

Chukchi Coastal Communities' Understanding of and Responses to Environmental Change

Principal Investigators:

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Summary of Proposed Work:

Our proposal is a collaboration between Kawerak, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the North Slope Borough, to examine local and traditional knowledge (LTK) and other connections between Alaska Native coastal communities and the Chukchi Sea ecosystem. We will work with eight communities from Savoonga to Barrow, through community and regional workshops and via participation in the annual PIs meetings of the Arctic Program. We expect to work closely with other funded components of the program to determine the focus of our work and the best ways we can contribute.

Our proposal has four objectives:

1. Analyze existing information about subsistence harvests and traditional knowledge.
2. Determine with other PIs how existing and new LTK information can inform their research & findings.
3. Document additional information through community workshops.
4. Analyze existing and additional information to develop (a) summary of the Chukchi ecosystem as seen by coastal residents and (b) collaborations to connect local understanding with the results of other project components.

We will test four hypotheses:

H-1: To date, the primary drivers of short-term variability in subsistence harvests have been environmental, whereas the primary drivers of long-term trends have been economic, cultural, regulatory, and technological.

H-2: Environmental variability affects food security in the short-term, but lack of economic well-being is the main long-term threat to food security.

H-3: Trends in the Chukchi marine environment (in contrast to short-term variability) have not demonstrably affected communities' overall well-being.

H-4: Chukchi coastal communities have a variety of response mechanisms for coping with marine environmental variability and shifts.

The expected outcomes of our work are:

1. Review paper assessing existing LTK and subsistence data
2. Summary paper(s) about LTK findings from this study
3. Collaborative paper(s) with other PIs concerning the Chukchi marine ecosystem and its influence on coastal communities