

Draft - Notes for the meeting held 11/19/08

Berney Richert, Economic Development Administration – Federal Co- Chair  
(presiding)

Tara Jollie, Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA) – State Co-Chair

**In attendance:** Berney Richert – U.S. Economic Development Administration; Tara Jollie, Peter McKay, Brigitta Windisch-Cole, Athena Logan, Sally Russell Cox, Ruth St. Amour – Division of Community & Regional Affairs; George Cannelos, Joan Kane, Tessa Rinner – Denali Commission; Janet Hall – RurAL CAP/Denali Commission; Colleen Bickford, Deb Alston, Bill Zachares – HUD; Midge Clouse – Chenega Corporation; Nils Andreassen – Institute of the North; Liz Cheney, Lena Hoffman – First Alaskans Institute; Joe Sarcone, Martha Barber – EPA; Bobby Jo Kramer – Alaska Manufacturing Extension Partnership; Mary Spellens – Coastal Villages Region Fund; Wanetta Ayers – Western Alaska Community Development Association; Gene Kane – USDA Rural Development; Lillian Demoski – Deloy Ges, Inc.; Gregory Williams – Alaska Department of Labor; Christi Bell – UA Center for Economic Development; Steven Musser – Galena School District; Carol Wren – Cook Inlet Tribal Council; Deborah Vo – Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association; Andy Varner – Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference; Meera Kohler – AVEC; Sarah Scanlan – RurAL CAP; Bobby Jo Kramer – AMEP; Amy Sparck Dobmeier – Municipality of Anchorage; Steve Heimel – Alaska Public Radio Network; Doreen Brown – Anchorage School District

**Via teleconference:** Jordan Marshall – Rasmuson Foundation; Diane DiSanto – Municipality of Anchorage; Nelson Angapak, George Irvin, Adrian Lecornu – AFN; Cheri Lancaster – Southeast Conference; Debbie McLean – UA Bristol Bay Campus; Stephanie Martin – ISER; Anne Baxter – Senator Donald Olson’s office; Margaret Galovin – Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association; Sharon Boyette – Aleutians East Borough; Stanley Tom – Newtok Traditional Council; Doreen Lampe – North Slope Borough; Gina Shirey-Potts – Alaska Department of Natural Resources; Christine Amaktoolik – City of Elim

### **Discussion: Migration Patterns**

- In order to determine if rural out-migration is accelerating, data is currently being gathered by several agencies and organizations.
- School enrollment provides the most recent data. Athena Logan of DCRA is gathering data from schools statewide, but so far has received data from only 54% of the schools. She provided an overview of enrollment for the school years ending 2004 – 2008, which showed a decline for the state in total. Enrollment is affected by birth rates and drop-out rates as well as by migration.
- The Anchorage School District has changed its reporting process to include options for multi-ethnic students, so new data will not be comparable to prior years for ethnicity data.
- State Demographer Greg Williams presented population data (see [http://www.denali.gov/Planning/Program\\_Documents/Rural%20Migration%20and%20Economy.pdf](http://www.denali.gov/Planning/Program_Documents/Rural%20Migration%20and%20Economy.pdf)) which shows that the overall trend is for migration from throughout the state into

Anchorage, and from Anchorage to the Mat-Su region. Migration is not consistent or uniform, even by region. There are a number of communities in Southeast Alaska which may be in trouble in term of population loss.

- An examination of migration patterns should include the impacts on infrastructure and social services in both rural and urban areas.
- Special attention should be paid to the communities at risk of school closure due to low enrollment.
- The Denali Commission has a draft work plan that will be available on their website ([www.denali.gov](http://www.denali.gov)) along with a series of policies that call for a more rigorous look at small communities. The intent of the policies is to provide guidance regarding the appropriate level of investment.
- There is concern that the Denali Commission's new policies will exacerbate out-migration and contribute to the demise of smaller communities.
- The Denali Commission influences other agencies and therefore needs to be thoughtful in the application of the policies. The consequences of taking no action, i.e., not funding projects in small communities, may be costly and unpredictable.
- The research on migration should also include the history of swings in local economies and population, and consequences of those fluctuations.
- Changes in population figures alone may not reflect the impact of rising costs on those whose incomes are not growing.
- The loss of culture resulting from migration must also be considered. The high cost of energy may result in the equivalent of cultural genocide.
- The standardization of infrastructure and programs can create stress in rural communities.
- The research on migration should also attempt to determine the motivation for moving.
- The focus should be on being resilient in the face of the energy economy we have now. We don't always need complicated solutions to problems.
- There is a need for discussion between the Native community and agencies on the impacts of migration, including the impacts on the urban areas and the social and economic consequences. This migration affects everyone.

Determining whether out-migration is occurring,, analyzing the actual situation of migration within Alaska and its impacts from changes in both shrinking and growing communities, and determining the causes and potential mitigation of such changes needs to be part of an on-going dialogue. The Planning Work Group is attempting to provide a platform for these discussions. The Division of Community & Regional Affairs of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development is seeking to pull together the best resources available from within and without state government to support the research component of this effort. We hope you will join us at our next meeting as we try to understand whether there is a proactive role which the Work Group can take.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 21 at 10 a.m., at the Denali Commission, and is to be chaired by Tara Jollie.**