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Discussion paper on the Arctic Council's Work on Oil and Gas Issues

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Discussion paper

The Arctic Council's Work on Oil and Gas Issues February 15, 2016

Introduction

Over the years, the Arctic Council has conducted a large amount of work on oil and gas issues in the Arctic. The U.S. chairmanship is of the view that the time has come to examine this body of work and determine how the Council orients itself as oil and gas activities have diminished and as renewable energy development has gained attention. The Council could examine whether there are any important gaps in the work that could be filled by new projects and initiatives.

Inventory of Oil and Gas Projects by Working Group and Task Force

- Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention (2013 - 2015), deliverables:
 - Framework Plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic (2015)
 - Arctic Offshore Regulators Forum creation (AORF) (2014)
- **EPPR** Guide to Oil Spill Response in Snow and Ice Conditions (2015)
- **EPPR** Arctic ERMA (2015)
- **PAME** Safety Systems Management and Safety Culture Guidelines (2014) and two workshop reports.
- **EPPR** Best Practices for Prevention of Arctic Marine Pollution and Summary Report Recommendations - Prevention Arctic Marine Oil Pollution (2014)
- Agreement on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013)
- **EPPR** Operating Guidelines for the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution, Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (2013)
- **EPPR** Recommended Practices for Arctic Oil Spill Prevention (2013)
- **EPPR** Summary Report and Recommendations on the Prevention of Marine Oil Pollution in the Arctic (2013)
- **EPPR** Behavior of Oil and other Hazardous and Noxious Substances Spilled in Arctic Waters (BoHaSA) (2011)
- **EPPR** Guidelines and Strategies for Oil Spill Waste Management in Arctic Regions (2009)

- **AMAP** Assessment Oil and Gas Activities in the Arctic—Effects and Potential Effects; the “OGA” (2010) and Summary Report (2008).
- **EPPR** Arctic SCAT Manual: A Field Guide to the Documentation of Oiled Shorelines in Arctic Environments (2004)
- **EPPR** Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters (1998)
- **PAME** Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines (1997, 2002, and 2009)
- **EPPR** Guidelines and Strategies for Oily Waste Management in the Arctic Region, featuring the Oily Waste Calculator Tool
- **EPPR** First Responder’s Guide to Arctic Oil Spill (1998)

Discussion

Oil and gas issues have always been a focus of the Arctic Council, but the focus has evolved and changed over the Council’s two decades. The PAME Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines were drafted a year after the Council was born. This was the time when some Arctic States were just entering into *commercial* oil and gas activities, and EPPR was primarily concerned with radiation issues. By 2008, when AMAP produced the Oil and Gas Assessment (OGA), the outlook was for markedly increased activity levels both onshore and offshore. The EPPR Best Practices for Prevention of Arctic Marine Pollution Report and the PAME Safety Systems Management and Safety Culture Guidelines were written in response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster and the subsequent major overhaul of Arctic oil and gas regulatory regimes in the United States and elsewhere.

Oil and gas is a cross-cutting issue in the Council touching on shipping, biodiversity, ecosystem-based management, marine protected areas, CO₂ and BC emissions, emergency response, socioeconomic and cultural impacts, and perhaps other areas. This is evident in recommendations and guidance on oil and gas activities appearing in other Arctic Council products such as the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment (AMSA), the Arctic Ocean Review (AOR), the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment (ABA), the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR), and the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan (AMSP). In response, the working groups have collaborated in addressing some of these issues, such as the PAME Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities (MEMA) project involving PAME’s collaboration with SDWG; PAME and EPPR’s joint 2012 workshop on Health, Safety and Environmental Management Systems for offshore oil and gas operations; and the AMAP, CAFF, and SDWG collaboration on the AMSA IIC report to identify marine areas of heightened ecological and cultural significance. All-in-all there have been – by

one account – some *238 recommendations* made by the Arctic Council on oil and gas activities.

The Council has evolved to address real world changes in the realm of oil and gas activities. However, the current assemblage of AC working groups, task forces, expert groups, and bodies outside of the Council (e.g., AORF) that all have involvement in oil and gas issues presents a coordination challenge to the Council.

In a recent review of the AC’s work on oil and gas issues, PAME identified some areas where there is still room for improvement both in industry’s performance and the work of the Arctic States. Below are some suggested areas of further work and possible collaborative partnerships for addressing them:

Engagement of indigenous peoples	SDWG/PAME/EPPR/AORF
Risk assessment/analysis	EPPR/PAME/AORF
Emergency preparedness and response	EPPR/AORF/ACGF
Operational standards	EPPR/AORF
Non-emergency marine operations	PAME/AORF
Environmental and compliance monitoring	AMAP/PAME/AORF
Marine noise (seismic, shipping, coastal)	AMAP/PAME
Coastal infrastructure erosion	PAME/SDWG/AEC
Offshore decommissioning	AMAP/PAME/AORF
Use of UAS for emergency operations	EPPR/AMAP

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the emerging oil and gas challenges and opportunities in the Arctic region?
2. Is the Arctic Council in a position to address these issues?
3. In addition to the above list, are there other gaps in the Arctic Council’s work on oil and gas that should be addressed?