

# Meeting Notes

## Yukon-Kuskokwim Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

2022 Q1 Subsistence and Food Security Work Group Meeting March 31, 2022 | 1:30-3:30pm

### Agenda Item 1. Welcome + Introductions

#### Attendees:

Aaron Moses	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge	aaron_moses@fws.gov
Boyd Blihovde	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge	boyd_blihovde@fws.gov
Brenda Pacarro	Calista Corporation	bpacarro@calistacorp.com
Clarence Daniel	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)	<a href="mailto:clarence@avcp.org">clarence@avcp.org</a>
Florence Kargi	Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF)	Florence_N@coastalvillages.org
Jacqualine (Jackie) Qatalina Schaeffer	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)	<a href="mailto:jdschaeffer@anthc.org">jdschaeffer@anthc.org</a>
Jennifer Hooper	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Natural Resources Division	JHooper@avcp.org
Katie Kashatok	Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF)	katie_k@coastalvillages.org
Oscar Evon	Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF)	<a href="mailto:oscar_e@coastalvillages.org">oscar_e@coastalvillages.org</a>
Paige Jones Petersen	Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Natural Resources Division	PJones@avcp.org
Serena Fitka	Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association (YRDFA)	serena@yukonsalmon.org
Seth O'Brien	Association of Village Council Presidents, Regional Housing Authority (AVCP RHA)	SOBrien@avcp.org
Tisha Kuhns	Calista Corporation	tkuhns@calistacorp.com

### Agenda Item 2. Purpose of Today's Meeting

- Measures of Success – see supplemental materials

### Agenda Items 3-4. Measures of Success and Action Planning

**STRATEGY 9: Expand local employment and involvement in natural resource research, management and subsistence decision-making at the community, regional, state and federal levels.**

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<b>9-A. Maintain a youth seat on CEDS Subsistence working group.</b> Three Yup'ik UAF ANSEP students were featured as keynote speakers for the October 2021 YK CEDS work session, providing a leading example of an all-Yup'ik waterfowl research crew.	<b>Lead:</b> AVCP <b>Partners:</b> Calista

**Priority Action 9-A.**

- Calista can be a partner to cultivate opportunities for youth to serve on boards.

**Priority Action 9-B.**

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p><b>9-B. Develop a career pathway for subsistence and natural resource management.</b> A number of resources exist or are in development, including: ANSEP placements into the Yukon Delta NWR; Navigating the New Arctic Community Office (NNA-CO) capacity-building in early-career researchers; Study of Environmental Arctic Change (SEARCH); UAF Fisheries Management Program; Tamamta; UAF Tribal Governance Program.</p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Alaska EXCEL?  <b>Partners:</b> Tanana Chiefs Conference, UAF, Alaska Pacific University, BIA Pathways Program</p>

- Does AVCP have funding for youth internships?
  - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
  - Calista Lands Department
  - Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
  - Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) Fisheries Program and Culture Camp
- The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC), and the State of Alaska are gathering data on salmon harvest. That data is used to help manage the fisheries. Local people from communities along the river are hired each summer during the fishing season. These are not full-time or permanent jobs, but they are good experience for young people.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) hires Refuge Information Technicians (RITs). Subsistence is the bulk of what they deal with. These are part-time jobs, so they are also good for young people.
- Are there ways for organizations in this region to piggyback on each other to make internships and part-time jobs into full time jobs?
  - The Calista Lands Department is focused on natural resources and could possibly partner with other organizations.
- The USFWS also offers Youth Conservation Corps positions (similar to AmeriCorps). These are paid employee positions during the summers for youth aged 15-18.
- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) hires youth.
- It is important to have programs for young adults (i.e., age 18-25).

- Refuge Information Technicians (RITs) usually travel to villages and work with schools in villages on conservation and species that might be low population. Could Department of Interior (DOI) funding be used to expand this into a youth program? The youth are usually doing subsistence for their parents and grandparents. They will know first-hand instead of second-hand which regulations might apply in different zones.
  - The USFWS appreciates this idea. The Refuge used to employ 10 RITs; we now have three. We are working with partners to expand and hire more RITs to get the program back to the robust program it used to be. Chuck Hunt was a pioneer of the program; he would go to schools to educate young people. We want to go back to getting into high schools. We may need help because the Refuge does not have the funding to do all this on our own the way the budgets are right now.
  - Partner with Togiak National Wildlife Refuge because it covers Quinhagak down.
- Would ANSEP be a good lead for 9-B? They already place interns into the USFWS. The RIT's could help with outreach to show young people the different opportunities within the Refuge, so they could find work besides being biologists.
- Calista works with Alaska EXCEL, which serves high school age youth. Alaska EXCEL might be a good start for developing a pre-apprenticeship career pathway. The State of Alaska could help with funding.
  - There is a maritime apprenticeship program with three different pathways already created under the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), with training by AVTEC in Seward. AVTEC can work with students remotely to get them into a pathway and start recording their hours on the water.

**Priority Action 9-C.**

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p><b>9-C. Develop an apprenticeship program to guide younger people into high-level resource management positions.</b> ANSEP is guiding young people toward high-level resource management positions, starting with its Acceleration Academy (in partnership with Lower Kuskokwim School District and UAF Kuskokwim Campus). USFWS is hiring youth from the region into its Fisheries Resource Management Program. Calista awarded 362 CECI natural resource scholarships over the last five years.</p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Department of Labor?  <b>Partners:</b> Calista, ANSEP, Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, LKSD, UAF Kuskokwim Campus, USFWS</p>

- The group discussed contacting Jackie Garcia about the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) being the lead. Jackie Garcia used to work for the State of Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADOLWD), and now works for the national DOL creating an apprenticeship program. Participating employers would be registered under U.S. DOL. The State of Alaska would potentially cover the training.

**Priority Action 9-D.**

PRIORITY ACTIONS	LEAD/PARTNERS
<p><b>9-D. Establish a small cohort of youth to be mentored and introduced to educational and career pathways in natural resources.</b> The Native Youth Climate Adaptation Leadership Congress is an annual national mentorship program for youth that is a collaboration among the USFWS, National Park Service, BIA, and USFS. TKC is building subsistence advocacy into their internship program. Four of the current Tamamta cohort members have ties to the Y-K.</p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> USFWS and Calista co-lead?  <b>Partners:</b> ANSEP, First Alaskans Institute, Inuit Circumpolar Council, ANTHC</p>

- Aaron Moses was invited to share his story of working for the USFWS, Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. Aaron was unable to tell his own story, so others who have worked with him some time talked a little about how his story can provide an example of the kind of youth involvement they would like to see more of in the region.
  - Aaron Moses grew up in Tooksook Bay, a young shining star that went to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If we can duplicate some of what inspired Aaron, we could reach other people just like him. The RITs went to schools and inspired him to look into working for the Refuge. He got into ANSEP and was then hired by the Refuge. Randall Friendly from Tuntutuliak is another student who went through ANSEP and is now a full-time USFWS employee. The USFWS has two part-time employees from ANSEP as well.
- It is important to make sure organizations and tribes that want to be part of this process (cultivating student opportunities with ANSEP) are included at some level. We want to see more and grow more of our own biologists, anthropologists, etc. but we want our people to have more doors open than they've thought about, not just agencies. We should keep the organizations that have access, projects, departments, and make sure that youth coming into these pathways know that there are many professional opportunities out there.
  - How do we grow our own and keep them in our region? How do we help them find the place where they can do the most good, *and* their personal finances can work, *and* they have opportunities to grow in their careers?
- Continual outreach and information to subsistence users is needed in general because we don't want our youth to be pushed away because the expectation from their community members is that they are there to "fix" issues.
  - Jackie Schaeffer agreed and gave an example from her region's perspective. At NANA, we say, "We walk in two worlds and one spirit." When you live in a small community where everything is Federally funded and you go through that for generations – it's not anyone's fault, but we get this mindset that it's broken, and I can't fix it, so I'm going to call someone else, and they'll fix it. We're humans, we think however we are conditioned to think. Even natural resources and environment

have different definitions in our subsistence use communities and Federal agencies. It's important to make sure community leaders understand the pressure they put on youth is hard; they can't fix everything. We shouldn't expect them to fix everything for us. We should be the ones to mentor and guide them into becoming better leaders than we are.

- One way Calista tracks shareholders that go into secondary and post-secondary education is through the Calista Scholarship Program (Education and Culture). School is expensive. Sometimes we see shareholders not complete or drop off because they are hired elsewhere. Calista supports each shareholder's self determination for their own lives. Calista posts jobs in the region and presents opportunities to shareholders. This would not fully track the intended outcome(s) for this strategy, but it could provide some information.
  - Calista also creates strong partnerships with AVCP and anywhere we can get our shareholders employed. It is important to sustain them; they carry our knowledge and culture. We help our shareholders wherever they live.

**Priority Measures of Success**

Priority Measures of Success	Data Source(s)	Where this is at Today	Where we want to be in 5 Years
<b>Career Path:</b> [#] Calista shareholders who are enrolled in natural resources degree programs.	Calista Scholarship Program (Education and Culture) tracking	[#] Calista shareholders who are enrolled in natural resources degree programs.	[#] Calista shareholders who are enrolled in natural resources degree programs.
<b>Career Path:</b> [#] Calista shareholders who have completed natural resources degree programs since [YEAR].	Calista Scholarship Program (Education and Culture) tracking	[#] Calista shareholders who have completed natural resources degree programs since [YEAR].	[#] Calista shareholders who have completed natural resources degree programs since [YEAR].
<b>Jobs:</b> [#] jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing [%] of total regional workforce in [YEAR].	Bureau of Economic Analysis if Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming can serve as a proxy for jobs related to Subsistence + Food Security	590 jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing 5.65% of the total regional workforce in 2020.	[#] jobs in Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing [%] of total regional workforce in 2025.
<b>Wages:</b> \$[#] annual wages to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing [%] of total regional wages in [YEAR].	Ditto comment above	\$857,000 annual wages to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing 0.12% of total regional wages in 2020.	[\$#] annual wages to Bethel + Kusilvak Census Area(s) employed in Forestry, fishing and related activities + Farming representing [%] of total regional wages in 2025.

**Measures of Success:**

- Could we include indicators related to food costs? We hear about food shortages, restrictions on salmon and meat, and complaints that there is not enough food in the grocery stores and it's expensive.
  - The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) may have indicators for the cost of living that include food costs. *(After the meeting, Agnew::Beck staff looked up ISER's cost of living studies, which do not appear to be updated regularly for food, in the Y-K region.)*
- Federal projects with NEPA requirements must identify numbers of threatened and endangered species that determine mitigation for projects to move forward. In the future, what about determining the economic impact that someone in one of the villages would feel by not having that particular resource? Is there a way to put a value on what it would mean to a family to not have fish for a year? What is that economic impact? When there are potential projects in the future, can the risks to subsistence (fish, game, plants) be expressed through economic impact, as the cost impact to a family of not having that resource? Thinking about unmet needs, how do we determine unmet needs? For a family, 75-80 percent of the food we put on the table comes from the land. If we don't have a particular resource, what does that 75-80 percent equate to in food costs?
  - ISER studies the economic impact of subsistence use. ISER may have updated data on their subsistence economy research. We have pre-Covid baseline information for the percentage of food cost. From the land, the prices of gas and ammo has gone up, a lot higher than we think. Is it going to cost three times as much next year to fill our freezers?
  - One measure of success could be through micro-grants. The State of Alaska had a micro-grant application for farming. We could measure the success we see through programs like that. It supplements the food security issues we are looking at; it doesn't solve them.
  - We could go about it strategically, so that some number of villages develop a crop and trade from there.
  - Sometimes individuals have a hard time, especially with agriculture in rural Alaska. At the tribal level, foundations can fund community-level projects (e.g., a connex with a cooling system to store food in a communal freezer). Community-based projects like that have been more successful than individual projects. Agriculture is not easy, and it's not free. Picking berries is not even free because you have to drive there. Maybe providing rides to go berry picking?
- A new ADF&G Game Management Plan is underway and receiving public comments now; it includes efforts to replenish the wood bison population. Wood bison mess with the lights on the airstrips, but 20 percent of the population is for rural taking. Can we see more

successful resource management like that in the region? Maybe re-introduce sheep to our mountains to offset caribou decline?

- That is a good reminder that the Mulchatna caribou herd has declined. The Refuge is seeing more interest in expanding reindeer herds. It's something that has been done for generations, although it has gone up and down. It could be replicated in other areas, and there are opportunities to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for funding.
- One day, hopefully we will measure what returns to our region. We forget that life begins in our region. We need to find a way to determine what's being created in our region and what's leaving our region when it comes to our resources (e.g., fish, birds) because then we could come up with other mitigations surrounding what's borne of our region. It sounds impossible, but when they developed the test fishery, the Fish and Game biologists probably never thought it would correlate to escapement. We have a lot of smart people going into the sciences; surely we can find ways to look at what's borne of the region and what's leaving the region to come up with mitigation strategies.
  - Our people knew how to self-manage. There are a lot of different factors today (e.g., more people, climate change, we live within the guidelines of regulation). It's a good dream to have, to hope that someday we can achieve that by raising our own scientists, researchers, etc.

## Agenda Item 5. Next Steps and Wrap-Up

### Next working group meeting:

- The group decided it would prefer to meet again before June. Tentatively schedule the next meeting in mid-May 2022.

### Other follow-up:

- AVCP's next steps are to start working on the five-year CEDS.
- Follow up with Tisha Kuhns and/or Brenda Pacarro regarding available indicator data for measures of success.
- Follow up with Alaska EXCEL to potentially lead Priority Action 9-B (Develop a career pathway for subsistence and natural resource management.).
- Follow up with Jackie Garcia about Priority Action 9-C (Develop an apprenticeship program to guide younger people into high-level resource management positions.):  
Jacqueline Imapigmiu Garcia, Apprenticeship Training Representative  
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- The USFWS could be a co-lead or partner for 9-D (Establish a small cohort of youth to be mentored and introduced to educational and career pathways in natural resources.). The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge is ready to take steps to make things happen.
  - Mentoring is something the Refuge is interested in, aligned with traditional indigenous environmental knowledge, something like a combined science and culture camp. The USFWS could sponsor that.
  - The USFWS also discussed creating mentorship opportunities through building up the RIT program to work with school districts.
  - Please connect with:  
Boyd Blihovde, Refuge Manager, Yukon Delta NWR  
PO Box 346, Bethel, AK 99559  
[boyd\\_blihovde@fws.gov](mailto:boyd_blihovde@fws.gov)
  - If Calista can help share information about USFWS resources, please connect with:  
Brenda Pacarro, SWP  
Workforce and Shareholder Development Manager, Calista Corporation  
[bpacarro@calistacorp.com](mailto:bpacarro@calistacorp.com) P: 907.275.2818 | C: 907.802.0608
- If anyone is interested in becoming an RIT, the Refuge hires indigenous people in smaller villages in remote areas for these positions. We are trying to recruit and hire two of them right now.
  - Boyd offered to share a link or flyer with the group. Brenda offered to share it on Calista's facebook page.