

Rural Community Outreach Committee Meeting Report

August 12, 2009

9 am – 5 pm

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Conference Room
1016 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 304, Anchorage

Committee: Eric Olson (Chair), Paula Cullenberg, Gale Vick (for Ole Olsen), Pete Probasco, Jennifer Hooper, Tom Okleasik. Not present: Duncan Fields. **NPFMC staff:** Chris Oliver, Nicole Kimball.

Other Participants: AJ Salkoski (RurAL CAP), Steve Garcia (USCG), Paul Albertson (USCG), Jon Kammler (USCG), Sally Bibb NMFS AKR, Brent Paine (United Catcher Boats), Art Ivanoff, Dorothy Lowman (consultant), Jason Anderson (Best Use Cooperative), Henry Mitchell, Angelique Anderson (Coastal Villages Region Fund), Bubba Cook (World Wildlife Fund), Stephanie Madsen (At-sea Processor's Association), Stephanie Moreland (ADF&G), Muriel Morse (Alaska Marine Conservation Council), Desa Jacobson, Jeff Stephan (United Fishermen's Marketing Association), Ole Lake, Glenn Reed (Pacific Seafood Processor's Association), Valli Peterson (Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Energy Services), Sarah Scanlan (RurAL CAP).

I. Organizational issues

- Introductions and additions to the agenda

The committee and the public introduced themselves. Sally Bibb (NMFS) offered to provide an update on NMFS' efforts to improve the tribal consultation process at the end of the organizational issues. Note that a list of all handouts provided to the committee and public is attached to this report as **Attachment 1**.

- Review purpose of the committee per Council direction

The committee reviewed the three primary purposes of the committee, based on Council direction:

- 1) to advise the Council on how to provide opportunities for better understanding and participation from AK Native and rural communities;
- 2) to provide feedback on community impacts sections of specific analyses; and
- 3) to provide recommendations regarding which proposed Council actions need a specific outreach plan and prioritize multiple actions when necessary.

The Chair noted that the driving factor for committee membership was not geographic representation; it was experience with and expertise in outreach in rural Alaska. In addition, the Chair noted that the committee was not initiated in response to any individual Council action. It was established in response to the Council's identified priority and recognition that it is necessary to improve communication with and participation from rural communities. The committee itself is not intended to conduct outreach, it is charged with making recommendations to the Council on how to improve its overall outreach efforts, as well as recommend which actions may need a more targeted effort in rural Alaska.

Committee members stated that this was a step in the right direction, as many regions of Alaska are concerned about management decisions being made without sufficient input from those closest to the resource. In addition, navigating the Council process can be daunting to a rural resident, thus, efforts should be made to both educate people on the process and provide creative opportunities for people in rural communities to participate in person and through technology. One member provided a worksheet to the group with estimates of the potential expense to attend all five annual Council meetings, each for the entire 9 days, based on whether you lived near or outside of Anchorage.¹

¹Estimates were developed by the Gulf Coastal Communities Coalition, July 2009. They ranged from about \$13k to \$31k per person, for five Council meetings (9 days each), including airline transportation, ground transportation, meals, and hotel.

Some committee members were concerned about the group determining which particular issues may be important to rural Alaska, and instead wanted to focus primarily on institutionalizing ways to have rural AK participate in the process. Chris Oliver (NPFMC) noted that while the broad effort is important and part of the purpose of the committee, we still likely need to make some effort to identify projects or issues that need a higher profile outreach effort. These multiple purposes are consistent with the Council's direction. Members agreed that using technology to reach rural AK on an ongoing basis will be critical, and with better ongoing outreach, we lessen the need for the committee to determine which individual actions are important to communities.

Some committee members offered overall goals that may guide the committee's efforts. One member noted that equity in public engagement in the public process should be a primary goal. Another member noted that two-way participation is key, and that we should strive for an ongoing system for the Council to receive the input it needs from rural Alaska, and vice versa. The committee agreed that a review of the public processes that various agencies provide would be useful, in order to gain insight and ideas from other entities (e.g., ADF&G, Federal Subsistence Board, etc.), and that at some point, inviting members of these entities to a committee meeting would be helpful.

- Discuss how the meetings will be conducted (e.g., consensus vs. vote; no-host, etc.)

The Chair noted that the committee, like all Council committees, is no-host; travel and accommodations are not paid for general committee members. The Chair also noted that working by consensus is preferable, but a vote would be taken if determined necessary in order to address a specific recommendation to the Council. One member provided a cautionary note that consensus can sometimes be used to mask dissent in a group setting, and an open vote is more transparent and provides a history of where committee members stand on specific issues. Staff noted that regardless of whether there is consensus on a particular issue, differing opinions will be outlined in the committee report. The Chair also noted that public participation is encouraged in the committee process, and frequent opportunities will be available for the public to provide feedback as the meeting progresses.

- Discuss frequency and location of meetings

While it is less expensive and easier for most committee members to meet in Anchorage, the group agreed that committee meetings should be held on a case by case basis in other regions of Alaska. One member noted that many regions have regional organization meetings and there may be a time when we consider scheduling the outreach committee to meet on dates close to those meetings, in order to generate public participation in a Council committee. **Members agreed that they prefer meetings be held in rural Alaska, but that care should be taken such that the public does not confuse the committee meeting with the outreach mechanism itself (i.e., the committee is intended to recommend ways to improve outreach, but is not itself the conduit for feedback from rural Alaska).** As the committee chooses rural locations, it needs to consider the resources and capacity of the community (e.g., technology, hotel accommodations, meeting space, how to advertise effectively), and document that for potential Council use in the future.

Other members noted that it may be appropriate to have teleconference committee meetings, and/or use a shared worksite program, such that powerpoint presentations could be shared remotely on each individual's computer. It was generally agreed that the committee should hold every other meeting in person.

The Chair noted that while it is the Council's purview to task the committee, the expectation is likely that the committee will meet 1 to 2 times per year, which is similar to or more frequent than other Council committees. Some committee members noted that it may make sense to meet more frequently (quarterly) in the first year in order to establish general outreach mechanisms, and that eventually, if the committee is effective, the committee itself will no longer be necessary.

The committee also addressed the question of timing the in-person committee meetings. For example, the committee was tasked by the Council to meet over the summer, prior to the Council's meeting the first week of October. After setting a date and providing Federal Register notice, the committee found that its meeting was the same day that several President Obama administration officials were meeting in Bethel. Changing the meeting date would have been difficult due to members' schedules, as well as providing new Federal Register notice (the requirement is 23 days notice in advance of the meeting). One member noted that the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils have found that typically Sept/Oct and Feb/March cause the least scheduling problems for subsistence users.

One member of the public noted that in 2005 and 2006, NMFS convened a stakeholder participation committee, the findings of which may be useful to the committee. It was requested that staff research and distribute those findings to the committee for reference.²

- Budget information/considerations

Chris Oliver reported that based on the expected Council budget for 2010, the outreach budget is likely in the range of \$75k to \$100k for 2010. This overlaps with some other budget categories (e.g., information technology), and would need to cover both outreach committee meetings as well as outreach efforts. Committee meetings outside of Anchorage would cost an estimated \$2k to \$4k, depending on location. As the Council's recent outreach efforts for the Arctic FMP and Chinook salmon bycatch projects averaged about \$22k each, a budget this size could fund 2 to 3 intense, project-specific outreach efforts, and a few outreach committee meetings. As the Council has limited staff (14 person staff in Anchorage), one committee member noted that we should leverage our resources from committee members' agencies and other organizations represented at the meeting, in order to maximize our potential resources.

One committee member asked whether there was any follow-up on one of the Council's outreach workgroup recommendations from November 2008, to ask whether NMFS has staff available to help fulfill a logistics coordinator role for the outreach efforts. Sally Bibb (NMFS) stated that it was unlikely that NMFS would have staff available, but if the outreach committee or the Council could develop a specific list of logistics or administrative tasks that need to be done, NMFS could consider whether any of these tasks would overlap with tasks necessary to support NMFS's tribal consultation process or could be appropriate for contracting.

- NMFS update on improvements to tribal consultation process

Sally Bibb (NMFS) provided an overview of the tribal consultation process required by E.O. 13175 to which all executive agencies (e.g., NMFS) are subject. This requires regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Indian tribes (i.e., Alaska Native villages/tribes) in the development of Federal policies that have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian tribes. In 2004, Congress added the requirement for Federal agencies to consult with Alaska Native corporations on the same basis as Indian tribes under E.O. 13175. While the Council is not an executive agency and is not subject to E.O. 13175, it is clear that, based on the Council's role in making Federal fisheries management recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce (NMFS), there is interest and overlap in coordinating Council outreach efforts with NMFS tribal consultation responsibilities.

²In response, staff distributed several links to the committee (and public) via email on 8/14/09. The first is the 2006 GAO report on stakeholder participation in the development of quota-based programs that was mentioned: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06289.pdf>. The second is the NMFS policy directive, effective in 2007, resulting from the GAO report: <https://reefshark.nmfs.noaa.gov/f/pds/publicsite/documents/policies/30-129.pdf>. Note that the policy directive asks the Councils to develop plans specific to each Council to help ensure effective stakeholder communication and involvement. According to the GAO, a set of core principles, a general communications policy, and a Council commitment to outreach will allow for increased communication and stakeholder involvement in the development of quota-based programs. It also says that NMFS will work with the Councils to implement this policy. As a result, the North Pacific Council adopted the set of core principles, for use broader than quota-based programs, into its Statement of Organization, Practices and Procedures (SOPPs). The SOPPs are posted (see Section 3.10 for the list of principles): http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/misc_pub/sopp608.pdf.

The Department of Commerce policy on tribal consultations is very broad, encompassing several guiding principles, but no concrete direction to NMFS on how to implement a tribal consultation process. Sally reported that when there is a fisheries management issue that may impact Alaska tribes, NMFS sends a letter to all tribes, ANCSA corporations, and local governments, explaining the proposed action, the analytical and decisionmaking process, and that tribes and ANCSA corporations have a right to a consultation with NMFS. A few consultations have occurred regarding halibut subsistence actions and the recent Chinook salmon bycatch action, and involvement started to increase with the salmon bycatch issue. NMFS received feedback that sending a letter as the initial step is not sufficient, and that there should be an emphasis on early education, information, and outreach. One dilemma is that conducting outreach or soliciting input on analyses adds time to the process for a particular action, and in many cases the public is requesting immediate or emergency action. NMFS and the Council need input on how to balance those desires.

In response, NMFS is attempting to make improvements to the tribal consultation process. NMFS is developing a contract with RurAL CAP, who has helped with the halibut subsistence working group in the past. RurAL CAP would organize a meeting/consultation with NMFS and representatives of tribes on a regional basis, to help determine how to improve the tribal consultation process. This meeting would likely occur in winter 2009/2010. NMFS will continue to update the outreach committee on its progress, and work with the committee to make the most efficient use of its resources.

II. Solicit ideas on general ways to improve outreach (e.g., how do we communicate who the Council is, what it does, and how to participate)

As a precursor to this discussion, staff provided a brief review of the May 2008 discussion paper on potential and past outreach approaches, the current Council process, and the November 2008 workgroup report that recommended initiating the outreach committee (see Attachment 1). The committee also received a brief overview of the recent outreach plans and reports on the Arctic FMP and Chinook salmon bycatch actions. One member noted that the Council established an expectation with its outreach efforts on these recent actions, noting that the high level of public testimony at the April 2009 Council meeting on salmon bycatch was in part due to the outreach to rural Alaska.

Several suggestions to improve general outreach to rural communities resulted from this discussion. Members noted that if the Council wants to conduct an outreach meeting on a particular issue in rural Alaska, it is more effective to piggy-back on another regional meeting, in order to garner better participation and interest. This was proven effective for both the Arctic FMP and Chinook bycatch projects. When determining an appropriate partner to host a meeting, it is important to consider whether they can provide sufficient time on their agenda to discuss the issue, and whether the meeting is broadly publicized and attended by the target stakeholders. Primary suggestions are listed below.

Website & email alerts. Members suggested that a primary way to improve the current process is to maximize our technological resources to reach rural Alaska. The Council could include an interactive component to its existing website that is specific to rural outreach, which would highlight issues on upcoming Council agendas in which rural communities may be most interested. The interactive module might include a place for people to comment, or respond to surveys periodically. Further exploration of this idea is necessary, in order to discuss the purpose for which that information would be used (e.g., would it be distributed to Council members, etc). The Council could also send a series of 'email alerts' to rural community and tribal contacts, so that people know what issues to look for, and where to find detailed information. The concept is to institutionalize improvements so that rural residents know how to participate on an ongoing basis, and are tuned in enough to know when a specific issue could affect them. Chris Oliver noted that the Council is already working on a new website design, and that this concept could potentially be folded into the redevelopment. The North Pacific Research Board's website was mentioned as a good template for outreach. Staff can provide an update at a future meeting.

Advertising meetings. Another member had suggestions for advertising either regional outreach meetings or Council meetings in a rural community. He noted that it should be standing protocol to talk to the local radio station in rural communities prior to a Council meeting, in order to advertise that the Council is going to be meeting (even if in Anchorage), and outline the dates, location details, and issues on the agenda, etc. Advertising for local meetings is typically free of charge, and some local meetings are broadcast on the radio. Statewide scanner ads (GCI) are also effective, and community ads are often free. Follow-up after the meeting is also crucial, so stakeholders understand next steps, where to find further information (email links to documents), and understand the Council's final action.

Educational workshop. Another member suggested that there should be an educational component on how the Council process works. For example, some communities have a workshop before the Alaska Board of Fisheries meets in the community, so that residents know how to best participate. The Council could develop a workshop that could be used opportunistically, whenever necessary in rural communities. Part of that workshop could entail an overview of the Council process, and differentiate between how the Board of Fisheries and Council processes work.

Audio broadcast of Council meetings. Several members supported an audio broadcast or web streaming of Council meetings. Some members suggested an email link such that people listening remotely could email questions during a Council meeting. Concern was noted on the level of resources necessary to respond to questions in near real-time, as the Council meeting progresses. The email link during a Council meeting did not appear feasible, as staff time is already fully consumed during the meetings. Staff noted that the Council is already working on streaming the Council meetings, and that this may be available as soon as early 2010.

Chat tool. An internet chat tool was also suggested for community meetings. It is a quick way of asking a question without emailing, and provides fast responses. Part of the impetus for this suggestion is trying to determine how the Council can facilitate communication between the commercial fishing industry and the subsistence community. Members of the public noted that this concept would not necessarily require Council members or staff to be involved, as people can chat on current issues already, but that the rural outreach committee may be an appropriate group to bridge the gap, and bring attention to issues that industry and rural communities can implement on their own.

Regional partnerships. One member suggested identifying several entities or groups within each region that are familiar with the Council process and can help disseminate information on how to participate, as well as be a contact if rural residents have questions on particular actions. These groups could help generate the input the Council needs prior to decisionmaking. There are several ways to divide Alaska by region – and it might differ for particular projects. It could be by regional nonprofit region, CDQ region, ANCSA corporation region, etc. This mentorship concept would likely entail approaching different entities and asking whether they want to work with the Council for this purpose, and then evaluating the response. The first groups to approach as potential mentors may be planning commissions, CDQ groups, regional corporations, regional nonprofits, etc. A region could potentially organize its own fisheries mentor group, if encouraged. One member noted that the partnership/mentor idea might fold in with the educational workshop mentioned above – rural groups could attend the workshop to learn the Council process and become mentors in their region. Hosting a workshop would help determine the level of interest for such a partnership/mentor program.

III. Solicit ideas on need for project-specific outreach in near-term

Staff reviewed several brief summaries (handouts) of upcoming Council projects, as examples of projects that may warrant targeted outreach efforts. The project summaries note whether some level of outreach has occurred or is scheduled, and the general timeline for analysis and potential decisionmaking. The purpose was to review these projects and the Council's '3-meeting outlook', such that the committee could recommend project-specific outreach plans if desired. Staff reviewed the following projects:

- Chum salmon bycatch in Bering Sea pollock fishery
- Northern Bering Sea Research Plan (NBSRA)
- Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Area (NBBTA)
- Bering Sea habitat conservation (Am. 89): Nunivak Island-Etolin Strait-Kuskokwim Bay habitat conservation area
- Arctic management (long-term)

One member noted that in regard to the NBSRA, the Marine Advisory Program agent in Nome has developed a collaborative fisheries research plan with ADF&G, NSEDC, and various Federal agencies. It may be helpful to provide this reference to the project lead at NMFS. One member commented on staff's mention of the Bering Sea Elder's Advisory Group plan to conduct some rural meetings or workshops in order to bring information to the subsistence workshop planned by NMFS for February 2010. These outside subsistence workshops should be noted on the NBSRA schedule for context, when the meeting schedules are made available.

Staff noted that once the schedule is established for a particular proposed action, it is often too late to solicit additional feedback outside of the Council meetings or regular Council process, without significantly delaying the project. Others noted that project-specific outreach may become less necessary in the long-term, if we have overall statewide efforts that are effective. However, one member noted that project-specific outreach may be the most important, as it is typically the uniqueness of each region and its relationship to a particular issue that generates interest in participating in the public process. Many communities will only have interest in one or two issues over a several year period.

The committee generally saw three levels of potential outreach efforts:

- Statewide level (primarily educational & website tools)
- Regional level (MOUs, partnerships/mentoring in each region)
- Project level (engage a particular community or set of communities on a specific action)

One member related that project-specific level approaches can be extremely effective. The Arctic FMP was used as an example of providing information between the Council and communities, such that the community input could inform the suite of alternatives and the analysis of those alternatives. Staff documented multiple meetings in Arctic communities, as well as time spent providing updates and communicating via phone and email. Members noted that it is a matter of available resources (staff and budget). One member of the public noted that we must recognize the tradeoff of putting staff resources toward outreach, as it means staff are pulled away from impact assessment.

In review of the three-meeting outlook, staff noted that all of the projects that were used as examples of those that may necessitate a specific outreach plan are not near-term projects, with the exception of chum salmon bycatch (i.e., Council review of alternatives in December 2009). Chum salmon is also the most immediate project in terms of outreach, if the Council is to conduct outreach meetings in rural communities that are timely and meaningful, prior to the completion of the analysis. The committee agreed that chum salmon would likely warrant a specific outreach plan, similar to the Chinook salmon bycatch outreach effort that occurred in 2008 – 2009. One member also noted that it would be helpful to send out a brief summary of the chum project and tentative schedule as soon as this fall.

IV. Discuss committee role in providing feedback on community impacts sections of specific analyses

While recognizing that this is one of the purposes of the committee per the Council motion, the committee agreed that it is not feasible or realistic to review every Council analysis and critique the community impacts sections. The committee generally wanted to focus on identifying the types of community

information that are most informative and necessary to develop sufficient analyses. The committee agreed to discuss this role in more detail at a future meeting.

V. Recommendations

1. The committee reiterated its approach to outreach improvements on three levels: statewide (education and website tools, etc.), regional (educational partnership approach), and project-specific (case by case basis), and it recommends considering development of short, written guidelines to support this approach.
2. The committee also recommends moving forward with the Council's efforts to redesign its website, and to consider a module that would highlight rural community issues separately, possibly with an interactive component. The committee requests an update on the status of the web design at the next meeting.
3. The committee agreed that the proposed chum salmon bycatch action likely necessitates a targeted outreach plan, and that the outreach plan for the Chinook salmon bycatch action should be used as a starting point. The committee recommends reviewing the Chinook salmon bycatch outreach plan and final report in detail at the next meeting, in order to recommend possible modifications for chum. The committee also recommends sending a status summary of the chum project out to the public, notably western Alaska communities, this fall, so that that public, the ADF&G advisory committees, and the Federal subsistence regional advisory councils understand that this project is on the horizon.
4. The committee recommends that it spend time working on the regional partnership approach, by determining how to define regions of Alaska and identifying key contacts in each region. Staff should circulate a master list of contact to the committee on which to add. SeaGrant has a list of regional contacts from which to start.
5. The committee recommends that staff develop a calendar of regional meetings, to be posted on the Council website.
6. The committee recommends reviewing the findings from the 2006 stakeholder participation committee on quota-based programs, for discussion at the next meeting.
7. The committee recommends that staff conduct research and/or invite speakers to a future meeting, in order to inform the committee as to what processes other organizations and agencies use for rural participation (e.g., ADF&G, Federal Subsistence Board, Native Tribal Consortium, etc.).
8. The committee agreed to teleconference the next committee meeting, and recommends that it be held in November 2009.

Finally, the committee discussed its idea of how to judge whether an outreach effort is successful. The committee agreed that measuring success should be based on whether significant participation resulted from the stakeholders you were trying to target. If people feel like they are sufficiently heard, and their information is conveyed to decisionmakers, then the outreach is successful. The committee also agreed that the success of an outreach effort cannot be linked to whether the final management or policy decision was deemed acceptable to stakeholders.

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

The committee agreed to teleconference the next committee meeting, and recommends that it be held in November 2009. A subsequent meeting could be held in a rural location, and one committee member suggested Kotzebue. Potential agenda items for the next committee meeting include: reviewing the stakeholder participation findings (mentioned on p. 3 of this report); developing short, written guidelines for the statewide/regional/project-specific approach; reviewing the previous outreach plan for Chinook salmon bycatch and consider constructing a similar plan for the upcoming chum salmon bycatch action; receiving an update from staff on development of a master list of meetings and rural contacts; receiving an update from staff on Council website changes; receiving an update from NMFS on the tribal consultation meeting planned for November 2009; and discussing and further refining the concept of regional rural partnerships, for potential recommendation to the Council.

Attachment 1

Rural Community Outreach Committee meeting North Pacific Fishery Management Council August 12, 2009

List of materials (and web links) provided for reference:

1. Agenda
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/Agendas/RCOCagenda809.pdf>
2. Committee member contact list
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/membership/committees/NPFMCcommittees.pdf>
3. Council discussion paper: “A potential approach to implementing the Council’s Groundfish Policy Workplan priority: Increase Alaska Native and Community Consultation” (May 16, 2008)
http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/Tasking/community_stakeholder.pdf
4. Council Outreach Workgroup Meeting Report (November 24, 2008)
http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/misc_pub/OutreachReport1108.pdf
5. Summary and Results of Outreach Plan for DEIS on Chinook Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery (April 2009)
http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/bycatch/BycatchOutreach409.pdf
6. Community Outreach Plan for Arctic FMP (2007)
www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/Arctic/Arctic%20FMP%20Outreach%20Plan%20Dec%202007.pdf
7. Council three-meeting outlook
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/threemeetingoutlook.pdf>
8. Project summaries:
 - Chum salmon bycatch in Bering Sea pollock fishery
 - Northern Bering Sea Research Plan (NBSRA)
 - Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Area (NBBTA)
 - Bering Sea habitat conservation (Am. 89): Nunivak Island-Etolin Strait-Kuskokwim Bay habitat conservation area
 - Arctic management (long-term)