



THE NORTHERN FORUM

REPORT TO THE ARCTIC COUNCIL SAO MEETING

NARVIK, NOVEMBER 28-29, 2007

Joint projects with Arctic Council Committees

1. Healthy Lifestyles (SDWG)

This project was approved as part of the U.S. health component of the SDWG at the last SAO meeting in April. As a follow-up to the work initially sponsored through the U.S. Department of State, the Northern Forum organized in September a trip by alcohol rehabilitation specialists to Khanty-Mansiysk and the Sakha Republic in Russia. Seminars on strengthening cognitive behavior therapy and dialectic behavior therapy were conducted in Khanty-Mansiysk. Discussions were held pertaining to collaborative research and exchange visitations. In Yakutsk, brief seminars were held in which information was shared concerning advances in substance abuse treatment and research. Steps were taken to establish collaborative research and to arrange visits in the near future by physicians/narcologists to treatment programs in Alaska. Efforts are being directed by the Northern Forum to obtain funding to sponsor future programs involving other members of the Substance Abuse Treatment Working Group. The information from the two training seminars conducted to date has been transcribed into training booklets and is being distributed to Northern Russian regions.

2. Telemedicine (SDWG)

As a result of the training programs that occurred with the regions of Khanty-Mansiysk and the Sakha Republic, each region is progressing actively in implementing telemedicine systems. In Khanty-Mansiysk, since the training, they have installed and are operating 52 remote telemedicine stations, including one located on a boat that travels up and down the Ob River to the remote villages. In the Sakha Republic, the region is currently ordering equipment valued at approximately \$ 3 million with the intent to deploy a system that will serve 35 administrative centers. Thus the initial training and networking has resulted in the creation of significant systems that will have a positive impact on hundreds of thousands of Northern residents. It is anticipated that the success of these two regions will emulated by other regions and lessons learned shared through the Northern Forum's Society and Culture program.

3. Indigenous Languages (SDWG)

The proposal was made by the Canadian delegation at the last SAO meeting to host a conference on indigenous languages sponsored by Heritage Canada. The Northern Forum regions are very interested in participating in this project, since most of them have substantial indigenous populations and the project has been considered by the Board of Governors for a long time. The Northern Forum is ready to apply for grants to help support the conference and in particular the travel of participants. At this point, Heritage Canada (Annie Carruthers) is planning to hold the conference in Iqaluit, Nunavut, in May or June 2008 with about 40 participants. The Northern Forum has approached the National Science Foundation in the U.S. which has expressed interest in providing funding for the conference and follow-up work. Heritage Canada is now sending the conference announcement to all the national delegations as well as the PP's to come up with a list of participants, and the Northern Forum may be able to help find participants in the Russian regions.

4. Flood Working Group (EPPR)

The Flood Working Group held its last workshop in July in Anchorage and vicinity, in Alaska. The workshop focused on issues of flood forecasting using satellite imagery and mathematical modeling,

coastal erosion, flood insurance and the chain of command used in each region/country to provide flood alerts. As a result of the discussions, it was decided to look for funding for more satellite radar imagery, which is the most invaluable tool to monitor flooding as it is available even in cloudy weather. The Northern Forum made contact with the UN satellite agency, UNOSAT, and will meet with them and other agencies in the first part of December to see how the number of radar satellite images for each region can be increased to a level where they represent a useful tool for flood forecasting and climate change monitoring. The Northern Forum will then provide the EPPR with climate change data in such areas as river ice, flooding, coastal erosion and permafrost changes and potentially, after a few years, emerging climate trends.

5. Brown Bear Working Group (CAFF/CBMP)

The Brown Bear Working Group conducted its last workshop in August in Denali Park and Fairbanks, Alaska, focusing on genetic sample gathering and predator management. The goals are as follows:

- ensure that the participants in the Working Group who will conduct the planned genetic study of North Pacific brown bears will use consistent data and methods;
- provide regions where bear-human interaction is increasing as a result of industrial development and other factors with information on how to minimize negative encounters.

The genetic study will be used to determine brown bear populations all around the North Pacific, as a management tool for harvest levels, overall population health, and trends in the population, and this information will be provided to the CBMP in the form of a bi-annual CD-ROM, since the CBMP determined brown bears to be a marker species for climate change in the North and the Arctic. In addition, the Northern Forum is working with the U.S. government to assist in logistics for upcoming CBMP meetings in Washington DC in 2008.

6. Arctic Portal

Halldor Johannson visited the Secretariat in October and received a number of electronic documents he will be able to use on the Arctic Portal, particularly regarding the Russian North. Cooperation will also be developed for the Arctic Portal in the area of maps and databases, as the Northern Forum partners with the Yugra Institute of Information Technologies in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, an excellent source of information and technological assistance for Siberia and Russia.

Projects of interest to the Arctic Council

1. Northern Architecture

The Northern Forum, in cooperation with the Cold Climate Housing Research Center in Fairbanks, organized at the end of October a conference in Fairbanks dedicated to best practices for housing in the North as well as alternate energy. The outcome of the meeting was the formation of a working group that will focus on several areas:

- training builders and architects in using North-adapted and environmentally friendly technologies
- spread the concept of Eco-municipalities in the North and develop cooperation between municipalities
- investigate the costs of retrofitting housing in the North
- develop affordable housing to encourage young people to stay in the North
- promote alternative energies and construction materials to foster energy-independent communities in the North
- study construction standards and codes and see if they can be harmonized to facilitate international cooperation in planning and construction.

This project could be a worthy component of the SDWG as it is aimed at sustainable development, energy saving and better living conditions for peoples in the North.

2. Northern Aviation

This project is aimed at providing hands-on training for aviation and airport personnel in the North and particularly in the Russian North, as it is expected that flights between Alaska and Russia will be

resuming in the near future, and that flights between Russia and the European North will also develop in the coming years. The aim is to provide Russian personnel with hands-on experience in such areas as electronic ticketing, customer service, airline safety, TSA requirements, airport facilities and other aspects. A month-long training was conducted last year with four Russian Far East companies on sales and marketing as well as ticket sales. We are seeing the results of this training now, as these companies are applying to fly to Alaska. The Northern Forum is cooperating with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and the Intergovernmental Aviation Committee in Russia, and working directly with the airlines and airports in Alaska and Russia. This project differs from the projects conducted by the Institute of the North under the CITF, but has merit for the Arctic Council's SDWG as it is a direct effort to promote sustainable development through training in Northern regions and encourage transportation links between the countries of the Arctic Council.

3. Northern Forum global cooperation

The Northern Forum has been working for four years with the nrg4SD (Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development) to share sustainable practices, and there might be an interest in the Arctic Council to invite specialists who can address a variety of topics dealing with sustainable development.

At the same time, the Northern Forum also collaborates with a number of international organizations under the auspices of the United Nations, in order to assist Arctic and Northern regions reach the Millenium goals defined by the UN.

For more information, visit our web site:

www.northernforum.org