

Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Arctic Ocean Leadership Roundtable Highlights

December 4, 2014

In December 2014, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Co-Chairs Bill Ruckelshaus and Norm Mineta brought together a diverse group of more than 40 leaders, representing ocean-related industries, science and research, national security, conservation, native communities, and federal and state government for an Arctic Ocean Leadership Roundtable in Washington, DC. The meeting was organized by Meridian Institute, which serves as secretariat of the Joint Initiative. Laura Cantral from Meridian Institute served as lead facilitator.

This Roundtable focused on generating ideas about how local, state, and regional priorities can inform national Arctic policies and ways that national efforts can support local, state, and regional priorities. This was the first of several regional ocean leadership roundtables being organized by the Joint Initiative as part of its 2014-2017 strategy to develop a comprehensive national Ocean Action Agenda.

Discussion topics included how to support the United States as it assumes chairmanship of the Arctic Council, environment and climate change, commercial activities and the related infrastructure needs, and safety and security. Ideas offered focused both on actions that could be taken at various levels of government and on ways in which the Joint Initiative might help advance priorities. Ideas are organized below into three broad categories: (1) demonstrating leadership at home and abroad, (2) improving Arctic research and management, and (3) investing in ocean observing systems and infrastructure. The Joint Initiative appreciates the valuable input that was offered at the December meeting and looks forward to continuing part two of this dialogue in spring 2015 in Alaska.

Demonstrating leadership at home and abroad

- The federal government should focus on Arctic policy priorities beyond the scope of the Arctic Council
 - Implement the search and rescue and oil spill response agreements signed by the Arctic Council
 - Establish mechanisms for effectively partnering with Canada and Russia to build capacity for oil spill response, search and rescue, etc.
 - Strengthen the U.S.-Russia relationship around resource management and commercial activities
 - Accede to the Law of the Sea Convention
 - Designate maritime economic zones and marine protected areas
 - Implement and build from the National Strategy for the Arctic, Alaska Arctic Policy Commission report, IMO Polar Code, and the U.S. Coast Guard Port Access Route Studies
 - Work toward passing implementing legislation for port state measures
- The Joint Initiative could help lead the national conversation on “Why the Arctic matters”
 - Develop a strategy to educate new members of Congress and other key decision makers that communicates a sense of urgency, secures funding to support critical actions, and enhances political will to act on existing information
 - Connect the changes occurring in the Arctic to other U.S. states

- Elevate the policy priorities of the people living and working in the Arctic, establish a model for including the perspectives of Alaska natives in policy decision making, and develop a systematic inventory of Alaskan perspectives
- Catalyze public diplomacy effort focused on the health of the people and ecosystems in the Arctic
- Connect investment in the Arctic to U.S. national security, environmental stewardship, and global climate systems
- Utilize visual tools to capture the magnitude of the risks of inaction
- Organize a national Arctic summit around the 2016 Arctic Summit Week
- Articulate the issues in a non-polarizing, bipartisan manner and increase political will of key leaders to act on existing information and recommendations

Improving Arctic research and management

- The U.S. government should boost its support of Arctic research and management initiatives
 - Develop a central clearinghouse for information and conduct asset mapping to gather baseline scientific information and local knowledge
 - Enable the University of Alaska to play a key role in driving Arctic research
 - Establish a national center for oil spill research
 - Implement an Alaska Coastal Zone Management Program to establish a formal method for engaging coastal communities
 - Scale up existing efforts to strengthen minimum response capacity
- The Joint Initiative could play a key role in facilitating interdisciplinary, cross-sector discussions
 - Prioritize efforts across agencies and sectors on an Arctic research agenda, recognizing where progress has occurred and where the greatest needs remain
 - Build on preexisting work, including what has worked well in other U.S. regions and applying integrated management strategies from the ocean commissions
 - Engage broader business communities and ocean-related industries in discussions about risk management and infrastructure development
 - Facilitate discussions on waterways safety building upon the Coast Guard's efforts under its Arctic Waterways Safety Committee
 - Make human experiences, impacts, and resilience a focus of discussions about climate change and show what is at stake for the communities and resources of the Arctic and the risks associated with oil spills, climate change, ocean acidification, fisheries, etc.

Investing in ocean observing systems and infrastructure

- Federal, state, and local governments should focus on investing in critical infrastructure in the Arctic
 - Improve infrastructure to meet basic needs and improve quality of life of Alaskan communities including, water and sewage systems, healthcare, workforce development, and telecommunications
 - Promote industry sharing of environmental observing data with more efforts similar to NOAA's private industry agreement
 - Consider an Arctic regional seas agreement to advance collaborative observation and monitoring
 - Ensure that local "boots on the ground" have the training and capacity to assist in implementation of strategies (e.g. oil spill response)

- Enhance maritime domain awareness and surveillance by coordinating with Russia to participate in the maritime safety and security information system
- Improve weather and ocean forecasting by establishing an international Arctic forecasting center
- Scale existing initiatives such as the Arctic Water Ways Safety Committee
- The Joint Initiative could assist in improving coordination with and engagement of the private sector
 - Coordinate discussions on basic infrastructure needs, regulating shipping lanes, and cruise ship pollution in the Arctic
 - Stimulate and coordinate private sector investment, including public-private partnerships
 - Engage the tourism, shipping, commercial fishing, and oil and gas industries , as well as oil and gas in conversations about infrastructure development and risk management
 - Facilitate efforts to define the parameters of “responsible development”
 - Enhance understanding of the various types of maritime traffic and the associated risks with each and communicate these risks to relevant communities and decision makers
 - Promote and build from innovative and cost-efficient data collecting efforts such as the XPrize and Google to engage with a broader community

Appendix A: December 4 Arctic Roundtable Participant List

Participant List

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