



Report to the Senior Arctic Officials: The 2nd Arctic Council Ecosystem-based Management Experts Group Meeting April 16 – 18, 2012, Gothenburg, Sweden

Background

Nuuk Declaration of the Arctic Council Ministers, May 12, 2011: “Decide to establish an expert group on Arctic ecosystem-based management (EBM) for the Arctic Environment to recommend further activities in this field for possible consideration by the SAOs before the end of the Swedish chairmanship”.

The decision by the ministers has been further elaborated by the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) and can be found in Annex 1 in this report.

The first meeting of the Arctic Council Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) Experts Group was hosted by the United States at the U.S. Department of the Interior headquarters in Washington, DC on October 18 – 19, 2011. Delegations at the first meeting agreed to start two intersessional efforts: One working group to adapt existing EBM definitions and principles to pan-Arctic needs and another to identify high-level science and capacity needs for marine, coastal and terrestrial EBM implementation across the Arctic.

The second meeting of the Arctic Council Ecosystem-based Management Expert Group took place April 16-18, 2012 and was hosted by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management in Gothenburg, Sweden. The meeting was co-chaired by Evan Bloom, Director of the Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Magnús Jóhannesson, Secretary General, Iceland Ministry for the Environment and Laura Píríz, Senior Analyst, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. The meeting was attended by 32 participants, including seven Arctic States, one permanent participant group, several experts and observer organizations, and representatives from the SDWG, PAME, AMAP and CAFF working groups. Mikael Anzén, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden and Björn Risinger, Director General of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management opened the meeting by welcoming the participants.

Findings and Work Products

The Experts Group revised and adopted the intersessional group document on Definitions and Principles which contains a clear and succinct definition of EBM as well as a series of principles that represent key elements of a potential common EBM approach by the Arctic Council. The definition for EBM ultimately adopted by the EBM group is as follows:

“... comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health of ecosystems thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystems goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity...”

The Experts Group also welcomed the intersessional effort on Knowledge, Information and Tools for Arctic EBM and agreed that the document should be further developed to incorporate important feedback provided during the meeting.

The Experts Group heard presentations from four Arctic Council Working Groups on their ongoing projects related to EBM and discussed how these could be more coordinated to advance cooperation on EBM in the Arctic Council through, for instance:

- CAFF's Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program,
- SDWG's guidelines for incorporating traditional knowledge in the work of the Arctic Council,
- AMAP's Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) project, and
- PAMES's working map of 17 Large Marine Ecosystems.

The Experts Group also heard an update on the status of the Arctic Council project on Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic and presentation on the Arctic Council's Arctic Resilience Report. The group recognized the possible linkages to EBM such as how shifts might affect Arctic societies and ecosystems and how management actions can enhance resilience of these systems.

Several findings also emerged as consistent themes during the course of this meeting, among them:

- **Research:** Implementation of EBM in the Arctic will benefit from improvements in data sharing, monitoring and integrated assessments. Consideration should be given to the arrangements under which the Arctic Council and its working groups undertake these functions. It is not within the scope of the Experts Group to address this need in details, but deserves deeper collaborative attention from ACWGs.
- **Arctic Council Collaboration:** Working groups and the Arctic Resilience Report have important roles to play in advancing EBM in the Arctic and the Experts Group can play a part in identifying these collaborative roles and needs. For example, PAME is successfully advancing EBM in the marine environment but there is a strong need to bring support to CAFF to advance EBM in the terrestrial environment.
- **Conservation Standard:** There is an interest in the identification of conservation standards and/or ecological objectives for the Arctic that would provide guidance for the implementation of EBM.
- **Best Practices:** There is an interest in gaining further insight into Arctic EBM best practices similar to the marine best practices developed by PAME. There was also a strong interest in compiling a reference set of good examples.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** There is an ongoing need to find ways to incorporate traditional/ local knowledge in Arctic EBM – the Experts Group will likely look to the SDWG for leadership on this issue.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Delegates agreed upon a framework for the final product of the EBM Experts Group. The final product will contain elements related to building a common understanding of EBM in the Arctic and will provide guidance for advancing EBM in the work of the Arctic Council. The product will be presented to the SAOs well prior to the next Ministerial Meeting in 2013.

In order to finalize the Experts Group mandate before the Ministerial Meeting in 2013, it was agreed to do the following:

- **Timeline:** The Experts Group aims to fulfill the request of the Nuuk declaration at the next EBM Meeting in Tromsø, Norway in October, 2012. If an additional meeting is required it will be hosted by Iceland in early 2013.
- **Knowledge, Information and Tools for Arctic EBM :** The document developed during the intersessional will be updated to incorporate input from the meeting and distributed among the participating delegations in early May, 2012.

- **Common understanding:** With the Definitions and Principles now in place, an intersessional group led by Norway will focus on compiling EBM best practices, identification of conservation standards, and identifying ecological objectives. The document will be distributed among Expert Group participants prior to the next meeting for consideration.
- **Advancing EBM in the work of the Arctic Council:** With the Knowledge, Information and Tools document near-final, an intersessional group under the lead of Canada and the United States will use that document and the presentations of the Arctic Council Working Groups as starting points for identifying opportunities to advance EBM within and across the Arctic Council Working groups to promote EBM implementation in the Arctic. This document will be prepared for consideration by the participating delegations at the next meeting. The intersessional group should contain members from the relevant Arctic Council Working Groups.
- **Translate key findings into recommendations:** A third intersessional group was established to collect and elaborate on potential recommendations that emerge from the two new intersessional efforts listed above as well as from the first two intersessional efforts. US will take the lead in this effort and provide the document for consideration at the next meeting.
- **Industry attendance:** The co-chairs were given a mandate to invite relevant industry actors to present at the next meeting, if appropriate, in order to collect views from industry about their interests in collaborating through EBM in the Arctic.

Annie Hermansson from University of Gothenburg assisted the co-chairs with the writing of this report.

Annex 1

Senior Arctic Officials Report to the Ministers, May 2011

Human activities in the Arctic are increasing, and planning and management of these activities on a cross-sectoral basis can assist in reducing conflict among activities and in supporting the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The Senior Arctic Officials recognize the desirability of exchanging information regarding marine and landscape planning and management among the Arctic States, and encouraging compatibility of planning approaches on an ecosystem basis.

We recommend that Ministers convene an ecosystem-based management (EBM) expert group, reporting to the Senior Arctic Officials, composed of governmental experts from the Arctic States and representatives of the Permanent Participants. The expert group should consider developing a common understanding of EBM, consider EBM principles for marine and terrestrial areas, and consider developing Arctic-specific guidelines for applying the ecosystem approach to all relevant areas of work in the Arctic Council. If appropriate, the work of the expert group could be presented at the next Ministerial meeting in 2013.