed the similarities and differences in applying EBM across marine, coastal, and terrestrial areas, and concluded that an analysis of the shared needs of these different disciplines would be extremely helpful. In particular, such a gap analysis could focus upon access to socioeconomic and traditional knowledge; international capacity for monitoring, developing baseline data, and forecasting; tool and data sharing needs; Arctic ecosystem services; and the needs associated with understanding the transitional zones between marine and terrestrial areas.

Meeting Conclusions and Way Forward

At the conclusion of the two-day meeting, the participating delegations agreed that this effort represents a timely and much-needed convergence of EBM expertise to review the state of the art and best practices in EBM in the Arctic in order to recommend further activities in this field for the Arctic Council, and agreed to the following:

- Timeline: Delegations agreed that a minimum of two and possibly three subsequent meetings would be adequate to fulfill the charge of the Nuuk Declaration in time for the next Ministerial in 2013, with the next meeting to take place in the Spring, 2012. An effort should be made to co-locate subsequent meetings with other Arctic Council-related meetings if possible.

- Expanded Participation: It was generally agreed that there was little representation of terrestrial EBM experts and efforts should be made to expand participation in that area, such as by co-locating a meeting with a meeting of the CAFF working group.

- Common Understanding: It was determined that there is a need to build upon the work of the "definitions" breakout group and lead an inter-sessional effort to adapt existing definition and principles to pan-Arctic needs. This effort would be "virtual" and not require in-person meetings or conferences; the goal will be to bring documents to the next meeting for consideration.

- Gap Analysis: Delegations also agreed upon the need to lead an inter-sessional effort to compile an analysis of high-level science and capacity needs for marine, coastal, and terrestrial EBM implementation across the Arctic. This analysis would be "virtual" also, and focus on specific and accessible EBM needs rather than broader science issues and consider the possibilities of better coordination of existing science activities for the purpose of EBM. This group will provide this analysis for consideration at the next meeting.

- The Next Meeting: For the next meeting the group agreed to consider the two inter-sessional products, explore case studies that focus on overlaps between marine and terrestrial environments, and determine the necessary next steps to provide Arctic Council ministers with guidelines on pan-Arctic EBM.