

Coastal management issues

by George Owletuck

ST. MARYS, Alaska — The Cenaliuriiit coastal management plan is currently being updated from its initial adoption in 1985, to be more village oriented and relevant to local residents. Copies of a Pre-Concept Approved Draft (CAD) are being sent to all municipalities, traditional governments and ANCSA village corporations within the Cenaliuriiit region for review. The CAD version of the plan reflects changes made to the Public Hearing Draft following the initial review. Cenaliuriiit urges villages to review the CAD draft and provide further comments and concerns as needed.

This plan provides Cenaliuriiit with instructions on how to use its coastal management program and provides the local Yup'ik people an understanding of how our coastal management plan will be used and explains to state and federal agencies how best to implement our coastal management plan.

The Cenaliuriiit coastal management plan receives its authority from the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 which allows states to develop coastal management programs. The Alaska Coastal Management Act of 1977 created local coastal management districts and allows them to prepare local coastal management plans. Coastal districts refine the general statewide policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Program in a manner that best reflects local issues, goals and objectives. Cenaliuriiit's objective is to revise our plan, addressing all village and state government agency concerns and present the CAD draft plan to the state Coastal Policy Council next summer for approval.

Successful adoption of the plan will ensure that the direct input of Yup'ik community residents will be incorporated into the ACMP. This direct influence on policy and the policy process by indigenous communities within Cenaliuriiit is a drastic departure from the formerly typi-

cal practice of state and federal agencies: imposing policies upon Native communities without our participation or consent.

Of particular interest to Cenaliuriiit is the issue of local hire in permitted project activities within state coastal district boundaries. The November 1995 Public Hearing Draft included language in Mineral Extraction And Processing: J-4 Offshore Mining: Prior to conducting activities, . . . developers proposing activities . . . shall work with the CRSA to: (c) maximize benefits to local residents. This is what the Yup'ik within Cenaliuriiit proposed for a locally interpreted and implemented coastal management program.

Review of this same section in the CAD will reveal a counter policy proposal from the Office of the Governor Division of Governmental Coordination (DGC) which specifically deletes the Yup'ik proposed mineral extraction language relating to maximizing benefits to local residents in permitted projects within state coastal district boundaries.

Cenaliuriiit reviewed the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act 303 (16 U.S.C. 1452) which is a Congressional Declaration of Policy: (2) Congress finds and declares it is national policy to: encourage and assist states to exercise effectively their responsibilities, giving full consideration to the need(s) for compatible economic development.

Cenaliuriiit does not concur with the DGC that local hire is not an ACMP issue. Cenaliuriiit maintains that including language in its coastal management plan stipulating "maximize benefits to local residents" falls within Congressional Declaration of National Policy U.S.C. 1452 that "states give full consideration to the need(s) for compatible economic development." In that case, Cenaliuriiit maintains its original proposal that maximizing benefits to local residents is an ACMP issue.

Currently the State of Alaska is in the process of improving the ACMP to fit Alaska's needs into the 1990's. One of the proposals under discussion is the fair

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consideration of local knowledge. The intent is to promote considering local knowledge on the same level as the "best professional judgment" during the consistency review of projects. A consistency review is simply a review of proposed capital projects to ensure they are consistent with Cenaliurii's primary concern: the long-term protection of the land and its coastal resources for subsistence purposes, balancing the need for conservation with the need for economic development under resource extraction and protection of the Yup'ik Eskimo culture.

The State of Alaska is revising the ACMP to incorporate the local knowledge proposal due largely to appeals from various statewide coastal districts and village leaders. In the fall of 1995, numerous Yukon-Kuskokwim are senators and representatives participated in this initiative and wrote to Gov. Knowles urging him

to support the village leaders' proposal. To his credit, Knowles addressed the local knowledge issue at the 1996 AFN convention and the DGC supports the local elders knowledge language under the revised ACMP.

Cenaliuriiit respectfully urges village leaders, state coastal districts, legislators, the Office of the Governor and DGC to give fair consideration that Pre-CAD language specifying: "developers proposing activities within coastal district boundaries shall work with the district and representatives of affected communities to maximize benefits to local residents" is an ACMP issue and should be included in the Cenaliuriiit coastal management plan – as proposed by the Yup'ik and opposed by DGC. This is just one of many example where village leaders can have a direct impact on changing Alaska's laws, statutes and policies to reflect our village needs and concerns.