

Bering Strait Management Authority Workshop

Hosted by the Institute of the North during the 2012 Week of the Arctic

The Bering Strait Management Authority workshop featured plenary and small group sessions focused on 1) critical issues of investment and infrastructure; 2) communications and stakeholders; and 3) the functions and responsibilities of governance.

Taking into consideration current efforts around traffic management and a deep-water port—including the USCG vetting of the Port Access Route Study and the USACE efforts to produce an Arctic Ports study—participants examined existing co-management models that might work for Alaska's Bering Strait Management. Homework for attendees included the Integrated Ocean Management Plan for the Beaufort Sea, the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway Authority, the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-Operation and Port Fourchon.

The proceedings from the workshop will be vetted with regional stakeholders in Alaska and Russia for their input. The Institute will hold a small working group session in Nome and in Moscow to gather feedback from people who have a role in the Strait's management. The proceedings will also be sent to the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Congressional delegation, and Alaska's public officials, including members of the newly-formed Alaska Arctic Policy Commission. Hopefully this will be a good step toward outlining options for cross-border and local management of the Bering Strait. It may also provide key insight into planning efforts many in the state have initiated.

Key questions were used to provoke different and new thinking among work groups, framed around four additional questions that brought out consistent data. Framing questions were:

- What are the important considerations?
- What works well?
- What isn't/may not work?
- What else do we need to know?

Although each group tackled different questions, there were many reoccurring themes and examples presented, including:

- **Local, northern voices** - who are directly impacted by changes taking place – need to have a seat at the table, providing valuable insight, traditional knowledge and long-term considerations.
- **Funding** is the biggest hurdle; the only way to develop a successful model will be to identify and increase funding opportunities. This will require patient capital, scenarios planning and cooperation between communities, companies, organizations and governments. Successful examples of this are Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs); i.e. Red Dog Mine.
- Because the Bering Strait is an **international passage**, any type of authority needs to reference cross-border cooperation between Russia and the United States. In order to accomplish this, there needs to be effective communication and equitable risk-taking. Models for reference could include U.S. Coast Guard and Russian Navy communication, the NPS Beringia program and the Eskimo Whaling Commission.
- In order to more fully understand the needs and uses of the Bering Strait area, it should be recognized that baseline **data** exists but more is needed and needs to be shared. Climate impacts and weather forecasting as well as identifying natural resources, important

ecological and economic areas, and common shipping paths will help to make better-informed decisions. Many of these efforts are currently underway.

Key workshop questions brought out a lot of dialogue and some creative solutions. Compiled answers are below, with full documentation of the workshop online at www.institutenorth.org/woa.

How could we implement AIS (vessel tracking) fencing through the Bering Strait?

In order for any AIS fencing system to be successful there needs to be a written policy requiring the use of AIS. In order for this system to be effective, it is necessary to identify the gaps in AIS coverage as well as common non-users of AIS transponders (and incentives for their adoption). Successful communication between the US and Russia should result in complete and shared datasets. Additionally, technology adoption could result in workforce and economic development opportunities in partnership with local communities that include operation and maintenance of the system.

Some of the questions raised by this group were whether real-time emergency response ability would be strengthened, or if AIS data could be used to help design future traffic separation schemes based on historical trends? The workshop also highlighted the (lack of) availability of enforcement and licensed ice navigators.

Where does capital for new investment come from and how is public support leveraged?

Investment is a crucial argument for Bering Strait management. Any type of investment needs to be multinational and include the US, Russia and possibly Canada. PPPs serve as good models for what investment can look like. It is necessary to ensure responsibilities are clear and a management system is able to accept and spend financial resources from multiple sources, including multinational funding. This is especially cumbersome if a federal agency has this function.

NGO's are an option for bringing public and private entities together to encourage collaboration and bring investment groups together. A productive investment climate could be facilitated to include data on the location of resources, project specifics, and a demand analysis. There need to be clear guidelines for spending, evaluation of investments, and guaranteed access. Investors in a Bering Strait management system could include federal/state agencies, foundation grants, entrepreneurs, shipbuilders, major shippers, and markets.

What does an infrastructure system look like? Beyond a deep-draft Arctic port, how do we increase and maintain port and airport infrastructure, community response capacity, telecommunications, navigational aids, fuel and water transportation?

The location of any infrastructure should be relative to local development areas, connections to road/rail/aviation systems and should consider the need for emergency response, housing for workers, jobs for communities and natural site limitations.

Some of the major considerations for this topic are the need for long-term foresight and to ensure benefit for local communities. Before any decisions can be made, more data regarding climate impacts, environmental impacts, social impacts and marine mammal migration routes needs to be collected. Additionally, navigational charts and future projections regarding OCS development and world demand of resources (e.g. freshwater) need to be considered for responsible development to occur. Some of the needs identified during this discussion include waste disposal, emergency towing systems, icebreaker capacity, communications systems and regional energy solutions.

PPPs and co-investment are effective tools for infrastructure development; and community consultation and co-management are necessary. The group stressed that regulatory uncertainty and inadequate stakeholder engagement have been reasons for delays and failure.

How do we define effective communication within the region, between the region and state/federal agencies, and across the border?

In order to promote effective communication, it is necessary for involvement to start early and for participation to be broad. To encourage community involvement, local traditions and practices need to be understood so as to accommodate timing and context. It is better to “walk the path together” than to ask for approval at the end. The most effective way to accomplish this is by establishing schedules, creating dialogue opportunities in appropriate venues, and to be all-inclusive.

Examples of successful communication are found in regional advisory boards, the Eskimo Walrus Commission, Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and school boards.

What roles are there for various stakeholders and what structure supports governance of those roles?

Areas of governance identified for stakeholder engagement include safety, spill prevention and response, environmental preparation, security, resource management, food security, protection of subsistence areas and seasons, economic investment, shipping/traffic management and communication.

Stakeholders include fishermen (commercial and subsistence), marine mammal hunters, industry, tourism, residents, shipping companies, native corporations, governments, NGOs, scientists, and international organizations.

One potential idea would be to establish a stakeholder advisory board representing communities, academia, Russia, Alaska, and industry that works towards coordination and agreement. This could look like the Beaufort Sea Partnership in Canada.

Are there clearly delineated responsibilities outlined for stakeholders and governance?

The simple answer is no – responsibility is complex and layered. There are different responsibilities for different phases, such as planning and operations, and there are different roles for different tasks, such as investment and infrastructure. Layers of authority need overarching coordination and the application of resources. There are successful models such as the spill prevention organizations, community development quotas, trans border co-management, conflict avoidance agreements, PNWER and ICC. Currently, Alaska’s coastline communities risk the impacts of increased Bering Strait traffic with few benefits, while Russia is actively pursuing development and expansion of the Northern Sea Route. Permitting for improved investment and resource development that provides economic incentives will need to be managed with corresponding local benefit.

This topic raised several questions including: what are the risks to native communities and subsistence resources without regulation, what are the economic and political drivers, and what are neighboring nations planning? Answers to these questions would help to establish specific roles of stake holders and for Bering Strait management.

How do we increase across the border communications between Alaska and Russia?

In order to address cross border communications it is necessary to understand what the current communication pathways are and what has prevented or been lost in historical communications. In order for communication to work, there needs to be trust and confidence building, available translators,

communication infrastructure, clear expectations, institutionalization and support for common goals, and education. Investment in communication is also generational and needs different media. Failed or poor communication might be due to loss of enthusiasm or personal contacts, relationships not passed on, lack of official channels, and lack of holistic focus on the region.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the groups brainstormed next steps:

- I. The Institute of the North should follow up on the 25th anniversary of the opening of the border between Russia and Alaska.
- II. Education is essential to getting more people informed and involved both in Alaska and the whole United States.
- III. Examples should inform future work: Cooperative Vessel Traffic in Washington and Canada, Washington State planning with other West Coast states, Dutch Harbor AIS, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Conflict Avoidance Agreements, Beaufort Sea Integrated Ocean Management Plan, St. Lawrence Seaway Authorities, and Washington State Maritime CoOp.
- IV. Questions and results should be presented to local communities and in Russia for feedback.
- V. Results should be sent to appropriate policymakers.