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MEETING SUMMARY
ALASKA CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ADVISORY GROUP
Health and Culture Technical Working Group (HC TWG)
Meeting #3, 9 July 2008, 8:30 – 10:30 AM

Attendance:

1. Technical Working Group members:

Rose Barr, Jim Berner, Mike Bradley, Don Callaway, Patricia Cochran, Jeff Demain, Bob Gerlach, Henry Huntington, Jeff Smith, Jason Vogel

2. Public Attendees:

Sally Schlichting, Kyle Wright, Susan Arnold, Kris Chasson, Annie Chasson

Background documents:

(posted at http://www.akclimatechange.us/Health_Culture.cfm)

1. Meeting Notice and Agenda
2. Summary of Meeting #2
3. Health and Culture Draft Catalog of State Actions
4. Health and Culture Draft Descriptions of State Actions

Discussion items and key issues:

1. Jason Vogel called the meeting to order, completed the roll call, and reviewed the agenda and plans for the call.
2. The summary for meeting #2 was approved.
3. It was decided that enough time had been spent describing the process and it was time to start tackling the substantive issues with the draft policy options. Because Kristie Ebi was not available due to international travel, we focused on cultural issues and delayed discussions of health issues until Kristie Ebi was present.
4. Most of the remaining discussion focused on the Draft Catalog of Policy Options, specifically Overarching Issues (HC-1), Traditional Knowledge, Ways of Knowing, and

Subsistence Culture (HC-11), and selected issues out of Archaeology and History (HC-12) and Diminishment or Change in Subsistence Diet (HC-13). In addition to the comments submitted by members of the TWG prior to the meeting, the following issues were raised:

- HC-1 Creating a coherent central government agency to help rural communities coordinate with all of the federal and state agencies, NGOs, and other organizations involved in making decisions that affect rural and Native communities. This issue was brought up in comments from TWG members prior to the 7/9 phone conference and in the 6/26 TWG phone conference as well.
- Assess the extent to which existing agencies already perform the functions envisioned in the H&C TWG Catalog of State Actions.
- Focus on what the state can do. We are not making recommendations to communities in particular or the federal government. So focusing on the relevant state decisions can help focus our discussions.
- State agencies don't always understand the needs of Native communities. So any effort to create a central agency to help rural communities needs to involve input from those communities. Examples were discussed of organizations that could fulfill this role such as the Denali Commission and the Alaskan Federation of Natives.
- It was suggested that indigenous communities connect better with other indigenous communities than they do with other state agencies, so any attempt at a central government agency might be destined to fail due to a lack of trust.
- Two words missing from overarching issues: traditional knowledge and subsistence.
- The king salmon crash in western Alaska was brought up as an example of significant changes in traditional food species (60% of subsistence diet). This issue may merit greater emphasis, but would most likely be dealt with under HC-13.
- Facilitator Jason Vogel suggested that there may have been some items that were brought up in previous phone conversations that did not get incorporated to the satisfaction of TWG members. He then elaborated that the best way to ensure that such items did get incorporated was for TWG members to take ownership of items they feel strongly about, write them down, and then they will be included in future versions of the catalog.
- Facilitator Jason Vogel suggested that as we delve into the specific catalog options, that TWG members keep in mind that this list represents a limited set of options developed by Kris Ebi, Jason Vogel, and a few colleagues. Significant issues may not be addressed, some opportunities for state action may be overlooked, and it would be useful for TWG members to think about potential

options that have not yet been put down on paper.

- HC-11.1 To engage scientists and health professionals with indigenous communities may be facilitated by a symposium, for example at the AFN conference. Other organizations with a long history of working in health and culture fields include the Alaska Native Science Commission and the Tribal Health Consortium.
- Facilitator Jason Vogel emphasized that TWG members in their comments should focus on identifying solutions to problems instead of just identifying problems. This will help facilitate development of potential state actions.
- HC-11.2 May be overly general, but the intent of keeping elders and native communities in the loop is important. Generally, this cannot be done by putting things on a website or in a newsletter. Other forms of more proactive communication include radio, community-based publications, and newsletters to shareholders of native corporations. Regional elders' councils may be one way to engage people more directly.
- Once or twice a year could convene a conference in different areas in the state. This facilitates face-to-face interaction and provides an opportunity to communicate from Natives to scientists. This used to be done by ANSC, but NSF funding fell through for those activities. Possibly important to identify new funding sources to reengage in those activities. Alternatively, the AFN convention may still play this role because so many people travel to Anchorage.
- Utilize existing structures such as regional advisory councils (e.g. the National Park Service) to get local input into subsistence decisions. These are already funded regional meetings that could expand their scope to include some of the issues covered by this TWG.
- HC-11.3 There are already existing sharing networks for food (in case of shortage), existing alternatives to ice cellars, and generally this option does not seem to be an appropriate role for state government. Possibly an inventory of which communities have community freezers would be of use. That way, particularly vulnerable areas, or communities in need of assistance could be targeted. According to one TWG member, native communities are already addressing this issue. Group consensus seemed to err on the side of eliminating this option. An associated public health issue may be whether native communities can determine easily whether food is going bad if ice cellars are failing.
- In 1998 there was a salmon crash similar to the current one. Government, including FEMA, declared an emergency and delivered food as needed. In other words, dealing with food shortages might be a solution looking for a problem.
- HC-11.4 Should be removed from the list. It is too close to “social engineering.” There was broad TWG consensus on this point.

- HC-11.5 Cost of energy is a major issue that will overlap with MAG and other AAG TWGs. Governor Palin's gas rebate was brought up because it could help with the continuation of subsistence activities endangered by fuel prices. The discussion started heading toward alternative energy, at which point facilitator Jason Vogel explained that the MAG was addressing changes in the energy supply, possible reimbursement based on energy cost, etc. Policy solutions may lie in the other groups, but we should highlight the cultural issues for the other TWGs. Crosscutting issues – move this suggestion along to other relevant groups.
- HC-11.**NEW** Mental health/stress may need to be included in section HC-11. State could provide resources to work with elders to deal with psychological services (current resources are scant). Make sure that local community support structures are part of this service delivery. One member of the conference call agreed to take on this topic to develop some policy responses. This may need to be cross linked with HC-9, the section on stress.
- HC-11.**NEW** Constraints on adaptive capacity (e.g. constraints on customary and traditional use of a species) makes sense if ecosystems are static, but not if they are changing. Can the regulatory system do anything to facilitate adaptive, flexible decision making, especially regarding harvesting of species. Seems like similar to HC-13.3.
- Rearrange HC-12 and HC-13 because HC-13 is so closely related to HC-11.

Next steps and agreements:

1. Remove HC-11.3.
2. Remove HC-11.4.
3. The next TWG meeting will be held on July 23, from 8:30 - 10:00 am.
4. Send out reminder of next meeting and full list of meetings.
5. Several TWG members plan on working up some policy recommendations for HC-11.
6. Some TWG members expressed that this meeting was very productive and going through the policy options one by one is a positive development.
7. Jeff Demain asked for a PowerPoint presentation to be developed for his use in presenting the Health and Culture TWG to the AAG.