**Invitation and Agenda for SAON Agency Officials Meeting**

**March 18-19, 2009**

**Miami, Florida**

## Invitation

**Setting the Stage** – What are the objectives of the workshop and why should a funding agency participate?

The vision of Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) is to facilitate enhanced Arctic long-term observing that will make data and information freely and openly available in a timely fashion to realize Arctic and global value-added services and societal benefits. The need for enhanced observing capabilities has never been greater in the Arctic, where system-wide environmental change is occurring at a greater rate and magnitude than elsewhere on Earth. For example, the scientific community needs observations to support modeling for understanding and projecting change, and resource management and service agencies need observations and scientific findings to support their objectives and priorities. The purpose of this workshop is to provide a forum for an international, inter-agency discussion of the role of the agencies in the development of SAON.

Historically, most in situ observing activities in the Arctic are financed and/or conducted by a national government agency working alone, and by one or a small number of scientists working alone. The implementation of the International Polar Year encouraged a more international approach and many scientists responded by creating informal associations or networks to undertake scientific work that couldn't be accomplished individually. These voluntary partnerships have resulted in a number of pan-Arctic or regional research questions and data sets, multidisciplinary investigations that will reveal new relationships between, for example, the physical environment and the Arctic biosphere, and new ways of bringing information together, such as the Sea Ice Outlook.

Creation of these voluntary partnerships required scientists to weave together resources from a variety of sources and participate in a variety of decision processes that were uncoordinated in time and had differing selection criteria. Naturally the outcomes were imperfect from a scientific perspective.

This workshop has the overall objective of seeking the inputs from the funding agencies on feasible mechanisms for harmonizing actions involving priority-setting, decision-making, and implementation regarding long-term observing activities in the Arctic. It is explicitly recognized that agencies have their own missions, accountabilities and constraints and that these are not easily altered. Yet, agencies do have some flexibilities and it is these that we wish to explore. Just as the scientists have found new opportunities and strengths through increased partnering, it should be possible for the agencies to do the same. All agencies have the goal of obtaining the best possible return on the resources they administer. This workshop could identify

opportunities for agencies to obtain more value for the resources available, and achieve outcomes not likely to emerge through continuation of current approaches. Specifically for long-term observing in the Arctic, there seems no alternative but a harmonized international approach to achieve the aims stated in several science plans and agency missions.

The workshop will have both plenary presentations, and working sessions in breakout groups. Attendees will be asked to come to the workshop with some material prepared to present during the breakouts.

We invite you to attend this workshop. Please register for the workshop by visiting www.soa.arcus.org and clicking on the SAON button and following the instructions. Information on housing and logistics are also available at this web site.

We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

John Calder

Co-Chair of SAON SG

Vice Chair of Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program

Director, Arctic Research Program of NOAA Climate Office

David Hik

Co-Chair of SAON SG

Vice President of International Arctic Science Committee

Professor, University of Alberta