



U.S. – Canada Shared Interests and Opportunities in the North American Arctic Workshop, 14-15 December 2015

University of Alaska, Anchorage

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The “U.S. – Canada Shared Interests and Opportunities in the North American Arctic” workshop was developed to identify policy recommendations to Arctic interests shared by the U.S. and Canada. The workshop brought together approximately 60 U.S. and Canadian participants from a variety of backgrounds, including academia, state and federal government, the nonprofit world, tribes, and industry.

Day one consisted of keynote speeches by, Lawson Brigham (UAF/CASP), Willie Goodwin (AWSC), and Ed Page (MXAK). During the second and final day, a morning panel brought together U.S. and Canadian government and academic experts, and an afternoon working session opened discussion to all workshop participants to identify specific recommendations.

While certain disagreements persist between U.S. and Canadian positions in the Arctic region, these are far outweighed by the fundamentally similar common interests and challenges. These common interests and challenges in the “North American Arctic” are characterized as human factors, environmental factors, and governmental factors. Shared human factors include transboundary distribution of Inuit/Iñupiat peoples tied to subsistence; an economic dependence on resource extraction, with concomitant levels of volatility in global markets; and strong desires for local/state/territorial empowerment in policymaking. Environmentally, the North American Arctic is a unified zone undergoing significant climate change-driven disruption, including changes to weather, sea ice, permafrost, distribution of flora and fauna, ocean circulation, storm patterns, wind, waves, and changes yet to be understood. Both the U.S. and Canada have a robust democratic system that values consultation with indigenous communities, sustainable development, and the maintenance of regulation to support safe and secure maritime activity.

More specifically, both U.S. and Canada are currently striving to understand ways in which Arctic change requires new or altered maritime regulation, response, and enforcement. Both nations are constrained in their ability to secure funding to enhance management of the Arctic and therefore, engagement with indigenous peoples and industry in the Arctic is essential to support the mobilization of private funds as an alternate means.

During the workshop, several themes emerged that provide a framework for understanding the shared opportunities and challenges facing the U.S. and Canada. These themes include:

- Importance of *data*
- Importance of *communication*
- Need for *community engagement*
- Need for *infrastructure*
- *Duplication* or fragmentation of efforts

While these themes are not new, they were used in the workshop to organize ideas and promote thought that could produce specific and practical policy recommendations. Recommendations were generated by focusing discussion on these themes, and by querying participants to identify current best practices or most effective models.

Positive models and best practices include specifically:

- **MXAK (Marine Exchange of Alaska):** employs talented and effective individuals (focus on *effective individuals*); forges strong connections to the maritime and Native communities (robust *network connectivity*); a smart approach to avoiding costs through collocating with users; has the agility and fast response inherent to an NGO
- **AWSC (Arctic Waterways Safety Committee):** model of *governance* approach; seeks input from a variety of *stakeholders*; “game-changer”
- **Industry solutions:** *problem-oriented* and *strategic* approach; identify objectives and top priorities before acting; refuse to wait for government action; conflict avoidance agreements with communities (Shell)
- **International agreements:** WMU; IICWG; IHO
- **Bilateral agreements:** NAIS; NOAA-Environment Canada marine forecast; Beaufort Sea Partnership; USCG-CCG regional (Great Lakes, St. Lawrence Seaway; Puget Sound): operators work well together; shared connection to mission; regular contact

Workshop participants were prompted to move from identification and analysis of best models/practices to the generation of specific recommendations for the identified key themes. These are summarized below, and priorities are underlined:

Data

- Developing MXAK AIS network to improve data sharing across North America
- Training for ice navigation
- Cooperative tracking of Crystal Serenity
- Pushing indigenous use of AIS data (appropriately scaled to protect hunting interests) to ships and operators

Communication

- Coordinated CANUS development of Polar Code implementing regulations
- Develop “plain language” Polar Code tool readily translatable into Native languages
- Develop bilateral routing measures for seasonal and indigenous use
- Develop risk mitigation measures and notification
- Develop communications center model used by industry
- Use AIS at tribal government offices to support subsistence deconfliction and national security interests (i.e., locate vessels not on AIS)

Community engagement

- Document and learn from U.S. and Canadian cases across agencies and government
- Tie into preexisting focus areas, regional meetings, and organizations/structures to further community interests and schedules (i.e., engage with the right people at the right time without overburdening communities)

Infrastructure

- Expand AIS transponders in North Slope
- Improve communications infrastructure

Duplication of effort

- Increase awareness of research to avoid duplication of effort because research is chaotic and fragmented
- Develop closer connections with USN (ONR) for data sharing and coordination of research

Specific research needs were also identified:

- Arctic regional ocean models with coupled weather/ice/circulation/other
- Better use of Accident Incident Database
- Automated calculation of ship drift for ships not under command (real time)
- Ocean circulation model with forecasting capability
- Better understanding of different U.S. and Canadian approaches to Arctic regulations and governance
- Assessment of community readiness for human and environmental disasters, as well as relative risk

