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To: EPPR
From: WWF

Project Proposal for EPPR and PAME 2015-2017 work plans: Linking Ecosystem-Based Management and Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas decision-making

1. Project title:

Linking Ecosystem-Based Management and Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas decision-making

2. Project Overview/Objective:

The objective of this joint EPPR/PAME project is to identify national approaches to the use of the Ecosystem Approach in offshore oil and gas decision-making related to oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response.

3. Lead Organization:

To be decided

4. Point of Contact:

To be decided

(The name, phone number, and email address of the individual(s) leading the project.)

5. Background information/ rationale:

The proposed project will facilitate EPPR's engagement in the Ecosystem Approach (EA). PAME established an expert group on the Ecosystem Approach to Management (EA-EG). In 2011, the group was broadened to include other Arctic Council working groups (AMAP, CAFF and SDWG). Thus far, EPPR has not been involved in the EA-EG. The Nuuk Ministerial tasked an Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) expert group with making recommendations in this area, as well. The Report submitted to the SAOs by the Expert Group on EBM in May 2013 identified no existing or planned EBM-related projects by EPPR. Thus, it is particularly important to foster collaboration with the EPPR working group in the Ecosystem Approach.

The proposed project will help inform the development of prevention and response plans. Although the EA aims to address the cumulative impacts of multiple human activities (rather than individual sectors), management decisions are often made by sectoral agencies. The Best Practices for Ecosystem-based Oceans Management provides some examples of how Arctic countries incorporate the EA into sectoral decision-making. However, Arctic governments would benefit from additional assessment and examples of how the EA is incorporated specifically into offshore oil and gas decision-making, and more specifically in the prevention and response context.

The proposed project will contribute to the development of the Ecosystem Approach. Much of the work on the EA to date has been on three of the six elements of the framework for implementing the EA: identifying the ecosystem (through definitions and geographical boundaries), describing the ecosystem (through identification of scientific and sociological information), and assessing the ecosystem (such as integrated environmental assessments). The remaining three elements of the EA have received less attention: setting ecological objectives, valuing the ecosystem, and managing human activities in an adaptive manner. Each of these elements is relevant to the work of EPPR and PAME and can be furthered through this project. For example, for EPPR, the use of ecological objectives and ecosystem valuation can guide the prioritization of

prevention, preparedness, and response measures, or inform questions about trade-offs between response measures, such whether to approve the use of dispersants.

The EA can also help identify where response efforts should be focused, for use in oil spill preparedness and response plans. For example, in the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic, oil spill response plans must take into account “locales most likely to give rise to or suffer an oil pollution incident and anticipated risks to areas of special ecological significance” and include “a minimum level of pre-positioned oil spill combating equipment.” (Article 4). The EA approach can help to identify these areas.

The EA can also provide information that supports prevention and response decision-making, including the information for exchange under Appendix V of the Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response Agreement, such as “environmental mapping including data that may be relevant for considering environmental effects,” “spill trajectory monitoring and modeling,” and “response tactics including mechanical recovery, in-situ burning and use of dispersants or other countermeasures, including information on the operational benefits and limits associated with the use of these tactics.”

As noted by the IMO/EPPR Guide to Oil Spill Response in Snow and Ice Conditions, the EA can also inform our understanding of biological effects of oil spills on population and on community structure.

Additional collaboration between Arctic Council working groups is important as PAME’s EA-EG has developed an important body of work relating to the EA, and is committed to additional work to develop all the elements of the EA. Addressing the EA in oil and gas decision-making will provide a valuable opportunity for continued cross-fertilization between Arctic Council working groups in the development of the EA.

6. Detailed Description: A detailed description of the proposed project goals, milestones, implementation strategies, etc.

December 2014	The draft project proposal to be discussed following EPPR II 2014
December 2014-February 2015	The project plan further developed in coop with the Arctic states, PP’s and observers. A scoping workshop back to back with the PAME meeting in February 2015 might be a good venue for the preparations. Other options should also be discussed.
March 2015	Project plan approved by the SAOs and submitted to AC Ministerial meeting
March 2015-June 2015	Application for funding of the project
June 2015 – March 2017	Project work according to final and approved project plan
May 2017	The final report, guidance document etc. reported at the Ministerial meeting in US

7. Funding:

It is currently difficult to estimate. Must be further clarified during the development of the final project plan.

8. Link to EPPR Mission / Strategic Plan and broader Arctic Council policy frameworks

The proposal fits into the Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) mandate to address the prevention of, preparedness for and response to environmental emergencies in the Arctic that result from human activities. The proposal will contribute to achieving the four objectives as outlined in the EPPR Strategic Plan Framework. The proposal also fits into the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) mandate to address policy and non-emergency pollution prevention and control measures related to the protection of the Arctic marine environment from both land- and sea-based activities.

In addition, this project would support Arctic Council recommendations to further develop the EA in the management context, and specifically for oil and gas decision-making. The final report of the EBM Expert Group includes a recommendation for periodic reviews of EBM in the Arctic to exchange information on assessment and “management experiences, including highlighting examples from Arctic States.”

Moreover, the proposal will contribute to achieving Goal 2 of the Arctic Council Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025 as one of the Strategic Actions (7.2.1bis) is to “synthesize and use the results of past, current and future Arctic Council and other pertinent assessments and reports in conjunction with Arctic Council efforts to develop an ecosystem approach to management and use an integrated ecosystem approach for offshore oil and gas [maritime] activities.”

Finally, the proposal will represent a significant contribution in supporting the implementation of the 2013 Arctic Biodiversity Assessment policy recommendation 3: Advance and advocate ecosystem-based management efforts in the Arctic as a framework for cooperation, planning and development.

9. Partners:

Possible partners include Arctic states, Permanent Participants, [Observer states], WWF and others.

10. Expected duration:

Phase 1: Planning phase: December 2014 – February 2015

Phase 2: Preparation phase: February 2015 – June 2015

Phase 3: Project work phase: June 2015 – December 2017

Phase 4: Finalization phase: January 2017 – April 2017

Phase 5: Follow-up phase: Finnish Arctic Council chairmanship 2017-2019

11. Final Product(s):

Possible products can be, but are not limited to:

-EPPR/PAME EA-EG report synthesizing Arctic Council member states national approaches to the use of the Ecosystem Approach in offshore oil and gas decision-making related to oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response, including policy recommendations and outlining possible follow-up activities for the Arctic Council.