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MEETING SUMMARY

ALASKA CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ADVISORY GROUP

Health and Culture Technical Working Group (HC TWG)

Meeting #10, 12 November 2008, 8:30 – 10:00 AM

Attendance:

Technical Working Group members: Don Callaway, Jeff Demain, Erin Harman, Bob Gerlach, Jeff Smith, Kristie Ebi, Jason Vogel

Public Attendees: Sally Schlichting, Lynn Zender

Background documents:

Meeting Notice and Agenda

Summary of Meeting #9

Revised surveillance and control policy option

Procedural items:

1. Jason called the meeting to order, completed the roll call, and reviewed the agenda and plans for the call.
2. The summary for meeting #9 was approved.

Discussion items, key issues, and agreements:

1. Discussion of AAG comments on the H&C TWG draft policy options
 - a. The poor quality of teleconferencing meant that facilitators Kristie and Jason could not adequately support Don Callaway and Bob Gerlach when questions arose during the AAG meeting.
 - b. The next version of the policy options should be numbered to facilitate discussions with the AAG and others.
 - c. Only approximately 1/3 of the AAG was present, which made some TWG members uncomfortable with acting on recommendations that did not have a quorum.
 - d. AAG members wanted information on costs and benefits. They seemed to expect fully fleshed out policy proposals, which differed from the TWG goal of requesting feedback on policy options to develop further.

- e. Some AAG members with government experience took extreme exception to the subsistence advocacy commission proposal, primarily because they thought such a suggestion would be politically/logistically problematic.
 - f. There was some concern on the part of AAG members that the archaeology and traditional knowledge policy options might be essentially research based, so would be more appropriate for the Research Needs Working Group. This could have been because the Power Point presentation did not clearly explain this policy option.
2. Health Impact Assessments (HIAs)
- a. Significant concern was expressed by some members of the AAG about the costs (financial and human resources) of conducting HIAs. The TWG needs to clearly define what is meant by an HIA.
 - b. TWG members asked to see the Maryland HIA straw policy option, and Kristie Ebi agreed to distribute this.
3. Overarching surveillance and control option
- a. **Jeff Demain** and **Bob Gerlach** volunteered to work on this policy option. They both felt that input from **Joe McLaughlin** would be crucial for developing this option further.
 - b. Combining several options into one option on surveillance and control orphaned several issues: sanitation and solid waste management, food security, and assessment of toxic exposures. The TWG decided to create a separate policy option for rural sanitation and solid waste management, to incorporate food security issues with the option addressing subsistence diets, and to remove the assessment of toxic exposures from priority options for further consideration. **Lynn Zender** and **Jeff Smith** volunteered to work on the rural sanitation and solid waste management option.
 - c. Concern was expressed over inter-agency cooperation on surveillance and monitoring (e.g., DEC is responsible for water quality monitoring and DHHS is responsible for vectorborne disease surveillance programs). It was suggested that the policy option might recommend a formal policy or memorandum of understanding across agencies.
 - d. The importance of community participation in surveillance systems was emphasized
4. Subsistence advocacy commission
- a. It cannot be a commission because of conflict with sport hunters, commercial fishermen, etc. There is a significant amount of conflict between the state and subsistence users, hunters, and commercial fishermen.
 - b. It was noted that the State Board of Game does not have local subsistence representatives like the Regional Advisory Councils of the Federal

Subsistence Board. Consequently people using subsistence resources do not have the sense of buy-in with the State Board that they do with the Federal Board. Regional Advisory Councils make recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board.

- c. It might be important to separate functions and making this task more about data collection and networking and emphasizing that it would not be a decision making entity. This could be an important place to emphasize adaptive management and incremental change.
- d. All 7 policy recommendations that came before the Federal Subsistence Board using climate change as a justification for modifying seasons or takes have failed. However, there are emergency relief procedures that have not yet been invoked and may need to be.
- e. Ultimately, it was decided to **fold the important elements of the subsistence advocacy commission into the ombudsman** policy option since both are mostly about dealing with multiple government entities.

5. Community capacity

- a. AAG asked us to focus on gaps instead of a full capacity analysis which could take lots of time and resources but lead to little action. However the concept of a ‘gap analysis’ seemed to some TWG members problematic because of high turnover in rural communities.
- b. A suggestion was made and generally agreed upon to **combine this option with ombudsman** policy option. Indeed, a task force with appropriate expertise might be critical because of low capacity in some communities and fluctuating capacity in many others. Such a task force could work with tribal organizations which already have substantial knowledge about community capacity.
- c. The GAO report identified 180 villages at risk, but not all at the same time, so need to identify communities at greatest risk and determine which have the least capacity. Perhaps a process similar to the Immediate Action Work Group would be appropriate, whereby at risk communities are identified on a recurring basis as time and resources permit them to be addressed.
- d. Communication will be key to prevent overlaps in who is doing what. It would also be good to empower communities with capacity to do their own assessments (e.g. Homer has done one). These could be used as models for other communities.

6. Ombudsman

- a. **Don Callaway** volunteered to work on this issue and suggested **Father Thomas Weise** would have valuable experience and expertise to contribute.
- b. Because other TWGs are considering a similar option, it would be appropriate to determine the extent of overlap and common ground, while

ensuring that health and culture issues are appropriately represented.

7. Traditional knowledge

- a. **Sally Schlichting** agreed to work on this issue.
- b. The AAG was open to this being part of a H&C policy option.
- c. It was suggested that this should be **combined with the state advocacy commission** policy option to create a politically palatable option. This combination makes sense because local communities do not separate the issues of traditional knowledge with subsistence. Note: it was suggested to fold the state advocacy commission into the ombudsman role.

8. Archeology and History

- a. The AAG appeared to want to avoid a big research effort, so we need to be more clear and explicit about what we mean by this option.
- b. A simple survey of at risk sites is too resource intensive, nor are there sufficient skilled personnel or logistical capacity to make it happen. Despite the resource intensiveness of this issue, one federal agency has seen its funds for this activity cut by approximately 35% in real dollars over many years.
- c. You can currently petition for a site to be protected/recovered, but it is extremely unlikely to happen due to the resource poor status of the people and agencies dealing with these issues. The State Historical Preservation Office coordinates often with the Park Service and other entities, but they have their plate full.
- d. It might be reasonable to put in place a process for communities to push concerns up to get feds and the state to consider doing something. However, archaeology and history issues generally get short shrift when competing with other more pressing initiatives.
- e. The issue of folding this in with the ombudsman agency was raised but rejected because the ombudsman already has too much on his/her plate and this would likely fall to the bottom of the list.
- f. It was mentioned that even the creation of a database so that knowledge of important sites could be passed down through generations would be important. That way, even if we can't do anything about an important site today, there could be a possibility to revisit it in the future and take action then.

Next steps:

1. The next conference call will be Wednesday, December 10 at 8:30-10:00 am Alaska time.