

Rural Community Outreach Committee Meeting Report

February 23, 2010

9 am – 5 pm

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Conference Room

1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 304, Anchorage

Committee: Eric Olson (Chair), Paula Cullenberg, Duncan Fields, Jennifer Hooper, Ole Olsen, Tom Okleasik, Pete Probasco. **NPFMC staff:** Chris Oliver, Nicole Kimball.

Other Participants: Angelique Anderson (Coastal Villages Region Fund), Julie Raymond-Yakoubian (Kawerak, Inc.), Glenn Seaman, Bubba Cook (World Wildlife Fund), Jason Anderson (Best Use Cooperative), Charlie Lean (Norton Sound Economic Development Corp.), Fred Armstrong (USFWS), Dr. Carrie Eischens (NPRB), Joe Plesha (Trident).

I. Introductions and review agenda

Introductions were made, and the agenda was approved with one change: the agency presentations were moved earlier in the agenda, in order to inform the committee prior to the review of the chum salmon bycatch outreach plan. The committee also reviewed the Council's December 2009 motions on rural community outreach and the chum salmon bycatch outreach plan.

II. Updates from staff

- Re-design of Council website

Council staff updated the committee on the redesign of the Council website, including a 'rural outreach' node. The entire rebuild is expected to be completed by April. The committee noted that archived documents (discussion papers, analyses, committee reports) that have generally been posted by Council meeting need to be easier to find on an issue basis. The committee also questioned whether the re-design could incorporate a 'regional' sort, such that the public could search by area. The committee also noted that redundancy is positive in this case; several possible links to the same issue may be beneficial. The committee can review the new website when completed and provide feedback for fine-tuning the design.

- Development of regional meeting calendar

Staff developed a regional meeting calendar using Google calendar, as a test case for committee members. In the past several months, two committee members responded and signed up to review and edit the calendar. Staff reported that NMFS does not have the staff necessary to maintain such a calendar, and asked about the level of importance of such an effort in the context of other outreach activities. Committee members continued to endorse developing and maintaining a regional calendar, limited to bigger regional meetings (e.g., Board of Fish, Federal Subsistence RACs, Council, Native regional non-profits, annual conferences). The committee would like the meeting calendar posted on the new Council website, for use by the public, with the ability for committee members to add/edit meetings. One member suggested making the organizations responsible for updating their meeting details, although the Council could not ensure this would occur. Staff will resend the Google calendar website to the committee, and coordinate with the IT staff redesigning the website to evaluate possibilities.

One member also suggested allocating time at a future committee meeting to review various websites and other calendar options as a group. Familiarizing the committee with the available technological tools might boost participation and incentive to maintain a calendar.

- Development of rural community contact list

Staff updated the committee on progress in developing a rural community and Alaska Native entity contact list for Council outreach. Staff continues to refine this list, and the current list was sent to the committee prior to the meeting for review. The list has been coded by organization type (e.g., regional non-profit, ANCSA corporation, tribal government, local government, community non-profit). When additional staff resources are available, the list will also be coded by geographic ANCSA region. The committee suggested adding the Kotzebue Fishermen's Association, as well as the Community Quota Entities under GOA Am. 66. The committee also suggested adding email information to the list when available. The Council could send a letter to each entity asking them to contact the Council (by phone, mail, or website) if they would like to receive information by email. Challenges with email are staff turnover, non-functional email addresses, etc.

- Outreach budget update

Chris Oliver reported on the 2010 Council budget, which was approved with a slight increase from the previous year. About \$80k is allocated for outreach activities this year. Presuming the budget level is maintained in future years, the annual amount allocated to outreach could vary over the 5-year budget cycle, depending on project need (e.g., could use \$60k one year, \$100k the next year, etc.). The committee related interest in hiring a full-time outreach coordinator, contracting on an as-needed basis, or leveraging our current outreach funding by partnering with regional entities across the state. The committee noted that as stakeholders in rural Alaska become more familiar with the Council process, they have higher expectations in terms of communication and participation.

- Update on tribal consultation response from Dept of Commerce/NMFS

Staff reported that NMFS Alaska Region launched a tribal consultation web page on their website on February 19. NMFS posted the minutes/recommendations from the Nov 9-10 tribal consultation workgroup on this website. NMFS is currently developing a response to the recommendations provided at that meeting, which will also be posted on the website, likely at the end of March. In early February, NMFS was notified that the Department of Commerce submitted a plan to OMB "to develop a tribal consultation and coordination policy implementing E.O. 13175," as required by President Obama's November 5, 2009 memo to all Federal agencies. NMFS has requested clearance from DOC to post a copy of this plan on the web page. NMFS plans to send a letter to the community and tribal contacts mailing list (600+ entities) to make people aware of: the new web page, NMFS' responses to the recommendations, and the DOC plan.

Staff also reported that NMFS participated in a tribal consultation in Unalakleet on February 16 - 17, with nine tribes, as well as representatives of Kawerak, the regional non-profit for the Bering Straits region, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC), and the Bering Sea Elders Advisory Group. This consultation was initiated by the Village of Unalakleet with a letter to NMFS, and then other tribes were contacted and sought funding to attend. The regional CDQ group, NSEDC, funded travel for several tribal representatives. The participants developed recommendations, some of which overlap with the tribal consultation workgroup recommendations from November 9 - 10. A member of the public that attended the tribal consultation said it was a productive and positive meeting. The participants appreciated NMFS traveling to Unalakleet, and while there is no formalized tribal consultation process yet, it was emphasized that consultation needs to be early in the process, ongoing, and meaningful.

One committee member questioned whether tribal consultation input would be part of NMFS' regular input to the Council as part of its deliberative process. While the ultimate responsibility for consultation lies with NMFS, the timing of the tribal consultation is important in order to inform the Council early in the decisionmaking process, prior to making a recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce. It was thus

emphasized that coordination between the Council and NMFS must occur in order to gain meaningful tribal input. This issue led to further discussion about the possibility of the Council hiring an outreach position or NMFS AK Region hiring a tribal liaison.

The committee recommended formalizing contact with NMFS, such that the Council would receive a report on tribal consultations, and that the consultation would occur early in the process in order to inform Council decisionmaking. The committee suggested that NMFS consider both the timing and content of the consultations, on an issue by issue basis, as well as a way to foster ongoing communication with tribes. It was noted that Congressional legislation expanded the scope of tribal consultation to Native corporations (regional and village). One committee member related the need to attach funding to the executive order (E.O. 13175) mandating tribal consultations.

III. Review other agency outreach challenges & successes

Fred Armstrong, Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, USFWS, and Dr. Carrie Eischens, North Pacific Research Board, provided presentations on the lessons learned from rural outreach within their respective organizations. Each program outlined a different perspective and purpose to outreach. The Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council's primary purpose is to conserve migratory birds through development of recommendations for the subsistence harvest in Alaska. The outreach effort presented by USFWS was initiated for a specific, targeted effort to control the take of spectacled eiders in rural Alaska. The presentation emphasized that while outreach was determined necessary on this issue, there was no funding specified. The presentation focused on several key elements to a successful rural outreach effort: understanding the audience; maintaining a clear message; using the media most appropriate in rural villages; coordinating with local residents; explaining the potential benefits of the action to stakeholders; and the need to create or attend several regional meetings and conferences in order to provide ongoing, consistent communication.

The NPRB has an annual strategic plan for communication with the public, which encompasses education and outreach; local and traditional knowledge; and community involvement. One of the primary purposes of the NPRB's community outreach effort is to educate the public on the various research projects that are being funded by the NPRB in and around communities. In addition to Alaska coastal communities, the target audience may be marine researchers, resource management agencies, commercial and subsistence users, teachers and students, and the general public. The presentation focused on the many publications, website design, media tools, exhibits, and 'hand-outs' that the NPRB creates to inform the public about its research projects, both prior to and after projects are funded. The NPRB has an outreach coordinator staff person, and a person dedicated to maintaining the website. The presentation noted that the NPRB has an advisory panel to help set research priorities in the annual RFP, provide advice on rural outreach and education, and assist in the programmatic review. The Bering Sea Project was also noted as a way to conduct rural outreach, as five western Alaska communities are involved. Some of the challenges discussed were: translation; establishing a clear identity (who is the agency and what is it responsible for); planning and preparation; developing relationships and trust; and follow up with the community (post-project presentations and written documentation).

IV. Review of draft chum salmon bycatch outreach plan

- Statewide teleconference

The committee reviewed the latest version of the outreach plan for the proposed chum salmon bycatch action. Most of the discussion centered on the statewide teleconference that is part of the current outreach plan, as recommended previously by the committee. The teleconference was proposed in order to provide a forum for the public to understand the alternatives under consideration, the schedule for action, and

ways to participate in the Council process. Staff is scheduling the teleconference for the first week of May, due to the analyst's schedule and so that it is prior to the June 2010 Council meeting, in which the Council is scheduled to confirm its suite of alternatives for analysis. While the critical outreach components are scheduled after the preliminary analysis is available, committee members stressed the importance of allowing an opportunity for the public to understand the proposed action prior to June. It was noted that even though the Council is scheduled to 'finalize alternatives' in June, there is an extremely broad suite of alternatives proposed, and the Council can modify the alternatives at any time throughout the process if the issue is scheduled for review. The June action is primarily to allow the analysts a starting point from which to base the analysis.

Staff asked the committee to define the purpose of the teleconference: Is it to provide public input on proposed action? Is it a listening session? Is it a presentation so that the public understands the alternatives? Committee members discussed the benefits and drawbacks to differing purposes of the call, and generally agreed that the primary purpose should be an orientation for the public, such that people understand the basics of the alternatives proposed and ways to provide formal input to the Council (e.g., written and oral testimony). This purpose would be accomplished by providing a short presentation on the proposed action and Council process, and using most of the time for questions and concerns from the public. A secondary purpose of the call would be to document public input on the suite of alternatives, which would be provided to the Council in June. However, the primary purpose would be as an informational tool, as opposed to a public hearing.

Other committee suggestions pertaining to the statewide teleconference include:

- Limit the call to 2 - 3 hours.
- Clearly articulate the purpose of the call.
- Provide a 2 or 3 minute time limit for questions.
- Provide a mailing/flyer to the list of community and Native contacts that includes: the suite of alternatives; the schedule for action, including community outreach meetings; information on the teleconference; and notice that those who RSVP with the Council that they will attend the teleconference will have the first priority for asking questions.
- In addition to the RSVP list, attempt to take questions from a broad geographic range.
- Work with regional organizations to provide hub sites, where many community members could call in together. Examples provided: Kawerak in Nome, Northwest Arctic Borough in Kotzebue, AVCP in Bethel, Unalakleet.
- Provide a visual (powerpoint) presentation that those with web access could follow real-time.
- Make the powerpoint available on the Council website prior to the call.
- Research whether there is a limitation on the number of callers that can be on the same line.
- Close the call with a reminder of how to participate in the Council process, and the opportunity to provide formal input to the Council in late May/June.

Other aspects of the outreach plan

Pete Probasco (USFWS) requested that written background materials be made available for the fall 2010 Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meetings, as they will focus on fisheries issues. That would provide the RACs an opportunity to discuss the issue and provide formal feedback to the Council if desired.

Julie Raymond-Yakoubian requested that the Council consider adding the Kawerak annual regional conference in March/April 2011 to the list of annual meetings and conferences targeted for outreach on the chum salmon bycatch issue. This meeting typically has several hundred participants from the Bering Straits region.

V. Discuss concept of regional partnerships

- Review Council SOPPs core principles on stakeholder involvement

The committee reviewed the Council's core principles on stakeholder involvement in the SOPPs, used to guide communication strategies and activities. They determined that these are sufficient for the workings of the committee. One member noted that one principle is to "Include all stakeholder interests," and that the committee may include primary or targeted stakeholder interests, but not necessarily all interests.

- Identifying key contacts in each region

The committee discussed the need to identify key contacts in each region, which is related to the regional partnership approach. One concept of the regional partnership approach is to have people/organizations identified in each region that understand the Council process, that would be willing to help staff set up community meetings, teleconferences, etc., and be a key contact for people in the region to interface on Council management issues. While these contacts would not have any greater standing than any other individual, it would help to have several central contacts in each region to help the Council communicate with rural stakeholders and organize outreach efforts. Examples discussed were the regional nonprofit, borough, CDQ group, village corporations, regional corporations, and regional tribal entities.

- If necessary, decide how to define regions of Alaska

The committee discussed how the regions should be defined. Many members thought the twelve ANCSA regions were appropriate, as that is how many rural residents tend to associate. Members emphasized that using the geographic regions delineated by ANCSA does not mean that the key contacts must be the regional Native corporations formed under ANCSA. Members also noted that cross-region interests must be considered, and that the Council management areas are generally GOA, BS, and AI. Gulf issues may straddle several regional Native corporations, and are different from the Bering Sea.

- Development of educational workshop

The committee heard from Bubba Cook (World Wildlife Federation) and Paula Cullenberg (Sea Grant, Alaska Marine Advisory Program) on a collaborative effort to develop an educational workshop on the National Environmental Policy Act and Council processes, for use in rural villages throughout the state. The content would be agenda-neutral. The impetus for the workshop stems from the recognition that while many rural stakeholders are familiar with the Board of Fisheries and Federal Subsistence Board processes, the same level of understanding is lacking on the Magnuson-Stevens Act and Council process. The workshop scope and specific funding level are not yet finalized. WWF has secured funding from the Patrick Foundation, and Sea Grant submitted a grant to the National Sea Grant Law Center.

Bubba and Paula both noted that they would like the Council to endorse such a workshop or participate at some level. The Rural Community Outreach Committee previously discussed such a workshop, so it seemed like a logical opportunity to further the concept. The primary components envisioned are: 1) develop materials that are accessible, tangible, and interesting to people, including very clear steps on how people can be part of the process; and 2) conduct the workshop in five Alaska communities. Ideally, the workshop could be scheduled in some of the regions/communities prior to the chum salmon bycatch outreach meetings that are planned by Council staff (February/March 2011). Sea Grant will also evaluate the ability to provide college credit for attending the workshop.

One committee member asked how the workshop could have longevity, as opposed to going to the community one time and hoping the public retains the information. One way discussed is to find people in the community that could be trained in the process, using the materials created through the workshop, in order to continually educate other community members. This would necessitate keeping the materials

current and available. Another member noted that individuals need a vested interest in a particular issue in order to get involved. Thus, opportunistic outreach may be more effective, as it is driven by the community or tribal interest.

The committee recommends that the Council support the educational workshop initiative by having Council staff work with Sea Grant and WWF to review educational materials and participate in workshop development. Those materials should be inclusive, if possible, of an issue-specific demonstration of the Council process. Staff may also potentially participate in an actual workshop conducted in a community. The educational workshop should be viewed as a complement to the Council's rural community outreach efforts.

- Review committee members' ideas on how to define regional partnership concept

The committee discussed several different approaches to and goals of the regional partnership concept. One concept discussed was to create a voluntary network of regional organizations to help disseminate Council information, and create some guidelines for involvement. Each organization would have a Council staff person as a designated contact, so that they would have a point of contact for questions, as well as someone to guide them during Council meetings.

Another member stated that the goal should be to make the outreach efforts more efficient, by allowing staff to have 20 or 30 key contacts, and then those partners would have some responsibility for information distribution within a region. These partners could also assist the Council in planning outreach meetings in-region, with regard to schedules, locations, and identifying appropriate media tools. While this would not negate the need for mailings to each individual community, it would provide a local conduit for local information to help the Council work more effectively within each region.

Some members thought the committee should identify the set of partners first, and provide them with an invitation to participate. Several examples of a potential process to identify partners were discussed, including how this type of structure might be employed differently for an area like the Yukon River drainage, the Northwest Arctic, or the Kodiak Island communities. It was emphasized that while a few primary partners could be identified, it should not be exclusionary should another entity want to be included. The committee also discussed how the Council would need to communicate how participation may benefit the partner organization and their associated communities.

Staff noted that they could provide a template for identifying regional partners at the next meeting, and the committee could work to complete it. The committee generally agreed that several approaches were outlined in discussion, and that the committee needs to do further work to frame and finalize the regional partnership concept. This should be the primary agenda item at a future meeting.

VI. Timing & need for next meeting (wrap-up)

Staff reminded the committee that a community and subsistence workshop was planned for the Northern Bering Sea Research Area research plan, on February 24 – 25 in Anchorage. This was a major outreach effort, to involve subsistence users early in the process to develop the research plan. Staff will update the committee regarding the results of this workshop at a future meeting.

The committee recommended that it convene for a half-day teleconference, either the first week of June, or August/September, in order to receive updates on several ongoing issues and discuss the outcome of the statewide teleconference for the chum salmon bycatch action. It was suggested that the committee could start to refine the regional partnership concept during this teleconference, but that an in-person meeting should be scheduled subsequent to the teleconference to focus on this effort.