

Community Coastal Impact Assistance Program

Improving Community Capacity to Protect Coastal Areas

Award Amount

\$ 236,776.39

Grantee

Bering Straits Coastal Association

Project Contact

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Location

This project involves each of the 15 year-round communities within the region the Bering Straits Coastal Association serves: Brevig Mission, Diomede, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, St. Michael, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, and White Mountain. Other communities that are not currently occupied or occupied on a seasonal basis include: 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: November 1, 2012
Project End Date: October 31, 2015
Project Duration: This is a 3-year project

Project Description

The purpose of this project is to improve community capacity and information available to benefit the natural coastal environment through each of the 3 project components: Community capacity building, creating community inventories and developing a handbook. This project will serve as a predecessor to the CIAP funded BSCRSA T1-01 Coastal Management Plan Update project (F12AF01008). By training the BSCA board and area residents to more effectively participate in agency permitting processes and local decisions, and by developing a handbook which provides guidance on how to solicit local and traditional knowledge, identify regional environmental issues, and increase awareness of how development can impact coastal areas, the BSCA board and residents will be better prepared to participate in the BSCRSA T1-01 Coastal Management Plan Update project.

At the outset of the project, the BSCA Program Director will contact each of the 15 incorporated communities to solicit interest in the project and obtain written letters of agreement. Each participating community will assign a local project contact. The BSCA will arrange and cover travel and per diem for each participating community to ensure the community has adequate

resources to participate effectively in the project. The Program Director and consultant will visit each participating community at the outset of the project to meet with the municipality, tribe and local Native corporation.

Personnel: The BSCA will issue a request for proposals from qualified consultants to assist the Program Director in meeting the project's goals and objectives. The Program Director will actively participate in the project and manage the contract as directed by the BSCA board.

Project Components:

1. Capacity Building:

A major premise of this project is that people who live closest to a coastal area are best suited to know how to protect it. Increased community capacity will improve the ability of local governments to protect the coastal environment through local ordinances and when proposing conditions for state and federal permits. The following bullets describe how the project will provide BSCA residents with increased capacity to participate more effectively in agency permitting processes and local decisions that affect the coastal environment.

- **Training** – Prepare training materials and complete training sessions for community leaders about local actions they can take (e.g., ordinances or local projects) and their opportunities for participation in state and federal decision-making. (Year 1)
- **Mining Workshop** – A 2-day workshop will be held in Unalakleet with potentially affected communities, tribes, and Native corporations and nonprofit organizations. State and federal agencies and nonprofits with mining expertise will be invited to participate in workshop presentations, panels and group discussions. The consultant will prepare workshop notebooks with background about mineralized areas, current exploration and development projects, coastal impacts, agency permitting, and opportunities for local involvement. The consultant will interview workshop participants after the workshop to develop a list of potential mitigation measures and recommended actions communities and the BSCA can take to improve protections for the coastal environment. (Year 2)

2. Community Inventories:

The consultant will prepare detailed inventories of important resource areas and sensitive areas that merit special consideration. These inventories will serve three important purposes. First, they will provide baseline information for each community that can be used to evaluate future changes. Second, the inventories will provide a single source for information about important coastal areas that need special protection. Third, they will identify special practices and permit conditions that will protect these areas.

The community inventories will provide valuable information for planning, especially for the T1-01 Coastal Management Plan update. The community inventories inform but do not duplicate the efforts of the Coastal Management Plan update. Where the community inventories will provide new community data that will inform community and regional planning in general in the Bering straits region, the Resource Inventory and Analysis effort of Coastal Management Plan update seeks to compile information from existing studies and is very specific to coastal resources.

The methodology for preparing the inventories includes research, meetings with community leaders and public meetings. The community inventories will include the following information.

- **Issue Identification** – Identify flooding and erosion risks, invasive species, changes to distribution and numbers of species, and impacts from development. (Years 1-2)
- **Infrastructure** – Describe community infrastructure that may adversely affect coastal resources (e.g., landfill, sewer systems and contaminated sites). (Years 1-2)
- **Important Areas** - Identify areas important to communities including areas sensitive to development, productive and sensitive habitats, and cultural areas. (Years 1-2).
- **Actions that Protect Coastal Environments** - Identify actions community residents can take to protect coastal resources and uses. (Years 1-3)
- **Reports** – Compile a list of reports, plans and other documents that address land use, coastal resources, and coastal uses for each community. (Years 1-2)

3. Handbook:

A workgroup will be convened to provide direction for development of a handbook for use by state and federal agencies, researchers, organizations, and developers who work with communities in the BSCA. The purpose of the handbook is to provide practical information about how to obtain local and traditional knowledge and how to conduct activities to help prevent or reduce coastal impacts to areas important for access, recreation, subsistence, cultural practices, commercial fishing, and habitats. This handbook will provide a starting point for communities that wish to develop village-specific protocols for working with municipal or tribal governments.

Measurable Goals and Objectives

The goal of the this project is to increase the capacity of the BSCA communities to participate effectively in agency permitting processes and local decisions that affect the coastal environment This will be achieved by

- Visiting 15 communities to engage municipality, tribe and local Native Corporations;
- Establishing local contact in interested communities and commitment to participate in the program;
- Providing training for community leaders ;
- Conducting a mining Workshop;
- Developing community Inventories that identify important resource areas and sensitive areas that merit special consideration in each of the 15 communities; and
- Developing a Handbook that contains practical information about how to obtain local and traditional knowledge and how to conduct activities to help prevent or reduce coastal impacts.

A final report will be prepared summarizing how the project objectives were met and lessons learned.

CIAP Authorized Use

This project is consistent with Authorized Use #1 – Projects and activities for the conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas, including wetlands. During recent years, the Bering Straits area has experienced growing pressures on the coastal environment as a result of increased natural hazards and resource use activities. As a result of later freeze up of marine waters, coastal areas are subject to increased damage from fall storms, flooding, erosion, and ocean acidification. Three of the 6 Alaska communities most vulnerable to climate change are located in the area represented by the BSCA. During the past few years, there has been an increase in proposals for offshore and onshore mining exploration and development projects, marine-based tourism, airport expansions, port expansions, community expansions, and new local roads. In addition, a 2010 state-funded study examined the possibility of a 500-mile road connecting Nome to the Alaska road system. The purpose of the proposed road is to spur new development projects.

The three components of this project, community capacity building, community inventories and a handbook, will benefit coastal areas.

Capacity building will benefit the coastal environment because communities and the Program Director will have increased skills and information to participate more effectively in permitting processes. City governments will also have more information to develop local controls to benefit coastal areas such as local ordinances. The people who live closest to an area have the best information about its coastal values, and improving their capacity will have a direct benefit to coastal areas and resources through development of local ordinances and adoption of local recommendations by state and federal agencies.

The community inventories will improve information available for local, state and federal decision-making. The inventories will identify areas that need special consideration because of their sensitivity or high cultural, subsistence, habitat, or wetland values. In addition, the inventories will identify effective permit conditions and local actions that can be taken to protect coastal areas. The inventories will provide a baseline assessment of coastal conditions in the communities that can be used in the future to monitor impacts from development.

The handbook will also provide information that will lead to improved decision making for coastal areas. It will provide information on how to solicit local and traditional knowledge, identify regional environmental issues, and increase awareness of how development can impact coastal areas. State and federal agencies and applicants using the handbook will become more attuned to potential impacts to coastal uses and areas important to BSCA residents. Applicants can then design their projects and mitigation measures to prevent or reduce impacts. Agencies have the ability to develop permit stipulations that will prevent or reduce coastal impacts. The handbook will also assist scientists doing research in the Bering Straits area by informing them of potential impacts of their work, which will allow them to design research projects to prevent or reduce impacts.

This project will help to ensure responsible management of coastal resources and uses. The

BSCA represents the communities located in what is known as the “unorganized borough” where there is no regional government. It is important that the BSCA and its communities have effective capacity and information to participate in efforts to protect the natural coastal environment. Like many rural Alaska villages, communities in the BSCA face many challenges related to reducing local environmental impacts. The lack of resources, training and funds often results in local impacts that could be avoided.