

Svalbard Science Forum

Svalbard Science Forum board meeting 1/2011

Research Council of Norway, Oslo
12 May 2011

Participants:

Karin Refsnes, The Research Council of Norway, (RCN) (chair)
Kim Holmén, Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI)
Gunnar Sand, The University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS)
Hallvar Gisnås, Kings Bay AS (KB)
Paal Berg, Ny-Ålesund Science Managers Committee (NySMAC) – part of the meeting
Piotr Glowacki, Polish Polar Station, Hornsund
Sergey Priamikov, Arctic & Antarctic Institute (representing Barentsburg Research Stations)
Guri Tveito, The Governor of Svalbard (SMS) – part of the meeting
Christiane Hübner, Svalbard Science Forum (SSF)

Absent: LySEF

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Adoption of the minutes from last meeting

The minutes from the last meeting were adopted under the prerequisite to change the NySMAC chapter according to the input given by KB and NySMAC.

3. New information from SSF-partners on matters relevant to SSF

NPI: *NPI is partner in 2 SFF proposals; Fram Centre has developed 3 flagships; high activity of NPI in Svalbard; reorganization of research department at NPI*

* NPI is partner in 2 proposals for a Research Centre of Excellence (SFF): a) Centre for marine biology (based on ARCTOS); b) Pollutants & ecotoxicology; leading scientist from NPI

* FramCentre in Tromsø: mission is research in Northern areas, Svalbard is part of this and increased activities of institutes from Tromsø in Svalbard can be expected; three centre flagships: a) Ice & shipping, b) Ocean acidification, c) Ecotoxicology

* NPI presence in Svalbard and use of Lance has increased due to the Ice Centre

* NPI will have 50 person years in Svalbard in 2011 and activities are still increasing – in spite of the end of IPY.

* The research department at NPI is being reorganized: it has been doubled within the last 10 years; the position of the research director will be divided into two positions: an administrative research director and a director for international & strategic issues. Holmén will take over the latter and will move to Longyearbyen in September.

Barentsburg: *There is progress in the development of the Science Centre in Barentsburg; workboat Barentsburg is ready for use; new members in the State Spitsbergen Commission*

- * Science Centre in Barentsburg: the contract with construction company is signed to reconstruct the existing research facilities
- * A satellite receiving station is planned with three basements for antennas. Priamikov asked for advice concerning application procedures and it was recommended to contact SMS.
- * Completed spring activities include fast-ice investigations (N-RUS cooperation) and investigations in Petuniabukta
- * Workboat Barentsburg: is repaired and ready for use; it will be used for oceanographic transects
- * The State Spitsbergen Commission had a meeting on 28 April (last meeting was in 2009) and has a new head and members. Priamikov will report on changes and development at next meeting

UNIS: *Renewal of agreement with mainland universities; increasing student production; UNIS part of a SFF and partner in 2 further proposals; new Centre for research-based innovation SACME; guest house operative in August*

- * In 1994, UNIS was set up as agreement of collaboration with mainland universities. Now this agreement is renewed and updated; 7 universities will be part of the agreement (new: Bodø, Stavanger, Ås); the main difference will be that research cooperation will be included in the agreement; very likely that SIOS will be included as well (facilitating role of UNIS towards SIOS); UNIS as the polar extension of Norwegian universities; revision phase: March – September; signing of agreement in September.
- * UNIS is in the process of getting better funding for student production: there is an increase in younger people in the future and the government plans to increase the resources and thus, UNIS gets its share
- * Current growth at UNIS: 20 student years/year. UNIS increases the number of courses (not places, due to field work constraints) in close cooperation with universities. Decision for 6 new courses due in June.
- * UNIS is a partner in a Research Centre of Excellence (SFF)/Centre for Environment-friendly Energy Research (CO₂ project) with, beside others, the Univ. of Oslo and Bergen.
- * UNIS is part of 2 proposals for further SFF's: a) Centre for marine biology (based on ARCTOS), leading scientist from UNIS; b) Space physics
- * Arctic Technology is growing at UNIS, but also at other partners
- * UNIS is part of a new centre for research-based innovation: Sustainable Arctic Coastal and Marine Technology (SACME). SACME is led and hosted by NTNU and will mainly investigate ice mechanics; funded by 200 Mio NOK over 8 years; lot of fieldwork in Svalbard and Barents Sea; it is important to include technology into research
- * The UNIS guest house will be operational in August and will contain 52 living units; researchers from institutions with an agreement with UNIS will be able to book accommodation through the UNIS reception
- * The student housing facilities in Nybyen is reaching its capacity and UNIS is in the process of finding new housing; one possibility would be to rent old buildings and rebuild them

NySMAC: *Report from last NySMAC meeting*

Berg reported from the NySMAC meeting in Seoul, 28 March 2011. Agenda points were:

- * Resource allocation and potential conflicts of interests (co-ordination of high season): groups can have positive synergy effects, but large groups also create negative impact on the environment.
- * Information about the new demands for research applications from SMS
- * Status report for SIOS
- * International student camp

- * Monitoring of local environment evaluation from the working group: data from NILU were presented (general low levels of pollutants, ships east of Ny-Ålesund are easily visible in the data); EIA action points should be part of an initiative KB has started on limiting human impact in Ny-Ålesund
- * Rules for operations of unmanned free balloons at Ny-Ålesund: there was some confusion on about whom to contact and SSF was suggested as the natural starting point
- * Information about the management plan for eastern areas
- * The next NySMAC meeting will take place in Kjeller on 26/27 October 2011; the 10th Ny-Ålesund seminar will take place in Kjeller 24-26 October 2011
- * Paal Berg was re-elected as chairman for NySMAC

Kings Bay A/S: *High research activity in 2010 and 2011 so far; new director Ole Øiseth starts 1 July; fibre optic cable will be put in place probably in 2013; NMA continues process of planning two new VLBI antennas; Amundsen Villa will be reopened 28 May*

- * In 2010, Ny-Ålesund had 13669 researcher days and 50% of the activity took place in summer (June-August).
- * So far in 2011: 3100 researcher days; unusual high activity in April due to the project VAUUAV; lot of cooperation between stations
- * KB has a new director: Ole Øiset (background: arm, NATO, station commander at Jan Mayen); he will start 1 July
- * The new storage hall will be operational in June
- * KB has taken over the diesel tanks from ESSO and Statoil will deliver fuel and the requested protective measures will be taken
- * SMS has given permission for the fibre cable; it will be put in place probably in 2013
- * The Norwegian Mapping Authority (NMA) continues the planning of their new antennas. Funding for the fibre optic cable and the development project is in place, but there is no funding for the VLBI antennas themselves yet; if funded, the antennas are planned to be operative in 2015; the assessment of environmental impact will be out for hearing very soon and SMS will decide on the permission for building the antenna in autumn 2011.
- * The 5th Ny-Ålesund Symposium will take place on 26-28 May 2011 (topic: Towards a green economy: the role of technology)
- * The Amundsen Villa will be re-opened on 28 May 2011 after considerable renovation
- * KB has sharpened the request for the RiS ID prior to booking and now all projects need to register the project in the RiS database

Hornsund: *High polish activity at Hornsund and Svalbard in general; Polish funding agency requests RiS-ID; agreement on use of 6 huts in Sør-Spitsbergen between SMS and Hornsund working well*

- * For 2011, 70 polish researchers will work in Svalbard (excl. Hornsund) during spring and summer; UAM, Poszan: will establish two transportable huts in Petuniabukta, since they are no longer allowed to use Skottehytta; Univ Gdansk: will use tents in Magdalenafjorden; UMCS, Lublin: will start a new project in Calypsobyen
- * 70% more money for research
- * Horyzont II will come twice to Svalbard: 5-13 July and 19-27 August
- * There will be 10 people overwintering in Hornsund next winter (last winter: 7 crew members)
- * Total person days in Svalbard for 2011: 5570; for Hornsund: 1630 (many nations, incl. Spain, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Czech Rep.)

- * All researchers have registered their projects in the RiS database; the main funding agency does not give grants without a RiS-ID
- * SMS and the Polish polar research committee made an agreement on the use of 6 huts in Sør-Spitsbergen; researchers need to apply, information (who, where, what) is sent to SMS. It is still in the test-phase but it is working well until now.
- * The Polish Committee for Polar Research will present Polish research in Svalbard (not only IGPAS and Hornsund), the secretary will still be Glowacki.

SMS: *Ongoing work on management plan for eastern areas; SMS welcomes strengthened SSF*

- * Work on the management plan for eastern areas in Svalbard continues; the working groups have delivered their reports and some data have been collected on the environmental status of the area; the writing of the document has started and the reference group will meet next week
- * SMS is pleased about the strengthening of SSF and hopes to be able to use SSF as a base of knowledge

RCN: *Increased budget and activity at SSF from 2011 onwards*

- * Received 45 Mio NOK for polar activities in 2011; 5 Mio NOK are dedicated to SSF. Thus, the yearly budget of SSF is now 8 Mio NOK/year; this results in three employees at the secretariat (Christiane Hübner (continued), Karoline Bælum (from 1 August), Hallvard Pedersen (from 1 Oct)) and a revised mandate (will be translated as soon as it is adopted)
- * Comment UNIS: there is already a lot of cooperation happening and new initiatives should be thought through thoroughly. SSF should plug into already existing activities rather than making own plans/activities
- * Comment NPI: the current workshops and other activities aim already to find synergies in ongoing research

Action: UNIS will prepare a discussion paper to be discussed at the next meeting

4. Work report from the SSF secretariat

Hübner reported the activities of the SSF secretariat since the last meeting in October 2010.

RiS portal: development is delayed due to limited personnel capacity at the secretariat; the official name for the combined RiS database module, SMS application module and Ny-Ålesund booking module is RiS portal and all members should use only this name from now on; in December 2010 SSF had a workshop on design and user friendliness, which resulted in the new layout; first programming has started (RiS database module); development in close dialogue with NPI, KB, SMS, Statistics Norway; help from researchers and logistic personnel from NPI and UNIS – test users, quality control

Arctic Field Grant: 61 applications for field period 2011; 1 was withdrawn, 2 rejected and 58 accepted; 22 researchers, 36 students were funded (2 779 Mio NOK).

International Student Camp: large interest within NySMAC, but potential conflict with peak season and KB commented on the high number of participants. Thus, a ‘test camp’ will be held in 2012 with 1 student (16 years old) and 1 teacher from 6 nations.

Flagship report ‘Atmosphere research’: the concluding document has finally been published; all partners are invited to use it!

5. Workshops 2011

Geology of Svalbard: The workshop took place in Tromsø, 27-29 April 2011, the planning group consisted of Matthias Forwick (UiT), Dorthe Klitgaard Kristensen (NPI), Riko Noormets (UNIS), Grzegorz Rachlewicz (UAM, Poland) and Marzena Kaczmarek (SSF), and 22 geologists from 10 countries participated. The topic was ‘Environmental changes in

Svalbard since the last glacial maximum – integrating marine and terrestrial records’ with the aim to bring together terrestrial and marine geologists. The participants presented their current work and future plans and identified potential areas of interest and possibilities for joined research in the future. The group was very positive to the possibilities SSF offers, both in terms of network building facilitation, channel to authorities and future funding possibilities. One outcome of the workshop is the plan to implement a collaborative effort with transect-based observations in 4-5 key locations for modern processes in geology and a fieldtrip to those key locations is already in planning for next year.

Glaciology flagship Ny-Ålesund: The workshop will take place at Sommarøy, 30 May – 2 June 2011. The planning group consists of Jack Kohler (NPI), Andy Hodson (Univ Sheffield), Irek Sobota (UMK, Poland), Jan Ove Hagen (UiO) and Marzena Kaczmarska (SSF). The topic will be ‘Ny-Ålesund glaciology – future opportunities and constraints’ and the aim is to improve collaboration and discuss a potential flagship programme for glaciology in Ny-Ålesund.

Land-Based Snow and Ice: This workshop will take place in autumn. Planning has not started yet.

6. Future workshop topics

Several potential workshop topics were discussed, including ‘Ornithology in Svalbard’, ‘Carbon cycle (marine & terrestrial)’, ‘permafrost & coastal line’ (in connection with SACME, see agenda point 3, UNIS), ‘physical marine research and the coordination of use of equipment as moorings, UAV etc’, and ‘Zackenberg & Nuuk – what can we learn for Svalbard’. NPI commented that Zackenberg & Nuuk may be an important topic, since there is a great interest in cooperation between Greenland and Svalbard. There is a potential for direct flights with Dornier-machines between Longyearbyen – Iceland – Zackenberg, which would facilitate cooperation.

Action: SSF secretariat will prepare an email to be distributed by the board, requesting suggestions for future workshop topics. Topics for workshops in 2011 will be decided at the board meeting in October.

7. Letters from/to the Governor of Svalbard (SMS)

Use of cabins: SSF sent a request for clarification of rules and conditions for use of existing infrastructure (cabins) by research groups SMS on 19 July 2010. SMS answered with a letter on 4 January 2011, stating that ‘cabins should not be lent out for research purpose, unless special reasons exist. Such special reasons may be research projects where the Governor is the contractor or contributor.’ SMS gave additional details to this letter. The answer is based on an internal regulation from 2009 and is, beside others, a result of unfortunate experiences with culture heritage cabins that were not taken good care off. SMS also states that this ‘no’ is not absolute and that there are exceptions, like the agreement with the polish research station in Hornsund and for ‘relevant’ research projects for the management of Svalbard. UNIS commented that it is difficult to distinguish between irrelevant and relevant research. SMS will evaluate this issue once more.

Logistical assistance: Also a request for clarification of conditions for use of SMS logistic resources by research groups was sent to SMS on 19 July 2010 and SMS was reminded to answer this letter. Contact person for such requests is police officer Eric Nygaard (erik.nygaard@sysselmannen.no).

New requests for research applications: SMS has published a list of requirements for the content of research applications in order to simplify the application process and processing.

The SSF board was informed about the content. The SSF secretariat has experienced that several foreign research groups were not familiar with this new requirements and the question aroused if the information channels used were sufficient (letter from SMS to address list, news on SSF webpage, agenda point at NySMAC meeting).

Action: SMS will inform SSF about the re-evaluation of the rules for cabin use and will answer the letter on logistical assistance. SSF will evaluate how to improve the information flow to the international research community.

8. Status ARCFAC

ARCFAC is finished. It was a successful form of stimulating new researchers into polar research and opening doors in Ny-Ålesund. It also profoundly increased cooperation between the stations.

9. Status SIOS

The Preparatory Phase is now 7 months ongoing and the progress is as planned.

10. Annual report

The annual report for 2010 was adopted without changes.

11. Other business

Glowacki asked for assistance for gasoline transport to Hornsund (30-40 barrels). NPI offered to look into potential solutions of the problem.

12. Date & place for next meeting

The next meeting will take place in Longyearbyen on Friday, 7 October 2011 (09:00 – 13:00) – back to back with the SIOS general assembly meeting.

Minutes written by C. Hübner