

Community Coastal Impact Assistance Program

Coastal Management Plan Update

Award Amount

\$ 57,600

Grantee

Bering Straits Coastal Association

Project Contact

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Location

This project will be located in the Bering Straits Coastal Association (BSCA) region which includes the area of the former Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area (the Norton Bay and Seward Peninsula area of Western Alaska). All 15 communities within the coastal zone of the area serviced by the BSCA will be involved in this project: Brevig Mission, Diomedea, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, St. Michael, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, and White Mountain. The other communities that are not currently occupied or occupied on a seasonal basis may be involved in this project as appropriate: Tin City, Council, King Island, Mary's Igloo, Port Clarence, and Solomon. The project will be managed from Unalakleet which is located at 63.8816 North Latitude and 160.798 West Longitude.

Project Duration

Project Start date: June 2014

Project End Date: January 2016

Project Duration: 1.5 years

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to complete a coastal management plan for the BSCA. The region had been revising its coastal management plan since 2004, and a plan was in the final stages of approval when the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) terminated in July 2011. Although the ACMP is no longer in effect, the new coastal management plan will be used for a number of purposes:

- It will provide information to communities in the BSCA region that will assist them in protecting coastal resources and uses,
- It will guide sustainable development decisions by these communities,
- It will be used for development of comments by the BSCA and communities regarding state and federal plans and permits, and
- It will be used by state and federal resource agencies when developing plans and agency actions for this region.

Although not enforceable, this plan will help fill the gaps in coastal management for this region and provide an avenue for local input into coastal decisions now that the ACMP has terminated.

The BSCA board has determined that subsistence use is the most important coastal use to the residents of the region. Subsistence provides a nutritious food source, a bond among community residents and a key to cultural identity. The high cost of food and the lack of employment opportunities make subsistence a necessity for many families in the BSCA's 15 rural villages. Subsistence foods are often shared among people in the region and with people in other regions of the state. Of equal importance, subsistence is an integral part of the Iñupiat and Yupik cultures of the people of this region.

During recent years, environmental change and increased interest in Alaska's northern areas provide new threats to coastal resources and uses. Climate change is affecting the BSCA region through increased storm activity, increased flooding and erosion, later freeze up, ocean acidification, drying tundra, and changes in the distribution and numbers of fish, wildlife and plants. Regarding human influences, there is an increased interest in mining, oil and gas activities, large-scale commercial fishing, tourism, and shipping. As an example of increased man-induced threats, in 2010, the number of vessels traveling through the Bering Strait nearly doubled over the previous year, and the Arctic Council has found that accidental or intentional releases of oil pose the most significant impacts from increased Arctic shipping. Effects from climate change and increased human activities pose new threats to sensitive coastal uses and resources. A new coastal plan will help reduce potential impacts by identifying sensitive uses and resources and appropriate measures to mitigate impacts.

The following work will be done to update the September 2006 draft Coastal Management Plan for the former Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area.

- Chapter 1 – Introduction: Update this chapter to reflect current status of the ACMP and BSCA and the public participation process for the current plan revision.
- Chapter 2 – Issues, Goals and Objectives: Update this chapter to incorporate current concerns and interests as directed by the BSCA.
- Chapter 3 – Coastal Boundary: Update this chapter to describe the BSCA region and history of the ACMP boundaries.
- Chapter 4 – Policies: Revise the previous enforceable policies to make them advisory in nature and to reflect current concerns and interests of the BSCA. While the policies will not be enforceable, they will provide guidance to local, state and federal agencies and project proponents.
- Chapter 5 – Implementation: Update this chapter to reflect how the BSCA will implement the new plan now that the ACMP has been terminated. Include information about how the BSCA, its communities and its tribes wish to be consulted during agency planning and permitting. Include principles for conducting research and development projects in the BSCA region. Identify principles for incorporation of local and traditional knowledge into research and project review.
- Chapter 6 – Resource Inventory and Analysis: Update information in this chapter to reflect recent studies for all coastal resources and uses addressed in this chapter. The

subsistence update will include information from recent studies, including the companion CIAP project, a mapping project by the Bering Sea Elders Association, and recent subsistence studies by Kawerak, Inc., the regional Native nonprofit. The section on commercial fishing should include information about potential impacts from expansion of bottom trawling.

- Chapter 7 -- Area Designations: Update this chapter to remove proposed designations that were designed to respond to requirements in the 2004 ACMP regulations. Identify important ecological areas designated or identified by state and federal agencies (e.g., Alaska Department of Fish and Game Most Environmentally Sensitive Area maps and the Environmentally Sensitive Index maps prepared by NOAA, etc.), and important areas included in the 1984 Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area Coastal Management Plan.
- New Maps: Prepare new GIS maps for the following resources and uses: Linguistic (cultural) boundaries, reindeer grazing areas, natural hazards, geologic resources, coastal habitats, fish and shellfish, marine mammals, land mammals, commercial fishing districts, and landownership. The maps in the 1984 Resource Inventory of the Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area (Volume 1 of the Coastal Management Plan) will be used as a starting point for preparing new maps. Since these maps are not in electronic format, a GIS specialist will develop new maps using information from the 1984 maps and any other maps produced since then by state or federal agencies.

The BSCA Program Director will be an active participant in the project, and this position will manage project contractors. A request for proposals will be issued for one or more contractors to revise the plan and produce GIS maps.

Measurable Goals and Objectives

Year 1:

- Complete RFP, select consultant(s) and approve contract(s)
- Conduct scoping meeting
- Complete a literature search and data gap analysis
- Prepare an estimated 44 draft subsistence use maps depicting specific defined areas for different types of subsistence uses at a scale of 1:250,000
- Develop draft maps for linguistic (cultural) boundaries, reindeer grazing areas, natural hazards, geologic resources, coastal habitats, fish and shellfish, marine mammals, land mammals, commercial fishing districts, and landownership.
- Develop a draft plan for internal BSCA review
- Develop and distribute a Public Review Draft
- Hold a public meeting on the Public Review Draft and establish a comment period

Year 2:

- Prepare draft Final Plan for review and comment by BSCA board
- Prepare and distribute a Final Coastal Management Plan with final maps

- Produce 50 hard copies and 10 electronic copies of the Final Coastal Management Plan

CIAP Authorized Use

This project is consistent with Authorized Use #1 – Conservation, protection or restoration of coastal areas, including wetlands. The project is consistent with this authorized use because it will increase efforts to conserve, protect and restore the natural coastal environment.

This project will directly benefit the natural coastal environment in a number of ways. The plan will identify sensitive areas, important ecological areas, and uses important to local residents, including subsistence uses. In addition to identification of these areas, the plan will identify measures to avoid or mitigate impacts to important coastal uses and resources. The maps and information in the resource inventory and analysis will fill information gaps, provide state and federal permitting agencies with up-to-date information, and help ensure that informed decisions are made. The policies will provide guidance for use of best practices to minimize impacts to local residents and the coastal environment. Information in the plan will provide developers and local, state and federal agencies with information that will lead to direct benefits to the natural coastal environment. In addition, the plan will enhance the ability of the BSCA to provide relevant comments during agency permit reviews.