

Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities

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Community Engagement Protocol

Submitted to

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEWC	Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission
ANMB	Alaska Native Management Board
ASI	Arctic Social Indicators
BOEM	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
ICAS	Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope
NSB	North Slope Borough
NSMB	North Slope Management Board
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
SLiCA	Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic
SRB&A	Stephen R. Braund & Associates

INTRODUCTION

This document details plans for engaging North Slope communities in the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) study entitled “Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities.” Stephen R. Braund & Associates (SRB&A) has been contracted to design and implement a social indicators system based on a household survey and existing data in six Arctic communities: Barrow, Nuiqsut, Wainwright, Point Hope, Point Lay, and Kaktovik. A successful social indicator system is based on measures that are seen as important and valid by North Slope residents. Achieving such measures depends on the engagement of North Slope communities in the design and implementation of the study, hereafter referred to as the North Slope Social Indicator Study.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS DESCRIBED IN THE RESEARCH PLAN

A model for the involvement of local residents is the Alaska Native Management Board (ANMB) in the Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA) study (Kruse et al., 2009). Prior to starting SLiCA in Alaska, the research team invited representatives of the three Iñupiat settlement regions to form an oversight board, the ANMB. Over the course of the study, the ANMB reviewed and gave final approval (prior to Institutional Review Board approval) for research design and questionnaire protocols, reviewed preliminary tabulations, and reviewed pre-publication articles. The arrangement explicitly transferred decision making authorities from the researchers to the ANMB (applied to this project, ANMB decisions would be prior to decisions made by BOEM and OMB). There were explicit guidelines to handle cases of disagreement between the researchers and the ANMB on the content of publications. Members of the ANMB became active participants in the research design in SLiCA and worked with the research team on difficult decisions on how to balance concerns about the sensitivity of certain questions with study objectives. The ANMB was an integral part of the study team.

To meet the challenge of producing social indicators that are viewed as relevant and reliable by region residents the study team invited Taqulik Hepa, Director of the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, to chair the North Slope Management Board (NSMB). Ms. Hepa invited representatives from each of the six study communities as well as a representative from the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC). The team will use the ANMB model as a starting point for designing the role of the NSMB. BOEM and OMB approvals would be based on protocols approved by the NSMB.

The NSMB will be involved in all phases of the study as described below. SLiCA’s approach to community engagement is based on the recognition that researchers bring to the project funding and technical expertise. These resources create an unequal power relationship. By explicitly establishing a community-based decision authority in the project the power relationship is more equal. Applying this approach in SLiCA resulted in a strong community engagement and improvement in the study design and implementation (Kruse et al., 2009).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NORTH SLOPE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Ms. Hepa met with the research team in Anchorage on February 9, 2012 to plan for the establishment of the NSMB and a meeting of the NSMB in Barrow to decide on the set of social indicators to be submitted to BOEM. Ms. Hepa provided recommendations for potential NSMB members in each of the study communities and agreed to contact these individuals and invite them to join the NSMB. The first NSMB meeting was scheduled for April 4-5, 2012. Representatives from the communities of Point Lay, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Wainwright, and Point Hope agreed to participate. Last minute difficulties prevented the representatives from Wainwright and Point Hope from coming to Barrow. The Executive Director of the AEWG also participated. The NSMB reviewed the process followed by the research team to come up with a recommended set of indicators. The Board then reviewed the questionnaire, making several changes, additions, and deletions. A summary of the NSMB meeting is now out for review by NSMB members. The revised questionnaire is available on the project website (see below). Note that the questionnaire is also out for review by the NSMB to ensure that all changes adopted in the NSMB meeting have been made.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROJECT WEBSITE

A second component of the community engagement protocol is a study website: <http://www.arctichost.net/NSSI/> . The experience of SLiCA demonstrated the value of a website to community engagement (see www.arcticlivingconditions.org). The timing of when interest in the study arises is unpredictable. The website provides answers on a timeframe suited to the individual resident. Key to the effectiveness of a website is that its content is updated on a near-real-time basis. We therefore have designed and constructed a simple website that is easy for the research team to add content without depending on website specialists.

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

The research team recognizes the need to balance direct community involvement with the burden that such involvement poses to the community. Special public meetings and even appearances at city or tribal council meetings are a burden to the community as well as a means of engaging the community in the study. The team will look to members of the NSMB for advice on the most appropriate balance. At a minimum, the team will send letters to the city council, tribal council, and village corporation as well as regional organizations with an invitation to contact the study team and to learn more about the study through the project website. There will also be opportunities for team members to apprise communities about the study in conjunction with community visits made in connection with other, ongoing studies. Special community visits prior to the field phase will be made in response to community requests.

REFERENCES

Kruse, J., B. Poppel, L. Abryutina, G. Duhaime, S. Martin, M. Poppel, M. Kruse, E. Ward, P. Cochran and V. Hanna. 2009. Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA) in Barometers of Quality of Life Around the Globe. Møller, V., D. Huschka, and A.C. Michalos (eds.). Social Indicators Research Series, Vol. 33: 107-134. Springer: Dordrecht.