

Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center

Board of Directors Meeting

This meeting was supposed to take place on Monday, August 12th, 2013. An ALC meeting was rescheduled to the same time as the OASLC Board meeting. The following emails were sent to the Board of Directors and Jim Pfeifferberger in lieu of a meeting.

EMAIL 1 August 8th, 2013

SUBJECT: OASLC Updates – ASLC CESU Task Agreement

Hello Board,

We will have to reschedule our next meeting since it conflicts with the ALC meeting next week. In the mean time, I thought I would update you all via email on the topics I had planned to discuss at our meeting.

First off, an update on our agreements and our meeting with Mark Vaughn last Monday. In attendance were Mark Vaughn and Peggy Iskra, Jeff Mow and myself, and Guy Adema. Recall that we had two goals, the primary objective being to was to plot a reliable and consistent way forward in our financial arrangements with the Alaska SeaLife Center. The second was what to do with the FY13 agreement. Mark confirmed right away that the NW Alaska CESU was a valid and reasonable way to move money to partners, and that the ASLC is a valid partner. So any questions to the validity of using CESUs or whether the ASLC is a legal CESU partner have been answered or dismissed.

Moving forward, Mark and his staff would prefer that we obligate money for multi-year projects upfront in the first year. That may be an option for the OASLC on some projects for the future, and it is something that as a Board we should consider for FY14, and whatever develops out of the strategic plan. That approach would lend a lot of continuity to the funding process. For example, the ASLC has completed year three of a five year seabird project. We could consider funding the remaining two years all at once and be done with it. The downside is that that leaves less money for other projects within the same fiscal year. It is also somewhat atypical of how research is funded by other federal agencies, which do obligate funds annually in five year agreements. There are pros and cons to both approaches, in my opinion.

Another thing Mark suggested was to draft an MOU between the OASLC and the Alaska SeaLife Center. This may be an element to include in our strategic plan. I believe this may be of more benefit to the OASLC and the NPS. With future (and imminent) Board turnover and the contracting officers general reluctance to use agreements instead of contracts, an MOU may help codify the expectations of our partnership with the ASLC. Our Greenbook language alone did not seem to compel Mark or his staff that Congress intended for the OASLC to be in a financial partnership with the ASLC. Not when it comes to financial instruments, anyway. Jeff suggests that the OASLC Board all be signatories on the MOU.

Recall that the ASLC has unspent money from the current CESU task agreement, on the order of 90k. Mark indicated that his understanding was that the ASLC could continue to conduct work and draw down funds after the effective dates of the agreement as long as the work is in line with the original agreement. This is contrary to what I have been taught as an ATR. If it is true, then it is a huge relief, because the ASLC cannot spend their funds by September 30, 2013, the current end date. We are waiting for confirmation that this is true from Peggy Iskra and Tina Spengler. My alternative is simply to grant the ASLC a no cost modification to the task agreement extending the effective dates. Hopefully the contracting office will agree to this.

When it comes to the FY13 obligations we had planned with the ASLC (our secondary/short term goal for this meeting) Mark indicated that the two new CESU task agreements I submitted (one for research and one for education) were still trying to combine too many projects, and that the connection between the different projects were not apparent to a lay person (i.e. his staff). And they do not have time to deal with them at this point. So those agreements (for a total of \$160,000) will not happen.

Now, the silver lining is that Mark said we could submit new task agreements on October 1st for FY14 (separating out our ASLC projects), and they can begin working on them right away, provided we have the money in hand. Since we use base funds for the ASLC agreements, we will have the money as long as Congress doesn't shut the government down. This *should* help keep their work going. The big downside is that the OASLC will not have \$160,000 in addition to our appropriations next year to give to the ASLC.

What happens to that \$160k? It will never leave the Alaska region. According to Mark, there is too much red on the balance sheets between KEFJ and AKRO. But however it gets spent, the spenders are essentially using OASLC funds to balance their books. It would be nice if these funds would be repaid in FY14 to the OASLC and obligated to the ASLC. In practice, it just doesn't seem realistic to expect an additional \$160k back to the OASLC in FY14. A lot of this money (80k) will help KEFJ out of the red. And they won't have that much, even 30k, to repay the OASLC in FY14. One solution we are contemplating is looking for KEFJ expenditures which we could complete in FY13 that we would not have to make in FY14, thereby freeing up more money for the OASLC. Board, your input and suggestions on this situation would be appreciated.

If there is less money in FY14 to obligate to the ASLC, we need to make some decisions on which projects we are interested in funding. It's probably fair to say the ASLC has been driving the bus when it comes to identifying how to spend OASLC money. That is something that needs to change, and we need to begin to see the ASLC as a tool we can use to meet NPS needs (in partnership with ASLC staff). That being said, there are some legacy projects still being conducted by the ASLC that I think we should see through. The specifics of all this may be best derived by the technical committee, and subject to Board approval.

Getting back to FY13 and the ASLC, they are most concerned with what happens in the short term. I think it's safe to say they are less than thrilled with the current situation and nonplussed at how the NPS manages money in agreements. They get an order of magnitude more money from NOAA than we give them, just for research. And apparently that goes pretty smoothly. So they don't understand what all our concerns are about.

More to come on other topics . . .

Benjamin

EMAIL 2 – August 8th, 2013

SUBJECT – OASLC Update – Technical Committee and Plan for the Plan

Hello board,

A few more updates for our now post-poned August 12th meeting.

You probably all know Jeff is leaving for, shall we say, greener pastures. Pam Rice will be the interim superintendent of Kenai Fjords and will be filling in his spot on the OASLC Board accordingly.

Jim and I will be heading up to Kotzebue for some orientation of CAKR and BELA. We plan on meeting with the NPS staff up there, and external partners as well. We will also be in the field with the hydrology camp on Ikpek Lagoon for several days. We hope to assist with field work and document as much as we can for potential education/outreach media. We'll be in the BELA/CAKR area from August 15th-30th.

Technical Committee

The OASLC Technical Committee has been chosen. In addition to Jim and myself, the committee consists of:

Name	Park/Partner	Natural Resources	Cultural Resources	I&E
Mason, Rachel	AKRO		x	
Rice, Bud	AKRO	x		
Morrow, Laurie	ASLC			x
Thelan, Jennifer	BELA			x
Turner, Carissa	KATM	x		
Kim, Sharon	KEFJ	x	x	
Sholly, Kristy	KEFJ			x
Schaafe, Jeanne	LACL/KATM		x	
Gende, Scott	SEAN	x		
Shephard, Michael	SWAN	x		
Morris, John	AKRO			x
Gabriel, Chris	GLBA	x		

This group represents my attempt at a balance between networks, and a balance between natural resource expertise, cultural resource expertise and I&E. There is also one external member, Laurie Morrow. She is the Education Director at the Alaska SeaLife Center, and someone Jim and I work closely with. I believe she will add a valuable perspective from outside the NPS. I realize there are a lot of people on this committee. But for much of what we need to do, only a subset will be involved at any one time. Committee membership is on a rotating basis. Rebecca has asked for a schedule of term limits, which I will work on. I anticipate a mixture of two to three year terms. One year seems too short to me. And I would hate to have complete turnover all at once. If anyone has any thoughts on this, please

let me know. If anyone has concerns about the makeup of the Tech. Committee, please let me know soon. I plan to begin discussing various topics with them by next week.

Plan for the Plan

One big topic we were scheduled to discuss is the "plan" to draft the OASLC strategic plan, as set forth in the management review and the Board charter.

My vision for the strategic plan is really more of a "tactical plan". As I see it there are many documents that give the OASLC goals to work towards. They include the management review, the Pacific Ocean Parks Strategic Plan, C2A, the National Ocean Policy, and the [national RLC mission and vision](#). These documents give us all, or at least most, of the strategy we need and to spend much time debating new strategies would only serve to reinvent the wheel. Instead what I envision is a document that outlines in some detail the specific tasks we hope to accomplish to meet our mission and the strategies mentioned above. While some tasks may end up being a little more broad in their scope (for example, reinvigorate the OASLC website with pages addressing research in each park), other tasks will be fairly narrow and precise (for example, use OASLC funds to leverage research on the effects of ocean acidification on western Cook Inlet razor clams and subsequent impacts on bears.) Therefore this plan would basically outline the OASLC work plan for the next four years.

November/early December 2013 - Hold three virtual meetings, one for each of the three networks. I want to give plenty of opportunity for every NPS stakeholder in the region to give input and have a say in what our plan says. That is important for transparency and buy in. Staff from each network can use the Polycom system to work with the facilitator and myself. One or two of these meetings could be in the regional office for anyone who wants to attend there. These meetings would consist of me laying out the background and history of the OASLC and laying out the scope and vision of the OASLC within the context of those documents I mentioned above. Then there would be active brainstorming by participants as to how the OASLC can serve them and what specific tasks should go into the plan. These meetings will probably last on the order of four hours, or so. I will be preparing background materials for all participants to read beforehand.

February 2014 - After the meetings Jim, the facilitator, and I will assimilate everyone's comments and suggestions into a single draft for comments and review by stakeholders and participants. This will include review of the draft by the OASLC Board.

May 2014 - Jim and I incorporate comments, suggestions and edits into the plan and resubmit it to the Board for final approval.

June 2014 - OASLC strategic plan is signed by Board members.

I have contacted John Bryant about facilitating this process. He may be willing to do it himself, though he is going to ask around and see if there may be someone more suitable. There are several folks within the regional office who may be good choices and all OASLC would have to pay for is any travel. I expect this to be fairly minimal, perhaps only one or two overnight trips to Seward.

Board, you may want to begin thinking about who you would like to participate in this planning process. All park staff are welcome as far as I am concerned, but Interp and RM should be involved at a minimum. How much involvement, if any, would you like from outside partners, such as the ASLC or Kachemak Bay Research Reserve? When the Southern California RLC went through their strategic planning they included meetings for partners at each park (three parks total). I don't know if that is something we should do here, or not.

Thoughts? Comments? Constructive suggestions?

I will save these emails as minutes for our August meeting. I will send out a Doodle Poll for another meeting in late September or early October, unless Board members suggest otherwise.

Onward,

Benjamin