

Information on GAO Engagement

Engagement subject: Alaska Native Village Relocation Efforts

Source for the work: GAO is conducting this work in response to a request made by the Senate Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Objective/key questions: This is an update to GAO's December 2003 study, *Alaska Native Villages: Most are Affected by Flooding and Erosion, Few Qualify for Federal Assistance* (GAO-04-142). Key questions are: (Q1) What flooding and erosion threats do Alaska Native villages currently face? (Q2) What federal and state programs are available to assist villages facing potential disasters? (Q3) What is the status of efforts to assist relocating villages? (Q4) How do federal programs provide and prioritize assistance to threatened villages?

Status: GAO has visited seven villages and spoken with various federal, state, and local government agencies. We have completed the design phase of our work and are currently conducting field work to address our key questions. We expect to have a completed report by mid-May 2009.

Villages visited: Alatna, Allakaket, Kivalina, Koyukuk, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, and Unalakleet.

Other villages of interest: Cheforak, Elim, Golovin, Hughes, Huslia, Kipnuk, Newtok, and Nulato.

Agencies contacted: Departments of Agriculture; Defense's Army Corp of Engineers; Health and Human Service's Indian Health Service; Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency; Housing and Urban Development; the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service; and Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration. We have also spoken to officials from the Denali Commission, the Bering Strait Housing Authority, the Maniilaq Association, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Kawerak, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the State of Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, and Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

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