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The Official Denali Commission Newsletter

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February 2010

A Message from Federal Co-Chair, *Joel Neimeyer*

Dear Friends of the Denali Commission,

It is my pleasure to address you as the new federal co-chair of the Denali Commission. It is my honor to follow the two gentlemen who previously held the position: Jeff Staser, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.) and George Cannelos, Brigadier General, U.S. Navy, Naval Reserve and Alaska Air National Guard (Ret.). Like Jeff and George, I too, have had a prior federal career as a recently retired Commander with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, which afforded me the opportunity to work in over 100 Alaskan communities.



My first trip to rural Alaska was during the summer of 1984 when I visited my mom's village of Akiak on the Kuskokwim River; professionally, my first trip was in February 1985 to Noorvik. The former trip I caught silver salmon with my two brothers; the latter trip I learned about the first community vacuum sewer system ever installed in rural Alaska. Both were new experiences for me.

Serving at the Denali Commission is not a new experience for me. I was fortunate to staff the Commission's energy and health facilities programs during the organization's inception years. Certainly, rural Alaskans have benefitted greatly over the past ten years from Commission investments in partnership with numerous federal, state, municipal, tribal, and non-profit organizations. Watch for our **FY09 Annual Report** highlighting some of these important projects and accomplishments. Also, be sure to review our [FY10 Work Plan](#), featured in this eNewsletter. We would appreciate your comments on this important document in the coming weeks. I must also take a moment and let you know that change is occurring at this organization with the departure of Krag Johnsen, our Chief Operating Officer. Krag and I both started at the Commission over 10 years ago, however, I spent the last 5 years at Rasmuson Foundation. Krag has been a valuable asset to Jeff, George, and now me. My best to Krag as he moves on to a new role with GCI as their Director of Rural Broadband Development. Thank you Krag for your dedication and steadfast commitment to this organization and to Alaska - much of the Commission's success can be attributed to your excellent work.

In closing, it is apparent there is more work to be done and I look forward to working with partners in the coming years. With the ever increasing energy costs, the impacts of climate change and the affects of global economies on rural Alaska, the need is apparent. As an independent federal agency, the Denali Commission can play a unique role of bringing many stakeholders together to have a combined conversation with rural communities on how the villages and boroughs can proactively plan for the future. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and getting started in partnership with the Commission's fellow funders and the rural Alaska communities we collectively serve.

Best Wishes,



Joel Neimeyer,
Federal Co-Chair

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 15, 2010 – Denali Commission offices closed in observance of *Washington's Birthday*.

February 16 – 18, 2010 – The [*Alaska Village Initiatives Rural Small Business Conference*](#) will be held at the Sheraton Anchorage. See their website for details.

February 20, 2010 – The Kenai Peninsula for Renewable Energy (KPARE) is hosting the [*Renewable Energy Conference*](#) at the Kenai Visitor's Center.

February 23 and 24, 2010 - The [*Alaska Chapter of Women of Wind Energy*](#) will have a webinar this month.

February 25, 2010 – Deadline for [*Denali Commission Primary Care Clinic and Behavioral Health*](#) project business plan submissions.

March 9 – 10, 2010 – [*Alaska Power Association Legislative Conference*](#) will be held at the Westmark Baranof Hotel in Juneau.

March 15, 2010 – Deadline for public comment on the Denali Commission's [*FY10 Draft Work Plan*](#).

March 15, 2010 – Deadline for the [*Denali Commission Summer Internship*](#) program.

April 27 – 29, 2010 – The [*Alaska Rural Energy Conference*](#) will be held at the Westmark Hotel in Fairbanks.

April 28 – 30, 2010 – The [*4th Biennial Alaska Rural Health Conference*](#) will be held at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Denali Commission [*FY10 Work Plan*](#) Public Comment Period is Open.

[*Alaska Source Link - is online.*](#)

[*Denali Commission Monthly Program Updates*](#)

REPORTS

The [*Alaska Clearinghouse - Final Report*](#) is available.

Farewell from Krag Johnsen, Chief Operating Officer

(Photo: Krag Johnsen (L) with the late Herbie Nayokpuk at his home in Shishmaref with his numerous mushing trophies in the background.)

"Far and away the best prize that life offers is



the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

--Theodore Roosevelt

In 1999 the people of the nation awaited the consequences of the Y2K bug, the US Senate opened impeachment proceedings for then President Clinton, Columbine high school became known to everyone through tragedy, and the loss of JFK Jr. was mourned. People here at home in rural Alaska were dealing with different challenges: How was fuel going to be stored for the next winter? Will the unreliable power plant continue to provide lights and heat? How was modern health care going to be provided in small run down buildings that were built over 30 years prior? At this time, the price of oil was hovering around \$20 a barrel and Senator Ted Stevens had recently created a new federal agency called the Denali Commission. This was also the year that I had the fortune of being appointed by Representative Gail Phillips to serve as the first Alaska State Legislature's staff person at the Commission. Under the leadership of Federal Co-chair Jeff Staser and Chief of Staff Al Ewing, and a dedicated group of coworkers and Commissioners we began to define the work and role of the Denali Commission.



A decade has passed and my last day as a member of the Denali Commission team will be at the end of this month. To say that the last ten years at the Commission has been fulfilling and rewarding is an understatement. I am thankful for the opportunities I have had to learn, work hard at work worth doing, and be a part of an organization that has improved lives of so many Alaskans. Over \$1 billion in Denali Commission funding for infrastructure, training and economic development has been put to work while I have been here.

In ten short years the Commission has made a remarkable difference in so many lives. The new clinics in most rural communities give people modern treatment facilities. The numerous bulk fuel tanks and power plants ensure safe and reliable power and heat for communities. The training of thousands has given people better paying jobs and long term career opportunities. The improvements to roads, docks and harbors help make life in rural communities healthier and safer. To say I was part of these accomplishments is an honor.

In addition to the projects and programs, I am most thankful to the many people across the State that I have enjoyed working with during my time here at the Commission. I am fortunate to now have friends in every corner of this State which I look forward to working with for many years to come. Thank you to everyone that I have worked with over the past ten years, we have made a difference. And a special thank you to former Federal Co-Chair George Canelos for providing me the opportunity to manage and lead this incredible organization as Chief Operating Officer.

I leave the Commission for a new opportunity and challenge but have the fortune of continuing to be involved in work that improves the lives of Alaskans. I also leave the Commission knowing that it is positioned for future success under new leadership and the continued work of a dedicated and passionate Commission staff.

I wish you all continued success for many more decades of Denali Commission accomplishments.

FY10 Draft Work Plan Available for Public Comment

The Denali Commission is accepting written comment on the ***FY10 Draft Work Plan***. The Denali Commission Act requires that the Commission develop proposed work plans for future spending and also that the Commission will provide an opportunity for a 30-day period of public review and written comment.

Comments and related material must be received by **March 15, 2010**. Please submit comments to the Denali Commission, **Attention: *Valerie Boyd***, 510 L Street, Suite 410, Anchorage, AK 99501. (907)271-1414.



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Denali Commission

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