

SAON Governance Review

Workshop #4 – Engagement with Arctic Council Working Groups

September 16th, 2021

Background and Context

As SAON moves forward, there are an increasing number of global and regional efforts that could have an impact on how SAON will evolve over the coming years. It was determined by the SAON Board that it would be valuable to organize a series of virtual workshops to discuss various options and recommendations surrounding SAON governance.

This fourth workshop on SAON governance focused on engagement with the Arctic Council Working Groups (ACWGs) and was organized under three broad objectives. The first objective was to continue to improve ties between the ACWGs and SAON. The second objective was to seek synergies and collaboration between SAON and the SAON ROADS process with the ACWGs. The final objective of the workshop was to increase understanding of the potential roles of the ACWGs and the SAON ROADS Process. These objectives were incorporated into the three-hour workshop (see Annex 1 Agenda). This virtual workshop had excellent engagement from 25 participants from across all ACWGs and the SAON Executive (see Annex 2 Participant Listing).

To establish a common level of knowledge amongst the workshop participants a series of presentations were made to set-the-stage for the following discussions. The opening presentation provided background and context on the need for improved collaboration in Arctic observations and referenced the SAON External Review (2016) which noted in its findings the need for improved coordination between SAON and the ACWGs; the meeting of CAFF's Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program's Marine Steering Group in 2020, expressed interest in collaboration with SAON; as well as messaging from the Senior Arctic Officials meeting, November 2020 that spoke to the need for SAON to focus on concrete actions. A deeper understanding of each other's activities would facilitate improved coordination.

The second presentation provided an overview of SAON and details on the ROADS process including the proposed approach to the Advisory Panel, Expert Panels, and Shared Arctic Variables (SAVs). This provided an in-depth look at the emerging ROADS process that served as background for later discussions. The ROADS guiding principles emphasized that the process should complement and integrate the planning approaches used by existing networks (regional to global), activities and projects; as well as the criticality for Indigenous Peoples' equitable partnership and funding for their active participation. A third guiding principle is that all aspects of the ROADS process should support broadly shared benefit from the observing and data systems. The SAVs need to be developed at the intersection of three aspects: Regionally

identified science and decision-making needs; Essential variables from global observing networks; and Indigenous-led benefit identification.

The final six presentations were a series from each of the ACWGs (ACAP, AMAP, CAFF/CBMP, EPPR, PAME, and SDWG¹) that provided an overview of each WG's roles and responsibilities with a focus on their activities with regards to observing and monitoring data. Each of these short presentations addressed the questions: What are your scientific needs for observations/monitoring data? What data is needed to conduct ACWG activities and assessments (e.g. accessible, interoperable, etc.)? In addition, there was a short presentation on the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure initiative that referenced Arctic data policy efforts that are being undertaken.

Discussion:

The overview presentations made at the Workshop served to increase the understanding of the ACWGs, in addition to SAON and the ROADS process. Following the presentations, there was an opportunity for general discussion on seeking a way forward to increase collaboration. The discussion was centred on the following questions: How could the ACWGs benefit from SAON and the SAON ROADS process? How can SAON increase the ACWG engagement in the ROADS process? What further actions or adaptations are needed to gain synergies and collaboration between SAON and the SAON ROADS process with the ACWGs? There was good discussion on the opportunities to collaborate that would focus on gaps of knowledge and address the points of intersection of efforts amongst all participating organizations. These possible opportunities were described as the tip of the very large iceberg of potential connections that could be further explored.

Key Findings

- This first workshop between SAON Executive and the Chairs/Executive Secretaries of the ACWGs was seen as ***an initial step in increasing the understanding*** of each other's work. Opportunities for regular and ongoing dialogue should be sought so as to build on this shared level of understanding and enable the identification of actions to advance each other's mandate, strategic plans, and objectives. It was noted that collaborative efforts should be sharply focused to get the most benefit from limited financial and human resources.
- The ***ACWGs have an impressive scope of work activities*** with a great capacity to harness efforts and move forward. It would be valuable to create a succinct invitation to the ACWGs

¹ ACAP – Arctic Contaminants Action Program; AMAP – Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program; CAFF – Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CBMP – Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program); EPPR – Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response; PAME – Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment; and SDWG – Sustainable Development Working Group.

to explore and understand where they might fit into the SAON ROADS process. This might necessitate both high-level/senior advisor engagement and communication around the SAON ROADS process.

- The willingness to collaborate across ACWGs and the SAON ROADS process will **require both practical actions as well as sufficient resources** to enable the work to proceed. It was emphasized that individuals are stretched to capacity now and that there is limited ability to take on new actions. With limited resources, there is a necessity to be very focused with requests. It was suggested that once collaborative actions were identified these could be taken back to the WGs.
- SAON and the ACWGs all share a **deep acknowledgement of the need to work closely with, and respond to priorities of, Indigenous groups and Permanent participants**. Several organizations are considering means of addressing this need and opportunities to work collaboratively exist. For example, CAFF's processes for improved Indigenous engagement and CBMP Coastal Steering Group's work on co-production of knowledge.
- It was noted that **new initiatives must be careful to not re-create or duplicate efforts**. By working more closely together, synergies can be identified and duplication avoided. Consideration should be given to mapping synergies and gaps amongst the various Arctic observing initiatives. It would also be beneficial to be aware of the strategic directions and high level objectives of both the ACWGs and SAON.
- It was observed that **collaboration is increasingly occurring amongst the ACWGs** in recognition of shared priorities. This collaboration should expand further across the ACWGs and with SAON. The lack of resources across initiatives and organizations working in the Arctic was noted as an ongoing hindrance to designing collaborative work.
- **Reports produced by many of the WGs include recommendations that highlight the data needs and knowledge gaps** in assessment work. These **could be examined** to identify possible topics for use in the ROADS process. The opportunities presented by these data needs and gaps could be synthesized and captured into one document.
- The **need for clear outreach and communication was noted as a priority** across the ACWGs and SAON. Together, innovative ways to reach out could be identified and implemented. There is also a need to be very clear in the requests for collaboration and assistance. This clarity should be reflected in the communications material with the general public targeted as one of the audiences. Easy and understandable messages should be the focus of this work. The recording of the presentation by Sandy Starkweather (describing the ROADS Process) was cited as an excellent resource and that this link should be distributed more broadly. This material would be valuable in continuing to reach out and educate the ACWGs.

- All **ACWGs have a seat in the SAON Board and are welcome to attend the SAON Board meetings and in engage in the ROADS initiatives**. It is recognized that there are limited resources and while ACWG representatives are not always available to participate in every initiative of SAON, it would be valuable to have representatives participate on the SAON Board that guides and directs the SAON ROADS process. It will be very important to have the ACWG perspective on the ROADS Advisory Process and integrating ACWG activities into the ROADS work.
- As the SAON ROADS initiative continues to move forward, there is a need to establish the ROADS Advisory Panel. The **call for nominations for members of the ROADS Advisory Panel** is out at this time. Participants at the workshop were asked to consider names of individuals who might serve on this Advisory Panel.

Possible Opportunities to Collaborate:

There were many specific topics discussed that could be pursued as opportunities for SAON and the ACWGs to collaborate. By working together and by sharing knowledge and best practices SAON, the SAON ROADS process and the ACWGs would be able to make the most effective use of resources. These topics for further discussion and collaboration include the following:

- It was suggested that collaboration could occur around Arctic observing topics such as Wildfires, Permafrost, Ocean Acidification, or Climate Change. One proposal suggested a **SAON ROADS Expert Panel could be formed on Wildfires and that it could be led by the relevant ACWG**. It was noted there is coordinated wildfire work currently ongoing across ACWGs that would need to be taken into consideration in the development of such a proposal. Other new emerging potential threats are being observed in the Arctic (e.g. micro plastics) where strategies for monitoring will need to be developed.
- The **Arctic PASSION project** is a multi-million Euro funded project that has over thirty partners. SAON is involved in Arctic PASSION and concrete benefits could be gained in the project with the active engagement of the ACWGs. There are specific opportunities relating to ACWG engagement as well as the SAVs efforts. A pilot service on Wildfires is planned within the Arctic PASSION project.
- ACWGs (e.g. AMAP) are looking at developing a range of **indicators that could be used as metrics** in measuring Arctic observing priorities of Permanent Participants, policy makers, etc. There are opportunities for SAON and the ACWGs to collaborate in this work.
- Observing techniques, such as **satellite observations and remote sensing, are not perhaps fully integrated into observing networks**. This is an area for possible collaborative exploration.

- Further ***discussions on the subject of Arctic data would be beneficial***, particularly between the SAON Arctic Data Committee (ADC) and the ASDI. For example, collaboration on an Arctic Data Policy, which could include the implementation of the FAIR principles (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability).
- SDWG addresses the ***human dimension of the Arctic*** and expressed interest in looking at opportunities to collaborate on the type of data needed for these studies.
- It was noted that the ***CBMP program of CAFF is an area where synergies with SAON could be explored***. Options for collaboration relate to the development of Societal Benefit Areas and Focal Ecosystem Components identified in the CBMP ecosystem monitoring plans. It was also noted that the ***Arctic Biodiversity Congress*** is scheduled for 2023 and that this could be a venue where the ACWGs and SAON ROADS could come together, host side meetings and workshops to advance the collaboration. There will be an ***Advisory Panel*** formed for the Congress and would be good to have a SAON representative join that Panel to provide input into the content and themes etc. for the event.

ANNEX 1: AGENDA

SAON Governance Review

Workshop #4 – Engagement with Arctic Council Working Groups

Date: September 16th 2021, 16-19 CET / 10am–1pm EST

**Champion: Catherine Coon, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management,
U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Delegate to CAFF and Chair of CBMP**

Objectives of workshop:

- 1) *To continue to improve ties between the Arctic Council Working Groups (ACWGs) and SAON*
- 2) *To seek synergies and collaboration between SAON and the SAON ROADS process with the ACWGs*
- 3) *To increase understanding of the potential roles of the ACWGs and the SAON ROADS Process*

Agenda

10:00 Introductions

10:05 Reference to the Code of Conduct <https://www.assw2020.is/code-of-conduct>

10:10 Review and confirmation of above workshop objectives

Part A - Background and Context on the Need for Improved Collaboration

10:15 *Presenter: Jan Rene Larsen and Cathy Coon*

- SAON External Review, 2016
- Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Plan (CBMP) meeting, Nuuk, Greenland
- Senior Arctic Officials meeting, November 2020

Part B – Overview of SAON and the ROADS Process

10:35 Highlights of SAON and the ROADS process, proposed approach, etc. (15 minutes and 10 minutes questions) – *Presenter: Sandy Starkweather*

- The SAON ROADS Process, including the concept of the Advisory Panel, Expert Panels, and Shared Arctic Variables
- Clarification questions

Part C – Background on the Arctic Council Working Groups

Presenters: The six ACWGs

11:00 Overview of the ACWGs, their roles and responsibilities with a focus on their needs for observing and monitoring data (5 minutes each).

Participants from the ACWGs will be asked to give a 5 min presentation, with each addressing the following questions:

- What are your scientific needs for observations/monitoring data?
- What data is needed to conduct ACWG activities and assessments (e.g. accessible, interoperable, etc.)?
- What are ACWG expectations of SAON and the ROADS process?

The six ACWGs are proposed to speak: ACAP, AMAP, CAFF/CBMP, EPPR, PAME, and SDWG.

Presentation on data policy (Peter Pouplier, Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI) and The Danish Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency) (5 min)

11:30 Short Break

Part D – Discussion of a Way Forward to Increase Collaboration

11:45 Discussion of the following questions

- *How could the AC WGs benefit from SAON and the SAON ROADS process?*
- *How can SAON increase the ACWG engagement in the ROADS process? (e.g. recruitment into ROADS Expert Panels).*
- *What further actions or adaptations are needed to gain synergies and collaboration between SAON and the SAON ROADS process with the ACWGs.*

12:45 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Participants (approximately 20)

- Representatives from ACWGs (WG Chairs and Secretariat): ACAP, AMAP, CAFF/CBMP, EPPR, PAME, and SDWG.
- A representative from the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure (ASDI).
- SAON Executive Committee

Pre-reads:

- Recording/video of presentation by Sandy Starkweather to the SAOs on the ROADS process (SAON chair) (5min): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mMNCYgzzX7BvFBG3eSLI0B|pzW3WnG-/view?usp=sharing>
- SAON ROADS Process paper as submitted to the journal *Arctic*: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E-xCed7BsBUr7ThadK6N8MFy0D9iIYDt?usp=sharing>

- The SAON Strategy:
https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Strategy_and_Implementation/SAON_Strategy_2018-2028_version_16MAY2018.pdf
- SAON External Review, 2016, in particular Findings and Recommendations #4 and #6:
https://www.arcticobserving.org/images/pdf/Review/SAON-External-Review-Final-Report_August-29-2016.pdf

ANNEX 2

SAON ACWG Workshop – List of Participants

Affiliation	Name	Institution and Address	Phone	e-mail
Arctic Council Working Groups				
ACAP Chair	Patrick Huber	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency		huber.patrick@epa.gov
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