

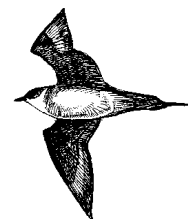
News

- **Successful rocket launch**
- **The electric car is “on the road”**
- **Gold mining at Svansen?**

Columns

- **Publications and Calendar of Arctic Meetings**
- **Staff News and Publications**
- **Contact Addresses**

Ny-Ålesund Newsletter



*11th edition
Dec 2002*

Sixth Ny-Ålesund International Scientific Seminar “The Changing Physical Environment”

Polar Environmental Centre, Tromsø, Norway, 8 –10 October 2002

The Sixth Ny-Ålesund International Scientific Seminar was hosted by the Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI) in Tromsø, Norway, during the period 8-10 in October 2002. The meeting was organized in collaboration with NySMAC and the Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility programme. It was devoted to the “Physical Environment Research” in Ny-Ålesund, involving contributions from the cryospheric, atmospheric, solar-terrestrial, solid earth and marine environments. A few ecosystem effect studies on environmental change were also presented at the seminar. Approximately 60 scientists from the Ny-Ålesund international scientific community coming from more than 15 European nations contributed to the success of the meeting. The seminar was cosponsored by the Norwegian Polar Institute, the Norwegian Research Council (project 155661/700) and the European Commission IHP-programme (contract HPRI-CT-1999-00057 – Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility).

The seminar programme represented a cross-section of the contemporary physical environment research activities in Ny-Ålesund. Most of the contributions were under the atmospheric and cryospheric environment, more specifically from the fields of Arctic aerosols, long range transport of pollutants, air quality, glacier monitoring and mass balance measurement, hydrological processes and energy balance studies. Relatively few contributions were presented from the fields of Solar-Terrestrial, Solid Earth and Marine environments, and an important goal for future seminars will be to attract also these important fields for multidisciplinary scientific dialogue. Noteworthy was that a comprehensive set of contemporary marine multidisciplinary research projects in Ny-Ålesund was presented at the “Kongsfjorden Ecosystem Workshop II” in Poland a month later (7-10 November 2002).

The meeting was organized as a scientific seminar during the first 2 days and a workshop during day 3. The set of 4-page extended abstracts of each paper/poster presented at the seminar was published in the Conference Proceedings made available at the seminar (NP Report Series No. 10, 2002). The report is available from the NP information department. Of the 60 paper and poster presentations, 15 selected papers are now in preparation for publication in a special issue of the Elsevier Journal “Physics and Chemistry of the Earth”. Other papers from the seminar have been invited to publish coherently in the electronic peer review journal Atmospheric Physics and Chemistry.

Initiated by the Ny-Ålesund Science Managers Committee (NySMAC), the Ny-Ålesund International Scientific Seminars aim at facilitating more exchange and collaboration between the scientists involved in research activities in the Ny-Ålesund area. A major objective of the seminars is to create new ideas and identify new research needs at the site through the discussions at the meeting. This is also the first step in new research proposals for the national and European research councils. The third day of the seminar was dedicated to workshops on instrumental techniques and observational needs concerning research into the Atmospheric, Cryospheric, Solar-terrestrial, Solid earth and Marine environments. All participants at the seminar were invited to contribute to these important activities. Reports of the workshops concerning the atmospheric & solar terrestrial environment, the cryospheric environment and the Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility workshop are posted on the conference web-site.

Jon Børre Ørbæk

European Research 2002

The European Research Area and the Framework Programme

Brussels, 11-13 November 2002

An exhibition was arranged in Brussels 11-13 November in connection with the launch of the 6th framework programme for European research.

Dr Jon Børre Ørbæk from the Norwegian Polar Institute applied in June 2002 for a stand on behalf of the Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility program (LSF), Kings Bay AS (KB) and Svalbard Science Forum (SSF). When the application was granted Kjell Tore Hansen from SSF was appointed project manager for the project.

The stand consisted of 15 posters, one video projector showing two videos from Ny-Ålesund (hence one from the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP)), and a PC with internet connection.

Emphasis was put on the following presentation material:

- **Ny-Ålesund LSF:** Presentation of the Ny-Ålesund Large Scale Facility of Arctic Environmental Research program, facilities, services, opportunities, statistics, examples of research projects etc.
- **Kings Bay:** The general infrastructure and services provided at the Ny-Ålesund International Research and Monitoring Facility, user statistics etc.
- **Svalbard Science Forum:** Svalbard as a research platform, University Courses on Svalbard (UNIS), European Incoherent Scatter Radar Association (EISCAT) etc.
- Presentation of each research station in Ny-Ålesund, facilities, programs and projects.

For each station a poster was presented with a short description of the station. The information from each station included:

- A short description of the station, facilities, services etc.
- What kind of research activities they focus on (biology, geophysics, geology etc.).
- Major monitoring programs running at the station.
- Contact information (name of responsible person at the station, telephone, fax, e-mail, and web-page home address).

At the conference there were more than 8000 participants with approximately 150 stands. This was the largest conference arranged by the European Union (EU) ever. The above stand was the only stand that had focus on Arctic research which made it unique in Brussels. Due to this the stand received a lot of attention from people interesting in high Arctic research activity.

Successful Rocket Launch

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)/Goddard Space Flight Center and Andøya Rocket Range launched one Black Brant (Mod 1) X sounding rocket from SvalRak, Ny-Ålesund 14 December 2002.

The overall objective of this investigation is to study the electrodynamics of the cusp and boundary layer, the associated plasma processes within this region, and their effect on energy and momentum coupling between the cusp ionosphere and the magnetosheat/solar wind.

For more information on the campaign see <http://www.rocketrange.no/>

The Electric Car is "on the road"

The electric car was offered for free to Ny-Ålesund by Nissan in Japan. They want to test this kind of car in an Arctic environment.

After some time with bureaucracy and delays, legal licence plates are now issued for the car.

The car will be used in daily traffic in Ny-Ålesund.

Arctic Science Summit Week 2003

The ASSW 2003 will take place in Kiruna, Sweden, 31 March - 4 April. NySMAC will also this time schedule one of the committee meetings to take place during this week.

New members of NySMAC

At the last committee meeting Korea Ocean Research & Development Institute (KORDI) was welcomed as new member of NySMAC and University of Groningen was welcomed as observer.

Gold Mining at Svansen?

Possible gold finds were located on Svansen north of Blomstrand by Store Norsk in cooperation with Norsk Hydro in the early 1990ies. Since then Store Norsk has held a claim for the Svansen area. Until recently this has been a resting case but Store Norsk informed Sysselembannen on July 7, 2002 that they wish to perform prospect drilling at Svansen. If the find turns out commercially viable they will undoubtedly in the extension seek to commence full-scale mining of the gold ore.

The prospect of having a commercial mining operation in Kongsfjorden has stirred a lively debate. NySMAC has expressed great concern regarding this development. In a letter (October 9, 2002) to Sysselembannen NySMAC states that although the prospect drilling currently at stake (5 holes have been proposed) is likely to have little impact in itself on the ongoing research in Ny-Ålesund there are two grave concerns. Firstly the signal that a prospect drilling activity sends to the world is this is a location where commercial drilling may commence in the future. Such a signal is most unfortunate for the development of Ny-Ålesund as a primary global site for scientific research and monitoring. Secondly NySMAC sees no possibility for full-scale mining to coexist with the present activities in Ny-Ålesund without several adverse and direct effects on the research and monitoring. NySMAC has this position even though the mining methods that may be used have not been presented. NySMAC also makes reference to Norwegian parliament white papers that designate Ny-Ålesund for research and monitoring asking for a

clarification regarding this commitment to protect the area for assigned activities.

Kings Bay AS and the Norwegian Polar Institute have also expressed grave concern regarding gold mining in the Kongsfjorden area.

The present state is that an environmental impact assessment (EIA; performed by Store Norsk) regarding the prospect drilling is underway. Sometime in early 2003 the EIA will be sent out for hearing. Sysselembannen will then judge if prospect drilling is to be allowed based on the hearing statements. The prospect drilling could be ongoing during the summer of 2003. Depending on the outcome one could foresee another round of EIA regarding the full-scale mining the following year or maybe further in the future. Actual gold mining would probably be at least another year away.

How strong the risk of Store Norsk going ahead with their plans is difficult to judge. In a recent Svalbardposten (Nr. 47, November 29, 2002) the director of Store Norsk (Robert Hermansen) comments that it is not certain when the prospect drilling and mining will occur. They need to secure financing and the drilling must fit in with all their other drilling plans. They also wish to have a cooperative partner before such an endeavor is commenced and at this time they have not found such a partner.

NySMAC will, nevertheless, continue to work towards eliminating the threat of having a commercial mining activity in Kongsfjorden that will have negative influences on the pristine environment, research and monitoring that is the hallmark of Ny-Ålesund.

Kim Holmén



Calendar of Arctic Meetings

"Arctic-Alpine Ecosystems and People in a Changing Environment"

Polar Environmental Centre, Tromsø,
24 Feb - 1 March 2003
<http://npolar.no/ArcticAlpine2003/>

ASSW 2003 - Arctic Science Summit Week

Kiruna, Sweden
31 March - 4 April 2003
<http://www.polar.se/assw/>

The 33rd Annual Arctic Workshop

will be held at the Polar Environmental Centre, Tromsø Norway from 3-5 April 2003. The meeting is organized by the Norwegian Polar Institute and the Department of Geology, University of Tromsø, and is open to all interested in the Arctic
<http://npolar.no/>

ACSYS Final Conference to be held in St. Petersburg 11-14 November 2003. Preparations are in progress.
<http://acsys.npolar.no/meetings/final/conf.htm>

For a comprehensive list of published meetings, look at **SAM** (Survey of Arctic Meetings) on the IASC home page:
<http://www.iasc.no/>

Staff News

Kings Bay (KB):

Ole-Finn Håndlykken is hired as temporary managing director while **Monica Kristensen Solås** is on leave until March 2003.

Thelma Banne will start as office manager January 2003.

Norwegian Polar Institute (NP):

John Wilsgaard will replace **John Arild Svenske** as logistic manager January 2003.

Publications

Research in Svalbard 2002

A yearly information. Available from Svalbard Science Forum and on
<http://www.npolar.no/ris>

Ny-Ålesund - International Research at 79°N
3rd revised edition. By the Norwegian Polar Institute in co-operation with Kings Bay AS.

The Ny-Ålesund Safety Guide

By Nick Cox, NERC (2nd edition 1998)
An introduction to safety in Ny-Ålesund and its surroundings. The guide is obtainable in Ny-Ålesund from Kings Bay AS and Sverdrupstasjonen.

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