

Alaska Planning Journal

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President's Message

John McPherson,
President APA Alaska

Is February too late to make New Year's resolutions? Despite already being February, it is still a relatively new year, with new possibilities. Resolutions, after all, are really just goals, not unlike the goals of our Alaska APA Chapter (**Yes, Alaska APA does have goals!**). I personally believe it is never too late to begin planning to make the future better than the past. With that mind, I want to remind members of our goals, with the intent of making them New Year's Resolutions for our organization.

The goals of our organization are:

- To **promote increased knowledge** of planning techniques and experience;
- To **foster intercommunication** among the various planning disciplines;
- To serve as a **public forum** for planning issues of general interest;
- To foster **standards of conduct** among those practicing planning;
- To facilitate **public education** and information about planning and to foster **citizen involvement**;
- To promote and facilitate rural/urban **interregional communication**; and
- To promote social, economic, and racial **equity** in planning practice.

As a means of implementing these goals, the Board has written a **strategic plan**. That plan is now online for all members to read and hopefully inspire your participation to making these goals a reality. Check out the plan at www.alaskaplanning.org.

Another major component of our approach this year to beginning to meet these goals of increasing planning knowledge, fostering communication, and sharing expertise and ideas is further development of the chapter website. If you **check the website out**, you will see a page called "Resources." Under that page is an outline of an ambitious site that we hope will become one of the first places any of us will check for planning-related information in Alaska. However, **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** If you have expertise in any of these areas and would like to provide content to flesh out the website, please contact me or webmaster **Laurie Cummings**. You can find our contact information on the website.

In closing, take a look at the goals of the Chapter and see if you can't turn some of those into professional resolutions as you go about your planning day. If you do, I know we can make the future better than the past.



In this issue:

President's Message	1
Regional Reports	
Northern	2
Southeast	3
Central	
Focus on Palmer	4
Whittier Teamwork	4
Planners' Resources	2
APA Membership	
AK Chapter member passes AICP	5
Website gets a new look	5
Membership info	5
AK Chapter officers	5
In Other News	
National Conference	6
Western Planner Conf.	6
Planners on the move	6
Rural CAP - Diomed	7
Buffalo Commons	9
Planning Commission	10
Hazard Planning	10
Legislative Info	11
Sponsor ads	11



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Regional Reports

Northern

Greetings from the top of the world and a very Happy New Year! Often life in the Arctic slows down a bit during the winter, after the sun goes down on November 18, not to rise for over two months, on January 23.

But not this winter. According to our correspondent **Doreen Lampe** in the North Slope Borough Planning Department, January 31 to February 2, there was another Arctic Economic Development Summit in Barrow. This is an ongoing project and process between the North Slope Borough and the Northwest Arctic Borough.

That was immediately followed February 3-5 by the **Kivgiq 2005**, or Messenger Feast, a traditional celebration in the past, re-introduced in the mid-1980s, as a way to help pick up people's spirits and preserve traditional dances, stories and songs.

Back around the beginning of the twentieth century, people on the North Slope celebrated good subsistence hunting seasons by sending out messengers to invite other communities to come and share in the good harvest with dancing and gift giving. Then the messenger feast died out, until it was revived by the North Slope Borough and Mayor **George Ahmaogak**.

In March, the **Alaska Library Association (AkLA)** will hold its annual meeting in Barrow, attracting some 200 librarians, mostly from Alaska. These include librarians from public libraries, schools, and organizations like hospitals, courts and businesses. According to **David Ongley**, director of the Tuzzy Library in Barrow, "speakers will include some Alaskan authors and some nationally recognized library researchers and authorities from different parts of the United States."

After decades during which Barrow residents always had to fly out of town to attend business and professional conferences, recently a number of groups have held larger get-togethers in this farthest north location. In addition to librarians, these include public utility officials and officials from the Alaska Municipal League. A more specialized scientific meeting included over two dozen scientists working on possible life on Jupiter's moon Europa. They met in Barrow because it is thought the offshore ice here may somewhat resemble the ice covering a liquid ocean on Europa.



Northern APA representative Earl Finkler by Browsers, with Nuna

Meanwhile, Doreen added information on a few other planning developments in the North Slope Borough, including a cutback in meetings of the **Barrow Zoning Commission** because of budget constraints. She said the Commission will now meet every other month, instead of every month.

Doreen is the platting administrator for the planning department, and she said she has been busy on some proposed large developments for Barrow. "I did get a subdivision application for the **Barrow Global Climate Change Research Facility** site – about 13 acres," she said, but added that the application was deemed incomplete and sent back to the applicant.

She also reported some preliminary discussions on a **new hospital** in Barrow on a site of some 20 acres. "But no subdivision applications at this time," she added.

Finally, we all enjoyed the return of the sun to Barrow on January 23, and the two-mile "Run to the Sun," where local runners, walkers and bikers get together to celebrate the big event.

Once the sun returns, the days quickly get longer, until on May 10 it rises up and stays up 24 hours a day through most of the summer. So we go from several months of no sun to several months of nothing but sun above the horizon. That's why the arctic is such an exciting place to live!



The sun's return



"Kivgiq, the Messenger Feast, helps to preserve traditions and lifts people's spirits."

Planner's Resources

By Toni Jones, Planning Commissioner Representative

A treasury of information regarding communities throughout the State of Alaska can be found through the swift click of your computer's mouse. The resource I am referring to can be found through the State of Alaska, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development website. Information is available for most Alaska communities through the "community database online".

This database can be found at the following website:
(http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_COMDB.htm).

You can choose either community information summaries, which contain a standard one page report for the community you select, or you can choose reports that contain detailed community information. In addition, you can design custom data queries selecting specific types of information for one or more communities at the same time. If you haven't had an opportunity to check out this helpful resource, I would encourage you to do so. It's a great way to get acquainted with communities throughout our great state.

Regional Reports

Southeast - Tuning in to the Legislature



Barbara Sheinberg,
AICP, Southeast
Region Vice President

The 24th session of the **Alaska Legislature** (Jan 10-May 10, 2005) is well underway here in Juneau. There are two easy ways that planners across the state can monitor issues that might be affecting your community or are planning-related.

One option is to watch 'Gavel to Gavel' on TV or the internet.

- To find out what TV station to tune in in your town, go to:

www.ktoo.org/gavel/cable.cfm

- The list of what is being broadcast (and when) is updated every day. You can find it at: www.ktoo.org/gavel/schedule.cfm

- To watch online (works best if you have high speed internet access) go to: www.ktoo.org/gavel/stream.cfm

Another way is to connect with the **Alaska Municipal League**, whose mission is to, "Represent the unified voice of Alaska's local governments to successfully influence state and federal decision making." www.akml.org They devote considerable resources to monitoring the Alaska Legislature on behalf of communities.

AML has five **Legislative Subcommittees** tracking relevant legislation and issues on: (1) Revenue & Finance; (2) Education; (3) Land Use, Resource & Economic Development; (4) Local Government & Public Services; and (5) Public Works & Infrastructure.

If your community or organization is a member of AML, you can sign up to get action alerts on specific issues or legislation. Whether you are a member or not, if you want to **stay informed** about pending legislation on one of these topics, from the AML home page you:

1. Click "AML Legislative Advocacy Site"
2. Scroll down the page and in the box, click "View" for 'Issues and Legislation.'
3. Now, click on "Current Legislation" You will now see a list of bills in play, sorted by the five topics above.
4. To find out more about a bill, click on the bill to get a brief description of it.
5. For more information, click on "Click here for complete bill" to see read it completely and see what committee it is in.

6. Finally, to find out when a bill you are interested in is scheduled for its next hearing....scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Return to Basis Main Menu (24 Legislature)" (you can get to this link from other places too). At this point, on the right side of the page, click the 3rd 'button' up from the bottom, "Committee Meeting and Public Hearing Schedules." Now you can query by the bill number (i.e. HB 130) or by a date range (i.e., 020905 to 022805 - to see all month)

And speaking of the Legislature, is a new home in the works?

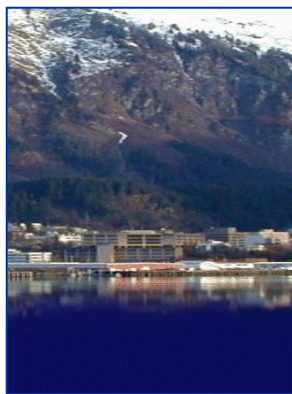
Alaska's **Capital Building Design Competition** - For the past 3 months, the international architectural community has been abuzz with possibility: Alaska—the 49th state, the last frontier, the last state without a building designed to serve as a capitol—is embarking on a project to design and build a capitol in time for its 50th birthday. The design competition for an Alaska Capitol is now in its final stages. Four teams remain.

With aspirations as high as the mountains and optimism to match, the four design teams are working to help Alaskans create a capitol building that represents democracy in our state at this time in history. Nobody yet knows what a 21st century state capitol looks like and we're all about to find out.

The four teams will submit a design concept by February 16th, designs will then be posted on the competition website www.alaskacapitol.org/overview.php and the concept boards will be displayed in several Alaska cities between February 18th and February 25th. The jury will select the winning design team by March 2nd. Stay Tuned.

Visit the four finalists page for slideshows of the work of the four lead designers.

www.alaskacapitol.org/finalists.php



Alaska's New Capitol: A Symbol of Democracy

Alaska's new Capitol will be prominent, enduring, memorable, and dignified. It will convey democratic values, instilling in all Alaskans a sense of civic pride and inspiring confidence and respect for the democratic institutions housed within. It will be designed for the ages: a lasting cultural achievement, at once ceremonial, accessible, and functional.

Source: www.alaskacapitol.org



Alaska State Capitol Building

Regional Reports

Central Focus on Palmer

Submitted by Suzanne Taylor, Editor

Planner, ASCG Incorporated



Palmer lies in the scenic Matanuska Valley

"It was a terrific project for us. It gives us a chance to see how the things we've been learning apply in a real world setting."

- Eric Knoll, doctoral planning student and team coordinator



"Palmer, Alaska at its Best"

Palmer, Alaska became one giant school project for nine days last September. In a fantastic collaboration between the City of Palmer, the University of Washington, and the Northwest Center for Livable Communities, 20 students and 5 professors descended on Palmer for an "Advanced Studio Project" in the real world.

The team's had two objectives:

- To study methods to maintain and enhance the character of Palmer – especially the downtown core area.
- To guide future area-wide growth.

Ten minutes before their kick-off public meeting, the room was empty. Sara Jansen, Palmer Community Development Coordinator, felt a sinking feeling. "Who wants to be in a meeting on a beautiful Saturday morning?" But soon the room was filled. Over 70 community members attended; and those who did were caught up in the excitement.

"The community was jazzed. There was this really great synergy," Jansen said.

Residents were encouraged to draw their vision for Palmer's future in addition to getting ample opportunities to express their opinions. Focus groups were also utilized.

Jansen reported that the students were housed in various homes in Palmer. But their hosts seldom saw them. No, the students weren't out painting Palmer red – they were working! The students, equally split between planners and landscape architects, impressed the community with their work ethic and their dedication.

At first a bit skeptical about the value of landscape architecture to the project, Jansen said that she was soon thrilled with the visual expression of the Palmer's possibilities that they provided.

"Our community is excited. They really got involved with the project and we hope to carry that momentum on into the Comprehensive Plan Update," Jansen said.

Public involvement was a major element of the project and resulted in a strong foundation of trust and rapport with city staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council, and the community of Palmer. The team's final report will include recommendations that will help to shape the look of the community in the future.

Whittier planning - a team effort

Submitted by Suzanne Taylor, Editor

Planner, ASCG Incorporated



A great turn-out at the February 2004 visioning meeting



Annual tunnel walk brings visitors to Whittier.

"Our vision for Whittier includes preserving our unspoiled environment, while improving amenities for all those who live and visit here.

We see a Whittier with full-time access and ample, first-rate facilities to attract visitors and improve the quality of life for residents of all ages. We see a beautiful, clean Whittier with a self-sufficient economy and opportunity for local ownership of land, homes, and businesses."

*- Whittier vision statement
February 2004*

The new century brought big changes to the community of Whittier. Before that time, the only access to the community was via railroad or boat. Then in June 2000, after an extensive renovation project, the railroad tunnel was opened to vehicular traffic. More visitors came to Whittier and the demand for moorage in Whittier's small boat harbor increased. Various developers looked at Whittier with an eye toward investment.

The citizens of Whittier wanted to be sure that their ideas and concerns were taken into account as the inevitable changes came to their community. The city's Comprehensive Plan was last revised in 1995; so the first step was to update their plan. The Whittier Planning and Zoning Commission began by revising the first three chapters on their own. Then they decided to hire planners from ASCG Incorporated to work with them on the task.

A Planning Taskforce was formed to bring together the many varied groups with a stake in Whittier. These included representatives from the City, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Alaska Railroad Corporation, Chugach Alaska Corporation, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Chugach Electric Association, ASCG, USDA Rural Development, the US Forest Service, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, CRW Engineering – who were working on Whittier's Water System Master Plan, and the offices of State Representative Mike Hawker, and US Congressman Don Young. This team met regularly to advise and assist in the planning process and were critical to the creation of a document that would address all areas of Whittier's future development.

At the first public meeting, more than 120 individuals gathered to talk about their vision for Whittier's future. Whittier anticipates continuing change and development, but they recognize the value of their beautiful setting on Prince William Sound. It is a delicate thing to balance industrial use, residential needs, and a growing tourism industry. Through careful planning and extensive public involvement, Whittier is meeting that challenge.

APA Membership

Alaska Chapter member passes AICP exam

Submitted by Suzanne Taylor, Editor

Planner, ASCG Incorporated

Congratulations are in order for another Alaska planner, Else Madsen Goltz, who was recently certified as a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

The American Institute of Certified Planners is the professional institute within the American Planning Association that certifies practicing planners and promotes continuing education and professional development. Certification requires specific education and experience plus passing a rigid examination in planning.

Else, a Planner with ASCG Incorporated in Anchorage has broad planning experience in Alaska, including sanitation, aviation and transportation plans. Else brings project management, research, document drafting and public involvement experience to each project. She is very experienced in developing public interest in community infrastructure projects, with a focus on assisting government agencies with public affairs and communications on special projects. Else coordinates open houses and focus groups for projects in rural Alaska, and has developed numerous public involvement plans. She has worked effectively on community planning projects in cross-cultural environments and is able to maximize public involvement efforts on a variety of projects.

Else earned a bachelors degree in political science from Saint Olaf College in 1993 and a masters in public administration from the University of Washington in 1997. Else has been a key member of ASCG's planning department for seven years. Prior to that, she worked for Pacific Rim Resources in Seattle. Else's career has recently taken a hiatus with the birth of her second son.

The AICP exam is offered in November and May of each year. If you are interested in taking the exam, contact the American Institute of Certified Planners by phone at (202) 872-0611, by email at www.planning.org/certification AICP web site at www.planning.org. You can also contact Alaska Planners Board member Angela Chambers at angechm@yahoo.com for more information or help with your test prep.



Else Madsen Goltz, Planner, ASCG Inc.

APA Alaska Chapter website gets a new look



By Laurie Cummings, Alaska Planning webmaster

Planner, HDR Alaska

The Alaska Chapter's website (<http://www.alaskaplanning.org>) has a new look. It has been reorganized to accommodate new sections to make the website a more valuable source of information about planning in Alaska.

To continue to improve the website, however, we need your help. How can you help? It's easy. You can volunteer to write a description about a type of plan, tell us about links to other websites you think are useful, let us know about upcoming events and training sessions, etc. You don't need to know about web page development. All you have to do is email the information to laurie.cummings@hdrinc.com

One new addition to the website is a job openings page. This page provides employers the opportunity to advertise planning jobs in Alaska. To have a job listed on this page, please put the job description in the body of an email (no attachments please) and send to laurie.cummings@hdrinc.com. The job will be posted for one month.

Alaska Planning Association Officers

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Wells Williams

second seat open

Membership Information

Your local chapter relies on the latest information that the American Planning Association has to provide you with this newsletter and other pertinent information from the Chapter. Please take a moment to ensure your membership information is up to date by logging on to

<https://www.planning.org/myprofile/>.

If you are not currently a member of APA and are interested in joining, or have other questions about APA departments and services, you can find general links and information at

<https://www.planning.org/apadepts/email.htm>, or contact APA at:

American Planning Association
122 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60603
Phone: 312-431-9100
Fax: 312-431-9985

In other news

Mark your calendars:

National Conference: California Dreamin'

By Angela Chambers,
Planner, Municipality
of Anchorage

2005 National Planning Conference
The 2005 American Planning Association's National Planning Conference will be held on March 19-23, 2005 in San Francisco. According to APA, more than 5,200 planners and their colleagues attended the 2004 conference in Washington, D.C. Expect housing to go fast for this conference, so make you plans today! It is not too late to register for both the conference and housing on-line, at www.planning.org/2005conference/. The preliminary program is now on-line at www.planning.org. Some of the primary focus items are New Urbanism, which has its own track this year, as well as Safe Growth, Planning for the Food System, Alliances for Regional Planning as well as Planning and Public Health. There are also additional research sessions regarding transportation and housing research. There will also be a continuing commitment to diversity with a Diversity Summit, which follows up on last year's Minority Summit. The purpose of the session is to discuss how APA promotes inclusion, according to the APA web site. The conference sessions will be held at Moscone West, and the San Francisco Marriot and Moscone West will hold most receptions. The AICP Continuing Professional Development credits will be awarded to AICP members, so be sure to fill out the logs that are included in the registration bag for drop off at the conference. There will again be tours and mobile workshops available. Be advised that these tours and mobile workshops go fast, so make your arrangements now!



Angela's dog, Sammie, is ready to go along



The Moscone Center, San Francisco

It Will Be Great...

The 2005 Western Planner Conference

By Wells Williams,
Western Planner Rep.,
Sitka, Alaska

This summer's 2005 Western Planner Conference will be held in beautiful Midway, Utah. Alaskan planners are strongly encouraged to try to make the trip. The conference will be held on August 3rd through the 5th. The Utah APA Chapter is the host organization and session planning is in full swing.



Midway, Utah

Midway, Utah is located just up the mountain from Salt Lake City. Its about 15 miles from the famed Park City resort. The high desert offers a number of summer recreational activities. These activities are even attractive to Alaskans who have unparalleled outdoor opportunities. The Western Planning Resources, Inc. winter board meeting, as is our custom, was held at the conference site last month. The Homestead Resort is a large restored complex that is a mixture of small farm houses and low profile buildings containing guestrooms. Its claim to fame is a very large hot springs that resembles a small pound inside of large hill. The water is said to be sixty feet deep in the cavern that contains a floating dock. The conference is worth attending just to see this underground facility.



Neff's Canyon,
Wasatch National
Forest

A golf course is on the resort grounds and the Wasatch National Forest is nearby. I had the chance to ski on the Soldiers Hollow cross country ski trails that were used during the Salt Lake Winter Olympic competitors during the brief trip in January. Other former Olympic venues are scattered around the valley. Conference information will be updated regularly on www.westernplanner.org. The resort website is www.homesteadresort.com. Thanks for considering the conference...

Planners on the move

- Sev Jones, formerly a planner with the City of Boise, Idaho, is now Chief of Planning for the Mat-Su Borough.

Send your updates for the Planners on the move column to

smtaylor@ascg.com

Or Suzanne Taylor, editor, Alaska Planning Journal, ASCG Incorporated, 3900 C Street, Suite 501, Anchorage, AK 99503

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Job Connection at the APA National Conference
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www.planning.org/2005Conference

Act Now! Online reservations close March 11.

JOB SEEKERS:
Find jobs at www.planning.org/2005Conference and visit the Job Connection booth at the conference.

APA American Planning Association
Making Great Communities Happen

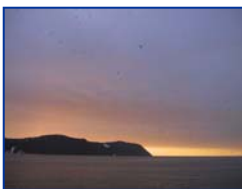
In other news

RurAL CAP Goes to Extremes With Diomedé Housing Rehabilitation Project

By Mitzi Barker,
RurAL CAP
Vice President, APA
Alaska Chapter



RurAL CAP -
Working Together
for Healthy People,
Sustainable
Communities, and
Vibrant Cultures



Soaring seabirds in
the midnight sunset off
Little Diomedé

Running water, flush toilets, reasonable shelter from the weather, and a modicum of privacy are things most urban Alaskans take for granted in their housing. But for nearly 80,000 Alaskan families, these amenities are sadly lacking. Rural Alaska has some of the most overcrowded housing in the nation, much of it in exceedingly poor repair. Overcrowding, coupled with lack of adequate sanitation facilities and extreme Arctic weather, exerts a heavy toll on public health and threatens the very viability of many remote villages.

In some ways, resolving the larger capital facility needs of these communities is simpler than addressing the very basic need for decent shelter. Public funding for housing is miniscule by comparison, and parceled out in an array of boutique programs administered by a patchwork quilt of state, tribal, local, and federal agencies. It can take literally years to assemble enough funding to build one new home in a village, if the village is determined enough and has the technical capacity to master a daunting roster of regulations and program requirements.

The village of Diomedé is perched on a rocky slope on a speck of an island 125 northwest of Nome in the Bering Sea. There is no harbor, and no roads – only a helipad. Weather permitting, twice-weekly helicopter service brings the mail and most of the village's supplies. During winter, the FAA may certify an ice runway when the sea ice has achieved an appropriate thickness, allowing larger capacity fixed-wing aircraft to land; warmer winters in recent years, however, have made this a less-than-reliable proposition.

The Native people who have inhabited Diomedé for hundreds of years have a rich culture, anchored in the subsistence wealth of the sea and avian flyway that surround the island. Little Diomedé is considered one of the world's prime birding destinations, offering an opportunity for local economic development through eco-tourism. However, as raw weather and time have taken their toll on the housing stock, and with little hope of improving living conditions for the island's residents, the tribal council voted to begin the process of relocation, to abandon the island and move the community to the mainland.



Native Village of
Diomedé



Use of local labor on
construction projects
keeps more money in
the community

The Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), provider of housing weatherization services to western and northwestern Alaska, was well aware of the need to preserve and improve Diomedé's housing, as were several other housing organizations, but no one organization had sufficient resources to mount a project that would achieve the scale necessary to achieve a real improvement in the housing and to overcome the island's logistical challenges.

The Diomedé Housing Improvement Project began with a call for help from the Kawerak Housing Improvement Program director, Paul Sanders, to RurAL CAP. Paul had just completed a housing condition assessment in the village and knew his program couldn't begin to address the needs he found and was looking for other answers. Together, RurAL CAP and Kawerak convened a meeting in Nome with representatives of the village, Bering Straits Housing Authority, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to brainstorm what it would take to rehab every home on the island and help the village avoid the need to relocate. From that meeting emerged a plan for RurAL CAP to take the lead in assembling \$2 million in funding and develop a program that would meet the need.

Less than one year later, \$1.9 million had been secured from four separate sources and the project kicked off with a job-training program that would ensure that local residents could be hired to perform the rehabilitation work. In early 2003, Kawerak, using Denali Commission training funds, provided on-site training in carpentry and other building skills and built a small structure that would house RurAL CAP's project supervisors. RurAL CAP staff made a comprehensive assessment of the rehabilitation needs of home, and by that summer, the work began.

At the end of the second full construction season, the project is on-time and within budget. A total of 34 homes will have been rehabilitated, including improvements to foundations, exterior stairs, insulation, and energy-efficiency. Several homes received modest additions to relieve overcrowding, and others were actually re-built from the ground up on the existing footprint.

In other news

Diomedede, continued

What made this project a success, despite almost overwhelming challenges? Here's the short list:

- Designation of a lead partner, and each partner's willingness to trust the lead partner to act in a way that would achieve the project's goals, respect the needs and limitations of the various partners. This was huge!

- Accurate cost-estimating, project scoping on the front end, coupled with conservative budgeting for logistics. We were blessed with favorable weather and access to a new landing-craft barge service from Nome, which greatly reduced costs. But we budgeted for a winter airlift. The cost savings resulted in additional work on the homes, and six additional homes receiving services.

- Involving funders in figuring out how to coordinate the funding. Each funding source had its own delicate set of requirements, some of which conflicted. Once we had the funding commitments secured, RurAL CAP convened the funders and the partners to lay out these issues and develop a strategy to overcome them. Because everyone had already bought in to the project, there was real incentive to make it work – everyone wanted to be associated with the project, and no one wanted to be fingered as the agency that said “no”. We were also prepared to go to the Alaska congressional delegation, if necessary for help (fortunately, that was not needed, although we have kept the delegation informed of our progress and how the partnership is working).

- Empowering the village as a full partner in the project. RurAL CAP and Kawerak had the tribal council convene community meetings early on in the planning process, as well as provide a liaison who was responsible for facilitating communications between the homeowners and RurAL CAP as construction proceeded. RurAL CAP assisted the tribe with obtaining and administering an Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) which paid for local labor. In addition to the value added to the village in the form of wages, the tribal council's administrative capacity has been increased through this project as a result of RurAL CAP's technical assistance in grant management.

- Hiring local labor whenever possible.
- Maintaining a close working relationship with all partners, especially the tribal council.



We built a lot of stairs - the project replaced rotting steps with highly durable materials



Making a difference, one home at a time

Diomedede Project Funding Recap:

RurAL CAP/AHFC (Weatherization) •Field supervisor, project management, materials & freight	\$500,000
HUD Rural Housing & Economic Development (grant to RurAL CAP) •Materials, freight, travel, archaeological research, services to families “over income” for other funding sources	\$400,000
Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority (funds from HUD Indian Housing Block Grant –NAHASDA) •Grants to homeowners for materials and freight	\$500,000
HUD Indian Community Development Block Grant (grant to Native Village of Diomedede) •Labor, tribal grant coordination	\$500,000
Kawerak – Denali Commission Job Training •On-site training for project workers	In-kind
USDA – Rural Development Section 504 grants •Direct assistance to elders/disabled for home repair	Not finalized



Sunset on Diomedede

What's next? RurAL CAP staff will travel back to Diomedede later this winter to conduct some final community meetings, and to finalize a punch list of items to be completed in the spring. The project should be closed out before summer. Given the enormity of housing needs in rural Alaska, good stewardship demands that every effort be made to preserve existing housing whenever possible. When one funding source is present, it offers the opportunity to leverage additional resources and effect a more comprehensive approach to the problem. RurAL CAP has been successful, although on a more modest scale, in using this same approach to partner with tribal entities in Kwethluk, Point Hope and Nome, bringing multiple funding sources to the table and coordinating the various grant program requirements. It just makes sense.

Articles Needed!

Share your writing or planning experience in an article in the Alaska Planning Journal. Contact editor, Suzanne Taylor, at smtaylor@ascg.com

In other news

After a rather bumpy start, the **Buffalo Commons** idea may be catching on in parts of the Great Plains – Any relevance for Alaska planners?

By Earl Finkler, VP
Northern Region,
Barrow, Alaska



“Compared to cattle, they drink less water (important in the Plains, which are semiarid), graze less heavily, don’t trample river banks, survive winter better and don’t need additives. In human terms, they have more protein than cattle, less fat and cholesterol, calve more easily and without human help, need a shorter work week, take care of themselves better and are smarter.”
– Dr. Frank Popper describes the environmental benefits of buffalo

Planners in Alaska are often involved in rapid growth situations on the last frontier. But a resource-based economy can have ups and downs, with periods of decline, or areas of decline, as well as growth. Are there some lessons we could learn from planners trying to deal with population decline in areas of the lower 48?

Recently, I had an interesting interview on KBRW with Dr. Frank Popper, an APA national board member and planning professor at Rutgers in New Jersey. He and his wife Deborah, who teaches geography at the City University of New York, have been analyzing a decline in population in areas of the Great Plains and suggesting the farm-based economies of the area are failing, and should transition toward something which has some aspects of a large wildlife refuge –the “Buffalo Commons.”

“My wife Deborah and I took a look at the long-term history of the Great Plains,” Popper said, “which in the United States includes large parts of the states running from Montana and North Dakota in the north, into Texas and New Mexico in the south, and there’s also parts of three Canadian provinces there.” He said the total area is about the size of Alaska.

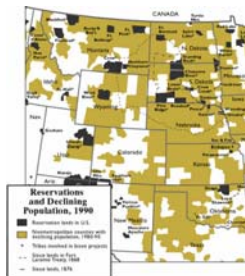
“But basically the history includes periods of very short boom and great long bust, in particular in the agricultural –farming and ranching—side. There’s large portions of the Great Plains where there are towns and counties that had their high year of population in some year like 1910, 1920, or in some cases 1890, and have been steadily declining ever since.”

He said there are towns, including some county seats, which now do not crack three figures in population, but which had much larger populations in their heyday –sometimes into the thousands.

“We’re talking about Manifest Destiny in reverse. We’re talking about de-population. We’re talking about places that do not have problems of growth management, like say one has in Anchorage, but have problems of decline management.”



Dr. Frank Popper, APA National Board Member, Rutgers University, NJ



Dr. Deborah Popper

“And Deborah and I propose that maybe in the long run, the end state solution for these places would be to pull back on traditional agriculture, traditional farming, and traditional ranching and go for things like buffalo cultivation, eco-tourism, sustainable development, and basically have large portions of the Great Plains, whether in public or private hands, be in some position between conventional agriculture on one hand and pure wilderness on the other.”

“We call that end state, which is very much forming on the ground, the Buffalo Commons.”

Popper pointed out a number of environmental improvements for buffalo over cattle.

“Compared to cattle, they drink less water (important in the Plains, which are semiarid), graze less heavily, don’t trample river banks, survive winter better and don’t need additives. In human terms, they have more protein than cattle, less fat and cholesterol, calve more easily and without human help, need a shorter work week, take care of themselves better and are smarter.”

Needless to say, the idea generated lots of opposition, and anger in the Great Plains, when it first appeared in APA’s Planning Magazine in 1987. “Why don’t we start with New York City?” asked one Kansas farmer, as reported in the Kansas City Star.

Mike Hayden, then the governor of Kansas, said of the Poppers, “I can only conclude their suggestions were in jest,” he said.

But now, according to the Kansas City Star, Hayden has come around. “I was wrong. They were right,” he said. “In fact, the out migration in many ways exceeded their projections.” He noted that the youths who go off to college don’t come back, the farms get larger and fewer and the population declines. And those people remaining tend to be older.

Popper said the Indian tribes in the area also back the Buffalo Commons concept.

“They actually are very enthusiastic about the idea. The tribal groups, whether you are talking about the Sioux in the north, or the Pueblo in the south, are very enthusiastic. They, along with Hispanic groups in the south, are the only groups that are actually growing in population, and they see the Buffalo Commons as a way to restore large portions of the land to what it was like before the whites showed up in such large numbers.”

Bits and Pieces

Planning Commission Corner Findings

Submitted by Elizabeth Benson, Benson Planning, Anchorage



Source: Alaska Planning Commission Handbook, 2003, available from DCED

http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/pub/Planning_Commission.htm



Buffalo Commons

Continued from page 9

What are findings?

Findings are nothing more than a statement by the commission of the evidence and reasoning it used to arrive at a decision. They are the "road map" that shows the process that got the commission from the evidence presented during the public hearing to its final conclusion to grant or deny the applicant's request.

Findings are important in helping the public understand why the commission reached the decision it did. Even if members of the public disagree with a commissioner decision, they may not become as upset or angry if they understand the reasoning that led to a decision.

One of the most common reasons that courts overrule commission decisions is that the commission has failed to prepare findings. The lack of findings will result in a remand to the commission or, if justice requires, a de novo hearing by the court where the court orders a new hearing and assumes the role of the commission. The court has made it clear that even if an ordinance does not require findings, they must nevertheless be made in quasi-judicial proceedings such as a variance proceeding.

Typical findings include a description of the request, a statement of the facts, reasons for approval OR denial, and conditions of approval.

For more information see the Alaska Chapter of APA Planning Commission Handbook, July 2003.

"A couple of years ago, for example, the Rosebud Sioux tribe in South Dakota actually adopted the Buffalo Commons as part of its tribal land use plan. I gather a similar thing is happening on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota."

What about lessons for Alaska? Popper noted that "For at least a century, Alaska has always been the last American frontier. But in the same period the Great Plains has always been the next-to-last frontier."

"As the region depopulates, as the Buffalo Commons emerges, the Plains becomes ever more like Alaska, much of which has always been the Caribou Commons." He also urged Alaska planners to be alert to smaller communities and regions that are losing population or depopulating, and their needs and options.

The importance of having a hazard mitigation plan

By Laurie Cummings, Alaska Planning webmaster
Planner, HDR Alaska

A hazard mitigation plan is a plan that has been developed in order to reduce or eliminate property damage and loss of life from natural, technological, and human-caused hazards.

A community should have a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved hazard mitigation plan for many reasons. Developing and implementing a hazard mitigation plan means making your community a safer place to live and work. A plan allows your community to set mitigation goals and objectives that will help your community reduce the loss of life and property due to disasters events and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

Another reason is financial. After November 1, 2004, communities without an approved hazard mitigation plan are not eligible to apply for Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grants or apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) grants. With a successful grant application, these programs can fund approximately 75% of the total cost of a hazard mitigation project.

FEMA has developed guidance to assist local communities in developing a hazard mitigation plan. The information is available at <http://www.fema.gov/fima/planhowto.shtm>. Or, your community can choose to hire a consultant to assist you.

To assist with local planning efforts, FEMA is currently accepting PDM planning grant applications. For communities with a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan, FEMA is also accepting PDM project grant applications. Approximately \$255 million is available on a competitive basis without reference to state allocations or quotas.

However, if you have not already submitted a letter of intent to apply for a PDM grant to the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (ADHS&EM), you are not eligible to apply for a grant this year. If you would like to be informed about future grant opportunities, please contact Scott Simmons, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer at 907-428-7016 or scott_simmons@ak-prepared.com.

The Back Page

Get involved in Juneau

By Toni Jones, Planning
Commissioner
Representative

Now that the First Session of the 24th Alaska Legislature is back in session it is once again time to monitor items of interest to our respective communities. Below are a few resources to assist you in tracking the status of proposed legislation and the State of Alaska budget process. A good place to start is the Alaska State Legislature website. You can access this website from the State of Alaska home page (<http://www.state.ak.us/>) or through the Alaska Legislature's website (<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/home.htm?>).

The Alaska Legislature's website contains links to information regarding the Senate, House, Committees, Districts, Status of Bills and Legislative Information Offices throughout the State. Legislative Information Office staff are available in many communities throughout the State to assist you with your research. A list of those offices can be found on the Legislative Information Office website (<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/legaff/liolist.htm>).

Budget information can be found through the Office of Management and Budget website. (<http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/>). The "Gavel to Gavel Alaska" website contains links that allow you access to live audio and/or video streaming of various legislative committee meetings and sessions, as well as archives of tapes from previous hearings or proceedings. (<http://www.ktoo.org/gavel/stream.cfm>).

The table below contains additional websites that will provide information about our State Legislature.

Sources for Legislative Information:

<u>Source of Information</u>	<u>Website</u>
State of Alaska (Home Page)	http://www.state.ak.us
Alaska Legislature (Home Page)	http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/home.htm?
Legislative Information Offices	http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/legaff/liolist.htm
Status of Bills	http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp
Budget Information	http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/
Gavel to Gavel (Home Page)	www.ktoo.org/gavel/stream.cfm

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www.hdrinc.com

Your company's business card can be included in future Alaska Planning Journal publications at the rate of \$50 for one year (four issues). Contact Suzanne Taylor at smtaylor@ascg.com for details.

Hazard Planning, continued from page 10

They are specifically looking for contact information for community/local government public works offices, native agencies doing work for several native organizations or tribes, and professional planners so they can send out information about future grants.

For more information about hazard mitigation planning or the PDM grants, please contact Laurie Cummings at laurie.cummings@hdrinc.com or Scott Simmons, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer, at 907-428-7016 or