

Memorandum 2/11/2018

## **AS2: Oil spill prevention, preparedness and response in the Arctic**

This memo provides a summary of reports submitted on the session AS2 organized at the Arctic Biodiversity Session in Rovaniemi, Finland, October 9-12 organized by WWF and the Emergency Prevention and Preparation (EPPR) Working Group of the Arctic Council.

**Attendance:** 40

**Arctic Biodiversity Assessment recommendation themes most prominently addressed in the session:**

- Addressing stressors
- Improving knowledge and public awareness

**Key points raised in the session that were important to note:**

- Arctic oil spill response is challenged by remote locations (lack of infrastructure and personnel) and conditions such as ice, storms, and long periods of darkness
- The potential for oil spills in the Arctic is increasing as both shipping and offshore oil and gas activity increase there
- EPPR provides a key forum for the Arctic countries to coordinate efforts on spill preparedness and response - which can be challenging across national borders

**Recommendations/actions identified for how to deal with the issues raised in the session:**

- More table-top and deployment exercises between countries should be conducted
- Increase numbers of responders trained. Volunteers can be a helpful asset but require training for safe and effective participation in a spill response
- Build baseline understanding of response assets in different places then enhance both assets and training of local responders to ensure their effective use
- Test open water response tactics in ice conditions and practice modifications as needed
- Anticipate NEBA results for particular areas with regards to anticipating the potential benefits of using dispersants or in-situ burning (do as much of this as possible before a spill occurs)
- Continue to explore the potential for bioremediation in cold conditions
- Align use of tools such as ERMA as much as possible across national boundaries

**Take home message from the session:**

- There are efforts across all sectors to improve Arctic spill response e.g. WWF-managed volunteer force in Finland, industry-led enhancement of OSRL Arctic capacity, wildlife management enhancements in Russia, and understanding of bioremediation options in cold conditions.
- EPPR provides a mechanism for sharing practices and new developments around the Arctic region as well as coordinating on exercises and lessons learned through table tops or actual deployments.