President’s Message
Vivian Korthuis
Chief Executive Officer

Summertime
As the long days of summer start getting shorter, we are reminded that we have to start getting ready for the fall. Taking care of fish camp, fish, and preparing for gathering berries are activities we all enjoy as a family. Children are out of school and enjoying their friends and family. Young people are working and thinking about the start of school around the corner. We hope that the weather brings the rain that will help grow the berries we will pick in a few weeks. People who have jobs take time off to be with family and do summer subsistence activities. Summertime is a busy time of the year to enjoy as a family and community.

Yukon River Salmon
From the Yukon River mouth up into the middle river, fishermen are reporting very good catches and are so thankful for the fishing opportunities they have been able to have this summer. ADF&G and the USFWS have stated that the Chinook salmon run is most likely going to be above the upper end of the preseason outlook range and may top 200,000 and, the summer chum salmon run is on track to be above the upper end of the preseason outlook range of 2.2 to 2.5 million. River-wide, subsistence fishing is no longer restricted and there are even commercial opportunities for summer chum. The pictures of fish camps with full fish racks and smokehouses is such a wonderful sight!

Kuskokwim River Salmon
Unfortunately, the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon are not returning as anticipated. Heading into late June the Bethel Test Fishery has the lowest count of Chinook on record and the new sonar project upstream from Bethel is tracking an estimated total run that may not meet the low end of the escapement goal range. The Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission continues to meet with the USFWS and the ADF&G and the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group. The 12-hour subsistence opening on June 24 (only the 2nd one) did provide many with their first taste of fresh salmon. Overall though, the Chinook salmon run and escapement for 2017 does not look promising.

Governor’s Tribal Advisory Council
Early in June, I was appointment to the State of Alaska Governor’s Tribal Advisory Council. The council consists of 11 members, who represent Alaska’s federally recognized Tribes’ interests in education, health care, subsistence, energy, public safety, justice, wildlife and fisheries, economic development, housing, transportation, language and culture. The mission of the council is to identify areas of concern and opportunity shared by the State and the Tribes and to suggest policy, programs and other means and methods for solutions and progress. The goal is to maximize opportunity, resolve issues, and generate timely, efficient, and effective responses to both pressing and long-range matters affecting the State and the Tribes. I look forward to serving on the Council and know that it will benefit the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Region.
FY18 Trump Administration Proposed Federal Budget

The feedback we have been getting on President Trump’s FY2018 proposed budget and cuts would greatly impact all tribes and programs on the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. Targeted eliminated programs include HIP, Small and Needy Tribes, and others. The feedback also is that programs need to demonstrate success in meaningful ways in order to have funding continue. We encourage individual Tribes to send letters and testimony and to work with our Alaska delegation to prevent the deep cuts from being enacted into law. AVCP wrote a letter on June 6, 2017 to the Congressional Delegation stating that “If the President’s proposed budget is passed, the effects on our Tribes will be devastating. Already faced with the challenges of providing services in an economically depressed region with very little infrastructure, our Tribes need more support, not less.” The letter also asks to hold harmless the Bureau of Indian Affairs budget and reaffirms the support for the Office of Self–Governance. We are urging the Tribes on the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta to voice your opinions and share your thoughts with Alaska’s delegation in Washington DC as well as the Senate Appropriation Committee members.

Secretary of Interior Zinke visits Alaska

AVCP participated in the AFN meeting with Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke on May 30, 2017. The meeting was the first opportunity Alaska Native leaders had to meet the Secretary and covered a broad area of issues. The Secretary listened to what Alaska Native corporations, tribes and tribal organizations had to share with him. AVCP had the opportunity to highlight that Alaska is at a strategic global geopolitical crossroads, which means the AVCP region is in a position where issues facing the AVCP region are actually national and international issues that impact all of us. In working toward the goal of improving the lives and well-being of the AVCP region, we plan to continue the discussion with the Secretary at every opportunity we have.

Department of Interior Alaska Listening Session

Michael S. Black, Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs sent a ‘Dear Tribal Leader’ out to Tribes inviting Tribes to a listening session to be held in Anchorage on June 22, 2017. The letter stated that ‘we would like your input on how the DOI…could be reorganized to help streamline services to tribes and better fulfill the Federal Government’s trust and treaty obligations.” Attendees at the listening session included two YK Delta Tribes along with AVCP. Key points shared at the listening session by AVCP were that 1. The federal government must maintain the Trust Responsibility to Tribes; 2. The federal government has the obligation to protect the Tribes; 3. The federal government must protect the funds for tribal programs; 4. The federal government must conduct appropriate Tribal consultation in the reorganization effort and AVCP invited the Listening Session to be held in Bethel for YK Delta tribes to participate in. Written testimony is being accepted until July 15, 2017 and can be sent to consultation@bia.gov.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and be careful when you travel on the river or if you are out boating in the Bering Sea.

Quyana,
Executive Board Report

Summer has come to the Delta, and it is a very busy time for us all. Although this is the traditional season of catching, hunting and gathering, we know that the stress of fishing closures has seriously impacted many of our communities. AVCP will continue to work towards solutions to better protect these resources for future generations.

As you are working hard to provide for your families, hard work at AVCP continues as well. In this newsletter, you will read about just a few of the many projects, trainings and program highlights from the last few months as AVCP strives to provide better services throughout our region.

We, as your Unit representatives, are excited to announce that we are once again planning to conduct Unit Meetings around the region beginning in August. You may have already been contacted by your Unit representative, and if not – expect to hear from them soon. Please begin considering what dates will work for your council and Unit.

Last, but not least, we would like to welcome Marcella White (of the Nunakauyak Traditional Council) as the Unit 8 representative.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you at your Unit Meeting.

- AVCP Executive Board

AVCP welcomes new Tribal Workforce Development Director

Yvonne Jackson, Tribal Workforce Development Director

AVCP welcomes Yvonne Jackson as its new Tribal Workforce Development Director! She is originally from Kasigluk, Alaska. Yvonne has been working in the field of Workforce Development for the past 12 years. She began her career as a Workforce Development Intern with the State of Alaska, Department of Labor (DOL) in 2006. Since then, she advanced in her career as an Employment Security Specialist II with the DOL. She went on to work for Coastal Villages Region Fund as an Employment Specialist/Office Manager, and most recently with Calista Corporation as a Workforce Development Coordinator. Yvonne works evenings at the Lower Kuskokwim School District for the Kuskokwim Learning Academy as a Dorm Parent. She enjoys spending time with her dorm students and acts as a positive role-model and a mentor for the youth of the Calista region. Her favorite activities include cooking Traditional Native foods and hosting feasts for her community.
Economic & Energy Department facilitates 10 Community Energy Planning site visits

Over the past 6 months, AVCP’s Department of Economic & Energy Development has facilitated 10 Community Energy Planning site visits in Oscarville, Tuntutuliak, Tuluksak, Alakanuk, Emmonak, Upper Kalskag, Kipnuk, Kotlik, Napakiak and Nightmute. This work was possible through an agreement with the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy On-request Technical Assistance.

Through these community conversations focused on energy development, renewability and efficiency. Each village came up with its own energy vision. The two day meetings in each village brought community members together to discuss the different energy projects they are interested in pursuing and programs they would like to develop. The villages then developed specific goals based on the projects and programs they would like to pursue. These goals were prioritized and a timeline created for accomplishing the short-term, mid-term, or long-term goals. This timeline tells the village leadership team which project to focus on first.

AVCP’s work in each community was unique. In the villages of Emmonak and Nightmute school students from either junior high or high school joined the discussion with the permission from the local school, which was especially significant when discussing the future energy vision for these communities.

Towards the end of this project, AVCP’s Department of Economic & Energy Development collaborated with AVCP’s Tribal Workforce Development and the VPSO program who traveled along to conduct their own program presentations along with the energy planning. The Tribal Workforce Development presentation highlighted AVCP’s new job centers opening throughout the region, and the VPSO program gave an overview of the history, training, and hiring for the VPSO program. Additionally, AVCP was able to collaborate with an Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) and they presented on local projects updates and took on new suggestions from the community members. These collaborations help bring necessary information to our village communities.

The Department of Economic & Energy Development would like to ensure that more communities in our region are able to have an energy plan complete if they already do not have one. Currently there is technical assistance available to Tribes and Villages through the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). To apply for technical assistance for community energy planning (also called strategic community energy planning) go to www.nrel.gov assistance for or call (303) 275-300 for more information.
On May 23, 2017, the AVCP Executive Board released the following statement in response to President Trump’s April 28, 2017 action which wiped out the Bering Sea Executive Order that our Full Board of Delegates requested at the 2015 Annual Convention.

AVCP Calls for Reinstatement of Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Executive Order

May 23, 2017 PRESS RELEASE

Bethel, AK – The Executive Board and Administration of the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), representing 56 federally recognized Tribes in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, is deeply disappointed with the Implementing An America-First Offshore Energy Strategy Executive Order, signed by President Trump on April 28, 2017. The April 28th Order struck down the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Executive Order, signed into law on December 9, 2016. The December 9th Order addressed concerns our Tribes have about the increased shipping and effects of climate change on our Bering Sea. The December 9th Order also gave the Bering Sea coastal Tribes their rightful seat at the table when decisions about the Bering Sea are being made.

AVCP (along with the Bering Sea Elders Group and Kawerak) requested assistance from the Alaska Congressional Delegation to help protect the December 9th Order, which directly impacts our waters and the sustainability of our people. However, despite the combined voices of 76 federally recognized Tribes, the protections lasted only four months before being dissolved in a single sentence.

AVCP will not stop working to protect our land, our water and the resources that have sustained us for thousands of years. AVCP’s Executive Board has passed a resolution calling for the immediate reinstatement of the December 9th Order, and calls for individual Tribes and regional organizations to do the same.

AVCP demands that our Congressional Delegation support us in reinstating the December 9th Order in its original form in its entirety.
The AVCP Tribal Justice Center held two training workshops in May. May 9-11 was a three-day workshop for Tribal Judges and on May 17-19 the center held another three-day workshop this time for Tribal Clerks. The judge workshop welcomed 13 tribes with a total of 35 judges attending. The same number of tribes participated in the clerk workshop with 18 people attending.

Judge Michael Petoskey was the Judge Workshop Trainer and is the Pokagon Band’s Chief Judge since his appointment in February 2002. He is a Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians tribal member. Many of the judges at the workshop remembered Judge Petoskey from the Tribal Justice Center’s Tribal Ethics, Roles and Responsibilities Training held May 2016.

The Clerk training was conducted by Monique Vondall-Rieke, Director of the AVCP Tribal Justice Center and Darlene Daniel, long-time Clerk of Court for the Native Village of Kongiganak. The two collaborated to cover important topics and responsibilities of tribal clerks of courts. Darlene Daniel has been the clerk at Kongiganak for 24 years, volunteering countless hours of her time over the years.

The purpose of the workshops was to continue to develop the expertise and capacity of the tribal courts in the Y-K Delta Region and many participants commented that they left knowing a great deal more than when they came.

The Tribal Justice Center conducts annual trainings based on the needs identified through its work with the tribal courts in this region. Over the course of the last two years, the Tribal Justice Center has assisted nine (9) new tribal courts in the region to open their doors while many others in existence have taken advantage of the training and technical assistance offered by the Tribal Justice Center.

One of the most significant achievements of the Tribal Justice program at AVCP has been the completion in this past year of 10 tribal court assessments. These are the first BIA tribal court assessments in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Region and BIA Tribal Justice Support Division staff were on hand at the May training, along with the Whitener Group a third party tribal court assessment team hired by the BIA. Several tribes met with assessment team and BIA staff to discuss their court’s assessment and hear the recommendations for the development of their court.

Funding for two trainings was provided by the BIA, Tribal Justice Support Division and the BIA Tiwahe Initiative.
AVCP Environmental Department hosts E-waste Drive

AVCP’s Cultural and Environmental Sciences (CES) Department is pleased to announce the AVCP Community of Bethel Recycling Project! Protecting our land and water from e-waste, which contains heavy metals and mercury that leach into the environment and contaminate our soil and water supply, is one of the CES Department’s top priorities.

On June 16 and 17, the first phase of the Recycling Project kicked off in Bethel with an E-Waste Drive. AVCP Environmental Manager Ben Balivet and Environmental Planner Heather Kanuk collected old computers, televisions, VCRs, stereos, copiers, and automotive batteries from the Bethel community. These recyclables will be sent to Seattle, Washington to be recycled. With the help and participation of Bethel’s residents and the community’s organizations, almost two shipping containers were filled with e-waste. Thank you Bethel!

The second phase of the project continues with the CES Department’s goal of filling two more shipping containers with e-waste from our villages by the end of the summer. We are requesting the assistance of our tribal offices to collect properly packaged e-waste, lightbulbs and batteries from their communities. Once the waste is collected, please contact the AVCP CES Department for assistance in scheduling transport of your waste to Bethel.

The CES Department would like to thank all of the partners who have made this project possible, including: AVCP, Northland Services, Ravn Air, Swanson’s and AC, and the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (IGAP).

For more information on the AVCP Community of Bethel Recycling Project, IGAP, or any other CES Department programs, please contact us.

Thank you for helping to make our region clean in ’17! We appreciate your support.

Contact:

Ben Balivet—Environmental Manager
(907)543-7362  bbalivet@avcp.org

Heather Kanuk—Environmental Planner
(907)543-7363  hkanuk@avcp.org

Dept. Fax # (907)543-5732
UPDATE FOR OUR TRIBES FROM WASHINGTON DC.

The President’s Proposed 2018 Budget

On May 23, 2017 President Trump released his detailed FY 2018 budget request. The President doesn’t actually establish the federal budget, it is up to Congress to determine what is funded, although the President retains the power to veto a budget approved by both houses of Congress. So the President’s budget is his vision of how the federal government should be funded that sends a message to Congress and the country about the president’s priorities.

President Trump’s budget made deep cuts in many programs that will directly impact Alaska’s Tribes. For example, the President’s budget would eliminate altogether the Low Income Heating Assistance program or LIHEAP. In 2016, LIHEAP helped more than 10,000 households in Alaska who received collectively $10.2 million dollars along. Under that same program in 2016 another $1.6 million went to weatherization retrofits. All of that would be eliminated under the President’s budget.

Tribal Administrator Training

Tribal Administrators of AVCP Compacted Aid to Tribal Government (ATG) Tribes received college credit for an Introduction to Tribal Administration course hosted by AVCP in partnership with KUC. The training was held April 4-7, 2017 at the KUC Campus. This course reviewed the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully serve as a Tribal Administrator, including:

- Introduction to Federal Indian Law
- Basics of Tribal Self-Governance/BIA 638 Contract programs and funding
- Overview of Tribal financial management
- Reporting fundamentals
- Role of the Tribal Administrator.

The effort to provide credit to Tribal Administrators receiving training is part of a larger effort to allow Tribal Administrators to obtain an Occupational Endorsement (OE) through the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). Occupational Endorsements are designed to give students occupational training in a specific field. A minimum of 9 credits is required to earn an occupational endorsement. These credit hours may be applied to other undergraduate degree programs such as an Associate’s or Bachelor’s
Under this budget the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs budget would be cut by $371.7 million. Most importantly for AVCP’s Tribes is the proposal to cut altogether the Small and Needy Tribes program. Small and Needy Tribe funding is intended to ensure all tribes have the base-level funding to run a government. This program, which began in FY 1995, provides some of the neediest tribes with a critical economic boost to strengthen their government and operations. There are 567 federally recognized tribes, of which about 62 (11%), fall into the small and needy tribes criteria. The loss of this funding would be felt most strongly in Alaska, which has 53 small and needy tribes.

The President’s budget also cut funding for the Housing Improvement Program, the Tribal Climate Resilience program, and greatly reduced social services funding, higher education scholarship funding, Johnson-O’Malley funding and much more.

Another great concern for AVCP’s Tribes is that this budget eliminated all funding for the Tiwahe Demonstration Project. The Tiwahe funding AVCP has received in the past two years has funded the growth in Tribal Courts programming and support AVCP has offered recently. Additionally, the five year Tiwahe plan that AVCP originally proposed included significant funding to improve our service delivery for all our client-based programs.

The Alaska delegation reacted with a mix of praise and concern, especially for proposed cuts that could impact tribes, but it is critical that tribes continue to monitor the budget priorities and raise concerns with Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Representative Young.

Newly Appointed Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Endorsed the President’s Budget.

The newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Interior Ryan Zinke has publically proclaimed his support for the President’s budget saying it would still allow his agency to carry out its “core mission.” In discussing that mission he referenced the National Park Service and his department’s trust responsibilities over managing Federal lands, but he did not make any mention of his department’s Trust responsibility to the 567 Federally recognized tribes and Secretary Zinke’s has not publically commented on the impact of this budget on Tribes.

The Department of Interior is Undergoing Reorganization

In addition, Secretary Zinke’s office has already begun a process to significantly reorganize the Department of Interior. While it is unclear at this stage what impact that will have on the BIA specifically, there are concerns that the goal is to dismantle significant parts of the BIA and IHS. A listening session was held on June 22, 2017 in Anchorage and AVCP’s CEO Vivian Korthuis expressed our strong support for the BIA’s Office of Self Governance and asked that Secretary Zinke take a careful look at the success of that program and not to cut any funding nor reduce the size of that small section of the BIA’s overall budget. Tribes can submit written comments to the Department of Interior about the reorganization until July 15, 2017.

Senate Health Care Bill Proposed Huge Cuts to Medicaid

Last week the Senate released its proposed Health Care Reform bill. As proposed this bill calls for almost $800 billion dollars in cuts to Medicaid funding. Medicaid provides medical care to the poor, the elderly and the disabled and Alaska’s Tribes will be heavily impacted if this bill becomes the law. The Senate Health Care Bill would cut funding to the State of Alaska over the near few years to half of the current Federal spending. Approximately 185,000 Alaskans are currently insured in part through Medicaid, 40% of those people are children and almost half are Alaska Native. This bill would dramatically decrease health care coverage in Alaska in the next several years. If your Tribe is concerned you should contact Senator Murkowski and Senator Sullivan and let them know you want them to vote no on this bill.
Upcoming Events:

Independence Day (Offices closed) — July 4, 2017

Fish Skin Exhibit—June—August 2017

Eek School Children Art Exhibit—September—December 2017

Labor Day (Offices closed) - September 4, 2017

2017 Annual AVCP Convention—September 26-28, 2017

2017 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention—October 19-21, 2017