

# Toolik 2023 Summer Steering Committee Meeting

June 30th, 9-12am

**Attendees** - Steve Oberbauer, Brandon Yokeley, Frank Rack, Brett Biebuyck, Ariel Shogren, Jason Dobkowski, Mike Weintraub, Chris Baird, Sydonia Bret-Harte

- Staff - Haley Dunleavy, Amanda Young, Marin Kuizenga, Joseph Franich, Adam Chisom, Kara Kornhauser, Faye Ethridge, Justin Johnson, Mike Reynolds

## Opening Statements

- NSF — Frank Rack thanks Toolik staff for helping during the NSF visit earlier this season. There have been productive discussions recently about the energy transformation at Toolik. The momentum is there to develop a tiger team for EV vehicles, either at Fairbanks offices or the station.

## Agenda

- Update on the strategic plan
  - Toolik management has been working through the feedback we received on the strategic plan with the UAF Process Improvement & Training crew.
  - We will send out the plan for additional feedback in the fall.
  - Frank encourages Toolik to think broadly for the next decade or more about both future infrastructure requirements and emerging areas of science.
    - This is in conjunction with discussions with DoD on how to support energy transformation for research infrastructure.
    - Frank advises us to advocate for what we need and create a forward-looking plan. It will be important for it to support ICARP IV priorities, identified in 2025 and the next International Polar Year in 2032.
- Update on end-of-season demographics & climate survey
  - The demographic and climate survey has been created ([survey preview](#)) and is currently in review with UAF's IRB. The plan is to distribute this to all 2023 residents in August.
- Update on the 2023 TUNDRA awardees
  - The TUNDRA [2022 awardees](#) and [2023 awardees](#) are listed on our website.
  - Brett offered to advertise for the TUNDRA award at RMBL and will send resources to advertise RMBL early career awards to the Toolik community. Haley will make flyers for the TUNDRA award to advertise at RMBL.
- COVID progress report
  - Toolik is continuing to test residents and reserve beds for an infirmary. One project had four members tested positive in camp in March. Two people have tested positive prior to coming to the station.
  - Jason Dobkowski stated that some users are expressing that masking in helicopters seems like a formality and not functional. Additionally, helicopter pilots are telling passengers they can take off their masks when flying.

- Steve suggested that after residents test negative on their day 7 in-camp test, they could be relieved of masking in helicopters.
    - No decision was made. NOTE: The day following this conversation, a helicopter pilot tested positive for COVID. Five passengers, deemed to be close contacts, were asked to maintain social isolation, while continuing their day-to-day work, for the next week.
- Upcoming construction projects
  - A representative from the Alaska Center for Energy and Power traveled to Toolik and completed a trip report with potential energy transformation ideas.
  - Construction on the water intake system will begin in early August. This will involve an excavator trenching near the shore. A silk curtain will be temporarily installed to protect from excess sediment entering the lake.
  - Another project will be transitioning generators from carbon dioxide to nitrogen.
  - There are additional plans to finish the garage waste heat project this season.
- Update on helicopter operations with Alpine Air
  - Battelle is receiving positive feedback via their post-flight surveys. Ratings are 4.8, 4.9, and 5.0 on the survey questions.
  - Pilots are changing out more rapidly and have been working well. They have all been of similar caliber, and it seems that having them swap out ensures that they maintain a level of professionalism with community members.
  - Having a consistent, highly experienced helo coordinator has been really helpful.
- Discussion on Community Liaisons (CL) and mandatory reporting
  - Toolik updated the [liaison roles & responsibilities](#) this spring and asked two additional community liaisons to serve in the role, Jansen Nipko and Erin VanderJeugd, in addition to returnees Jason Dobkowski and Lexy Salinas.
  - The updated responsibilities include the designation as a mandatory reporter, as decided in the 2022 Winter Steering Committee meeting. This change has sparked concern from the community that the CL being mandatory reporters creates a gap in the lines of support for the Toolik community.
  - Toolik could have a peer network to act as a sounding board, similar to the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute network. Volunteers would need to clearly disclaim that they are not trained and point to organizations who are.
  - Another suggestion to no longer have liaisons be people who receive reports.
  - This reporting requirement and any potential training requirements could limit the number of people willing to serve in this role. It's advantageous to have a younger person in the liaison role to relate better to younger community members. It's important to not make it too large of a burden by instilling training requirements with mandatory reporter status.
    - Suggestion to show our appreciation to community & science liaisons with an acknowledgement of the time & effort they're providing to camp.
  - If we provided more training for liaisons, what would it be? How will we fund it?
    - [THRIVE Lifeline BAJEDI PSECCO training](#), Field Futures, but these have a substantial cost attached to them.
    - UAF title IX training, free

- Internal, community-wide training to illuminate the reporting process
  - Additionally, Toolik should work to build the legitimacy of local advocacy and resource centers and hotlines within our community.
    - People who come up to Toolik for 1-3 months are not necessarily going to trust an organization in Fairbanks and feel motivated to cold call them. Especially folks who have either never used resources like that before or have had negative experiences with reporting.
    - Look into having a contract with a mental health professional at UAF, who can serve in the confidential role.
    - Invite UAF DEC or IACNVL to Toolik so that community can meet them and understand them better. Give people adequate time to understand the system, community education to understand the role.
  - Jason suggested a mandatory referee role, where liaisons are required to advise to use reporting options, rather than mandatory reporter roles
  - Ariel added that another confounding aspect of this is that many who are employed at academic institutions - including faculty, students, research staff - are mandatory reporters to their home institutions. This applies on & off campus, including at Toolik. Many of the liaisons may be in the same boat, that they might be mandatory reporters at their home institutions.
  - There is an opportunity to develop a system of best practices that can be implemented at other field stations and “lead the way.”
    - Find other models, especially regarding protecting people from liability
    - Create a larger working group with various institutions, including OBFS, APECS, NSF [Cultural transformation in the geosciences solicitation](#), UAF E&C, to pool funding and run some of these trainings
    - Share these ideas with NSF OECR visitors to solicit more suggestions for funding, using our history of supporting DEI efforts as leverage
  - Haley, Chris, Ariel, Brett, Jason, Ruby, Mike Reynolds will form a working group to identify solutions, both short term for this summer and long term.
- Update on Ambler Road - Steve O. ([Map of road location](#))
  - Toolik does not have any insights on these plans nor have we been approached regarding our input. We did have a site visit by BLM, including Director, Tracie Stone-Manning prior to Ambler Road meetings, but no discussion.
  - The Department of Interior (DOI) of the US has delayed the release of the record of decision (RoD) for the Ambler road project until mid-2024. [Arctic Sounder article](#).
  - Apart from the Ambler Road, there is another nearby development project proposing to install fiber cable to Anaktuvuk Pass. Toolik has met with the developers and requested that should the project proceed with the support of Anaktuvuk Pass, that they avoid certain research areas. Toolik also advised on potential negative effects on the tundra. Prior research based at Toolik has shown laying fiber on the ground can be low impact and effective. The project appears to be taking this approach.