

OBSERVATIONS AND CHALLENGES while building capacity and securing funding to address environmental hazards in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

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OUR VISION:

Alaska Native people are the healthiest people in the world.

Environmentally Threatened Communities



The YKHC service area contains 38% of ETCs and 46% of “Highly Vulnerable” ETCs

Source: Combined Threat Assessment Rating, 2018 Denali Commission Threat Assessment Draft Vulnerability Rating Lists



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SUCCESSSES

- \$7 million awarded to ETCs in the YK
 - Replace and repair barge landings damaged by erosion
 - Erosion protection for a household of nine
 - Relocate 10 homes and one community building
 - Three environmental risk assessments
 - Decommission infrastructure in Newtok
 - Build two duplexes in Mertarvik
 - Design new Head Start school building in Chefornak
 - Geotechnical investigations to inform site selection
 - Managed retreat planning
 - Strong relationships with communities
 - Newsletter
- Currently \$7 million pending for ~46 projects in the YK



HOW WE WORK

DECISION-MAKING

Tribal Council
City Council
Village Corporation

**COMMUNITY PLANNING, PROJECT
PLANNING & MANAGEMENT,
GRANT MANAGEMENT**
Resilience Coordinator

FUNDING

Center for
Environmentally
Threatened Communities

PROJECT CONSULTANTS

Relocation planning,
river morphology,
housing master plan,
etc.

**PROGRAM
MANAGEMENT**
Engineering Services
Contractor

Cost of non-project personnel ranges from \$20,000 to \$800,000 per year per community



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OBSERVATION 1:

Most Alaskans and Americans are not aware how severe or urgent this problem is.





“Due to the combination of extremely flat terrain, sea-level rise, sea-ice reduction that facilitates more storm flooding and accelerating permafrost degradation, we believe the YKD is the most vulnerable region in the Arctic to climate warming.”

Jorgenson et al. 2018. Drivers of Landscape Changes in Coastal Ecosystems on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska



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It will cost \$50 to \$100 million per year for communities to protect and move to safer ground

University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research. 2018. Economic Effects of Climate Change in Alaska.

Recommendation:

Increase awareness of challenges and the benefits of solutions, especially outside Alaska



OBSERVATION 2:

Most communities do not have access to western science risk assessments

Recommendation:

- Support community-specific assessments for erosion, flooding, and permafrost degradation
 - What is the magnitude and timing of the threat?
 - How many communities can protect in place?
 - Provides foundation for economic analyses to demonstrate benefits of proactive action and increased programs and services



#1 CHALLENGE:

Funding will come in small amounts and only a handful of programs currently address this problem

We've assessed >150 programs and pursued ~20. Thus far, only ten competitive programs have responded positively.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding to effective grant programs (e.g. BIA Tribal Resilience, Denali Commission)
- Change the structure of funding programs to meet Alaska's unique needs and challenges (e.g. rural set-aside, Tribal set-aside, incorporate Threat Assessment in scoring criteria, etc.)
- Long-term solution will require transformational change in funding systems, requiring strong collaboration from local to national levels



Thank You

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