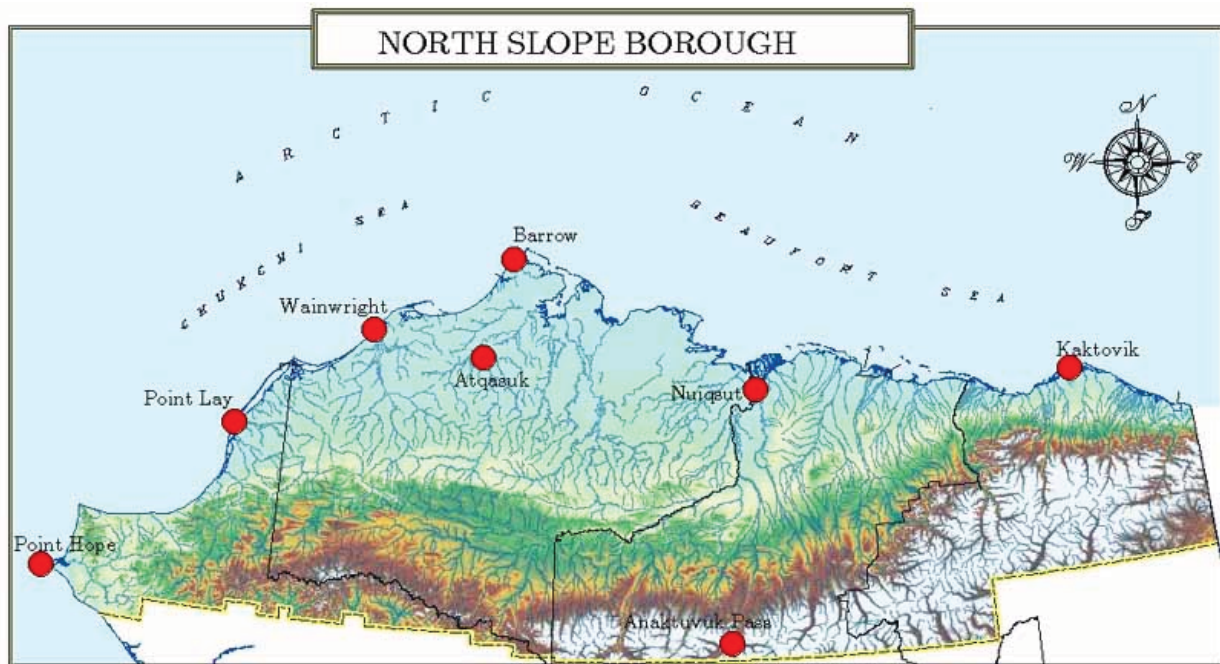




North Slope Communications Protocol

Communication Guidelines to Support Meaningful Involvement of the North Slope Communities in EPA Decision-Making



May 2009

2.0 Communication with North Slope Communities

Region 10 Protocol Statement:

Region 10 will:

- Maintain and improve our working relationships with communities on the North Slope of Alaska,
- Use communication strategies that take into account the cultural context of the North Slope communities,
- Communicate early both internally and with North Slope communities as soon as Region 10 staff learn of a proposed project or issue.

Implementing the Protocol:

Region 10 will use communication strategies that take into account the cultural context of the North Slope communities by adapting our communications to the values and practices of those communities. In this way, Region 10 will practice culturally appropriate communications for each project related to the North Slope. For each project (or project category) related to the North Slope, there must be a deliberate consideration of whether there is a need to prepare and implement a formal communications strategy. If a formal strategy is not deemed necessary, the Protocol must still be implemented by the program.

Communication with North Slope communities can begin as soon as EPA learns of a project (perhaps even before an application is received, for example). This requires EPA program staff to communicate regularly with each other concerning their activities on the North Slope. Development of a communication strategy can also begin as soon as EPA learns of a project. Routine and open communication with the communities is an integral part of the entire project process, beginning at project inception, not from the start of the comment period. The type and frequency of communication will be in alignment with the expressed needs of the communities.

Region 10 will routinely plan for a 60-day window for public comment opportunity. This does not mean we will routinely offer 60-day comment periods. Rather, we will set aside a timeframe of 60 days, to provide for any comment period extension requests, to accommodate any scheduling changes that might be necessary after consideration of the subsistence year activities (described Section 5), or changes due to logistical complications, and to build flexibility into our schedules to account for other unforeseen delays.

Part of conducting meaningful public involvement with communities of the North Slope includes applying cultural competence. Cultural competence refers to the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. It is the responsibility of each program to determine specifically how implementation of the Protocol be done for a given project. The Protocol is a guide to considerations that each staff member will confront and provides a general framework

<u>Community</u>	<u>Approximate Population (<i>numbers are changeable</i>)</u>
Point Hope	764
Point Lay	260
Wainwright	556
Barrow	4500
Atqasuk	260
Nuiqsut	416
Kaktovik	286
Anaktuvuk Pass	358

These communities are within a county-level political subdivision called the North Slope Borough (NSB). The NSB covers a very large geographical area and is comparable in size to the state of Minnesota. It is located completely above the Arctic Circle. These communities are remote arctic villages, with no roads between them. Agency access to the villages generally occurs by bush plane.

Cultural Information

These villages are home to native Inupiat residents. About 69 percent of the residents are all or part Alaska native. Whaling is central to the culture.

This is a culture with an oral (spoken) and aural (listening) tradition. Inupiaq is spoken and translation services may be needed in some cases. English is widely spoken, but in many cases it is a second language.

In this traditional society, elders hold special status, as do whaling captains and their wives.

For more detailed discussion about each native village, see Appendix E.

An Example Subsistence Year

The following, adapted from work done by Molly Pederson of the North Slope Borough, is a generalized example of activities that take place throughout the year in the subsistence life of the villagers on the North Slope. This is not a rigid schedule, but is an attempt to put the yearly flow of work and life of the villagers onto the twelve month calendar that we are all familiar with. There is variability from time to time and from village to village, which is one reason that, for us to serve the North Slope communities, it is so important to communicate with the villages to ascertain what is happening and what is anticipated.

As the example on the following page illustrates, there is no perfect, ideal time to begin a community involvement effort. The protocol sets out a process for determining the best way to proceed, working directly with the communities.

An Example Subsistence Year in the North Slope Borough Area

January

- Trapping continues
- Seal hunting
- Seal skins prepared for bleaching
- Polar bear hunting
- Build/repair skin boats

February

- Trapping continues
- Caribou skins drying outside
- Seal and ugruk skins also drying/bleaching
- Continue build/repair skin boats

March

- Some polar bear hunting
- Seal hunting
- Trapping continues for fox, wolf and wolverine
- Women sew ugruk skins for skin boats
- New skins put on boat frames
- Hunting tools repaired
- Female polar bears bring out their young

April

- End of trapping season
- Whaling season begins
- Caribou and ground squirrel hunting inland
- Time to clean cellars if not done during winter
- Birth of young seals

May

- Whaling continues
- Geese/ptarmigan hunting inland
- Duck hunting on ice
- Ice breakup on rivers
- Seals on ice at Qaaktugvik
- Ugruk have their young

June

- Nalukataq in the whaling communities (Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Barrow, Am, Point Hope)
- Going off to Summer camps
- Fishing on rivers and lakes begins
- Seal hunting
- Fish in Qaaktugvik

July

- Fish continues
- Caribou hunting
- Gathering eggs in Pt. Hope
- Ugruk and walrus hunting
- Drying meat and making seal oil
- Preparing ugruk skins for boats

August

- Caribou hunting by boats, some by snow machines
- Ugruk and aiviq hunting continues
- Ugruk skins prepared for boats/boot bottoms
- Duck hunting at Pigniq
- Boat frames build
- Geese hunting at Wainwright
- Tuktaq making time
- Fish on rivers
- Berry picking inland

September

- Panmaksrak coming through
- Some duck hunting
- Beginning of fall bowhead whale hunt
- Moose hunting
- Whaling in Kaktovik/Nuiqsut/Barrow

October

- Fall whaling continues
- Ice fishing on rivers and lakes
- Caribou hunting first part of the month
- Ice fishing along coastline for cod fish

November

- Polar bear hunting on the coastline
- Seal hunting
- Some hunters still at fish camps
- Traditional Thanksgiving Feast

December

- Trapping season for fox, wolf, wolverine
- Seal hunting
- Polar bear hunting
- Traditional Christmas Feasts
- Traditional games of skill and endurance