



**For Immediate Release
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Canadian Polar Commission and US Arctic Research Commission Participate in the US-Canada Northern Oil and Gas Research Forum

As part of their ongoing collaboration the Canadian Polar Commission (CPC) and the United States Arctic Research Commission (USARC) helped organize, and participated in, the Third Biennial US-Canada Northern Oil and Gas Research Forum held November 13-15 in Anchorage, Alaska.

Commissions Chairs Fran Ulmer (USARC) and Bernard Funston (CPC) presented remarks at the opening and concluding sessions of the Forum, which brought together experts from both countries -- key scientists, decision and policy-makers, regulators, industry representatives, and local representatives and other northerners -- to share knowledge, results and collaborative approaches regarding oil and gas research primarily in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The Forum provided an opportunity for participants to discuss knowledge gaps, current and future research priorities, access to research, and the links between research and informed decision-making toward sustainable oil and gas development that will benefit northerners.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Ulmer reminded the audience that “safety should be the core priority in oil and gas development,” and that “the uniqueness and vulnerabilities of the Northern environment require us to do business differently, using a high level of expertise to make it all work.” Mr. Funston noted that “Canada and the US share this unique environment, and initiatives such as the Canadian-led Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment have generated effective collaborations between our two countries.” He also reminded the participants of the importance of the Aboriginal and local perspectives expressed throughout the forum’s discussions.

Importantly, access to and incorporation of indigenous traditional knowledge was discussed throughout the forum. Both Commissions agree that, while the significance of indigenous traditional knowledge is now broadly accepted, there remains a need to create and improve a reliable and trusted system to gather and effectively use it.

In their concluding remarks, both chairs stressed the importance of the research community’s ability and capacity to adapt to a fiscal world with shrinking research funding. Research institutions on both sides of the border will need to work together, in a coordinated fashion, to maximize research funding and use knowledge gaps to establish science priorities.

Both also agreed that by taking a coordinated and mutually reinforcing approach to northern oil and gas research, “we can promote social and economic development across the North, while still protecting the region’s environmental heritage – which has no borders.”

In conclusion, both the CPC and USARC commit to working together to provide guidance and assistance to each country's institutions in ensuring that results-based research generates pertinent knowledge towards informed resource development decision-making continues.

In anticipation of a full report from the 2012 Forum, a brief initial joint summary of some of the key points and conclusions heard by the Forum's Organizing Committee is attached.

Information pertaining to the Third US-Canada Northern Oil and Gas Research Forum can be accessed at the US North Slope Science Initiative Web site:

www.northslope.org/event/forum2012

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Media Contacts:

Kathy Farrow, 703-525-0112, kfarrow@arctic.gov

Marc Meloche, 613-947-6462, marc.meloche@polarcom.gc.ca

Initial Joint Summary of Key Points and Conclusions
Heard by the Forum's Organizing Committee
Third Biennial US-Canada Northern Oil and Gas Research Forum
November 13-15 in Anchorage, Alaska

- Information exchange and sharing across all stakeholder groups has improved since the first US-Canada Northern Oil and Gas Research Forum, but much more remains to be accomplished. Many examples of cooperation were presented at the Forum, such as the fishery projects sponsored by the Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment initiative (Canada) and the US Trans-boundary Fisheries Survey. We can and should continue to learn and build from these successes.
- Research and monitoring need to be conducted at multiple temporal and spatial scales, so stakeholders can detect short-term local patterns and differentiate these from long-term regional or circumpolar patterns.
- Expanding community-based observational monitoring could provide early indications of changes related to climate and development so that managers/regulators can better incorporate these into decision-making and evaluation of cumulative changes. Long-term monitoring in both natural and social environments is essential to understanding changing conditions and adaptations. This requires predictable and secure funding.
- On the issue of accessibility, transparency, and application of northern/Arctic knowledge/data, it is recognized that recent years have seen an expanded effort to generate information about this region. However, to share this information and synthesize it in a meaningful way, government, industry and academic institutions are encouraged to undertake new collaboration “outside the box.” We are now seeing the beginning of new practices, protocols and approaches in data sharing such as: the establishment of “Portals” presenting historical and real-time information; spatial tools for layering data; interactive maps; establishing networks of observation such as the Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS).
- Traditional knowledge is uniformly important. Improved transparency and access to traditional knowledge might be accomplished by establishing a reliable, consistent, and trusted system for gathering and using it.
- Communicating effectively about research and science requires an understanding of the various audiences/clients of the research data and related products. Understanding the information needs of specific stakeholders and tailoring communications to suit will strengthen the relevance and meaning of data and related products. Transparency and sharing increases the value of knowledge.
- Throughout Forum deliberations, some representatives from local communities expressed concerns and uncertainty about current and potential oil and gas development in their regions, increasing shipping in northern waters, and the capacity for government and industry to respond adequately to spills and other pollution. There is a consistent concern

around sustaining traditional subsistence lifestyles and the risks to traditional food supply and harvesting.

- Communities and local experts also need to be involved early in planning research activities and can contribute to the actual design, development, conduct, and implementation of a study or research activity.
- The US and Canada share many similar concerns and issues as more attention is focused on the Arctic and we need to embrace change as we move ahead together. We must identify tangible approaches to collaboration to address our common interests. Clearly, we need to continue building and strengthening relationships and trust across all sectors and stakeholders. Progress is being made in this area.
- While the Forum is unique in bringing together those who generate knowledge, those who make management decisions related to oil and gas development in the North, and those who live in the region – all in the spirit of sharing and cooperation - it can also serve as a catalyst for people to work together who might not otherwise do so.