Governance in Alaskan Communities: Complicated Times, Complex Systems

Diane Hirshberg, PhD
Mara Kimmel, JD
Governance and Adaptability

• Governance is “a system of roles for resource managers and resource users, regarding who has the authority to make management decisions” (Loring et al. 2010)
  – Authority to make rules – who is doing what?  
  – Describes governmental structures and rules at state, local and federal levels

• Adaptability “refers to the flexibility and resources that a person or community has or can use to design and implement adaptations” (Loring et al. 2010)
  – Governance authority is a “resource” that can be used to design and implement adaptations
The Ideal

“maximum local self-government with a minimum of local government units”

- The Constitution of the State of Alaska: Article 10, Local Government, Section 10.1
The Reality

• Maximum local governmental units with a minimum of self-governance
Multiple authorities - governance within communities

• Borough
• Municipality/City
• Municipal electric authorities
• School Boards & REAA School Advisory Councils
• Tribes (IRA, Traditional, both)
• Alaska Native Village Corporations
• Community Councils
• Port Authorities, Utilities, etc.
Multiple authorities - governance outside communities

- Rural and Regional Electrical Authorities and Cooperatives
- State government/legislative districts
- Federal government
- Borough government
- Municipal/city government
- REAAs
- Regional Health Corporations
- Tribal governments
- Alaska Native Regional Corporations
- International laws and regulations and treaties
Alaskan communities
Alaska communities, roads and borough boundaries
Communities, roads, boroughs and REAAs
ANCSA Corporations, Communities, Roads, Boroughs and REAAs
ANCSA corporations and land ownership
Challenges to local governance

• Multiple layers of governance
  – State, federal and local
• Gaps and overlaps
  – Jurisdictional and regulatory
Complicated laws and regulations

- An “alphabet soup” of agencies create a bureaucratic labyrinth
- Fisheries as an example
The question

• How do complex governance systems impact the abilities of Alaskan communities to promote adaptation and well-being?
  – How do people perceive governance efficacy at each level?
  – How do governance authorities gap and overlap?
Moving forward

• Inventory existing relevant governance structures and systems to identify overlaps and gaps

• Support additional analysis regarding jurisdictional gaps and overlaps, and how they potentially impact perceptions of efficacy among community members as well as the adaptive capacity of communities
Contact

Mara Kimmel
mkimmel2@uaa.alaska.edu
907-350-0786

Diane Hirshberg
dbhirshberg@alaska.edu
907-786-5413