

Arctic Policy and Climate Change

Alaska makes the United States an Arctic nation, and we can be a leader in the future of the region. Many of us live in the Arctic, and all of us depend on its resources. Sustainable, holistic management of the Arctic based on good science and community input and control is key to our future. Choices about the Arctic are made at local, state, national, and international levels, and those choices affect our economy, culture, communities, environment, and other aspects of everyday life in Alaska. Climate and other changes occurring in the Arctic create challenges for us moving forward, but the State has significant opportunities to craft good policy for the future. This committee encourages the new administration to increase participation in government processes, raise the profile of Arctic issues, commit to science, and undertake comprehensive planning.

The Arctic Policy and Climate Change committee confronted these and other issues affecting the Arctic region. We come from diverse backgrounds and brought very different perspectives and expertise to the conversation. Nonetheless, we found significant agreement and, through that agreement, developed five priority areas to facilitate good stewardship, responsible development, and preparedness. These recommendations come from our conversation and, we hope, reflect a starting point for an ongoing, inclusive dialogue about the future of the Arctic.

- 1) Increasing involvement and prominence in all areas of Arctic governance, with particular focus on the Arctic Council.** The U.S. will assume chairmanship of the Council from 2015 through 2017, which will continue to increase emphasis on Arctic issues and create opportunities for the State to demonstrate leadership and bring expertise to decisions that affect our residents.
- 2) Ensuring the sustainability of rural Alaska, particularly Alaska Native communities.** Sustaining rural Alaskan communities should be a priority for the new administration. The Arctic Policy committee agreed that significantly more emphasis must be placed on, and resources dedicated to, sustainability, adaptation, and resilience in order to equip communities with the tools necessary to ensure their long-term viability. Community sustainability can be furthered by prioritizing lower cost energy, healthy environments, language and cultural preservation, and improved relationships between the State of Alaska, Alaska Natives, and other rural Alaskan communities. The State can work with communities to develop economic opportunities that improve infrastructure, increase culturally and technologically relevant educational opportunities, safeguard resources, and enhance and maintain unique and important Alaska Native cultures.

- 3) Developing a better understanding of our changing climate, oceans, and environment.** Better science is key to understanding, planning for, and adapting to the ecological and climatological changes facing Alaskans. Especially in light of our 54,000 miles of coastline, diverse ecosystems, and reliance on natural resources, we must improve our understanding of the natural environment and the ways in which it is changing. The most effective way to meet this need is to develop and implement a solid, Alaska-based research and monitoring program with a particular focus on adaptation and good stewardship.

- 4) Improving intergovernmental collaboration, transparency, and participation.** In addition to improved relationships with our federal counterparts, we need better partnerships across all levels of government, including tribal, municipal, state, and interstate and international bodies. These partnerships should increase transparency, provide opportunities for local input and control, improve coordination, create research synergies, and coordinate research pertaining to the Arctic in such a way that resources are available in a single location and online.

- 5) Implementing planning and holistic management to meet infrastructure needs and adapt to the rapidly changing Arctic.** The committee identified the need for long-term, adaptive, ecosystem-based planning as one key to a sustainable future. Such a plan would build on existing science and tools and would help Alaska assume a more prominent leadership role in all aspects of Arctic policy and research. The committee emphasized the need for Alaska to have an Arctic policy lead in the Governor's office and a permanent governmental body that would guide research and make policy recommendations. Alaska can play an important role in forming and implementing Arctic Policy, and its active participation is critical to sustainability, sovereignty, the wise use and conservation of our marine environment and resources, understanding of our changing climate, protecting important areas, responding to disasters in the far north, and the recognition of the United States' place among other nations in the Arctic and Alaska's unique and singular capabilities in that regard.

1) Increasing involvement and prominence in all areas of Arctic governance, with particular focus on the Arctic Council.

As the only Arctic state in the U.S., the decisions, analyses, and discussions taking place in international arenas, particularly the Arctic Council, will affect Alaska. We have significant experience and expertise to contribute and, with the U.S. becoming Chair of the Arctic Council, should have new opportunities. By pursuing more active participation at the international level, Alaska can ensure that our priorities and expertise are considered.

Stakeholders

- Department of the Interior
- Governor's Office
- Indigenous people
- Alaskans generally
- State Department
- NOAA
- University
- Legislature

- Congressional delegation
- Industry
- NGOs
- Municipalities
- Communities
- Tribes
- Hunters
- Co-management entities

Success Elements Considered to be Agreeable by Most Alaskans

- Alaska Native liaison on Admiral Papp's team
- Effective Arctic dialogue led by Alaska
 - Representation on Admiral Papp's team
- Direct line of communication between State government and Arctic Council
- State participation in the Arctic council working groups
 - Appointment by Governor of Arctic specialists on his staff

Possible Actions to Achieve Agreed Success Elements

- Governor recommends representatives to Adm. Papp
- Governor initiates positive relationship with Arctic Council and federal government generally
- Governor appoints Arctic specialist
- New administration offers Alaska expertise and involvement in working groups of Arctic Council via the US Senior Arctic Official and Adm. Papp
- Identify and communicate to the federal government Alaska's priorities for the Arctic Council

Barriers to Further Success

- Past difficult relationship between State and feds
- Budgetary constraints
- Poorly defined points of communication

- Poorly understood processes and protocols of Arctic Council (by State personnel)

Actions to Address Barriers

- Begin outreach/relationship building starting with the Governor and leading to effective delegation of responsibilities
- Prioritize in the budget process
- Adopt spirit of collaboration and consistent point of contact and messaging
 - Including creating standing committee to host Arctic Council working group and other Arctic meetings in partnership with existing entities like Institute for the North and ICC
- Obtain briefings from knowledgeable sources

2) Ensuring the sustainability of rural Alaska, particularly Alaska Native communities.

Sustainable communities are central to Alaska’s future. Economic, cultural, and environmental change create significant hurdles for communities in the Arctic and all of Alaska. We need to ensure that our communities have resources and opportunities into the future. Both immediate and long-term needs should be addressed in a coordinated, inclusive manner. Language, culture, economy, and environment all play an important role in this process. These issues must be recognized at both the local and state levels, and there should be a mechanism to ensure sustained commitment to communities and effective communication between all levels of government.

Stakeholders

- Rural Alaskans
- Land owners
- Urban Alaskans
- Alaska Native corporations
- Tribes
- State-Federal government

- Industry
 - Oil and gas
 - Fisheries
- Language and culture experts
- Co-management entities

Success Elements Considered to be Agreeable by Most Alaskans

- Reduced energy costs and implementation of innovative programs to reduce consumption
- Development of Arctic people
 - Education - innovation - jobs

- Improve/adapt technology
- Improved food security, including local access
- Indigenous language continuity
- Empowerment of people to address local sustainability challenges
- Development/maintenance of infrastructure
- Reduced suicide/violence/barriers to success

Possible Actions to Achieve Agreed Success Elements

- State recognizes (has an open door to) tribal capabilities and partnerships
 - Explore avenues for revenue-sharing/impact aid
- Fund sensible rural energy and infrastructure innovation programs
- Use Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) and University research to help solve local problems
 - Identify opportunities, economic and other, to improve quality of life
 - Provide incentives for communities to develop adaptation plans
 - Identify funding for adaptation and changes needed in federal regulations.
- Establish State rural priority for subsistence resources
- Support programs to transfer knowledge from elders to youth
 - Implement the new Native language bill
 - State partners with tribal organizations to expand and implement language immersion programs
 - Strengthen families
- Work with local governments to prioritize immediate Arctic infrastructure needs, including re-location and access
 - Assessment of infrastructure vulnerability to climate change
- Improve quality of life
- Start at top with Governor
- Commitment to govt - govt relationships with tribes

Barriers to Further Success

- Funding
- Lack of mechanism through which local issues and needs are communicated to decision-makers in the administration
- Lack of planning, coordinated priorities or process, and Coastal Zone Management coordinated permitting process
- Lack of infrastructure, cost-effective energy alternatives, and transportation to connect communities
- Problems with self-sufficiency plans and education (K-12), as well as issues with communities taking ownership of problems and solutions
- Urban/rural competition for resources and commercial/sport/subsistence competition
- Unclear delineation of responsibilities
- Potential lack of materials/trainers for all languages
- Lack of recognition of tribal authority

- Lack of coordination among cabinet departments and programs
 - Creates challenges with outreach to local people
- Lack of appreciation that resources mostly come from rural Alaska, past hostility to rural/tribes from State

Actions to Address Barriers

- Review megaprojects and establish new priorities for infrastructure and funding (AIDEA, AEA, other)
- Review mental health trust authority – make up and priorities
 - Review certificate of need system
 - Establish leadership from the State to meet rural needs
- Increase rural representation on Boards of Fish and Game
- Pass constitutional amendment establishing rural priority
- Increase oversight and regulation of sport hunting guides
- Outreach by Board of Regents and Association of School Boards to rural communities and educators action
- Implement Native language bill
- Recognize tribal authorities
- Coordinate infrastructure plan with strong local involvement
- Re-institute coordinated permitting process
- Evaluate local borough/State MOA's for permitting
- Develop statewide policy/approach on rural justice and law enforcement commission - to address suicide, violence, barriers
- Governor plays leadership role in education, State policy, and trouble recognition

3) Developing a better understanding of our changing climate, oceans, and environment.

Effective management, sustainability, and responsible development depend on understanding affected environments and how those environments are changing. The changes occurring due to warming and ocean acidification are not limited to only the Arctic—they will affect all Alaskans and all parts of Alaska. While increased attention to the Arctic has brought with it new research, the State can and should play an active role in identifying research and monitoring priorities, ensuring that decisions are based appropriately on science, and coordinating among the various scientific entities. Developing and using a better understanding our oceans and terrestrial ecosystems, including the effects of changing climate and ocean acidification, is key to sustainable choices for the future.

Stakeholders

- Universities
- Research organizations
- Regional non-profits
- NGOs
- Industry
- Tribes
- LTK experts

- Federal agencies
- Communicators
- Educators
- Investors
- US Coast Guard
- Legislators

Success Elements Considered to be Agreeable by Most Alaskans

- Coordination of Arctic science/LTK (Local and Traditional Knowledge) priorities by an entity like the State Committee for Research (SCoR) to help focus investments
- Science sufficiently informs solutions
- Research funding based on merit, objectivity, and Arctic priorities (rather than special-interest agendas)
- Centralized Arctic policy development that draws in all regions
- Expertise is coordinated, including through a sharing center
- Alaska leadership in addressing climate change and ocean acidification

Possible Actions to Achieve Agreed Success Elements

- Either reinvigorate and/or revamp purpose of SCoR or create a new entity—like a State Arctic Research Commission—charged with coordinating research and establishing priorities
 - Begin scoping with stakeholders to develop priorities
 - Identify baseline research and monitoring needs
 - Coordinate with USARC (Arctic Research Commission) and Arctic Council working groups

- Ensure support of decision-makers in identifying research needs and increasing stronger role of science in decision-making
- Centralize data and research results
 - Completed research is shared, including findings, recommendations, and implementing action
 - Create a coordination/sharing center works that functions as a clearing house for research
- Implement recommendations - act on research findings
 - Identify and protect important subsistence and ecological areas
 - Direct agencies to use science, recognize unknowns in decisions
- Ensure that LTK is incorporated and that experts are included in decision-making
- Establish priorities that include prevention, response, and adaptation
 - Priorities include baseline scientific needs, response, mitigation, adaptation, etc.
 - Establish spill response and prevention capacity

Barriers to Further Success

- SCoR may not be appropriate body, and it could become politicized
- Lack of commitment to use science/LTK
 - Lack of support from State and other scientists
 - Lack of will to change the way decisions are made
- Funding
 - Need to articulate and adhere to priorities set by Arctic communities during funding cycles
 - Initial funding need to set up entity and gather information
 - Overwhelming amount of data and number of entities
 - Could be politicized
- Difficulty in ensuring that State makes issue a priority and commits to leadership
 - Lack of education on fundamentals of climate change and ocean acidification
 - Enormous scale of problem
 - Outreach logistics
 - Issue is politicized, and there is the possibility of manipulation of emotions and data
 - Research/scientific capacity—need for State to prioritize having Alaskan scientists study these issues

Actions to Address Barriers

- Determine whether SCoR is appropriate and/or needs to be modified
- Receive specific commitment from the Governor to use science & LTK
- Pursue creative sources of funding/research investment and partnerships (including industry, private-public, NGO)
- Establish formal process to establish Arctic priorities for research, clearly articulate and follow those priorities

- Clarify/focus most pressing scientific questions to inform adaptation to “New Arctic” life
- Pursue/request state seat on SAON (Sustainable Arctic Observing Network)
 - Using existing Alaska Ocean Observing System data portal platform, join networks that exist and inform data inclusion
- Use public media/state communications systems (radio/internet/PSAs/TV/distant learning), to educate Alaskans on climate change and ocean acidification
 - Do not sensationalize science. Do not use politics of fear, but calm leadership, to spread understanding
 - Incentivize ocean/climate/acidification research

4) Improving intergovernmental collaboration, transparency, and participation.

Inclusion of Alaskans’ expertise, experience, and perspective in the decision-making process is critical to ensuring that good decisions are made about our lands, waters, and communities. For example, we need to provide opportunities for affected communities to have a seat at the table when state-wide decisions are made, and we need to ensure that the State’s voice is heard when the federal government makes decisions. Openness, transparency, and an inclusive process are key.

Stakeholders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tribes ● Cities ● Public ● Federal government ● Youth ● Elders ● Other Arctic involved nations |
|--|

Success Elements Considered to be Agreeable by Most Alaskans

- Special adviser to State government on Arctic issues
- Arctic policy and implementation plan adopted by the State and resources allocated to implement it
- Established public process for decisions related to the Arctic
- All Alaskans included in decisions
- Governor and cabinet informed on challenges and opportunities in the Arctic
- Urban/rural divide is eliminated

- Federal funding increases in Alaska
- Government becomes transparent
- Positive relationship with Arctic Council and federal government

Possible Actions to Further Agreed Success Elements

- Appoint special adviser
- Review and prioritization of existing State Arctic policy resources
 - Look back at climate change sub-cabinet working group recommendations
- State priority for federal government to ratify Law of the Sea treaty
- Specifically commit to complying with Alaska constitutional requirement that decisions be made in the public interest with public participation
 - Create mechanism for local control and input like Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) and consider having another entity fund a new AK CZMP
- Create a venue for dissemination of information and feedback from the public
- Administration seeks out/conducts regular briefings from/with a variety of experts on Arctic issues
- Create policy for govt. to govt. relations with tribes
- State presents unified request for federal funding

Barriers to Further Success

- Funding, politics
- Willingness to implement, potential problems in the legislature
- Lack of understanding of the relevant processes
- Lack of good information about importance of meetings, difficult timing (relative urgency, not during fishing/hunting seasons), and difficulty communicating
- Lack of appropriate mechanism, time, dedicated person, staff, and information clearinghouse
- Bad relationships, lawsuits
- Previous administration's closed-door leadership, prevention of face-to-face access to our government, accountability, and agency coordination
- Clarity of roles, exclusionary practices, lack of trust

Actions to Address Barriers

- Revisit funding priorities
- Demonstrate leadership from Governor, including acting on opportunities, supporting board/committee creation, and clarifying jurisdiction
- Use bully pulpit to encourage better engagement, implement new policies, and provide more information
- Provide access to data, create opportunities for the public to be involved, use existing infrastructure for education/outreach/understanding, ensure good scheduling, and make this an immediate priority
- Commit to necessary staff focused on this issue

- Create “Arctic Portal” clearinghouse that includes information from all sources, including Tribes, nonprofits, corporations, and others
- Direct staff on cross-cutting education, culturally relevant curriculum, cultural orientation, and areas unfairly served by law or regulatory priorities
- Maintain open door
- Ensure accountability and accessibility to agencies using existing assets—webinar, tele/video conference
- Review and incorporate effective models and maintain active engagement

5) Implementing planning and holistic management to meet infrastructure needs and adapt to the rapidly changing Arctic.

The Arctic is changing rapidly, and the State needs to plan for the region in a way that ensures the viability of communities, allows for responsible development, and protects our natural resources. This type of stewardship will be most effective if based on a holistic plan rooted in science, an understanding of community needs, and identification of disproportionately important areas. Once a comprehensive vision exists, we can take steps to implement it and base future decisions on the goals and priorities that are identified.

Stakeholders

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislature • Alaska’s Arctic people • Governor • Executive Branch |
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Success Elements Considered to be Agreeable by Most Alaskans

- Adoption of an adaptive, ecosystem-based management strategy
- An administration-led permanent group on Arctic policy issues
- A State Arctic vision and plan for outreach, education, and communications
- Funding for Arctic research and monitoring, including LTK
- Healthy communities/ecosystems
- Maximized benefit of regional projects for regional communities
- Establishment of clear priorities based on science and local input that include addressing immediate community needs like relocation/ stabilization
- Effective testing of spill response technology
- Emphasis on prevention over response
- Prioritized infrastructure plans (all levels)
- Adaptive management for hunting/fishing that more readily meets subsistence needs

- Planning based on acceptance of the realities of climate change and ocean acidification
- Recognized need for “immediate action working group”

Possible Actions to Further Agreed Success Elements

- Adopt an adaptive, ecosystem-based management strategy
- Identify opportunities to implement new strategies
- Appoint a State Arctic Policy Group/Board/Commission
- Develop Arctic vision and plan
- Review and reinvigorate climate change sub-cabinet working group
- Revisit existing plans and documents
- Develop a coordination mechanism for Arctic issues
- Incorporate climate change reality into planning
- Identify targets/messages within State and beyond
- Engage experts, including universities
- Support Arctic Federal Fishery Management Plan and International Arctic fisheries management priorities
- Develop best practices and standards for assessment and development of Arctic infrastructure
- Plan for community relocation in response to climate change
- Study research/monitoring needs in existing info including LTK

Barriers to Further Success

- Resistance of policymakers to make decisions based on science
 - Need for adequate personnel with appropriate expertise
- Funding
 - Support staff
 - Collaborative engagement between fed and state government
- EPA and other federal agency rules/permitting that do not require or allow for adequate testing or demonstration of technologies
- Lack of understanding about science-based choices
- Missing opportunities for diverse stakeholders to reach an agreement on priorities
- Lack of community and ecosystem-level understanding
- Lack of local voice in decision-making
- Politics
- Lack of institutional capacity and funding to act in a proactive manner
- Historical inaction on existing plans

Actions to Address Barriers

- Administrative mandate to make science-based decisions
- Define healthy ecosystems
- Identify important ecosystem and subsistence areas and commit to monitoring
- Funding and training

- Commit to objective science and research
 - Provide funding and adequate staff
- Inclusive approach modeled on transition meeting
- Seek federal funding
 - State agencies combine resources on priority issues
 - Administrative mandate to collaborate with federal agencies
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of communities, address economic profiling,
- Administrative commitment to engaging local communities
- Use science and modeling - State commits to working with local, tribal and federal governments
- Industry contributes funds to objective, transparent, testing
- Ensure that 470 Fund (response and prevention) is fully/adequately funded
- Administrative mandate requiring agencies to prioritize practical planning
- Revise and analyze past plans in build upon them
- Accept that greenhouse gas emissions are causing climate change and ocean acidification
- Review outcomes from previous working groups