



Governor Palin signs Administrative Order creating the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet July 2008

Governor Sarah Palin's Report on Climate Change Sub-Cabinet

Dear Alaskan,

Alaska's climate is warming. While there have been warming and cooling trends before, climatologists tell us that the current rate of warming is unprecedented within the time of human civilization. Many experts predict that Alaska, along with our northern latitude neighbors, will warm at a faster pace than any other areas, and the warming will continue for decades.

We are faced with significant questions: How fast will the climate warm? How warm will it get? What effects will the warming have? Is there anything we can do to slow the increase or the extent of the warming? Realizing that we can't stop the warming, what can we do to adapt? And, what role should state government play in all of this?

To get the ball rolling, I signed Administrative Order 238 in September 2007, which directs a team of my cabinet members to prepare an Alaska Climate Change Strategy for my consideration. The strategy is to serve as a guide for a thoughtful, practical, timely, state of Alaska response to climate change. It is to identify priorities needing immediate attention along with longer-term steps we can take as a state to best serve all Alaskans and to do our part in the global response to this global phenomenon.



Above and below photos of Shishmaref erosion





Constructing temporary flood protection structures at Kivalina (above and lower right photos by Enoch Adams)

“Approximately 6,600 miles of Alaska’s coastline and many of the low-lying areas along the state’s rivers are subject to severe flooding and erosion.”

My team, the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet, is giving immediate attention to our communities most at risk from coastal erosion and flooding. Although many of our coastal and river communities have flooded in the past, they have become more vulnerable as permafrost and shore ice that once protected their shores has been lost to warming temperatures.

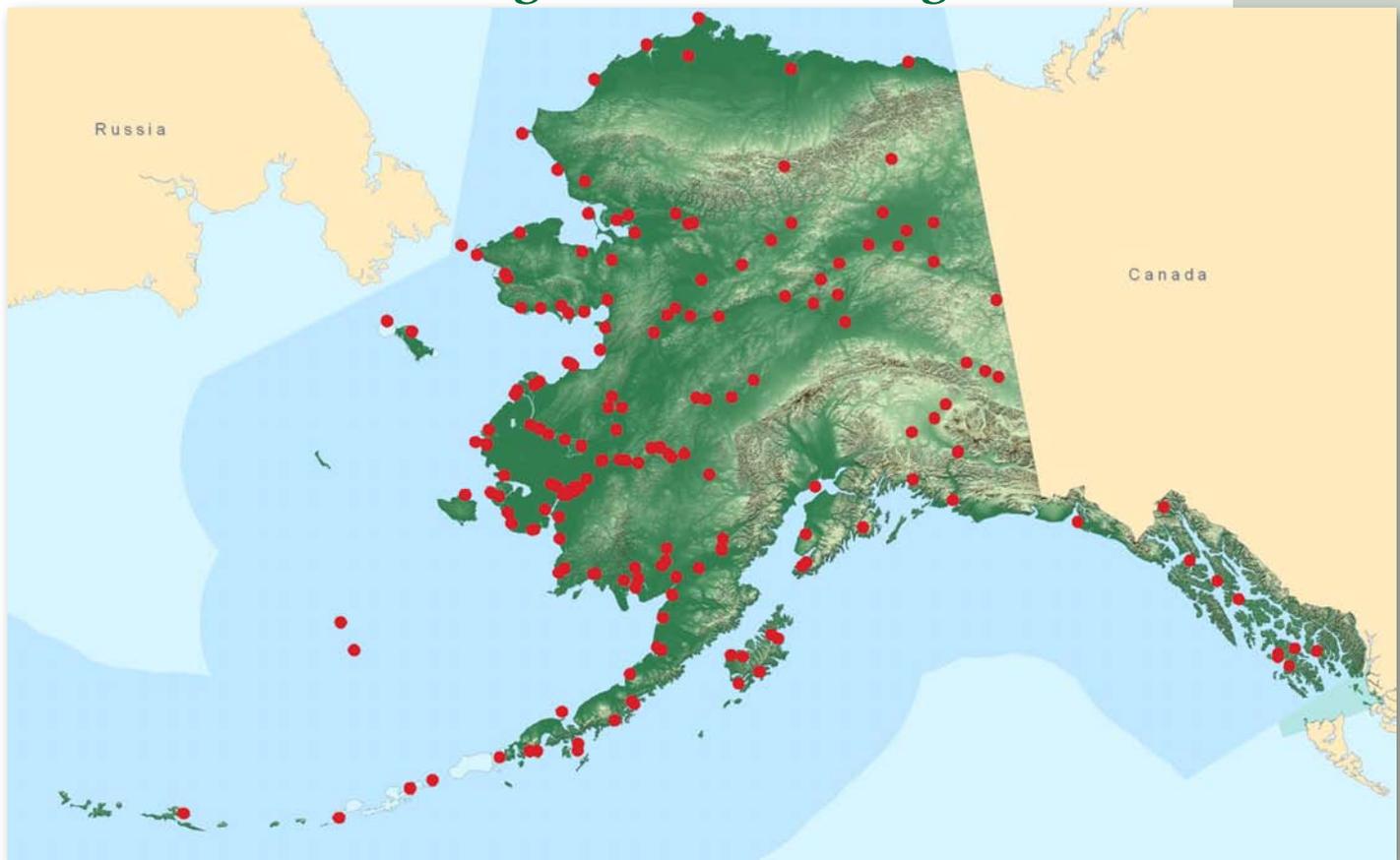
The Climate Change Sub-Cabinet convened a workgroup comprised of federal, state and local representatives and developed a list of actions to be taken over the next 18 months to protect our most at-risk communities. These actions included constructing additional flood protection structures in Kivalina and Unalakleet, and an evacuation road and shelter for Newtok, a village that can’t be protected and must be moved. Funding for these projects is included in the state’s fiscal year 2009 budget. We expect to see progress starting this summer.

In addition to communities requiring immediate attention, at-risk communities need professional planning and engineering services as they work with federal and state agencies to evaluate the needs and options for their communities. The workgroup outlined a grant program that would address these needs. The workgroup also recommended the development of more comprehensive emergency planning and training for the most at-risk communities. Our budget includes funding for these efforts as well.



The Sub-Cabinet is also developing recommendations for other Alaska communities that will be impacted as a result of climate change. In developing these recommendations, we will continue to look for co-benefits such as lowering the cost of energy and reducing longterm maintenance costs. We are also looking at how to leverage federal dollars, and in all instances spend public monies wisely.

Erosion and Flooding in Alaska's Villages



Flooding and erosion affect 184 out of 213, or 86 percent, of Alaska Native villages to some extent.

More than 100 Alaskans, bringing a broad spectrum of expertise, interest and views with them, are now serving on various advisory and technical committees providing recommendations to the Sub-Cabinet as we build Alaska's Climate Change Strategy. I thank these fine Alaskan volunteers for their service. All meetings of the workgroups are open to the public. The draft strategy will also be available for public comment before it comes to me for my final approval.

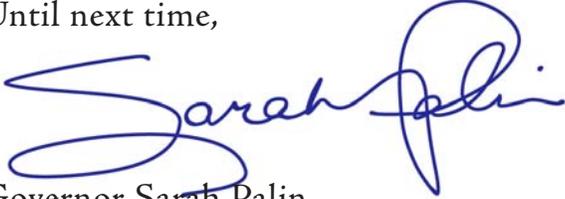
The Sub-Cabinet will also be making recommendations to me on how Alaskans can save energy and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. One of our workgroups, called "Government Leads by Example" will be looking at ways federal, state and local governments can save the taxpayers money while reducing government's carbon footprint.

Alaska has the opportunity, through commercialization of its vast North Slope Natural Gas reserves, to assist the rest of the country in securing a steady, affordable, low-carbon energy source. This will be an element of our climate change strategy.

All life on Earth shares one atmosphere and each nation, each state, bears a responsibility to all to protect it. Our government officials need to be well-informed as the debates continue on legislation to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.

When Alaskans come together to solve problems, good things happen. Every Alaskan has been, or will be affected by climate change, and thus has a stake in this effort. My cabinet and I look forward to working with you as we build this bridge to the future. You can learn more about Alaska's climate change efforts, and how you can become involved, by visiting the Web site at: www.climatechange.alaska.gov

Until next time,



Governor Sarah Palin

Additional Information on Alaska's Climate Change Sub-Cabinet

Visit online:

<http://www.climatechange.alaska.gov>

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