

BLM NPR-A Subsistence Advisory Panel Meeting

Tuesday, June 5, 2012
Point Lay, Alaska

Summary of Public Presentations, Community Concerns, and Panel Recommendations

The complete transcript of this meeting, along with other documents associated with the BLM NPR-A Subsistence Advisory Panel (SAP), is available on the SAP webpage:

http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/res/npra_sap.html



The Bureau of Land Management National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Subsistence Advisory Panel consists of representatives from seven tribal governments and the North Slope Borough, and provides a forum for government-to-government consultation regarding activities in the NPR-A. The Panel reviews plans by industry, current scientific research projects, and other activities authorized by the BLM in the NPR-A.

Subsistence Advisory Panel Representatives in attendance:

Joseph Eleeyak Sage, Native Village of Barrow, SAP Chair
 Qinugan Roddy, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (Barrow)
 Mary Lou Kippi, Native Village of Atkasuk
 Danny Pikok, Native Village of Point Lay
 Charles 'Solly' Hugo, Naqsraqmiut Tribal Council (Anaktuvuk Pass)
 Betty Kakinya, Naqsraqmiut Tribal Council (Anaktuvuk Pass)
 Charles 'Chuck' Ekak, Village of Wainwright
 Bart Ahsogeak, North Slope Borough Planning Department



Subsistence Advisory Panel members Betty Kakinya, Chuck Ekak, Mary Lou Kippi, and Joe Sage



SAP members Solly Hugo and Bart Ahsogeak and BLM Arctic Field Office Manager Lon Kelly

BLM Employees present:

Lon Kelly, Arctic Field Office Manager

Stacey Fritz, Arctic Field Office Anthropologist/Subsistence Specialist (SAP Coordinator)

Industry Employees present:

Bartley Kleven, Environmental Permitting Manager for Linc Energy

Dave Whitacre, Umiat Project Manager for Linc Energy

Erling Westlien, Senior Environmental Scientist with Shell Exploration and Production

Pauline Ruddy, Permitting with Shell Exploration and Production

April (last name unknown), Safety with Shell Exploration and Production

Public Meeting Summary

Introductions

Approval of Agenda

INDUSTRY UPDATES

1. Linc Energy Summer Studies Program

Bartley Kleven, Environmental Permitting Manager for Linc Energy (officially referred to as Renaissance Umiat because the leases were taken by that company) presented on Linc's summer studies program at Umiat. Linc hopes to complete wetlands delineation, vegetation studies, part of the habitat mapping, some fish and wildlife surveys, ecological mapping, and to install a few meteorological stations. Linc must survey their snow pad at Umiat and snow trail to Umiat from Pump Station Two (91 miles straight west).

After this summer's studies, Linc plans to drill several wells to delineate what is there and determine whether they are developable. If Linc intends to move ahead with development, they would then begin the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for that.

A discussion about the concerns over public access on the proposed road to Umiat from the Dalton Highway followed Linc's presentation. Kleven clarified that the road is a State of Alaska proposal, not Linc's.

2. Shell in Alaska 2012 Onshore Science Program

Erling Westlien, Senior Environmental Scientist with Shell, presented on Shell's environmental studies occurring this summer in the NPR-A. The studies are a continuation of the coastal area studies that have occurred the two previous summers around Wainwright but include a much larger area because Shell is looking into potential pipeline routes to bring oil to TAPS if they develop wells offshore in the Chukchi Sea.

Shell has coastal processes, bird, and fish studies that will be based out of Wainwright using the Tukpuk boat and ATVs. Shell will conduct hydrological surveys, habitat assessment, and cultural surveys using two Bell 412 helicopters and will be based out of Atqasuk from mid-June through July and out of Umiat for the remainder of the season.

Olgoonik Fairweather, a joint venture between Wainwright's Olgoonik Corporation and Fairweather, is the prime contractor for the project. Shell's Subsistence Advisory Program includes advisors in Atqasuk, Wainwright, Point Lay, Nuiqsut, and Barrow who participate in daily calls and engage with residents to relay information to Shell about hunters' locations or to hunters about Shell's location.

Westlien confirmed that Shell will be flexible with their plans and will amend them to avoid disturbing hunters.

A discussion followed between Westlien, audience members and SAP representatives concerning the need for more and more effective communication between the Shell's Subsistence Advisors and local residents. Twenty-four-hour communication centers will again be established in Point Lay and Wainwright that can assist with this notification/communication system.

BLM UPDATE

Lon Kelly gave a briefing on the BLM's Draft Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the entire NPR-A. The Plan will determine which areas in the NPR-A will be available for oil and gas leasing and will specify the conditions and special stipulations that will be required for oil and gas activities. The USGS's most recent petroleum resources assessment for the NPR-A estimated that the amount of undiscovered oil in the Reserve is much less (one tenth) than what was previously assessed. The areas with the highest potential are in the northeast corner of the Reserve and around Umiat, while the southern area is estimated to have low potential.

Kelly and the SAP discussed the NEPA process, the four alternatives, the Cumulative Case and the ANILCA 810 subsistence analysis that were presented in the Draft IAP/EIS. Kelly also briefed the audience and SAP on the schedule for the Public Comment period, release of the Preferred Alternative, the Final EIS, and the Record of Decision.

ANILCA 810 Subsistence Hearing

A formal Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) section 810 subsistence hearing was subsequently held, and SAP members and the public were invited to go on the record with their comments on the Draft IAP/EIS. Several members of the public advocated for protection of the Icy Cape/Kasegaluk Lagoon area. Solly Hugo commented at length that there would be no way to mitigate impacts from development and that he believed it would represent an environmental justice issue. Joe Sage commented at length about how increased development offshore and a pipeline across the NPR-A will not be compatible with the culture and lifestyle of the people of the North Slope.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS and RECOMMENDATIONS to the BLM

Mary Lou Kippi said that she had already stated her thoughts at length during the meeting (with Shell and the North Slope Borough Planning Department) in Atqasuk.

Danny Pikok voiced his support for all the comments made during the meeting and stated that Kasegaluk Lagoon, as Point Lay's main source of food, should be protected.

Joe Sage spoke about the unique lifestyle of the Iñupiat and said that he prayed that the land would remain healthy. He stated that the people were concerned about every aspect of development and that he would do everything in his power to help the people and their subsistence lifestyle.

Qinugan Roddy reported that ICAS was particularly concerned with offshore development and is trying to oppose it and the proposed road to Umiat. She said that she and others are very concerned with the increase in helicopter traffic that will occur with Shell's studies and that people need to communicate and unite.

Solly Hugo spoke at length. He recommended that BLM attempt to be more precise when presenting the IAP/EIS alternatives. He recommended meetings where all community leaders would be brought together in order to alleviate meeting fatigue and the frustration of making similar comments repeatedly. Hugo said that offshore development in the Chukchi Sea poses a significant risk to coastal peoples and that industrial progress in the United States in general results in the death of indigenous cultures. He voiced his support for the SAP and hoped that Alaska's congressmen would respond to the SAP's comments and concerns. He reported that, since 1972, the TAPS has disrupted the Porcupine Caribou Herd's migration through the Brooks Range. He said that if a pipeline is built across the North Slope to transport offshore oil to TAPS, it would be devastating and that people who live the subsistence lifestyle would prefer to die.

Betty Kakinya supported all the comments others had made and also requested that BLM simplify presentation of the alternatives in the DEIS. She stated that Anaktuvuk Pass people are scared of the proposed road to Umiat, that it took them by surprise, and that her tribe was going to fight it. She does not want Anaktuvuk to end up with industrial development around it and she hoped that something good would come out of the meeting.

Chuck Ekak said that he has been involved with the Olgoonik Corporation but that it was his first time on the Subsistence Panel. "I have been called upon to participate, and I jumped in with both feet. I can do it." Ekak called for his people to unite, to ignore whatever impacts they may be experiencing as individuals, and do more than talk about it. He said that the way things are going, if allowed to continue, may drag them down but that they have the opportunity now to "stick our heart together."

Bart Ahsogeak requested that BLM provide a list of all permittees, especially guides, and geographic coordinates for all permitted activities in the NPR-A. He also complained that compartmentalization among federal agencies prohibits any progress on actions such as cleanup of contaminated sites and recommended that the agencies unite and move forward. Ahsogeak appreciates the freedom that has come with living in the NPR-A and is concerned that this freedom will be restricted when the land is "marked up".

The SAP decided that the next meeting should be held in Fairbanks in late October.