



Sustainable Rural Communities: Public Comments:

Following in this section are the public comments as they were provided to the Denali Commission presented in their entirety.



Alaska Energy Authority

PG 5. The scope of this report may be too broad to be effective.

PG 14. Need for an agency to coordinate grant and loan information.

This (lead) agency should do this and offer technical assistance for the completion of grant and loan applications. Often what happens now is that some rural communities have developed relationships with engineering firms located in urban areas of Alaska to help with this process; but at a price. The lead coordinating agency needs to be staffed to provide not only the information about all funding opportunities for rural Alaska, but also provide the assistance to complete the applications. This could be accomplished with regular scheduled workshops in key rural hubs, teleconferences, or individual site visits to the rural communities.

It would be important to not duplicate services already provided at the state level.

PG 15. Lead agency proposes Federal Partner meeting opportunities to bring agencies to the table. Encouraging federal participation at regularly scheduled statewide meetings would be a better way to bring in participants. Examples include: AML, SE Conference, AFN, Rural Energy Conference, SWAMC, and many others. Another idea would be to have Federal participation at regularly scheduled regional meetings of the 12 non-profit's annual conventions.

PG 17. Completion and/or updating of the community profiles generated by the former Department of Community & Regional Affairs

As noted, planning for activities in a community are crucial, but often the basic infrastructure and siting information is not available for the rural communities. Adequate funding to update these community profiles for each of the rural communities and the completion of these profiles will provide the necessary information for adequate planning for all types of development or improvements; either for economic development or basic health and welfare improvement such as water, sewer or energy projects.

PG 18. Developing partnerships with the various entities serving rural Alaska, including ANCSA, village and regional corporations, Community Development Quota (CDQ's), and others.

The issue here is that corporations by their very nature are profit driven, which sometimes may be in conflict with the residents of a community served by this same ANCSA corporation. Therefore, these particular partnerships need to also be sure to include insights, comments and concerns from the local residents of an area served by an ANCSA corporation, at the village and regional level.

PG 19. Communities should have local equity.

Directly under that in *Planning* and *Subsistence* seem to directly contradict that statement.

The issue of sovereign immunity for some rural Alaska entities

No one wants to examine or really discuss this issue, but as an issue it is a major concern to some and needs to be addressed.

PG 21 – 22. Adequate funding for water and sewer projects in rural Alaska.

Continued



Alaska Energy Authority

The recommendation is made to increase this funding back to prior levels. This is needed; however, the agencies administering the majority of the funds (ANTHC and VSW) need to have adequate staffing and training to responsibly administer additional funding. In addition, the selection of which projects to fund needs more transparency in the decision-making process

Energy for Rural Alaska

Improved efficiency for diesel generation is not discussed. This will remain the energy source for some time, so efficiency needs to be stressed and supported. In addition, additional funding for staff to help with the installation, maintenance and operation of improved and more efficient diesel generation also needs to be provided.

Significant barriers (pg 5) not discussed in this report include federal permitting requirements for Hydro projects, and new regulations and requirements on biomass systems, heat recovery (from diesel engines) and burning used oil in rural areas of the state.

PG 23. (Editing comment only) the bullets listed under Energy, Environment, Health, etc are difficult to read. In some cases there is a solution then problem. In others the problem is stated and then the solution. Arranging statements in a clear problem/solution format would be preferable.

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Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

September 17th, 2010

Joel Neimeyer
Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission
510 L Street, Suite # 410
Anchorage, AK 99501-1953

RE: Sustainable Rural Communities is a subject of principal concern to DEHE.

Dear Mr. Neimeyer:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Denali Commission report titled: Sustainable Rural Communities, July 2010. Promoting and protecting the quality of life in rural Alaska is of principle concern to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). ANTHC is a statewide tribal health program that serves all 229 tribes in Alaska, co-manages with Southcentral Foundation the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), the tertiary care hospital for all American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) in Alaska, and carries out all non-residual Alaska Area Office functions of the Indian Health service that were not already being carried out by Tribal health programs as of 1997. As part of this responsibility, ANTHC manages statewide public health infrastructure construction and operations programs, working in as many as 40 rural Alaska Native communities each year. As ANTHC stands in the shoes of the federal government in operating these statewide programs, we would welcome the opportunity to participate in a Denali Commission sanctioned work group committed to removing/mitigating the barriers to achieving sustainable rural communities.

Our observations on the top five internal and interagency barriers to sustainable rural communities are:

1. Underutilization of existing program authorities and opportunities

Maximizing the benefit of current opportunities is the first step. Agencies should evaluate their user access rates and processes of currently authorized and funded programs. Are all potentially eligible users getting assistance? Can existing application processes be simplified? Can the communication of available assistance be improved? For instance the greatest challenge for rural communities is the cost of energy and collateral costs to operate and maintain public infrastructure. Fuel oil is as high as \$9.00/gallon and kilowatt/hr rates for electricity are correspondingly high. Together with our partner, the Alaska Native Health Board, we have found in community after community that key public facilities like the village clinic and water treatment plant are paying full price for electricity. Communities have not submitted the proper application to receive Power Cost Equalization subsidies and are paying thousands of dollars more than necessary each year for electricity. Another example is the Bureau of Indian Affairs Reservation Road Program. Tribes receive operations and maintenance funding annually for each mile of local road in their community registered in the reservation road system. Who has and has not made application? Are critically needed maintenance funds being lost because there is a lack of understanding in rural communities as to the opportunities available? Better education and communication is the key to achieving the intended potential of such programs.

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Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

2. Absence of a Lead Agency designation and confliction/duplicative requirements of funding agencies

The ANTHC routinely works on projects with multiple funding sources. Conflicting processes and requirements on these projects have resulted in higher project administrative costs, loss of efficiency, duplication of work, and delays in project construction of as much as three years while Agencies work out differences. Much could be gained in the better coordination of these efforts among the agencies. National Environmental Policy Act requirements, project award, approval and reporting processes are areas of particular interest to ANTHC.

3. Lack of adequate coordination among agencies

A barrier to achieving sustainability of rural communities is the lack of a coordinated government effort to better align the way agencies operate.

Coordination of infrastructure decisions has often been mentioned as a needed improvement and yet it remains an allusive goal because of a mechanism to implement this ideal. We concur with the observation made in the report that the Denali Commission could convene the coordination event(s) and facilitate the negotiations that would be required to improve this situation.

An Example of this type of opportunity is the lack of systematic coordination in the development of rural housing and the provision of necessary supporting infrastructure. Housing is occasionally constructed outside of existing service areas requiring extensions of essential services (e.g. roads, utilities, water & sewer) that are both expensive to build and to operate. Agency collaboration in the development and sharing of best practices would be a good start in promoting a solution for this problem. Consistent delivery of advance planning and coordination that includes all the parties, incorporates such developments into an overall community plan, and targets sustainable operating strategies would improve the quality of the outcome for participants and the return on investment for funders.

4. Reduced funding and a potential for lack of national support for Alaska program offices and their initiatives.

Between 2004 and 2010 the total annual appropriations for sanitation facilities construction in Alaska have been reduced \$49 million, a 38 percent drop. With the changes in our delegation, Alaska specific sanitation appropriations have plummeted by 58 percent. The statewide unmet sanitation need in the HIS sanitation deficiency system is \$857 million. Much remains to be done. A quarter of Alaska Native rural residents still do not have piped water and sewer service. We now rely more on funding agency national formula allocations. It is essential for the Alaska program offices of federal agencies to proactively educate national program managers and advocate for sustaining and, where possible, increasing Alaska allocations. We are a young state and our infrastructure development is more that a generation behind the Lower 48. Much is needed to be done to effectively communicate our unique environment.

5. Promote the availability and utilization of regional solutions

ANTHC is a supporter of local decision making. A local commitment to own and operate provided facilities is the key to effective public health protection. Building the water plant does not in and of it-

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Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

self achieve our public health mission. It is in the long term successful delivery of quality drinking water every day that improves quality of life and protects the public health in each community. To that end ANTHC believes in strength in numbers. ANTHC is pioneering an effort to develop a state-wide rural utility collaborative made up of community owned water and sewer systems. ANTHC currently is the operations manager of the public water system for 22 rural communities as part of its Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative (ARUC) program.

ARUC allows smaller communities to benefit from economies of scale and a higher level of managerial and technical support. For instance ARUC bulk purchased heating fuel at average price of \$3.10/gallon this year vs. the typical village price of over \$6/gallon. There are two stages of ARUC support: (1) billing assistance under which a village gets help with billing and collections, but not operations (11 villages); and (2) full membership (22 villages) in which ANTHC provides billing and is responsible for the actual management of the system. On average ARUC member communities had twice the user fee collection rate of other communities and were nearly twice as compliant with state and federal regulations. A stable and well trained local workforce is the key. ARUC local operator turnover was 8% the past year, compared a more typical average of 75% in other small communities.

In addition to reducing operating costs we believe ARUC will also ultimately reduce replacement capital costs, and increase the government's return on investment. We expect a consistent preventive maintenance program and stable employee base will prevent major system failures and should extend the operating life of the facilities beyond that currently expected.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sustainable Rural Communities report. In the future ANTHC would welcome the opportunity to offer additional thoughts and ideas to this very important discussion. We look forward to actively participating to deployment of developed solutions.

Sincerely,

Don Kashevaroff
Chief Executive Officer

Agency Representative: Don Kashevaroff

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Association of Alaska Housing Authorities

Sept. 16, 2010

Mr. Joel Neimeyer
Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission
510 'L' Street Suite 410
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Joel:

The Association of Alaska Housing Authorities (AAHA), whose membership includes fourteen Alaska Native regional housing authorities and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, are appreciative of the opportunity to provide comments on the recently released **Sustainable Rural Communities Report 2010**. Thank you to the many federal agencies and staff that participated in the development of this report.

General Comment: AAHA strongly supports any efforts aimed at increasing federal and state intra and inter-agency cooperation and streamlining of bureaucratic processes. AAHA applauds the efforts of the Congressional Delegation, the Denali Commission and other participating agencies to identify both barriers and possible solutions to the critical sustainability issues facing rural communities, issues which RHAs have been dealing with face-to-face for many, many years. The RHAs are significant stakeholders in this effort and stand ready as partners to support all viable and equitable recommendations that will improve our opportunities to deliver the highest quality and most cost effective housing and related services possible.

AAHA is particularly supportive of the recommendations proposed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the *"Top Five Barriers to Best Practices."* AAHA supports the proposed solutions to address the following issues:

- ◆ The requirement for multi-agency environmental review records for leveraged projects
- ◆ Barriers to funding in Alaska's unorganized borough
- ◆ The definition of "decent, safe and sanitary" in communities without residential piped water and sewer.
- ◆ ICDBG limitations on eligible applicants for new construction activities which currently prevents IHA's & RHA's from being recognized as Community Based Development Organizations (CBDO)
- ◆ Limitation on use of the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program

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Association of Alaska Housing Authorities

- ◆ Indian Preference requirements in procurement for leveraged projects under the IHBG
- ◆ The Indian Health Service prohibition from providing sanitation facilities funding for HUD funded new construction projects.

Although not specifically noted by HUD, for many years, AAHA members have advocated for the need for an improved process when sanitation facilities are being installed in a community as housing units are being built in the community by a regional housing authority. At times, the sanitation facilities are not completed according to an agreed upon deadline so housing authorities must either use their own funds to complete the sanitation project or there is a delay in a home receiving sanitation services. As the regional housing authorities have been developing housing and infrastructure throughout the state since the early 1970's, we recommend that, for efficiency purposes and as a partner in increasing the supply of quality, affordable housing and improved sanitation, the RHAs be allowed to be a recipient of sanitation funds and a developer of sanitation facilities.

Additional comments are identified below:

Top 5 Barriers to Best Practices – HUD Comment Section:

AAHA has been a long-standing advocate for a more coordinated and unified NEPA Environmental Review process. Implementing a “lead federal agency” and “lead federal program” system would be a significant cost saving measure for many RHAs.

While AAHA supports *the goal* of providing for piped water and sewer systems as part of all new construction projects, given current practical fiscal realities in rural Alaska, AAHA also supports the re-consideration of how the “decent, safe and sanitary” housing standard is implemented. Communities and housing developers such as RHAs should have greater flexibility and decision-making input, if not authority to implement an acceptable community standard.

AAHA also strongly supports independent recognition of IHAs and RHAs as CBDOs for purposes of securing ICDBG funds. There is no logical or rational reason for ongoing failure to provide such recognition. As noted in the report, RHAs are in fact substantially similar in purpose, function and scope to currently recognized entities.

AAHA would most likely be supportive of option 2 in terms of the Indian preference in procurement for leveraged projects issue. The issue should not be a barrier in the pursuit of leverage funds which are becoming more and more critical to many RHA projects. IHAs and RHAs should be given great latitude and flexibility in the implementation of preference requirements. In most cases, there is no entity with a stronger interest in the effective implementation of preference provisions and applying a “greatest extent feasible” standard would meet the spirit of such provisions while at the same time allowing an avenue for leveraged projects to proceed when they might otherwise fail to be executed due to the technical barriers that might otherwise exist.

AAHA has long advocated for reinstating IHS Appropriations for HUD funded projects and strongly supports the removal of the current IHS prohibition against serving HUD funded housing with IHS sanitation facilities. The removal of the prohibition would be a major positive step towards improving project coordination and efficiency.

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Association of Alaska Housing Authorities

Other General Comments:

Page 19: The report provides a recommendation that projects should have some local equity and financial commitment.

Since some communities are not able to provide a financial contribution to a particular project, we recommend that this sentence be amended to read local equity and/or financial commitment

Page 19: We recommend the removal of words in the report that are unnecessary and may be confusing to a reader – the word “epistemology” is not necessary in this section.

Page 21: The description of diabetes in this section does not appear to fit well in the topic area being discussed.

Page 23: AAHA supports any recommendation that can help to address rural energy issues and needs and any federal or state energy policies which make the support of in-state rural energy projects a priority.

It is important that each community identify its own energy development opportunities and energy usage needs.

Health section – Most tribal councils in Alaska have tribal courts. Tribal courts at the local level should resolve these issues affecting Alaska Native children.

Page 24: Transportation issues are a major barrier and significant cost to most if not all rural housing projects executed by AAHA members. AAHA would support any recommendation to subsidize local or non-local barge or air transport companies to ensure continued and cost-effective services to small rural communities. AAHA also supports the continued study of how existing modes of transportation can be more effectively coordinated or utilized, or how new modes of transportation can be developed to meet this critical need.

Page 34: Alternative/renewable energy development should occur in a balanced, holistic manner. For example, the use of trees for biomass energy must be balanced against the need to protect fish and game habitat.

Page 35: The report comments on the lack of skilled grant writers in some small Alaskan communities. An AAHA member recommends the consideration of funding a circuit-rider type grant writer who could provide services to villages without a grant writer.

Page 67: This section discusses the limited transportation options in rural Alaska, particularly for the elderly and disabled. The section recommends new funding – we recommend that the new funding be sustainable.

Page 69: The word “homeostatic” should be removed.

Page 70: Village re-location issues – the possible solutions in this section are vague. We recommend that, in working closely with the community, options are developed and considered and the community approves the option that is most workable for them.

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Association of Alaska Housing Authorities

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dan Duame
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Title: Board President

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Association of Village Council Presidents

Top Five Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
1. Inability to use technology to its full potential	Variety of reasons which include lack of access, lack of experience, lack of personal computers, unreliable internet
2. Lack of tribally-driven community plans	Limited local ownership in planning-plans driven from outside the community
3. Absence of activities for youth	This leads to substance abuse, crime, high drop out rates, poor self-esteem creating problems for the future and a lack of future local leadership. Also this results in emigration to urban areas.
4. Inadequate schools	High turn-over rate of educators causes interruption and discrepancies in learning leading to children not being adequately educated which results in increased drop off rates, youth not adequately performing in higher education, low self-esteem and lack of local leadership
5. Volunteering is difficult	Difficult to develop afterschool programs, youth activities and other volunteer-driven programs

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Bristol Bay Native Association

October 5, 210

Mr. Joel Neimeyer, Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission
510 L Street, Suite 410
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Re: An Invitation to Bristol Bay Region to Discuss the “Sustainable Rural Communities” Report with Tribal Officials and Other Community Leaders

This letter is an invitation for the Denali Commission and the Federal/State funding agencies to again visit the Bristol Bay region the week of February 20-26, 2011. The timeframe is when Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) and the Bristol Bay Housing Authority (BBHA) host the annual Tribal Presidents and Administrators workshops in Dillingham, Alaska.

The Last coordinated Federal/State funding agency and Denali Commission meeting in 2001 was well received. Many tribal and other community leaders were able to listen, ask questions and participate with the funding agencies first hand in an open forum. Many of the rural community leaders of and have since accessed grants to develop needed infrastructure in their communities.

With the completion of the “Sustainable Rural Communities” report it would be proactive and timely to again travel to rural Alaska to review the Commission’s findings with local leaders.

Please let me know if and how BBNA can be of assistance to make the visit happen. Feel free to call me at (907) 842-5257 to discuss the matter. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph Anderson
President & CEO

Agency Representative: Ralph Anderson

Title: President & CEO

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BIA Providers Conference: Listening Session (Held 12-01-10 Egan Convention Center)

Feedback from Listening Session Hosted by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development:

- ◆ Information will be provided.

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City of Pelican

Top Five Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
1. Lack of Outreach	Lack of outreach to small rural communities with the need to access potential programs
2. Permitting	Permitting process onerous and expensive
3. Application assistance	Grant applications difficult to complete
4. Access to conferences	Local funds needed for daily operations
5. Rural networks	Video conferencing equipment for problem solving

Agency Representative: Patricia Phillips

Title: Mayor

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mayor@pelicancity.net



City of St. George

Top Five Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
1. Local Economy	No economy outside of government grants
2. Tax Base	No raw fish taxes
3. Boat Harbor	Harbor unsafe and unfinished
4. Surface Transportation	Costs of all products to island because harbor not complete. Cannot develop without safe harbor.
5. High Energy Costs	High costs for power generation/home heating.

Agency Representative: Pat Pletnikoff

Title: Mayor

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Kawerak, Inc.

Barriers Regarding Coordination of Federal Policies and Programs

Top Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
<p>Grant Application and Reporting Policies</p>	<p>The ability to electronically submit grants seems to have reduced the average time from when a NOFA is released until it is due. Tribes are often delayed in even getting the notices of funding opportunities because they have to be mailed when other means of communication fail. Not all rural tribes have reliable internet, dependable fax machines, and they often suffer phone outages. Not all tribes are able to upload applications. Tribal grant writers often obtain grant writing assistance remotely and need more time to gather documents for submission due to communication and technology issues. The additional grant reporting requirements for the ARRA stimulus funding was daunting for rural communities and tribes with limited training, poor internet systems, and few staff to track the data required.</p> <p>Possible solution: It would help if the federal agencies allowed a longer time period between the release of a NOFA and the due dates for grant applications. The federal government should offer proposal development workshops, and allow submission alternatives for communities and tribes with special needs. More grants should expand their criteria to allow tribes to be eligible to apply, since they perform some of the same services as municipalities. Since regional tribal consortia's, CDQ's, non-profits, and Native Corporations and local businesses provide vital basic services in rural communities, eligibility requirements should be expanded to allow them to apply if it will provide basic necessities in a rural community (see page 20).</p>
<p>Wetlands Policies</p>	<p>Nearly all of rural Alaska is located in a wetland, and it complicates development.</p> <p>Possible solution: The federal requirements should be lessened within or near city limits to reduce the costly need to do environmental studies or force the recreation of wetlands for every project deemed to be completed in wetlands within or near city limits for infrastructure development. Allow payment in lieu of taxes to go to non-profits like Kawerak and not just conservation groups.</p>

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*Kawerak, Inc.*

<p>Land Policies</p>	<p>Federal policies to protect the land and environment often conflict with state and tribal policies and complicate matters for development. Some military sites are contaminated and the cleanup is slow. Federal regulations impact mining, hunting and other development.</p> <p>Possible solution: Advocate for faster cleanup of military sites and be as proactive at protecting the land by respecting local subsistence rights and allowing responsible development. Advocate that the public process is followed regarding management of land resources. Resolve land use conflicts and insure public input is included in land use and management plans.</p>
<p>US Census Issues</p>	<p>The US Census is used to determine eligibility for many communities and tribes for funding, yet the system is flawed. Some communities do not have their own zip code and so their data is combined with nearby communities that skews the data making them look better off than they are. Also some have many high paid outside workers living in the community at the time of the census which can also skew the numbers.</p> <p>Possible solution: Allow alternative sources of data to support grant applications, and advocate for improvements of the census process.</p>
<p>Unfunded Mandates</p>	<p>Mandates like “No Child Left Behind”, Health Insurance portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements, and other mandates place great strain on rural communities that can barely meet minimal infrastructure needs let alone fund additional requirements. An example is HIPPA requirements require adequate space for privacy protection, but do not take into consideration the cost to heat that space in rural communities where fuel can be over \$7.00 per gallon.</p> <p>Possible solution: The federal government needs to consider the cost of regulations, reconsider many of them, or modify them so they can be accomplished with reasonable means without outside assistance.</p>
<p>Minimal Federal Standards</p>	<p>Many communities lack law enforcement, medical staff, sewer and water, and other vital needs. It seems astounding that some communities are required to have 20 teachers, but not one doctor, not one fully armed police officer, and it runs out of fuel and/or drinking water before the winter is over.</p> <p>Possible solution: The federal and state governments should define and help to meet basic standards in all communities, it would improve the quality of life in rural communities with the most critical health, safety, and sanitation issues and prevent critical shortages of basic needs.</p>

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*Kawerak, Inc.*

<p>Postal Service Issues</p>	<p>The US Postal Service is a vital part of life in rural communities. The by-pass system passes the responsibility to deliver the mail directly to the airlines while erasing all federal responsibility for the damages and loss of products and services. Villages stores struggle to keep the shelves adequately stocked and should have safe reliable shipping of products guaranteed by the US Postal Service like everywhere else in the United States.</p> <p>Possible solution: While there is not much to be done about the weather or the remoteness of rural communities, improvements can be made in the storage of “by-pass” mail until goods can be transported to rural Alaska.</p>
<p>Energy Policies</p>	<p>Rural communities are busy trying to survive and they experience energy high costs of living, shortages of diesel to run power plants, and fuel outages. Yet some manage to put up solar and wind projects, but they are the exception and not the rule.</p> <p>Possible solution: Federal policies need to support long term renewable energy practices and development because our rural communities have the lowest capacity to pay and the highest utility bills in the United States. More assistance is needed to assist rural areas with energy needs.</p>
<p>Homeland Security</p>	<p>One staff person at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is tasked with the entire state to assist rural communities with Emergency Operations Planning, and several staff in the state homeland security office help communities through the process. Communities need help with all types of emergency planning like Hazard Mitigation, Relocation, or Flood Planning. Yet for communities to even obtain funding to assist with erosion problems or to qualify for disaster relief they must have an Emergency Operations Plan.</p> <p>Possible solution: The federal government needs to provide more and appropriate technical assistance and training, with additional staff able to travel to help communities with emergency planning, because one storm can put an entire community and all of its vital infrastructure at risk.</p>

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Kawerak, Inc.

Barriers Concerning State Policies, Programs, and Planning	
Top Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
Mapping Needs	<p>Nearly every rural region needs to map their community and planned projects, and each community struggles to obtain up-to-date maps and lacks the capacity to produce such maps.</p> <p>Possible solution: The state should assure that rural areas have adequate maps to plan and implement development projects, or at least provide a supplement to assist needy communities to obtain new maps on a regular basis.</p>
Urban Bias	<p>The bulk of state appropriations goes to urban areas. Our villages are experience living conditions that are comparable to third world counties – basic infrastructure investment is needed.</p> <p>Possible solution: A policy needs to be put in place to assure a more even distribution of state funds and that basic needs are met.</p>
State Funding in the Denali Commission	<p>Although they have funded rural projects, the State of Alaska’s failure to place funding within the Denali Commission (as intended) has complicated the grant requirements for reporting and matching requirements for tribes and municipalities and prevented, complicated, or delayed many vital projects. It’s good to see that the IAWG with DCCSD recommended putting state funding into the Denali Commission.</p> <p>Possible solution: Advocate for consistent discretionary contributions into the Denali Commission Funding and streamline procedures for grant applications.</p>
Subsistence Policies	<p>State regulations conflict with subsistence needs and impact every rural community at its heart, affecting its very survival. Individuals are cited for not having sport fishing licenses when they are actually subsistence fishing. Also they ate cited for not having hunting licenses when they are actually involved in age-old practices of putting food away for the winter. Families cannot afford the USDA meat, fish, or birds in the village stores.</p> <p>Possible solution: It is time for the State of Alaska to recognize that liberalizing regulations for people in small communities where the cost of living is high increases self-sufficiency in rural communities and improves the economy (see page 19).</p>

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*Kawerak, Inc.*

<p>Energy Policies</p>	<p>Rural communities have the lowest capacity to pay and the highest utility bills in the United States.</p> <p>Possible solution: The state needs to work with the federal government and support long term renewable energy, but never forget the emergencies which our villages face every winter. The state needs to offer more bulk fuel purchasing assistance, keep subsidizing energy costs, and find ways to supplement freight and storage costs. Develop a state-wide energy plan and implementation strategy.</p>
<p>Village Public Safety Officer Housing</p>	<p>Housing for Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO's) is an issue in almost every rural community in Alaska, yet few grants will fund the construction of new VPSO housing in rural Alaska. Non-profit regional consortias that administer the VPSO program are not in a position to become property owners due to no other source of income coming in to maintain housing. Rural municipalities do not have a tax base and struggle to maintain the regular city buildings and are reluctant to stretch their budgets to try to maintain VPSO housing. So VPSO's often end up living in barely adequate, poorly insulated, sub-standard housing at their own expense. This affects the turnover rate of VPSO's greatly. Few local residents or entities are sympathetic because they themselves are overcrowded and need better housing.</p> <p>Possible solution: The state needs to assist rural municipalities in solving this problem, perhaps by funding a prototype cold climate prefab house that can be a scientific energy experiment, to provide one energy efficient house to each eligible community (even if they had to raise part of the funds locally).</p>

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*Kawerak, Inc.***Transportation Planning**

The state has done much to improve village airports, but still struggles to maintain them. Few village airports have even rudimentary shelters to keep passengers out of the harsh weather as they wait for a plane, which could be critical for an ailing patient. Also there are no restroom facilities. Passengers and people waiting to pick up packages must go back home and miss their plane or urinate on the ground behind the state garages at village airports. This is a health hazard. Very few communities have barge landing facilities, loading docks, or small boat harbors. Ferry systems could greatly reduce transportation costs in some areas and provide cheaper delivery of goods, but have never been seriously considered. Alaska has fewer roads and railroads than any other state in the United States. Plus the winter trails that connect rural Alaska get very little attention, yet are so vital.

Possible solution: STIP funding estimates need to be adjusted for inflation. Unravel the issues preventing the development of shelters and restroom facilities at rural airports. Advocate for more funding and assistance with rural harbor development. Advocate that public process is followed regarding transportation planning, land planning, and management of land resources. Resolve conflicts and obtain public input into all planning documents. The State of Alaska needs to capitalize long term transportation funding for Alaska and create a transportation fund of one billion or more dollars to address transportation needs (see the attached testimony by Denise Michels).

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Kawerak, Inc.

Barriers Regarding Municipal Capacity	
Top Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
Small Municipal Budgets and Few Funding Opportunities	<p>Rural cities operate with minimal staff and limited funding revenues. Rural communities collect no property taxes and limited sales taxes or other fees to generate revenue. Some are forced to operate charitable gaming to fund basic city services, which in itself creates social and economic problems in the community. Some rural cities are forced to operate with shorter workweek scheduled and part time staff to save money. Some cannot afford the fuel needed to heat clinics and other vital community necessities. Many communities lack adequate infrastructure, basic public safety facilities, heavy equipment, or public safety personnel. Search and rescue volunteers usually must use their own 4 wheelers, snow machines, or boats to go search for missing persons. Village Public Safety Officers often have to pay office expenses out of their own pockets because cities are not adequately funded.</p> <p>Possible solution: The state needs to support rural city governments with more training and technical assistance, and provide more assistance to help struggling communities with basic local services so that communities are not faced with water shortages, fuel shortages and other serious issues. Increase revenue sharing to assure rural communities can provide services to assure public safety and health.</p>
Overwhelming Responsibilities	<p>Rural municipal governments have many local responsibilities: roads, law enforcement, public buildings, equipment, sewer and water, power, clinics, etc. Cities should not be faced with decisions of, “do we order the parts to fix the only working sewage truck or plow the streets or buy the fuel to heat the clinic this month?”</p> <p>Possible solution: The state needs to find ways to relieve this burden on rural municipal governments by supplementing their funding and by providing more effective hands-on assistance from state personnel to address these issues.</p>
Infrastructure Limitations	<p>Each community faces unique challenges of harsh weather, finding adequate gravel sources, storage capacity, and dealing with the narrow shipping and construction season. Also, every new project adds a strain on the existing water, sewer, landfill, power, and transportation systems which never seem to be upgraded to meet the new demands.</p> <p>Possible solution: Getting more local input into project will assure sustainability, but it cannot happen without extensive collaboration with federal, state, private, and local entities.</p>

Continued



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Barriers Regarding Tribal Government Capacity and Native Corporation Collaboration	
<i>Top Barriers to Best Practices:</i>	<i>Brief Detail:</i>
Grant Writer and Grant Management	<p>Local grant writer and grant management capacity is limited in rural communities. Technology develops slowly in rural areas and can complicate timely grant applications and grant reports. There are limited training opportunities for staff professional development.</p> <p><i>Possible solution:</i> Support continuing education and staff development, collaborative grant writing within a region, and more region-wide training opportunities in rural communities.</p>
Overwhelming Responsibilities	<p>Tribes have many essential priorities to focus on at one time and very few staff to carry out the work. Tribal councils are different each year making long range planning more difficult. In addition to trying to run all tribal projects they often try to help support the municipalities that are struggling to maintain vital services like clinics or landfills.</p> <p><i>Possible solution:</i> Support the development of long range planning. Encourage collaborative efforts on big projects, and extend the terms of service for council members.</p>
Consortia Support and Long Range Planning Efforts	<p>Regional tribal consortias offer much needed support for basic programs and services, provide advocacy on behalf of tribes, and provide technical assistance but must serve all tribes and cover a large service area. Most programs are grant run, and leave tribes struggling to maintain projects once a grant period is over. Many Alaska tribal governments have taken a lead in community planning and involved city governments and Native Corporations in the process. This has worked well in some places to accomplish important projects, but not all regions have successful collaboration and they suffer greatly. (see page 19)</p> <p><i>Possible solution:</i> Improve overall planning efforts and encourage collaboration amongst all parties to assure sustainable projects in rural communities.</p>
Land Issues	<p>Most tribal governments lack a land base yet are tasked with trying to obtain land for needed community infrastructure. For-profit Native Corporations often feel forced to give up land and gravel resources (at a loss) for vital community infrastructure needs.</p> <p><i>Possible solution:</i> More collaboration can assure that the needs of all are met without an undue burden on any one entity.</p>

Continued



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Barriers Regarding Private Sector Economy and Labor Force Issues

<i>Top Barriers to Best Practices:</i>	<i>Brief Detail:</i>
Non-locally based Businesses	<p>Many of the village stores are headquartered out of region or out of state (like ANICA in Seattle) and do not have staff that are closely connected to the needs of the people they serve in the village. These village stores are poorly stocked, and there are few local suppliers of other goods or services. All transportation systems are headquartered far away. Barge companies are headquartered in Anchorage, Seattle, or other urban areas and provide minimal services to rural communities. Airlines are based in urban areas and greatly affected by weather and the “freight” or postal service needs leaving passenger service customers last on their priority.</p> <p>Possible solution: Work to develop and support locally owned businesses, co-ops, and family businesses.</p>
Jobs and Economy	<p>Limited local labor force, limited local hire on infrastructure construction projects, and conflict of understanding of the need for the subsistence lifestyle all affect the rural economy. Rural families depend on the land to survive, yet all construction must be done in the heart of subsistence season. Also the high cost of transportation and fuel drives up the cost of nearly every project.</p> <p>Possible solution: Job sharing, adjustable work schedules, and other solutions will assure projects are done and families have full freezers. Subsidizing energy and transportation systems will assure rural communities have access to the energy and transportation needed to support the economy.</p>
Rural Cash Flow Problem	<p>Cash flow is a problem in rural communities because there are no local banks. Improvement comes with technology and multi-agency collaboration to get more options in rural communities to assist with cash flow.</p> <p>Possible solution: Subsidies or grants to banking institutions to install ATM’s in rural communities and more training on financial literacy and online banking in rural Alaska.</p>

Continued

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Barriers Regarding Denali Commission Policies and Procedures

<i>Top Barriers to Best Practices:</i>	<i>Brief Detail:</i>
Redefine “Distressed Community”	<p>Kawerak appreciates that there is a process that allows some communities to appeal the definition of “distressed communities” by collecting local data, but not all communities were able to get through the appeal process. Some of these were the “most” distressed communities in our region, like Little Diomed and Golovin.</p> <p>Possible solution: There is a need to redefine what constitutes a “distressed” community.</p>
Need to Obtain More Rural Input	<p>The key cabinet members’ trip in August 2009 (page 6 of the report) was to two of the larger communities in one region, Calista. While these communities were good choices to visit, they are not a complete picture of rural Alaska or village life. If a large community like Bethel with over 5,800 people is struggling, you can imagine a community of Diomed with 145 people is struggling even more. Also see the list of groups missing from the discussion (attached below this table.)</p> <p>Possible solution: Develop a formal process for rural input into the Denali Commission decision making policy. Use the existing decision making bodies and systems in place in rural Alaska to provide input, recommendations and if possible, make decisions and meet needs.</p>
Improve the Conflict of Interest Policies	<p>There have been noticeable conflicts of interest in the past within the Denali Commission policies, like awarding contracts to favored partners to provide training.</p> <p>Possible solution: Put mechanisms in place to prevent internal conflicts of interest within the Denali Commission.</p>
Become a Leader in Planning Efforts	<p>The cabinet seems to have a good understanding of the value of local ownership of projects, but when you must get community input into so many types of projects a small community gets planned to death with a community plan, and transportation plan, a health plan, an environmental plan, and so on.</p> <p>Possible solution: The Denali Commission could be the model for all regions and offer training and assistance for more holistic planning. The commission needs to develop a state wide development planning training program for rural communities, and make resources available to communities so that they are able to develop comprehensive community and business plans.</p>

Continued

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Make Grants Less Competitive	<p>Don't make rural entities within a region compete against each other for access to limited funds.</p> <p>Possible solution: Use formula funding if funding is limited to assure each region is funded and lower match requirements to assure more are able to apply.</p>
Complete Review of Denali Commission Policies	<p>Some policies are cumbersome or in need of revision to better meet the needs in Rural Alaska.</p> <p>Possible solution: Review the Denali Commission Investment Policy and Procurement Policies and reconsider the Cost Share Match Policies for capital infrastructure projects to make them more effective in rural Alaska.</p>
Renewed Vision	<p>Many communities are still waiting for basic infrastructure and services that the Denali Commission was designed to address.</p> <p>Possible solution: Implement the mission and operating principles contained in the Denali Commission's 2010 work plan (page 3 of the 2010 work plan).</p>

The cabinet is made up of many organizations that provide services in Alaska, but any federal, state and private agencies are missing from the cabinet and from the discussion in May 2010 (page 7) like:

Federal

- ◆ US Small Business Administration (SBA)
- ◆ US Post Office
- ◆ US Dept. of Justice (DOJ)
- ◆ US Dept. of Commerce
- ◆ US Dept. of Health and Human Services
- ◆ Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- ◆ Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- ◆ Economic Development Administration (EDA)

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State

- ◆ Alaska Municipal League
- ◆ Alaska State Troopers
- ◆ Alaska Dept. of Health
- ◆ Alaska Dept, of Transportation (DOT)
- ◆ Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)
- ◆ Village Safe Water (VSW)
- ◆ Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA)
- ◆ Alaska Energy Authority (AEA)
- ◆ School Districts (Like Bering Strait School District and Nome Public Schools)

Local and Private

- ◆ City Governments
- ◆ Tribal Governments
- ◆ Head Start Programs (Kawerak, Inc. and others)
- ◆ Tribal Consortias (Kawerak, Inc. and others)
- ◆ Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC)
- ◆ Regional or Local power providers
- ◆ Alaska Housing Finance (AHF)
- ◆ Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association (ANICA)
- ◆ Health Corporations (Like Norton Sound Health Corporation)
- ◆ Housing Authorities (Like Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority)
- ◆ QDC's (Like Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation)
- ◆ Airlines (Alaska Airlines, Frontier, Penn Air and others)
- ◆ Barge companies (Northland, Alaska Logistics, Crowley Marine and others)
- ◆ Communication providers (telephone, television, and internet)

Continued



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- ◆ Rasmuson Foundation
- ◆ Rural Cap
- ◆ Alaska Cold Climate Housing
- ◆ Alaska Partnership for Economic Development (APED)
- ◆ University of Alaska (UAA)
- ◆ University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)

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The number one “Internal and Interagency Barrier to Sustainable Community Development” is the construction of the political representation in the Alaskan Legislative body that is allotted to the rural and bush communities of Alaska. Initially the State Legislature needs to be fixed at a permanent number of 24 Senators and 48 Representatives. And, the selection of those 24 Senators needs to be redistributed by geographic area in order to truly represent the entirety of the State of Alaska while creating a necessary balance in the State Legislature.

Currently, our State Senators are merely Representatives with two votes instead of one – imagine if on the Federal level the State of Alaska had to share Senator Begich with Wyoming and Montana while sharing the other Senatorial seat with North and South Dakota – that is how rural/bush Alaska shares their “Senatorial representation” with the “rail belt” as the system is currently implemented.

(Perhaps the State of Alaska should also consider constructing its’ State Legislative body in an “electoral college” role of confirmation regarding the selection of Federal Senators from the State of Alaska.)

The number two “Internal and Interagency Barrier to Sustainable Community Development” is the issue of campaign funding. What representation the Alaskan bush and rural communities have in the State’s Legislative body is overwhelmed by the financial resources of the other more populous regions of the State as well as interests external to the rural and bush communities and the State of Alaska as a whole. The campaign funding mechanisms of political candidates in the State of Alaska need to be addressed in a rational manner. Basically, the only legal campaign funds for elections in the State of Alaska should be those given directly from one individual with active voter registration in the State of Alaska to a declared candidate (of any party) in Alaska. In our modern age the tracking of such transfers is complete and could be nearly instantaneous. No individual should have their personal rights infringed, capped, or otherwise restricted.

However, at the same time, campaign funds from any and all sources other than the personal accounts of an actively registered voter in the State of Alaska should be banned and made illegal. Likewise, the transfer of campaign funds to an eligible donator for donation to a declared candidate would also be illegal within the State of Alaska.

The number three “Internal and Interagency Barrier to Sustainable Community Development” is the ingrained conflict of interest in our current political system that has been allowed and, unfortunately, encouraged. The existing process has evolved into a system where everyone votes for their own boss/wallet while looking the other way and allowing their neighbors to do the same. This collusion promotes self interest at the expense of what is best for the State (and the rural/bush Alaskan communities especially) overall. Individuals who receive a check from a governmental body should be ineligible to vote in the elections of representatives to that body. City and Borough employees should not be allowed to vote for their own Mayor – or, in some cases, Assemblyperson. Cooperative utility employees should not be allowed to vote for Directors. And State employees – public servants each and everyone – should not be eligible to vote in State wide elections. Public servants should not be allowed to select their own supervisory individuals based on their own selfish interests. Rather,

Continued



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the general public – hopefully desirous of “broader public interests” – should be able to select the management for their public servants without interference.

As long as this sense of entitlement is enshrined within SOA and local public employment roles, it will remain embedded within the population. At this juncture no one is willing to surrender what little piece of Alaska that they have acquired (through patronage or luck) in order to contribute that asset towards an improved State.

Nothing short of a serious and major paradigm shift in Alaska’s political landscape will allow the barriers to sustainable community development to be overcome in rural and bush Alaska and permit the State’s residents to prosper.

The number four “Internal and Interagency Barrier to Sustainable Community Development” is the historical lack of development foresight, direction, and focus regarding how the State has expended its’ limited funds for new infrastructure throughout rural and bush Alaska. By zoning the entire state now for development corridors and non-development areas the State could restrict dispersal of state funds to those designated development corridors while getting more value for their dollars through the use of those focused expenditures.

By building infrastructure corridors to specific towns and areas while leaving other specific towns and villages off of the developed corridor Alaskans could make a choice about living in high cost areas or living in a lower cost development corridor. The State would over time, see a return on the investment through savings realized in their billion dollar “Bush” support programs.

With the pipeline we already have a “North Slope – haul road” corridor – which could use a few more “phase two” enhancements. We need to develop two more road corridors. One corridor should go from Fairbanks to Kotzebue through Galena with a second phase connecting Nome and Bethel. The other corridor should be from Mat-Su/Tyonek to King Salmon via Iliamna with a second phase connecting Aleknagik through New Stu.

That routing leaves plenty of rural Alaska for those who wish to live off the grid while serving those who truly desire improvements in their quality of life and cost of living. Once roads are in place, everything else becomes more cost effective. Power and communication tie lines would follow the roads – allowing for maintenance and substations along the way. Fuel delivered by tanker truck would be more than competitive with barge fuel and associated power. As everyone’s overhead costs went down the savings would directly impact “Bush” resident’s checkbooks.

If roads are not to be the focus of sustainable communities then the provisioning of subsidized power (home heating and transportation) may be substituted as a half measure. In that event a major external force (the State of Alaska is assumed to be the only such economical force available) is required to meet goals in that arena. The State of Alaska could do that for electric service delivery in two ways:

1. A complete socialization (State takeover) of the electric energy production in Alaska would allow the State to use State employees and the general fund to produce electricity and charge politically acceptable rates separate from the actual cost of power generation.

Continued



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- The State could accomplish the same goal to a certain extent by mandating a “postage stamp” rate across the state.

As an approximate example:

if the rail belt uses 1300 MW at \$0.15/kwhr and the “bush” uses 200 MW at \$0.50/kwhr the State could tax the rail belt consumers \$0.05/kwhr thereby raising those rates to \$0.20/kwhr and use that tax revenue to reduce the effective “bush” rate to a matching \$0.20/kwhr.

Similar financial structures could be developed to meet home heating needs.

In Summary:

No roads = no development. No development = no significant reduction in the cost of living and certainly no improvement in the standard of living.

And without inexpensive power - the remote Alaskan communities will not be able to develop true sustainability nor will there be any hope for an improvement in existing third world conditions.

Question: should the State even develop rural Alaska and the “Bush” via roads and infrastructure to promote sustainability and lower the overall cost of living thus improving the quality of bush life... or should the State mandate be simply to preserve the “Bush” and its high cost of living and “third world” standards at all costs?

The number five “Internal and Interagency Barrier to Sustainable Community Development” is the State’s approach to natural resource development. Since statehood we’ve seen the Parks Highway and the pipeline...without additional development there will be no sustainability anywhere.

Through the defects in our political process (described in barriers numbered 1-3 here) individuals and special interests groups have “captured” the State’s regulatory process and wield it effectively in the service of very narrow no-growth agendas.

One glaring example of an existing narrow agenda is the Alaska Marine Highway. Although the State’s resources belong to everyone we don’t see a comparable subsidy provided to those residents of communities not served by the State ferry system. In this example: since the State subsidizes a family (from Cordova with an equivalent value of \$1,600.00 per trip?) on their ferry system shopping trip to Anchorage (with personal vehicle), when do the residents of Naknek or Nome receive an equal amount of travel subsidy – say round trip air fare for four and rental car?

All of the State of Alaska’s natural resources belong equally to all of its’ residents – including non-renewable resources such as fish and wildlife. And those assets that have previously been politically allocated to protected classes of people remain the property of all Alaskans. Similarly, all extractable resources in Alaska – minerals as well as oil and gas – belong to all Alaskans. Therefore all Alaskans should have a voice in determining the direction of all resource development across the State – not just local residents or special interests. And, a reformed political apparatus as described in items numbered 1-3 should provide that foundation.

Continued



Nushagak Corporation

Congruently, a reformed political apparatus as described in items numbered 1-3 that provides the foundation for the infrastructure development as described in item number 4 should deliver the beginnings of the responsible, reasonable, and logical resource development that is necessary to enable sustainability in Alaskan communities.

Other “soft” resources such as an educated public and the public assets devoted thereto deserve improved development and deployment as well. Initially the K-12 public education system in Alaska needs to be re-structured. First, those public resources dedicated to K-12 public education should be placed into service on a twelve month basis. The school system should be realigned to a three semester per year schedule with children required to attend two of those three semesters. That allocation of the public’s resources would deliver an immediate fifty percent increase in education capability. At the same time the teachers – public servants each and everyone – would be subject to proficiency testing themselves with the less than competent being dismissed or relegated to other more appropriate duties. At the same time the funding for athletics should be brought more “in-line” with classroom educational goals. This would involve low cost intramural sports activities (removing the public funding and the public school system from the role of “farm team” for professional athletic entertainment). Parents who desire additional or advanced athletic activities for their children would be encouraged to patronize privately funded “competitive leagues”.

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State of Alaska Department of Law

September 8, 2010

To: Sharon Lind, Denali Commission

From: Daniel S. Sullivan Attorney General, State of Alaska
Through Monica Jenicek, Assistant Attorney General

Re: Comments on the Denali Commission's Draft "Sustainable Rural Communities" Report

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the commission's draft report on sustainable rural communities. The report does a good job highlighting many of the issues that the State's Rural Action Subcabinet observed in its outreach trips to five of the state's geographic regions.

Here are our specific comments.

1. Health. At page 23 Health, which is based on BIA comments at pp. 55-56, the State of Alaska suggests revision as follows to underscore the fact that the involved issues are not limited to Alaska's rural regions:

"Alaska's children, both Native and Non-Native, are at risk for child neglect, physical and sexual abuse, from a combination of factors: geographic remoteness, alcohol abuse and domestic violence within their living situations, and lack of local law enforcement. Not every community that wants a local law enforcement presence, such as a village public safety officer, has one. To protect their safety, children must sometimes be removed from abusive parents and placed into foster care and adopted. Child welfare workers, both state and tribal, are difficult to recruit and there is frequent turnover.

All of Alaska's cities and villages have high rates of sexual assault. The State of Alaska has recently implemented a comprehensive ten-year plan to combat high rates of sexual assault and domestic violence. A major aspect of this plan is increasing law enforcement presence in rural communities. The State of Alaska fully supports federal programs and seeks to partner with federal agencies to increase the local law enforcement presence in rural areas through the village public officer safety program."

2. Community Development Block Grants and Indian Community Development Block Grants. Two thirds of Alaska tribes already receive these grants. 2009 GAO Report, Alaska Native Villages at 27. The report notes that only some Alaska tribes are in unorganized boroughs, and only 64 tribes in unorganized boroughs face difficulties. A statutory change to make all "federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes/villages" grantees is an overbroad solution to a narrower problem, which could be practically solved by making the State the grant recipient.
3. Native Hire preference. As a general matter, Native Hire preferences may run into conflict with the Alaska State constitution wherever state funds commingle with federal funds. Art. I, §1 (equal protection); Art. I §3 (anti discrimination). The proposed fixes at page 50 may address a conflict between NAHASDA projects and HUD funding programs, but the proposals do not necessarily answer the lingering State constitutional issues.

Continued



State of Alaska Department of Law

4. ANCSA Lands. The draft report notes the ongoing subsistence debate and suggests at page 55 that ANCSA lands should be treated as if they are Indian country. The United States Supreme Court in *Alaska v. Native Village of Venetie* directly addressed this issue when it held that ANCSA lands are not under federal superintendence.
5. PL 280. The draft report states on p. 56 that there are no BIA law enforcement officers in Alaska because Alaska is a PL 280 state where jurisdiction is held with the state. The position inaccurately states Alaska law. After the Alaska Supreme Court's decision in *John v. Baker*, almost none of the state is treated as being subject to PL 280, because PL 280 by its terms applies in Indian country in Alaska (including Metlakatla). There are no BIA law enforcement officers because Alaska has virtually no Indian country, except Metlakatla.
6. Tribal Participation in Grant programs as if they are in Indian country. The draft report at page 71 suggests treating tribes as if they are in Indian country. The state encourages opening up programmatic funding for tribes which would otherwise be unavailable. But in other contexts, treating Alaska tribes as if they are in Indian country could seriously exacerbate the state's existing jurisdictional confusion. Instead, the commission should work to develop programs specifically tailored to Alaska.
7. Transportation. The draft report mentions transportation in several places, but it does not reference the Joint Federal State Tribal Transportation Task Force, or the transportation protocols which have been signed by at least 50 Alaska tribes. The state encourages the Commission to reference the task force—and to become a member if it has not already joined.

Again, thank you for allowing the Department of Law to be a part of this process.

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STG Incorporated

Thank you opportunity to submit comments on the Commission's Sustainable Rural Communities report. After reading through the document, I was left with the impression that this will be a valuable resource for the policy makers and agencies responsible for development in Alaska's rural communities. The challenges are well articulated and, more importantly, some valuable solutions are offered.

Our firm, STG, has worked extensively across Alaska to support the Commission's objectives through construction services over our 20 year history. While we offer a variety of heavy industry services, we have built numerous energy projects made possible through the Denali Commission including bulk fuel storage facilities, power plants, and wind power installations among others. Through this work, we have gained a detailed perspective of the how the availability of reliable and affordable energy is a vital component in creating/maintaining a sustainable community in rural Alaska. Indeed, without the investment in more reliable, efficient, and diesel-saving technologies the ability to maintain/operate existing facilities/investments in rural Alaska is greatly stressed. This point seems to be well documented in the report and something that I hope will be well understood by legislators that might be unfamiliar with rural Alaska when they read the final draft.

One suggestion I have on future edits is to consider adding wind power (pg. 26, first bullet) to the list of renewable energy alternatives that are appropriate considerations for our rural communities. Obviously the commission is very familiar with the technology through work with numerous wind projects in the past and we hope that this support will continue long into the future. As you know, existing wind power installations made possible through the commission's work continue to provide tangible benefits that reduce the cost of energy for rural residents and greatly expand the potential of maintaining sustainable communities over the long term.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on the draft and I look forward to seeing the final product.

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University of Alaska, College of Education

The following comments (in italics) are provided in response to statements and sections in the Sustainable Rural Communities. As a rule, the page number is listed, along with text from the report that I'm responding to. Comments are generally informal and written in response to particular elements that caught my attention.

p. 4

List of state partners – Over the years, the Commission's state partners have included agencies like: Alaska Energy Authority, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, to name a few.

While I know the list isn't meant to be all-inclusive I did note that the AK Dept of Education and Early Development and the University of Alaska are not mentioned.

p. 5

This report is addressing the following goals for improving federal government efforts in rural Alaska communities:

- Identify statutory and regulatory conflicts that impede the ability of federal agencies to assist rural communities.
- Identify best practices that work to bring government costs down with a focus on innovative solutions.
- Identify the barriers that prevent implementation of best practices and recommend solutions to address those barriers.

Since I'm missing some of the background on the Commission, my comments may be off base. In reading the goals (above) it appears many of the universities' programs (ANSEP, dental therapists, nursing, education, etc.) are also dealing with the barriers, best practices and solutions. Also, there's a strong role for ISER and the academic units (colleges) for conducting the research and serving as a resource for innovative solutions).

p. 7

List of federal agencies does not include U.S. Dept. of Education. Since many of the agencies deal directly with children, families, or communities, DOE needs to be included.

p. 13 - 15

Many responses focused on the need for a Lead Agency in Alaska. This "Lead Agency" could bring federal partners in alignment and improve communication and rural collaboration. There are numerous tasks highlighted for a "Lead Agency" in this section.

Continued



University of Alaska, College of Education

I see a definite role for the university and for education in many of the recommendations listed, including assistance with data warehousing, grants clearinghouse, research, technology aid, logistical support for meeting, technical assistance and information resource, etc.

Involving the university (UA) would also add a longitudinal dimension to the Commission's efforts.

Let me give an example (bear with me...this is a little radical):

Through surveys and guided discussion, Village X has indicated there is a need for biologists, teachers, engineers and nurses. Working with the school, students who have expressed interest in pursuing careers in these areas are identified early (sophomore year high school) and are provided technology support (their own laptops) and college readiness skills (via on the ground and distance delivery) to ensure they're ready to succeed at the post-secondary level. Students are kept as a cohort and encouraged to take college-level coursework (via distance) before they leave high school. The entire cohort (4-6 students) is encouraged to choose one university to attend (hopefully, in Alaska!), and will receive scholarships and other funding to keep them together as a cohort through their degree programs. The university will need to schedule General Education coursework to accommodate the cohort's needs. Also, students from Cohort X will be joining student cohorts from other rural communities, thus building statewide networks and capacity. Cohort members are given financial aid, extensive advising, social activities structured to strengthen networking, funds to travel home several times a year (to maintain connectivity), and other incentives to promote graduation and encourage their return and successful re-acclimation into their communities. Elements that would increase the likelihood of achievement include:

- *Capacity building*
- *Targeted need*
- *Cohort driven*
- *Technology & connectedness with home/peers/university*
- *Strong and focused advising*
- *Involvement of professionals from the various agencies to serve as role models, consultants, resources*
- *Leadership development*

Such a plan would also strengthen inter-agency collaboration and infrastructure. Alaska would be growing her own professionals who complete college not only with degrees in high-need areas, but with the leadership skills to enhance networking within a community and across the state.

p. 23

Other Solutions

Education

- *Work with school districts to "push out" education support for P-12 schools through innovative and sophisticated technology. Ensure schools have the necessary technology to provide high-quality, in-depth instruction for content fields where teachers are available. Consistent connectivity and adequate band-width are instrumental.*

Continued



University of Alaska, College of Education

- *Provide technical support for teachers in content areas where they may not have sufficient preparation (for example, I observed a teacher in a small village teaching Science and English to high school students. Her degree was in Fine Arts and she was woefully underprepared to teach in those areas). If students could get high quality content delivered via internet, and the teacher served in a facilitative role with technical assistance, we would strengthen the content that our future engineers, nurses, and teachers get before they get to college and have to take two-three semesters of remedial coursework. This is particularly critical in villages where the school's population isn't large enough to support a teacher who can teach physics or trigonometry (last year, 40% of Alaska's school districts only required two years of Science and only 60% required three or more years of Math.)*
- *Ensure schools have adequate funding to operate under rural conditions, including salaries that can attract and retain teachers and other school personnel.*
- *Support rural communities in their efforts to grow their own workforce, specifically in education and education-related fields (technology, psychology, nutrition, etc.)*
- *Create a powerful statewide data system that works across agencies in order to track P-20 student demographics, achievement, workforce development (career selection), etc.*
- *Support district efforts to support indigenous language and cultural preservation.*
- *Create a statewide consortium for purchasing commodities for rural community schools to control costs.*
- *Use professionals from other agencies (Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service, etc...) to work in schools and communities to provide experiential learning experiences related to their areas of expertise and supportive of school curriculum.*

p. 25 -

Barriers listed by the agencies that also apply to education:

Reliance on benefit/cost ratios (generally not expressed that way, but still applicable)

Coordination

Capacity

Planning

Turnover

Lack of interagency collaboration

Plus a few more

Large number of teachers (70%) recruited from 'Outside' annually

Technology support – individuals trained to assist with schools technology needs

Broad band connectivity

Continued



University of Alaska, College of Education

Cultural sensitivity

Understanding of the various “players”, unique to Alaska (Native corporations, tribal governments, village corporations, etc)

Housing

Agency Representative: Mary Snyder

Title: Dean, College of Education

Contact Information: 907-786-4494

anmls2@uaa.alaska.edu



Village Safe Water

December 6, 2010

Sharon, thank you for the opportunity to review the July 2010 Sustainable Rural Communities report.

I found the report to be informative and interesting given the different federal agencies perspectives. The report does illustrate that there are many barriers and conflicts amongst the federal agencies (and state agencies), which makes it difficult to work together to assist rural communities in Alaska with sustainability. Overall, the report is a good starting point to assess the current conditions regarding the federal barriers to developing sustainable rural communities in Alaska. I understand that the ultimate goal of this work group of federal agencies is to provide a final this report with findings and recommendations for building and maintain a sustainable future for Alaska, in which every rural community can thrive by achieving a right balance between social, economic and environmental systems of each community.

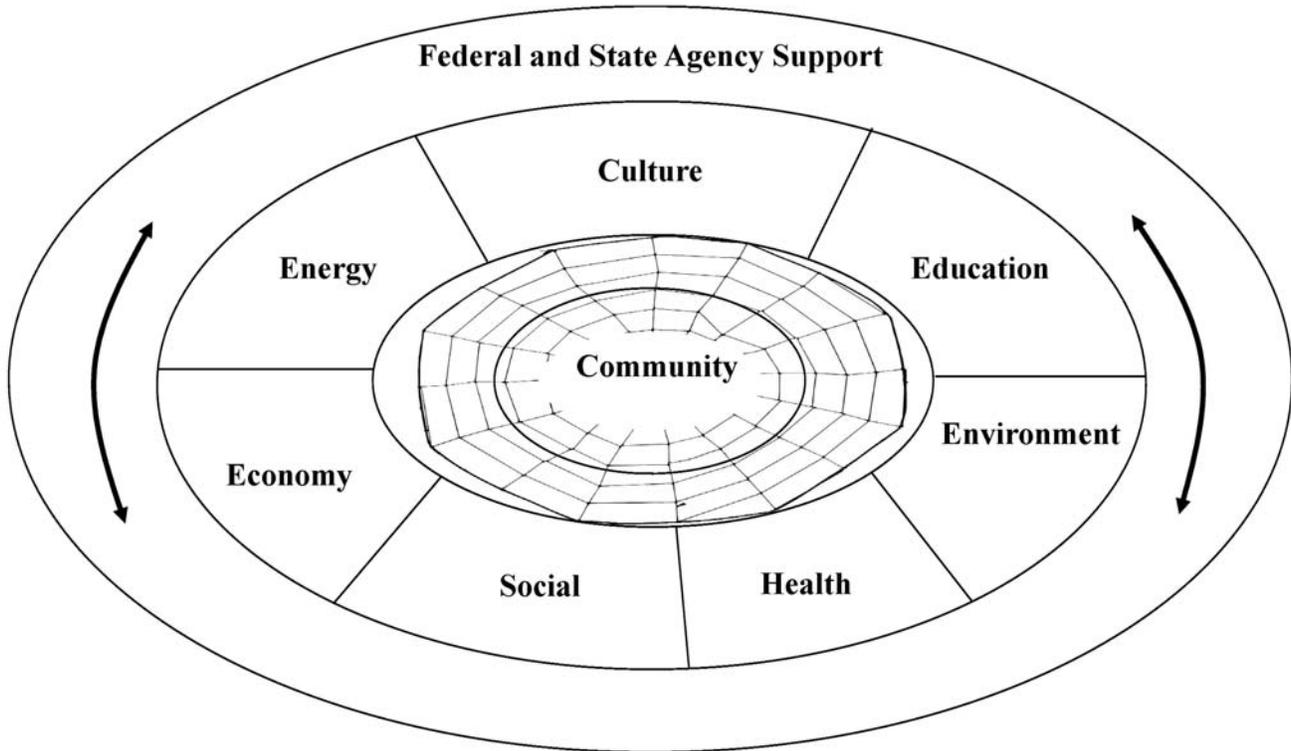
Besides the federal barriers to building and maintaining sustainable Alaska rural communities, similar barriers exist at the state level. All these barriers, whether they are statutory, regulatory, policy, and procedures, makes it very difficult to govern and help these communities with sustainability. The problem is too complex and convoluted. A better way is to take all the programs of all the different federal agencies in rural development and create a different, separate federal agency or bureau that deals solely with the rural communities in Alaska, which are mostly native populated.

In Canada, there is a federal agency called the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Their mission is to build and maintain a sustainable future in which First Nations, Inuit, Metis and Northern communities are healthy, safe, self-sufficient and prosperous, a Canada where people make their own decisions, manage their own affairs and make strong contributions to the country as a whole. It seems that INAC has the organization that makes them address sustainable rural communities in a more transparent and effective way.

Continued



Village Safe Water



None of the responses in the report offered any graphics to illustrate the barriers to sustainable rural communities. Sometimes a drawing helps to explain the written text. For example, attached is my first attempt at simplifying the complex situation of building and maintaining sustainable rural communities in a drawing.

One more comment, I suggest adding "in Alaska" to the title of the report.

Agency Representative: Greg Magee

Title: Program Manager

Contact Information: 907-269-7613

Greg.magee@alaska.gov



Village Safe Water

Additional comments regarding the DC's July 2010 Sustainable Rural Communities report.

The challenges of developing sustainable rural communities are difficult to overcome because of the many barriers of policies and procedures that exist amongst agencies in Alaska. As a result, a strategy of sustainable development in rural Alaska seems to be enormously convoluted and complex, thus the problem with sustainable rural development often times appears too great and the solutions too elusive for effective action. Therefore, the focus needs to be on the community first where the global, federal and state issues are dealt at the local level.

There is no single model of sustainable community development because every community has its own unique characteristics and challenges. Also, there are many paths to sustainable development as there are communities. However, there are common themes and concerns such as economic security, environmental protection, social justice, and a commitment to the welfare of future generations.

In order to implement a strategy for sustainable development for a community, members of the community must believe that they have the capacity to resolve their own problems and shape their own future. The agencies can assist with capacity development but a long term community commitment that they are in charge their future is a necessity. Strengthening the community's capacity is like weaving a web that creates a network of support throughout the community. Even if it starts small, the network expands and incorporates more stakeholders.

With regard to sustaining rural sanitation in Alaska, an affordability gap exists in many communities with water and sewer service between what the household can afford to pay and what they actually owe. As a result, many served communities are struggling financially to operate and maintain their water and sewer system because of the affordability gap. Also, given the history of deficit spending, this affordability gap will continue to exist in Alaska villages until the standard of living improves. For the remaining unserved communities in Alaska, building sustainable sanitation facilities for them are more difficult because of the affordability gap.

More attention needs to be given to the affordability gap and finding ways to help rural communities with the operating costs. Therefore, other sources of revenues are needed to fund the affordability gap in order to sustain water and sewer facilities in rural Alaska. Possible sources of an annual subsidy would be from the State of Alaska (similar to AEA's Power Cost Equalization program) and to set aside a percentage of the capital funding as a reserve for assistance with deferred maintenance. If nothing is done, the affordability gap will further undermine the investments made to date to improve public health in rural Alaska with some communities reverting back to the honey bucket.

Agency Representative: Greg Magee

Title: Program Manager

Contact Information: 907-269-7613

Greg.magee@alaska.gov



Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Top Five Barriers to Best Practices:	Brief Detail:
1. Energy Costs	Impedes everything from transportation to infrastructure development and sustainability to employment to basic quality of life
2. Lead agency/agency coordination	Most villages/tribes in rural Alaska do not have the manpower or capacity to handle or understand the multiple federal and state agency regulations, funding applications, compliance requirements etc. Many villages are missing out. The Denali Commission serves this purpose in many areas and needs to be reauthorized.
3. Technical/ Technological Assistance	Many villages/tribes lack the technical skills to meet needs as described in 2 above. The future depends on electronic communication. Rural Alaska in some cases is incapable of a required electronic submission ie: ICDBG
4. Sanitation	Must be moved to 21st century status
5. Employment	Many village infrastructure improvement projects continue to utilize non-local hiring practices. There needs to be continued support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) vocational/trades skills training b) waivers for local force account methods c) local hire and native preference

Agency Representative: Greg McIntyre

Title: Vice President Support Services

Contact Information: 907-543-6558

Greg_mcintyre@ykhc.org



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ALASKA
P.O. BOX 6898
ELMENDORF AFB, ALASKA 99506-0898

April 29, 2011

Environmental and Special Projects Branch

Mr. Joel Neimeyer
Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission
510 L Street, Suite 410
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Neimeyer:

Thank you for the continued opportunity to participate in this collaborative interagency effort to identify the barriers to Sustainable Rural Communities (SRC) in Alaska. The Alaska District has identified the enclosed comments for your consideration in finalizing the document, "Sustainable Rural Communities in Alaska: Part II". Our review revealed that a broad critical element in achieving State, Federal and Local agency collaboration focused on SRC in Alaska is the development of a Sustainable Rural Communities master plan.

The Alaska District has master planning expertise as demonstrated by our efforts for the Baseline Erosion Assessment, Matanuska Watershed, and other similar efforts. The Corps has been the Federal master planner for a multitude of historic basin studies, statewide assessments of resources in support of other agencies, and significant infrastructure planning issues.

Additionally, we have Congressional authorization and a funding mechanism through our Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Program. The PAS Program allows the Corps to perform cost shared planning studies in partnership with non-Federal sponsors. Using the PAS Program methodology the Federal, State and Local Partners could lay out a long-range master planning effort and pay as we go based on the 50% cost share formula. The non-Federal cost share can be any combination of cash and in-kind services. The cost share can even be Federal funds in certain cases. I propose that the Alaska District, Denali Commission, and the State of Alaska collaborate to establish the Federal and non Federal partnership necessary for developing this master plan. This partnership will bring the necessary leadership, collaborative, and technical skill together as we implement the vision for Sustainable Rural Communities (SRC) in Alaska.

Please contact Melanie Peterson (907-753-5694) or Clare Jaeger (907-753-2855) if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reinhard W. Koenig".

Reinhard W. Koenig
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

Enclosure

Sustainable Rural Communities in Alaska: Part II
 Comments from US Army Corps of Engineers

1	The Table of Contents and the organization of the report are difficult to follow.	Expand Table of Contents to include all sections and sub sections. Use numbers and letters to help clarify organization rather than the various bulleted formats.	Denali	Administrative. Add an appendix listing all 22 proposed Outcomes and include a column for designated lead agency so agencies can sign up for appropriate actions and if necessary form an interagency working group. Add another column for agencies to join working groups lead by others.
2	The term "Alaska MOU Federal Partners Strategy" is nondescript. It is odd that we the Feds can choose to not sign an MOU and thereby "opt out" of interagency collaboration.	Rename the initiative, "Alaska Federal Partner Strategy". Draft legislation to seek funding for Denali Commission to lead the effort.	Denali	Administrative
3	Summarize all recommended outcomes into an Appendix. Focus on Community has 4 outcomes. Lead Federal Agency has 9 outcomes. Regional Approach has 6 outcomes. Solution in Partnership has 3 outcomes. Need for Policy Change has 1 outcome.	There are 22 recommended outcomes. Assign/volunteer each outcome to a "Lead Federal Agency" to collaborate, define and identify path forward to included need for funding.	Denali	Solicit and/or assign leadership of each Outcome to appropriate agency.
4	Alaska Federal Partner Strategy. Too much time is passing just to prioritize the outcomes and scheduling a meeting to form the working	Send a letter to the Federal Agencies and request volunteers to lead each initiative. Also request volunteers to join the respective working groups.	Denali sends the letter and if multiple agencies volunteer for a single initiative they can meet and agree on a lead.	The Federal Agency lead will call meetings, teleconferences, and other forums to develop recommendations to achieve outcome. Denali to host semi-annual forum for lead

	groups.			agencies to brief the group on status of the 22 outcomes.
5	The Federal Government is the primary land owner in Alaska.	Seek legislation to implement a framework for Alaska Regional Master Planning for all Federal activities.	COE volunteer as the lead federal agency. COE use cost-share 50/50 funding for "Planning Assistance to States" to initiate the project and define the scope, schedule and budget. Cost shared funds are typically non Federal but there are exceptions.	Utilize Corps expertise in master planning. Hold State/Federal interagency meetings to define requirements. Hold public hearings. Procure contract support as need to accomplish the effort.
6	Alaska Federal Partner Fall FY11 Forum	The 22 outcomes will be scheduled for group presentation by the Lead Federal Agency and their Working Group.	Each Federal Agency is responsible for Outcome leadership and input. Denali is responsible for scheduling the Alaska Federal Partner Fall Forum. Legislative/Congressional staffers attend to gain insight into the policy and funding issue.	Consider two tracks to the Forum so the preliminary presentation can all be accomplished on Day One. Perhaps Socio Economic and Infrastructure. Then each track will advance their Top 3 to a full group on Day Two.
7	Policy improvements	Each agency shall review the Policy Changes proposed in the Sustainable Rural Communities report and initiate efforts to defend, clarify or change the policy.	All Agencies. Denali to send a letter to each agency that should be the proponent for a proposed policy change. The respective agency shall respond with a proposed course of action.	At the Alaska Federal Partner Fall FY11 Forum each agency tagged with policy change will report on progress and legal ramifications.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Economic Development Administration
Alaska Field Office, Suite 444
510 L Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone: (907) 271-2272

November 30, 2010

Mr. Joel Neimeyer, Federal Co-Chair
Denali Commission
510 L Street, Suite 410
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Attention: Sharon Lind

RE: Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative – Comments

Dear Mr. Neimeyer,

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide comment towards the comments submitted to the Commission and heard at the BIA forum for the Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative.

The most pressing issue is the high cost of energy that is driven by supply and demand, which we have little to no control over. However, through activities, programs and projects we can provide tools to assist rural Alaskans to alleviate the high cost of energy.

- We can insist new infrastructure projects are appropriately sized, affordable for the community and are energy efficient;
- Collaborate with each other to ensure successful renewable energy and energy efficiency becomes the norm; and
- Engage institutions in R & D to develop and increase renewable energy and energy efficient projects.

It is also apparent we (funding agencies) need to work harder to provide the appropriate methods of outreach to our rural clients whom we serve. We also need to work harder at collaboration and include other key entities that have a good track record of working with our rural clients.

The most pressing message I heard from the forum at the BIA Tribal Providers Conference is for us to be aware of draft legislation which may negatively impact our delivery of services to rural clients and provide input to the decision makers when appropriate.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to be part of this very important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shirley Kelly".

Shirley Kelly
Alaska Economic Development Representative



Appendix A: Memorandum of Understanding



Denali Commission
510 L Street, Suite 410
Anchorage, AK 99501

907.271.1414 *tel*
907.271.1415 *fax*
888.480.4321 *toll free*
www.denali.gov

Memorandum of Understanding *Strengthening the state and federal partnership*

An understanding between the Denali Commission:

And the State of Alaska:

- Office of the Governor
- Department of Administration
- Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
 - Alaska Energy Authority
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Education and Early Development
- Department of Environmental Conservation
- Department of Fish & Game
- Department of Health and Social Services
- Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Department of Law
- Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Public Safety
- Department of Revenue
 - Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
 - Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
- Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- University of Alaska

And the following federal agencies:

- Office of the Federal Coordinator, Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture:
 - Rural Development, Alaska Office;
 - Forest Service, Region 10;
 - Farm Service Agency;
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce:
 - Economic Development Administration, Western Region;
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration;
 - U.S. Commercial Service, Alaska Export Assistance Center
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Alaska Operations Office



- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Indian Health Service, Alaska Region
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Coast Guard, Alaska Region
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Interior:
 - Office of the Secretary
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs, Alaska Office;
 - Bureau of Land Management; National Park Service; Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S Geological Survey and Minerals Management Service
- U.S. Social Security Administration:
- U.S. Department of Transportation:
 - Federal Aviation Administration;
 - Federal Highway Administration;
 - Federal Highway Administration Western Federal Lands Highway Division
- U.S. Department of Treasury: Internal Revenue Service

Background:

Transparency and accountability in government requires that agencies strive to coordinate and collaborate together. Failure to do so results in inefficiencies, duplication and an inability to effectively carry out our respective missions.

The Denali Commission’s agility, flexibility and track record of innovation depends on our ability to partner, support and collaborate with a wide variety of federal and state agencies. The foundation for this collaboration is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This is the third version of the MOU which seeks to improve ongoing collaboration and partnership essential for improving life in rural Alaska.

In 2000, Denali Commission and 16 other state and federal agencies came together in a pledge of coordination through the first MOU document. They were joined by additional agencies in 2003 when 33 agencies signed a revised MOU. These MOU’s adopted a work group model focusing on planning, utilities, housing and infrastructure.

Guiding Principles:

- **Sustainable Infrastructure.** Participants of the MOU recognize the importance of funding and developing infrastructure programs and projects that will have a positive, lasting affect in rural Alaska. Parties agree to communicate and coordinate project planning, pre-development, site planning, design and construction processes.
- **Economic Development.** Parties recognize that government can provide opportunities for meaningful private sector development. Parties agree to coordinate activities which can stimulate economic growth.
- **Workforce Development.** Workforce development and having a job is critical to family and community wellbeing. Parties agree to coordinate on programs and policies that promote a skilled rural workforce.



- **Planning and Coordination.** Local participation, to include local funding is essential for successful infrastructure projects. Parties affirm the importance of local planning to identify and prioritize proposed projects, and the need to understand the overall impacts of multiple projects on a community.
- **Communication.** Active communications and sharing of information increases efficiencies and decreases the duplication of services. To the extent allowed by each agencies guidelines, MOU participants will share information as needed for the successful implementation of projects.
- **Involving other partners.** Participants recognize that many other non-profit and community organizations in Alaska are valuable resources for furthering the goals of this MOU. Parties will collaborate and communicate to provide regional planning, program support and partnering opportunities where practicable.

MOU Mechanics:

1. This MOU is effective as each agency signs. This MOU expires September 30, 2011 unless the parties agree to extend the date.
2. Any party to this MOU may withdraw upon 30-day notice to all other participants.
3. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed to limit or modify the authority or legal responsibility of any participating agency.
4. This MOU is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligating document. Any proposed funding endeavor will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority.

Implementation:

The parties agree to form a new, high-level forum to discuss the most difficult issues that face rural Alaska today, which often prevent federal and state government from working together effectively. This forum will be led by the Federal and State Co-Chairs of the Denali Commission and will be composed of federal agency heads, state commissioners and the Governor's office. The forum will meet twice yearly.

Topics for discussion will emerge from the parties, but can include:

- Discussions of state and federal policies which may compliment or hinder collaboration;
- Understanding the requirements and differences of federal and state funding streams, and budget development processes, and finding opportunities for linkage and synergies;
- Case studies of both successes and failures of coordination impacting rural Alaskan communities;
- How agencies can focus on regional approaches to rural Alaska;
- Presentations by agencies on their priorities, programs, progress, perspectives and ideas for greater coordination, communication and cooperation;
- The need to establish working groups on specific topics that may not be covered by existing state or federal groups;



- Issues threatening the viability of rural Alaska – these are many, and can include adaptations to climate change, unaffordable energy costs, healthcare delivery, public safety, education and rural schools, housing, transportation, regional and local governance, demographic shifts, etc.;
- The affect of school closures on a community, and strategies to promote public education in rural Alaska;
- Strategies for planning and delivering infrastructure in very small communities;
- Learning about best practices and innovative breakthroughs from experts in Alaska, elsewhere in the United States and overseas;
- Topics desired by any member of the forum.

There is no other high-level group in Alaska encompassing the breadth and scope of both federal and state agencies. Through these discussions, we believe leaders will:

- Form important professional relationships that will help cut through bureaucracy;
- Understand the magnitude, impacts and types of other state and federal programs;
- Find opportunities for synergy, reducing or avoiding duplication of effort which will save money and increase the efficiency of service delivery;
- Break down barriers that prevent agencies from working together;
- Create immediate positive changes.



STATE AGENCIES

Karen G. Delahell
STATE OF ALASKA OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Karen J. Rehfeld Co-Chair
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Shuttle Krizga
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STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

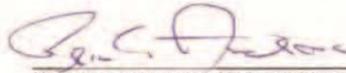
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STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

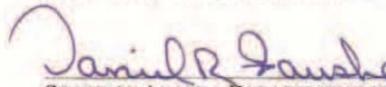
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STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

WALT MOPEGAN, Commissioner
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STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

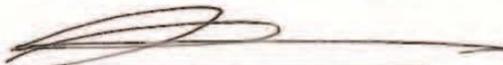
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STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
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m. Cirillo

*Michael A. Cirillo
Alaskan Regional Administrator*

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FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
WESTERN FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY DIVISION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

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Appendix B: Common Alaska Terms and List of Acronyms



Common Alaska Terms

ANCSA

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act passed in 1971 and was the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history, transferring land title to Alaska Native Corporations.

ATV

All terrain vehicle or four-wheeler, a common form of transportation in rural Alaska.

Break Up

The spring melting season when rivers thaw and begin to flow again, carrying huge chunks of ice downriver.

Bulk Fuel Storage Facility

Facilities used to store 6-to-13 months supply of diesel fuel required to meet the power generation and home heating needs for rural Alaska communities.

The Bush

Rural Alaska communities, typically not on the road system.

Bush Pilot

Pilots of aircraft who provide transportation to bush communities and isolated destinations.

Four Wheeler

An all-terrain vehicle used as a primary mode of transportation in rural Alaska.

Honey Bucket

A bucket used as a toilet in homes without sewer or running water. Buckets are emptied manually.

The Last Frontier

Because of its rugged splendor, Alaska is commonly referred to as The Last Frontier.

Lower 48

Alaskans refer to the contiguous 48 states as the Lower 48.

Multi-Use Facility

A facility that consolidates essential community services such as health clinics, fire departments, washeterias, and jails.

Northern Lights

Magnetic particles from the sun hitting the earth's atmosphere which are visible for more than half the year. Also called Aurora Borealis.

Permafrost

Ground that is permanently frozen year round in Arctic regions.

Snowmachine

A small vehicle with ski-like runners in front and tank-like treads, ridden by straddling a seat and used for driving in or traveling on snow. Also called a snowmobile.

Subsistence

The hunting, fishing, and gathering activities which traditionally constitute the economic base of life for rural Alaska.

Termination Dust

The first snowfall on the mountains signaling the end of the summer season.

Tundra

An area where tree growth is hindered by permafrost, low temperatures and short growing seasons. Typically the surface is boggy due to a high water table.

Washeteria

A small, public facility serving as the local watering point where people can obtain treated drinking water. Washeterias are also locations for laundry, showers and flushable toilets.



Acronyms

ANILCA	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ANTHC	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
ARUC	Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative
AVCP	Association of Village Council Presidents
CBDO	Community Based Development Organization
CDQ	Community Development Quota
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IHA	Indian Housing Authority
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
NAHASDA	Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act
NOFA	Notice of Funds Available
PFD	Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend
RHA	Regional Housing Authorities
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
SWAMC	Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference