



State of Alaska
 Governor's Climate Change Sub-Cabinet

 Adaptation Advisory Group Meeting
 Meeting #5

 Health and Culture TWG

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Health and Culture TWG

- Climate change poses risks to the health of all Alaskans, but particularly those living in rural communities with limited public health and health care capacity. Climate change also poses risks to cultural traditions and traditional ways of life. To address these risks, the Health and Culture Technical Working Group identified five high priority options to increase the capacity state-wide to avoid, prepare for, and effectively respond to the health and culture risks of climate change in Alaska

Overview of options

- Option 1: Identify a central ombudsman agency
- Option 2: Augment surveillance and control programs for infectious diseases
- Option 3: Initiate a community health impacts evaluation mechanism
- Option 4: Address risks to rural sanitation and solid waste management
- Option 5: Assess archaeological, historical, and cemetery sites at risk from climate change

1. Identify a central ombudsman agency

- Identify a central ombudsman agency, as well as responsible individuals, to support rural communities in dealing with complex issues requiring coordination among multiple state and federal agencies, local governments, NGOs, and others
- The intent of this option is to provide an integrated and coherent process by which state, federal, regional and local entities can provide rapid, coordinated, and effective relief to communities experiencing substantial cultural, health, economic, and subsistence impacts from climate change

Option 1. Design

1. Create Climate Change Ombudsman Office
2. Develop process for prioritizing impacted communities
3. Create mandate for relocation assistance within State and Federal entities
4. Designate lead agencies when agency responsibilities overlap
5. Create dedicated funding source for relocation efforts
6. Create Immediate Assistance Fund
7. Streamline the NEPA Process
8. Insure cross-cultural communication
9. Streamline regulatory response to subsistence seasons and bag limits

2. Augment surveillance and control programs for infectious diseases

- Augment surveillance and control programs for vector-, water-, and foodborne diseases likely to become greater threats because of climate change
- Develop educational programs for the public, health care providers, environmental staff, and others on approaches to reduce infectious disease threats

Option 2. Design

1. Create a statewide emergency room discharge database to improve detection of climate change-related diseases
2. Expand and improve the state's hospital discharge database to improve detection of climate change-related diseases
3. Improve surveillance for vectorborne diseases in vectors
4. Improve health care provider education around infectious disease reporting laws
5. Create a reporting system for sanitation/wastewater integrity disruptions
6. Improve interagency notification of wastewater violations between MOA, DHSS, DEC
7. Increase monitoring in humans, animals and the environment for specific contaminants and irritants

3. Initiate a community health impacts evaluation mechanism

- Actions taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions or to adapt to the current and projected impacts of climate change also may benefit or harm human health. This option proposes a Community Health Impact Evaluation (CHIE) initiative to rapidly and efficiently screen proposed mitigation and adaptation activities to determine whether there may be associated health benefits or harms and to identify additional actions to maximize the benefits and reduce potential adverse impacts.

Option 3. Design

- Designate a Project Review Committee within the State Department of Public Health, with participation from community and environmental health professionals from other agencies and organizations
- The State agency responsible for an mitigation or adaptation measure would forward a request to the PRC chair for an evaluation, along with a full description of the measure.
- The PRC Chair would convene the core PRC members, with at least one representative from the responsible State agency. The proposed measure would be reviewed by the PRC to determine the possible need for an in-depth review.
 - When there was a negligible likelihood for any adverse health effect, a report from the PRC would be issued to the responsible State agency. TARGET - one working week.
 - If the PRC decided an in-depth review was advisable, an appropriate group of additional consultants, agency personnel, and citizen members would be convened for an evaluation. TARGET - 4-6 working weeks

4. Address risks to rural sanitation and solid waste management

- Assess sanitation infrastructure and practices at risk from flooding, thawing permafrost, and other risks, or that is otherwise subject to changed conditions that significantly reduce performance in environmental health protection. Consider the modification, rebuilding, or relocation of sanitation infrastructure to protect human and environmental health

Option 4. Design

- Create a statewide emergency room discharge database for infectious diseases related to sanitation
- Expand and improve the state's hospital discharge
- Improve health care provider education
- Create a reporting system for sanitation/wastewater integrity disruptions
- Improve interagency notification of wastewater violations between MOA, DHSS, DEC
- Review existing Class III solid waste management guidelines (for rural and remote, non-hub communities) to adapt the regulations, recommendations, and community outreach
- Review CIP solid waste projects and priority classifications
- Make available financial resources or incentives for development of more efficient adaptive system

5. Assess archeological, historical, and cemetery sites at risk from climate change

- In cooperation with appropriate local, regional, and statewide entities, assess archaeological sites at risk from accelerated coastal and river erosion; convene archaeologists, anthropologists, Alaska Native elders, and others to discuss how best to address and prioritize sites at risk; and develop a plan for the protection or recovery of important at-risk sites Complete a statewide assessment of the gravesites most at risk; assist in identifying and opening new gravesites; convene a respectful discussion about gravesites and explore best practices; provide assistance for the relocation of existing at-risk gravesites.

Option 5. Design

- Establish a new program area within the Office of History and Archaeology, with a dedicated archaeologist / anthropologist position and funding for travel and equipment to coordinate and facilitate cemetery issues. The State agency responsible for an mitigation or adaptation measure would forward a request to the PRC chair for an evaluation, along with a full description of the measure.
- Establish a new program area within OHA, with a dedicated archaeologist position and funding for travel and equipment, to coordinate and facilitate studies for addressing the effects of climate change on Alaska's archaeological and historic sites
- Enact legislation to create a property tax benefit for private landowners who actively protect listed cemeteries / gravesites and archaeological or historical sites on their land