

Testimony from Climate Change Sub-Cabinet Meeting, February 13, 2008

Testifier	Affiliation	Text
Rick Steiner	IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP)	<p>Thank you very much. Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I am delighted that the governor has appointed a sub-cabinet. I think that reflects a growing urgency in this issue here. I've passed out to all of you some comments I made to the legislative commission a year ago and two letters to the governor, so I know Commissioner Hartig you may have gotten those or a cc, but I wanted to make sure the entire sub-cabinet had access to them with some suggestions to the state of Alaska's response to this issue and I wanted to simply call your attention to a couple of the more important ones here. One is it's a reflection of the urgency of the issue that the sub-cabinet is appointed, there's a legislative commission, but I think we need to go further, faster. I think that an Alaska office on climate change and/or joint federal office, similar to the JPO (Joint Pipeline Office), where there's better interagency coordination and a more formalized structure—you had some of it here this morning between the federal agencies and the state agencies, that's good, but I would recommend that we need to elevate the process and that is to a more formalized structure. And as busy as you folks are, and that is extremely busy, to imagine adequate attention can be paid to this issue without somebody eating, breathing, and sleeping it 24/7, 365 and a bevy of professionals in an office. Period. That's my first recommendation.</p> <p>Secondly, funding. And I had recommended in the February letter just a year ago to the governor and in September that the state establish an Alaska climate response fund. But the proposal at the time was that it be built off a ten cent a barrel tax off TAPS oil, and a commensurate tax on other hydrocarbons, gas and coal in Alaska and that would build maybe \$30 million to \$50 million a year. When we want to know what government, and people, and individual consumers care about, follow the money. People spend money on what</p>

they value. If the government truly cares about climate change and is willing to make a substantial investment in it--that would be a significant sign. And until there's significant money put forward by the state of Alaska, we can't rely on the federal anymore to foot the entire bill for adaptation and/or mitigation here. So I think that a substantial fund, if we start building it, it could be used for a large grant program, you would see entrepreneurs all over Alaska come out of the woodworks if you have a substantial grant program for mitigation or adaptation for climate change as well as revenue sharing with communities that are in desperate need of assistance.

Two others I simply wanted to call your attention to and that is number 4, I think it's important--and this is often forgotten in the mix of climate issues--and that is I hope the Governor and subcabinet would discuss with Law and Attorney General the potential legal remedies, at least nationally, with regard to advancing the state's interest in climate change issues. There's a number of other states that have come together to file suits against large carbon emitters in the United States. I don't know the status of those at this point, but there are others in this room that I'm sure do. The state of Alaska needs to sit at that table and get aggressive, I would propose, in the potential legal remedies nationally.

And then, finally, the last one on the last page of the first letter, national and international climate policy: the issue of mitigation as it seems to be traditionally framed is one of how we in Alaska can reduce our carbon footprint. That's good. That's necessary, that's absolutely essential. But that's only part of the equation. I think Alaska needs to aggressively advocate nationally and internationally a reduction in carbon emissions to 70 or 80 percent of where they are today. We can do that, if we can at least be at the table. Alaska, state government, should have, I'm not sure we were, be at the table in Bali and engaged in the IPCC process aggressively. The state of Alaska's interests

<p>Kate Troll</p>	<p>Executive Director, Alaska Conservation Alliance</p>	<p>are intricately linked with what goes on at these processes, and I think we need a seat at the table. So mitigation's a bigger issue than simply reducing our carbon footprint here in Alaska.</p> <p>There's one thing, and also, national legislation. The Governor's Washington office needs to be a strong advocate for mandatory reductions in carbon emissions within the U.S. and globally, or to be quite honest--and this might be heretical to some of my environmental colleagues—we could double our emissions or drive them to zero and it would make a negligible effect on global carbon emissions, and that's an unfortunate reality because we are such a small part of the global total. So what we've got to do is aggressively advocate those policies that are going to drive carbon emissions down globally 70 to 80 percent and we can do this, with the technology.</p> <p>And one other thing, on the research needs, and that would be of the political science of climate change issues and politics. Not just physical and biological and climatological science. So, it seems the resolution is there if we aggressively advocate for it.</p> <p>{ <i>Mr. Steiner's documents are posted here:</i> http://www.climatechange.alaska.gov/mtgs.htm }</p> <p>My name is Kate Troll and I serve as the Executive Director of the Alaska Conservation Alliance, which is a statewide group with about 40 conservation groups. And many of us are engaged in the climate change issue one way or another.</p> <p>I'm going to make a few brief comments and I want you to know that the focus of my comments is that everybody knows that Alaska is ground zero for the impacts. I want us to be ground zero for solutions as well. I think that with the right political will and leadership we can do that in the state.</p> <p>And I think that you're making some really good strides in terms of the focus on the immediate</p>
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needs. I applaud that effort by Com. Hartig to get right there and address the village at risk. I think that you're doing a great job in engaging the Center for Climate Strategies and Brian Rogers. You're tapping into good expertise. So I want to applaud those efforts to begin with. But I'm going to come back to this notion of thinking big and setting goals in the context of being ground zero for solutions.

When it comes to adaptation, why doesn't Alaska also be in charge of figuring out how to work FEMA and all the federal agencies so that when we have a crisis with coastal erosion, we set the standard for rapid response? I'm trying to get you guys to think about goals. When I'm sitting here and listening to all the diagrams for the different workgroups, I got a sense that that was a comprehensive approach, but that you were getting yourself into the weeds, and I think there needs to be some goal setting so that these groups can really work and meet your targets that you set better.

Particularly, I feel real strong about the goal setting for mitigation. I think not all states, but many states have started efforts with goal to reduce emissions by a set amount. And they're aspirations. They're nothing they'll be held accountable to. And the workgroups, they know what they're trying to strive for. And so I think it would be immensely helpful for the work groups and for all of you if you did take the time as a subcabinet to set these bigger and larger goals. While I'm on the topic of goals, I think it's important to realize that ConocoPhillips, BP, they themselves have pledged to reduce emissions by 10 to 30 percent from current levels in 30 years, and 60 to 80% by 2050. You've got the major emitters of greenhouse gas emissions in the state, at least on the Title V reporting list, are already committed to reducing emissions by a set goal. I would think that would give you tremendous comfort in saying, hey, maybe those are reasonable goals for the state of Alaska as well. If oil companies can step up and set those goals, why not us set the same goals? Let's look at

those things.

The Low Carbon Economy Act also set goals and both our congressional delegation are on board there. So I think you have room to step out and be bold and at the same time recognize that there's a parade building and lots of states and everybody's setting goals and the Western Climate Initiative is a good example to look to.

I would really encourage the subcabinet to go forward with your plan for these groups, but take a step back and make a tremendous effort to set some inspiring goals. And on the research level, I think we can do it there too. As you know, many of our marine mammals are on the forefront of being impacted. Well, are there ways to interact? One of my little crazy ideas-- and it may be indeed crazy-- but can we actually build temporary feeding platforms for walruses where they would actually use it? I don't know? But why not let's have some bold research topics along this line? And that's all coming back to casting Alaska out of the victim role and into solution role.

Another quick comment I want to make is on the chart there you talked about developing energy supply and demand. I would encourage you maybe look at a state of Alaska domestic energy plan, but it shouldn't be done under climate change. It's a bigger project all by itself. Just getting the railbelt utilities together is a monumental task. And that you consider doing an energy plan but one of the sideboards is that you have a carbon constrained strategy. But I think you're better off not trying to do an energy plan not under sub-cabinet but do a domestic energy plan that connects over into climate change.

In that regard, I want to share with you that every now and then in the conservation community we try to come together and articulate our policies and positions, and one of our first efforts last year was we came out with a position paper in support of the natural gas pipeline. And we sort of felt like the

<p>Deborah Williams</p>	<p>President, Alaska Conservation Solutions</p>	<p>next thing we needed to do was to articulate our statement and our vision on energy and climate change.</p> <p>A lot of people are talking energy now, but no one has really connected the dots and how they go together. You can't really have an energy conversation without it also being connected to where we want it to go on climate change. Anyway, we put together a policy paper http://www.akvoice.org/issues/ACA%20Climate%20and%20Energy%20Policy.pdf, and it got approved about two weeks ago, and I'd like to share it with everyone.</p> <p>Think big, set those goals, and one last comment I have is, definitely members of conservation community would definitely like to participate in sub-cabinet groups. There's a lot of expertise that we have, not only about Alaska issues, but connections into other major projects going on. For example, one of the persons I recommended to be on the research group who works in the World Wildlife Fund is tapped into what that organization is doing on the national and international and how some of those research dollars might be able to be brought into Alaska. So think about us participating as real constructive players, that not only can lend expertise but some very important connections to bigger players on this issue. So we'll probably put our heads together and come up with some names for your consideration.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> <p>**Commissioner Hartig noted that we don't intend the climate change strategy to be Alaska's energy policy. That would be separate, but we certainly anticipate that some of the issues, like energy conservation, renewable energy, would dovetail.</p> <p>My name is Deborah Williams. I'm president of Alaska Conservation Solutions. Like the other two testifiers, I first want to thank you so much for the very significant progress you are making. It's a pleasure to watch this sub-cabinet in action. To</p>
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analysis where we don't get charged just because we fuel people here when airplanes are traveling all over the place.

Now we could look at it for fuel for airplane operations on the ground, that could be part of an aspirational goal, you know, have them run less or whatever you can do on the ground. And we can look at them in the state, potentially.

But I think if you take out those two impediments from the, I think, noble point of having Alaska, as Kate said, poster child for impacts, we should be a poster child for addressing solutions. If you take out those two then we could as a state of Alaska, have a goal that would be consistent with what scientists say we need to, to keep Alaska a state that is recognizable. And we know what that is: It's 60-80 percent by 2050. And as Kate pointed out, ConocoPhillips, BP, Dupont, Alcoa, this long list of very reputable organizations have aspired to that goal. So we wouldn't be doing anything radical. We wouldn't be stepping outside what BP, Conoco, Alcoa, Dupont, etc., saying what we should do and not stepping outside what our distinguished scientists and the IPCC and others have said that we need a 60-80 percent reduction.

So I would propose that the subcabinet and the governor propose a 60-80% reduction, excluding the natural gas pipeline, excluding international air but that we apply to everything else. There may be another exclusion I'm not thinking of, but let's not get tied up because of those exclusions.

What people want to do so much is be part of the solution and want Alaska to be part of the solution. They really do. And I'm reminded of two things. World War II. And I, of course, often say that I think global warming is our WWII. And every citizen in the country wanted to be involved, if they weren't on the front lines, they wanted to be involved in the war effort. Whether it was their victory garden, or my mother used to save pieces of tin foil for a year, they wanted to be part of the

solution. And I can tell you that Alaskans want to be part of the solution. And it's really good to have a goal associated with being part of the solution.

The other thing is I think we're going going to find in Alaska because of all the impacts of global warming the mental impacts of global warming. You may know this story because it's true. A busload of kids was kidnapped and put into a tunnel. They were a small number of kids who had school spoons. And they were in this tunnel and they took their spoons and they tried to dig their way out. The other kids were in the bus crying. When they did an analysis afterwards of post traumatic stress syndrome, the kids who were trying to address the problem—almost no post traumatic stress syndrome. The people who weren't involved in the solution suffered the most from post traumatic stress syndrome.

So if we're thinking about the mental health of Alaskans, particularly Alaska natives and others who are just facing all these impacts, that we hopefully are going to help with adaptation as much as possible, but let's help people be part of the solution.

Okay, just two comments on adaptation: One, again, I am very excited that Alaska is going to be on the forefront of doing adaptation for the nation and for the world. This is going to be a really important report and you've got great people working on it.

Two, when I look at the initial list of possible adaptation advisory committee members, my reaction was, hmm, I think we need the most practical people possible on that list. People who roll up their sleeves and know how to implement adaptation strategies. I think that we need to make sure we have federal and local government people. Obviously, to address the adaptation needs we have, it's going to have to be a team effort. So I do strongly recommend, let's make this a comprehensive effort. Let's make sure we have

<p>Steve Ivanoff</p>	<p>Unalakleet</p>	<p>some key federal agencies, the Denali Commission, Coast Guard, Department of Interior. We wish you the best, you know we're here to help in every way we can. Groups like mine, Alaska Conservation Solutions. Climate change is the greatest threat Alaska faces and we look forward to being part of the solution.</p> <p>Steve Ivanoff, Unualakleet, I work for Kawerak Transportation. I was born and raised in the Unalakleet area. First of all, I'd like to thank the commissioner, deputy commissioners, for all their activity they have done in the immediate action work group and attending all of our hearings we have had. We really appreciate the opportunity to be heard and more so the activity that we see in the state department. We feel like it is a responsibility for the state to protect all its citizens. I think it can save us great embarrassment by avoiding forecasted catastrophe, by becoming participants and partners in dealing with erosion and relocation issues. I think with \$40 billion in the bank were anything to happen to these people it would be a great embarrassment to this state. And so I urge the cabinet and the state to hear what work group has to say because I think there are recommendations there that are on the right agenda.</p> <p>My wife and I were driving through Palm Springs and were just amazed by hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of wind mills that we saw out there. We drove for miles and miles. Once in a blue moon we could see one turning and we thought, man if we could have have one of those in our village that would be phenomenal, because they would be turning 365 days a year. And they would be just turning, quickly. We heard of one the Alaska Energy Authority is working on; on getting a windmill that could save up to 93,000 gallons of diesel per year. And we've heard of other projects in the state where they've got a couple of windmills, one here, one there. And my hopes are that we can expedite that process with alternative energy to</p>
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<p>Mary Walker</p>	<p>Alaska Inter-Faith Power and Light</p>	<p>where rather than do one, do four or five to capture wasted energy. But I'd really like to thank Mike and the Commissioner for all your work. We appreciate it. And on behalf of all the villages in my area, we appreciate it.</p> <p>Yesterday, Deborah Williams gave a presentation of a website where you can determine your carbon footprint and how to reduce it. Alaska Conservation Solutions website. Carbon reducer; calculator in various languages. http://www.alaskaconservationsolutions.com/acs/akcalculator.html</p> <p>Need to relay that to people who live in most expensive utilities. Perhaps something to get on Channel 2; program for short story on that subject to rural Alaska, even for the urban sector for that matter. Channel 2 is big in rural Alaska. Great resource to give them a chance to access this website. Ninety percent of those people don't know about it.</p> <p>My name is Mary Walker, and I'm with Alaska Inter-Faith Power and Light. We are an inter-faith ministry working on climate change and promoting stewardship throughout congregations across Alaska. It is my sincere hope that we will be able to have some of our ordained clergy as part of subcommittee and there's nobody better to address moral aspects of this issue. And also of course of individual action. When a lot of people that are faith based, they have such a strong moral compass, and they have every reason to be acting on this because they are guided by their morals, by their faith, by ethics. This is the right thing that we need to be doing to help protect creation and to help protect humanity. Humanity needs creation to be healthy, and so, all I wanted to say is that I hope we will get the opportunity. We have ordained clergy who want to be on the subcommittee and have their voices recognized. So thank you very much.</p> <p>(Added later: Just looking at your number 10, opportunities to reduce sources of greenhouse gas</p>
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<p>Steve Weaver</p>	<p>Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium</p>	<p>emissions from Alaska sources, including energy conservation, and energy efficiency, and renewable energy. And one thing I'd like you to consider is the opportunity for green collar jobs. There's so much opportunity in this area. We know that healthy environments equal healthy people and healthy communities. And so we started a small program here, that's called Recycling for the Homeless. And Bean Café is part of this and they pick up recycling cans and the number one plastic, and is giving their patrons something to do. And to feel like they have done something of worth for the day. And how this came about was I met a gentleman, and was making roast beef sandwiches with him and he said, you could go have one now. I said no thank you, sir, I've got to go to work. And he looked at me with nearly tears in his eyes and said, you have a job? And it touched me so much. And we really have an opportunity to promote these green collar jobs and work with lower socioeconomic brackets and train them to do retrofitting of energy efficiency of our housing, and something like that. I encourage you to consider this green collar jobs opportunity as the part of the adaptation process.</p> <p>And Toksook Bay, for example, has three windmills. It's absolutely fascinating if you have the opportunity to see Toksook Bay, flat as a pancake. And this small community has three wind turbines. It's such a beautiful to behold And this gives some of these people jobs, and they're displacing 50,000 gallons of fuel. Holy cow! Do you know how much money that saves them? And this is amazing. And so they have this dual electricity if by some chance the wind does stop blowing, they have back up generators that kick in, but they're using heat off the generators to transfer to other buildings and heat those buildings. So we just have to be innovative and creative and to think about those opportunities. Thank you.</p> <p>I want to say thank you--add that to the litany--and be brief. We've been involved in climate change for a long time, and we believe aligning a</p>
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	<p>(ANTHC)</p>	<p>statewide approach is where it's at. My name is Steve Weaver. I'm with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. I serve there as senior director of the Division of Environmental Health and Engineering. So from our perspective, we see climate change as an issue of the moment in rural Alaska. We have been involved in climate change on the national and international scene for several years. Our focus has been human health and water supply. And I wanted to bring those to your attention today because I didn't think there was enough emphasis in that area. We see the areas of water supply and human health as the key areas of interest.</p> <p>And when I talk about human health I also talk about the impact in rural Alaska on the subsistence food supply, which is huge, and the cultural network at stake. When we talk about invasive new species, Alaska is so large that when we talk about what's supposed to be here, is an important issue, we feel. So with that in mind, a lot of folks think ANTHC is a medical center and it certainly our primary program. We also have two other large businesses, community health which encompasses medical research, community and health statewide education. We cover that area. And we also have a construction program with clinics and water and sewer systems where we, of course, partner with the state and a lot of other funding agencies. So you asked the question of what the most important things would be and I wanted to give you an opinion.</p> <p>On the tactical level, we build new stuff every day and we're using old data. And there's a lot of new data out there that if it was aggregated and available it could be used as we build new facilities, and it could be used today, it could be used tomorrow. So tactically, data collection is of huge interest to us.</p> <p>I'll give you an example. The Dillingham Hospital was designed and built based on old data. Well, we shoveled the snow off the roof four or five times a</p>
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<p>Martha Levensaler</p>	<p>Alaska Marine Conservation Council, Climate Change Director</p>	<p>year now, because the new precipitation data, the roof's not built for that. So because we didn't have the new data, that increases our operational costs and creates downstream costs because we don't have access to the current information. So just in this form alone, I wrote down five or six organizations that are collecting data in their own little silos, so the opportunity for the state to create central data might interest engineering, that area. And if you look at what fish and game is doing with blood samples across the state, biological, medical engineering to collect data. So to me, that's job one, tactically. Strategically, putting our best foot forward to model the right behavior and build that individual behavior is important.</p> <p>But strategically, data is important. As I go federally looking for funds every year, I can't get money without data. Sometimes I can't get money with data, but I get no money without data. And so we need data; there's going to be a huge contest across the United States in the next several years to see who is the best canary in the gold mine? And the best canary's going to get the most resources. All our adaptive ideas are going nowhere without the funding resources. We have an opportunity today to begin to build our case. I believe it's about showing the impact of climate change here definitively, the impact on our people, the impact on our way of life and our culture, and using that as a basis to have the money to implement the plan we are going to build. So I would say that. Thank you.</p> <p>Hi, I'm Martha Levensaler. I work for Alaska Marine Conservation Council as a climate change director. I just want to say that we are working in coastal communities in southcentral and southeast Alaska, working with coastal residents, fishermen, and other members of the community on climate change. Talking about, educating them on the impacts of warming ocean, ocean acidification. Urging them to take action on a local level, working with us to make a difference in policy at the state and federal level. And I've been absolutely amazed</p>
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