

# About this manual ...

Communities in rural Alaska are faced with many unique and complex environmental issues. The presence of honey buckets, permafrost landfills, remote access, and extreme winter conditions are examples of issues that make rural Alaska unique from other parts of the United States. This manual has been produced in order to address these unique environmental issues using a common sense approach that promotes and encourages community-driven environmental management.

The approach to environmental planning taken in this manual can be described as “community-based.” A “community-based” approach to any type of planning is essential in order for communities to develop a greater sense of ownership to problems and solutions. **Environmental planning is most successful when the community is involved in the entire process from identifying problems to solving them.** Although many environmental planning guides focus on community-based efforts, this manual is specific to rural Alaskan issues and provides many examples from rural communities throughout Alaska.

**7**  
**GENERATIONS** *Addressing Village Environmental Issues for the Future Generations of Alaska* is divided into three parts:

## **Part 1**

Part 1 of the manual describes one approach to village environmental planning. It also describes how to use the surveys in Part 2 of this manual in village environmental planning.

## **Part 2**

Part 2 of the manual includes the Village Environmental Planning Survey & Technical Environmental Survey. These surveys are used to identify community environmental priorities and to identify environmental issues. Both of the surveys are described in detail and examples from rural Alaska are included.

## **Part 3**

Part 3 includes a directory, list of resources, and appendices.

## Why do you need this manual?

**7** GENERATIONS Addressing Village Environmental Issues for the Future Generations of Alaska is a manual designed for people in rural Alaska who want to accomplish environmental planning and management by using a community-based approach. The manual contains valuable tools that enable a community to prioritize and identify environmental issues of concern within their community. This manual was written to assist communities to more self-reliant and to take responsibility for their own environmental issues.

As communities begin to take more responsibility for their own environmental concerns and issues, they will rely less on others to solve problems. Clarence Alexander, Chairman of the Board for the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, described this issue at the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Summit:

*"You know we always had our hands out. We were hoping that some miracle would happen that would help us survive in our land. And, today we are finding out that we are the ones who have to take the lead. We have to be the ones to initiate. We are the ones who have to do something in our community. We are the ones who have to teach in order for those younger ones to know."*

*Clarence Alexander*

Building community strength to identify and solve problems is a powerful process that can lead to a healthier and more sustainable community. A community that is driven by the interests of its members rather than by outside interests will have a greater sense of ownership and pride in its accomplishments. A self-governing community also will have a greater influence over the goals and future direction of the community in the environmental realm or other domains. Although this manual focuses solely on selected environmental issues, the people driven initiatives discussed are an effective way for a community to take its inherent right to self-govern in all areas by influencing and taking responsibility for educational, social, judicial and health efforts within a community.

# Why are you here?

## Quotations from Rural Alaska

Environmental assessment training workshops have been held all over the State of Alaska to train local residents on how to use the tools in this manual to identify and assess environmental concerns in their communities. Most of these workshops are funded through Native non-profit health corporations through an Indian General Assistance Program grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

At the start and conclusion of each workshop, participants were asked to answer the question “why are you here?” The following responses reflect the range of knowledge, technical tools and insights gained by the participants as well as the ownership and responsibility for applying what was learned when they return home. Moreover, they reaffirm the importance of developing a sustainable community-based approach to addressing environmental issues and problems that currently face rural Alaskan villages.

*“...to become an example to the community in the prevention and reduction of solid waste garbage and other hazardous materials in our village. Also, to start a recycling program with our kids.”*

*Casey Kalmakoff, Ivanof Bay*

*“I am here to learn from the experience of others. Here to become more aware of things that I know of now regarding the environment. I am here to take knowledge, resources and tools home. To improve the environment immediately.”*

*Charlie Nelson, Iguigig*



Tlingit Haida Central Council, Juneau

*“I am here to learn environmental issues and to bring back to our village information about safe water and about solid waste. I have learned to test the water for chlorine levels... I also learned about some very toxic wastes in the dump or landfill and of some ideas of what shouldn't be in there such as aluminum cans, plastic bags, also batteries which have acid in them and lead.”*

*Harry Wassily, Clark's Point*

***"I have learned a lot about drinking water and the landfill and what harm it can do to the community and the land around it. Education and being a role model will make the difference."***

*Georgie Alexie, Nondalton*



**Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome**

***"I am here to learn as much as I can and become more aware of my environment. Being aware of how daily actions can be harmful. Making others aware of how ignorance is physically harmful to them and everything around them."***

*Mary Ann Johnson, Portage Creek*

***"I am here because of the lack of understanding I had pertaining to the environmental issues that the community is surrounded by. I care more now than I did before I arrived."***

*Roy White, Egegik*

***"I am here to learn about environmental issues that concern us all and to go back and present this to the community and make it a safer place to live. By educating them about the harmful things that we are doing to ourselves and to the world."***

*Robert Larson, Koliganek*



**Bristol Bay Native Association, Dillingham**

***"To get the ball rolling on all environmental matters. I am going to check wells for safe water. Dump matters like capping the old ones and working on the existing ones. Get the schools to crush the cans. Not only the schools but the whole village. To set an example for my son so he can start at a young age to think about environmental matters. Change the villages' eyes on environmental matters to open them towards prevention."***

*Fred Tom Hurley, Ekwok*

***"To learn more about solid waste in the landfill and more about pollution. To learn ways to educate other people about environmental problems we must face. Also, the importance of water quality."***

*Bobby Winer, Beaver*

***"I learned, listened and became very aware of how much the environment has to do with not only myself and others but with my children and possibly my future grandchildren. My only regret is that a lot more people are still in the dark—I am proud to be able (at least try) to explain this to my village. The 3 R's—reuse, recycle and reduce."***

*Valerie Carroll, Birch Creek*



**Association of  
Village Council Presidents, Emmonak**

***"Take back to members of our tribe the knowledge I have learned, especially to our most important resource, the children, to continue the important reason for preserving our natural resources. The environmentally sound management of all of our natural resources for the enjoyment of all, far into the future."***

*Wally Flitt, Fort Yukon*

***"To protect our environment by educating others."***

*Melinda Peter, Fort Yukon*

***"... I also learned the steps I need to take to make my home a safe and clean place to live for myself, my children and my people."***

*Pamela Sam, Venetie*

***"During the course of the week I've learned what is involved with an environmental assessment/survey and problem areas to look for. There are many serious conditions in various parts of the village we've seen so often. They've become the background and we've been living among such things for so long it's not an issue. It is now my goal to identify problem areas, find solutions and educate the community about these issues."***

*Samantha Hoover, Kasigluk*



**Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association,  
Dutch Harbor**

***"My goal is to share the information that I have gathered and put the tools to work, community awareness, solid solutions, without money, small steps, by example-talk the talk/walk the walk."***

*William Andrew, Marshall*

***"To use the tools I learned and use these tools to educate the community I work with."***

*Harvey Anvil, Napaskiak*



**Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, Chalkyitsik**

***"To pass on the knowledge and create environmental awareness and educate the youngsters and to keep trying no matter what."***

*Walter Johnson, Quinhagak*

***"I am here because I want to learn as much as I can about waste on the land and in the water. I want to know what I can do about it and I want to know what resources I have to work with. Also, on what this waste is doing to our people's health. Then I plan on taking this back to my community and teach the children and their families."***

*Ruth Farrens, Sand Point*

***"I am here to better my knowledge on how to better the environment in my community and make it safer to live in Nelson Lagoon for everybody."***

*Ray Johnson, Nelson Lagoon*



**Mannilaq, Kotzebue**

***"I will live here for the rest of my life. Our environment we are in today is unsafe. I would like to implement a program through our tribe to educate all who reside here, such as local households, schools and processing plants about the importance of recycling, hazardous disposal and re-use."***

*Janis Krukoff, Unalaska*