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Aleut International Association

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AIA mission:

Bringing new opportunities for environmental, social and economic improvements in the Aleut region through international programs that promote continuity of culture and protect resources needed to sustain it

Special Interest Articles:

- Bering Sea Sub-Network moves forward (p. 2)
- Monitoring for Shellfish Toxins (p. 5)

Content:

BSSN Workshop	2
AIA Projects	3
Arctic Council	4
PSP Update	5
Industry Acronyms	6
Calendar of Events	6
AIA Staff & Board	7

AIA in Arctic Diplomacy

The Arctic Council wrapped up its Russian chairmanship with the Fifth Ministerial meeting on November 26, 2006 in Salekhard, Northwest Russia.

The next two-year term was transferred to the Kingdom of Norway.

Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Environment and high level officials from the eight Arctic States and Permanent Participants' organizations presented the Salekhard Declaration. AIA was represented by Vera Belobrova of Nikolskoye, Russia, and Victoria Gofman, the executive director. Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs represented the United States. The meeting was chaired by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov.

(Read the story on Page 4)



Permanent Participants, Salekhard, Russia, 2006

BSSN: The Bering Sea Sub Network

In 2005, the Aleut International Association began exploring the concept of a network of community-based monitoring within the Bering Sea region. An initial workshop was held in October 2005 to facilitate the exchange of information, establish a network for participating organizations to prepare for and learn about current and past community-based research projects and to scope out potential funding opportunities.



Eduard Zdor, Chukotka, and interpreter Marina Bell

The web domain www.BSSN.net has been registered for the project.



Alexey Drozdov, Kamchatka



B. Wright, Alaska, F. Pokiak and J. Cudlach, Canada

Photos by B. Wright

In 2006, the International Polar Year (IPY) Joint Committee endorsed AIA's concept of the Bering Sea Sub Network. The cumulative result of these efforts was a proposal submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) under the title "Bering Sea Sub-Network, International Community-Based Observing Alliance for Arctic Observing Network (AON) (BSSN)" in May 2006. The proposal responded to the needs of AON, demonstrated an understanding of the issues in the context of both science and traditional knowledge and showed a grassroots support at the community and regional level. NSF, while not agreeing to fund a multi-year project as submitted, offered an approximate half-million dollars to fund a one-year pilot. During this one-year project, AIA feels strongly that if it can demonstrate success in organizing a Bering Sea network, the NSF (and other potential funding agencies) will likely continue to provide a level of support that will enable BSSN to not only continue its operation but also provide additional opportunities for funding and support for new and on-going local community-based programs.

A November 2006 workshop was organized to continue discussions with participating communities on the Bering Sea Sub Network, to obtain recommendations for a scaled-down project and develop an implementation plan. The BSSN workshop was one of several workshops held by the Environment Canada, US F&W and AIA to develop an implementation plan for Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP), an initiative of the Conservation Flora and Fauna working group of the Arctic Council. During the workshop, Victoria Gofman, BSSN managing co-principle investigator, made a presentation on the history and main elements of the project; Dr. Lillian Alessa, BSSN co-principal investigator, informed about the BSSN science plan; and Mike Gill made an overview of the CBMP as a vehicle for circum-Arctic collaboration.

Workshop participants engaged in enthusiastic discussion to help shape the project. They made important decisions on a number of issues, such as the number of pilot villages and the criteria for their selection.

Next steps:

- Inform the BSSN regions regarding the process of selection of pilot communities,
- Form the steering committee and define its role
- Establish communication with regions and selected villages
- Finalize grant negotiation with NSF

BSSN pilot will result in an established formalized network of six villages (three each in Alaska and Russia) for information collection, data processing and sharing:

- a forum for the Bering Sea regions to discuss common issues;
- a distributed database interconnecting communities and tying into the circum arctic system

AIA Project Information

Project Name/Description	Grantor(s)	Objectives & Activities
Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP). Proposed communities extend the length of the Aleutian Islands. Project Period: May 2006 through Sept 2007	North Pacific Research Board (Grant Awarded/In Progress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate local residents about PSP Train local residents to use test kits to monitor for PSP toxin. Investigate increased risk of PSP as a result of climate change and the reliability of traditional knowledge used when harvesting shellfish.
Bering Sea Sub-Network (BSSN): Proposed development of a network for community-based research and monitoring throughout the Bering Sea area. Project Period:	National Science Foundation (Grant Pending)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community-based research and monitoring network. Establish data management protocols. Define community based monitoring Establish methods for survival and continuity of traditional knowledge Develop individual ownership in a collectively connected network of information and communication sharing.
Language Communication Project (Anchorage, Atka and Nicolskoye)	Self-supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote use of the Western Aleut dialect Strengthen communication between Alaskan and Russian Aleuts using their native language.
Open World Exchange	Library of Congress via Pacific Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchange program to promote communication and understanding of different geographic locales, cultures and local issues.
Salmon sharks prey on Bering Sea Salmon Project Period: May 2007 through June 2010	Alaska Yukon Kuskokwim Sustainable Salmon Initiative (Proposal submitted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite tracking of salmon sharks to discern movements Analyze diet of salmon sharks and identify types of prey supplying the most energy to sharks Collection of additional shark life history information
Western Bering Sea salmon shark distribution, diet and life history information Project Period: June 2007 through June 2010	North Pacific Research Board (Proposal submitted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite tracking of salmon sharks to discern movements Analyze diet of salmon sharks and identify types of prey supplying the most energy to sharks Collection of additional shark life history information
Eastern Bering Sea salmon shark distribution, diet and life history information Project Period: June 2007 through June 2010	North Pacific Research Board (Proposal submitted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite tracking of salmon sharks to discern movements Analyze diet of salmon sharks and identify types of prey supplying the most energy to sharks Collection of additional shark life history information
Monitoring Harmful Algal Blooms in Alaska Coastal Communities: Assessing and Reducing the Health Risk for Subsistence Users of Shellfish Project Period: Oct 2007 through Sept 2011	Environmental Protection Agency (Proposal submitted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate people in the Aleut Region about harmful algal blooms and potential toxins associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning and domoic acid. Monitor for paralytic shellfish poisoning and domoic acid in selected Aleut Region communities.
A Disease-driven Extinction Model: Columbids and T. Gallinae as Proximate Species with Relevant to Understanding a Broader Class of Systems Project Period: Aug 2007 through July 2009	National Science Foundation (Proposal submitted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A disease model would be developed that would predict the spread of disease in high-density bird populations such as is seen in nesting colonies in the Aleut Region. The information may be useful for preventing disease and protecting birds in our region.
Endangered Language Program	National Science Foundation (Planning Stage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To record live Western Aleut language To document, record and publish modern Aleut literary works



Photo by N. Pavlov

AIA in Arctic Diplomacy

The Arctic Council wrapped up its Russian chairmanship with the Fifth Ministerial meeting on November 26, 2006 in Salekhard, Northwest Russia. The next two-year term was transferred to the Kingdom of Norway. Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Environment and high level officials from the eight Arctic States and Permanent Participants' organizations presented the Salekhard Declaration that emphasized among others:

- the recognition of the role and increased participation of Arctic indigenous peoples' organizations in the work of the Arctic Council,
- the continuing contribution of indigenous and traditional knowledge to research and culture in the Arctic,
- the recognition of the Arctic climate as a critical component of the global climate system with worldwide implications and the need for AC working groups to continue supporting, analyzing and synthesizing Arctic climate research, including the gathering and compilation of indigenous and local knowledge of the effects of climate change,
- the need to share adaptation expertise and best practices and possible actions, unique to the needs and conditions of the Arctic, so that indigenous and other residents can better adapt to climate change,
- the need to develop and implement cooperative projects enhancing the capacity of indigenous and other Arctic residents to adapt to environmental, economic and social changes and enable them to benefit from the results of the research,
- support for International Polar Year programs initiated by the Arctic residents and recognition of their traditional and indigenous knowledge as invaluable component of IPY research,
- the need to establish a circumpolar Arctic observing network of monitoring stations with coordinated data handling and information exchange for scientific, statistics, and traditional knowledge,
- the vital role of Arctic residents, particularly indigenous residents and organizations, in sustainable development, and potential impacts of modern development on traditional livelihoods,
- the continued cooperation with indigenous peoples of the Arctic, contribution of their traditional knowledge of flora and fauna to the scientific research, and further cooperation in the development of community-based monitoring of the Arctic's living resources.

AIA was represented by Vera Belobrova of Nikolskoye, Russia, a newly-appointed vice president, and Victoria Gofman, AIA executive director. Gofman actively participated in the drafting of the Declaration and successfully negotiated the language favorable to promoting AIA's programs and organizational objectives. Belobrova, in her statement, called for preservation of indigenous languages to halt disappearance of traditions, knowledge, and to reaffirm cultural identity.

Paula Dobryansky, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, a U.S. ministerial representative to the Arctic Council, noted the Bering Sea Sub Network as one of the emerging IPY projects and expressed a strong government support for BSSN.

The Russian chairmanship was concluded with a great fanfare that began with an opening ceremony of "Crossing the Arctic Circle" and ended on a high note with a spectacular concert based on the theme of the Arctic Council featuring local artists. Russia has proved once again that its hospitality is second to none.

PSP: Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Progress Report

The paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) project is designed to determine distribution of PSP toxin in the Aleut Region. The project partners are AIA, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, and Alaska Sea Grant. The North Pacific Research Board provided funding. This project is designed to educate local residents about paralytic shellfish poisoning, train technicians in Nikolskoye, Sand Point and Unalaska to use test kits to monitor for PSP toxin and monitor PSP in the Aleut Region.

Bruce Wight, co-principle investigator, wrote the field manual and conducted several workshops and field training sessions in the communities. In November 2006, he traveled to Japan to present preliminary results at the PICES (The North Pacific Marine Science Organization, an intergovernmental scientific organization, established in 1992 to promote and coordinate marine research in the North Pacific and adjacent seas. Its present members are Canada, Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.) Colleagues at the PICES Harmful Algal Bloom Committee meeting agreed to test the samples collected so far using a 'high-tech' procedure called high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). The tests will be run free of charge contributing additional \$30,000 in-kind services to the project and will enhance the scientific integrity of the project. Thirty-eight samples were prepared using procedures for a blind test and sent to the Seattle lab for HPLC analysis.

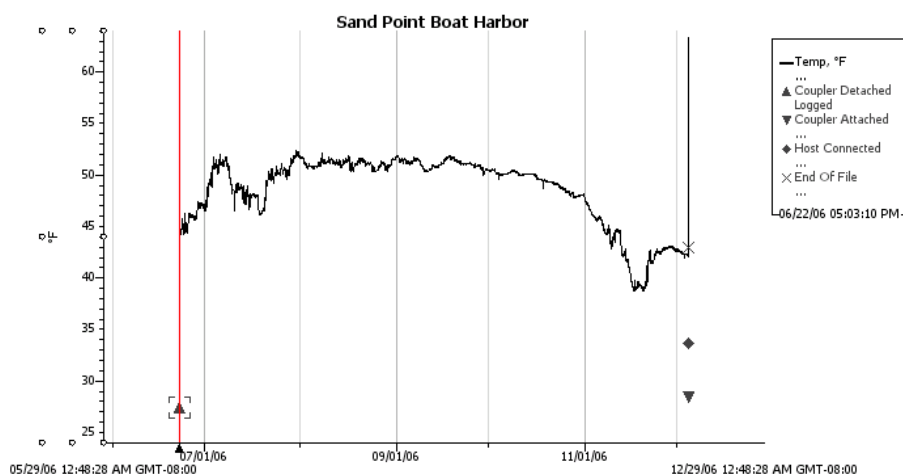
In November 2006, Russia PSP expert, Natalia Tatarenkova, attended a science conference on the issues of preservation of biodiversity of the Kamchatka peninsula and adjacent coastal areas, which is held annually by the Kamchatsky Ecology and Natural Resources Use Institute and the Kamchatsky League of Independent Experts. Success of the first conference that took place in 2000 and attracted substantial interest from scientists led to annual conferences with broader thematic coverage.

N. Tatarenkova made a Power Point presentation on PSP project. She noted that Russian scientists have discussed the issues of algae producing toxins and possible poisoning cases at various meetings but only now, with the help of the AIA project, PSP research on the Commanders provided an opportunity to confirm the hypothesis that the toxin is absent on the island. Natalia's presentation was received by the audience with great interest. The Head of Ecology department of the Far Eastern university expressed intention to introduce students to this important material.

The Sand Point, Unalaska and Nikolskoye technicians have been collecting and testing bivalves in the respective regions and sending in the results. Additional samples have been sent in from Akutan and False

The PSP tests continue to generally show the presence of PSP in bivalves in the eastern Aleutian Islands at 40 microgram/100 grams (U.S. Food and Drug Administration limits are 80 micrograms/100 grams) and the western Aleutian Islands are negative for PSP.

(continued on Page 7)



Dana Osterback, Sand Point

Alphabet Soup: Acronyms got you confused? (acronyms used in this issue are in bold)

ACRONYM	TERM
AC	Arctic Council
ACAP	Arctic Council Action Plan
ACIA	Arctic Climate Impact Assessment
AES	Arctic Energy Summit
AIA	Aleut International Association
AMAP	Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program
AON	Arctic Observing network
APIA	Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
BASC	Barrow Arctic Science Consortium
BSSN	Bering Sea Sub-Network
CAFF	Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
CBM	Community-based Monitoring
CBMP	Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program
CSSG	Chukotka Science Support Group

ACRONYM	TERM
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPPR	Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response
IASSA	International Arctic Social Sciences Association
IPS	Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat
IPY	International Polar Year
NPRB	North Pacific Research Board
NSF	National Science Foundation
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment
PICES	North Pacific Marine Science Organization
PSP	Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning
SAO	Senior Arctic Officials (of the Arctic Council)
SDWG	Sustainable Development Working Group

Calendar Of Upcoming Events:

Date	Event	Location
April 2-8, 2007	Snowchange 2007 Workshop	Neriungri, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Russian Federation
April 10-11, 2007	Arctic Council – SDWG Meeting	Tromso, Norway
April 12-13, 2007	Arctic Council – SAO (Senior Arctic Officials) Meeting	Tromso, Norway

PSP: Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Progress Report

(Continued from Page 5)

Pass. Samples from several more remote sites were collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Maritime Refuge staff and sent in for testing. The PSP tests continue to generally show the presence of PSP in bivalves in the eastern Aleutian Islands at 40 microgram/100 grams (U.S. Food and Drug Administration limits are 80 micrograms/100 grams) and the western Aleutian Islands are negative for PSP. Shellfish samples from Akutan, False Pass, King Cove, Sand Point, Unalaska and Nikolskoye were tested. The Jellett test results were positive for PSP in Akutan, False Pass, King Cove, Sand Point and Unalaska and negative for PSP in Nikolskoye.

While in Sand Point in December 2006, Wright recovered the HOBO temperature data logger, downloaded the data and returned the data logger to the water. The temperature data graph follows and shows seasonal and storm event temperature patterns. The PSP project co-principle investigators, Bruce Wright and Ray RaLonde, are preparing a proposal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to continue the PSP project for another four years and to expand the project to monitor additional locations, establish more frequent testing using HPLC for some communities (e.g. King Cove) and incorporation of monitoring demoic acid, another marine algal toxin starting to show up in Alaskan waters. We will continue monthly testing in Sand Point, Unalaska and Nikolskoye and periodic sampling in Akutan, Atka, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski, St. George and St. Paul, and arrange for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect samples from their remote Aleutian Islands field stations.

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