

Part 2: Environmental Assessment Surveys

Overview of Part 2:

Part 2 of the manual includes the Village Environmental Planning Survey and the Technical Environmental Survey. These surveys are used to identify environmental priorities and issues within the community. This section describes both surveys in detail and includes examples from rural Alaska.

Part 2—Environmental assessment surveys

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The Village Environmental Planning Survey

About the Village Environmental Planning Survey:

What is the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

A *survey* is a tool used to gather information. A survey can be a written document or a list of interview questions. There are many ways to gather needed information. The Village **Environmental Planning Survey** is used to identify a community's environmental priorities. The sample survey shown on pages 38–39 is used to build consensus, or agreement, within the community over environmental issues. The survey identifies many issues that are relevant to rural communities in Alaska. Some of these environmental issues may not relate to your community. You may also have environmental issues specific to your community that do not appear on the survey. For this reason, each community will want to design their own survey form to better reflect local issues and concerns.

Example

Village Environmental Planning Survey

	<i>Not important</i>		<i>Very important</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water
B	1	2	3	4	5	Abandoned vehicles, boats or other equipment left in and/or around the village

Issues covered on sample Village Environmental Planning Survey:

- Safe drinking water
- Abandoned vehicles, boats, etc.
- Beach and/or river bank erosion
- Village dump/landfill
- Construction materials left by contractors
- Abandoned drums
- Raw sewage spills/sewage disposal
- Annual clean-up
- Indoor air pollution
- Fuel oil contaminated soils
- Air pollution outdoors
- Dead animals/fish left around village
- Trash left around village
- Contaminated subsistence foods
- Old military sites
- Hazardous or toxic materials
- Other issues

Other environmental issues::

Sarah Weisner identified a serious environmental concern for her village of Shungnak:

“We have villages living upstream from us. They also have dog teams and these dogs do waste along the riverbanks. When the river comes up and washes the beach, everything goes down river and we consume the water, fish, and animals and everything that comes with it. We are also a village upstream from other villages.”



Wilfred Ashby from the Village of Noatak is concerned with the impacts of nearby mining and how it may be affecting his village and the surrounding areas used for subsistence.

Explanation of Village Environmental Planning Survey issues:



A brief explanation of each issue on the Village Environmental Planning Survey on pages 38–39 is provided below. It may be useful to use these explanations and pictures when conducting your Village Environmental Planning Survey door-to-door.

Safe drinking water

Safe drinking water is water that is safe from disease and contaminants.



Untreated or improperly treated water can make people sick, especially children and elders.

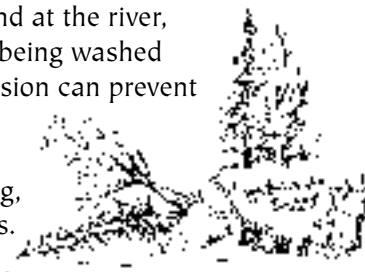
Abandoned vehicles, boats or other equipment left in and/or around the village

Materials such as deserted cars, boats, old generators, engines, and snowmobiles left around the village are ugly and contain hazardous materials such as antifreeze and lead-acid batteries. These abandoned materials can pollute the environment and are dangerous to children who often play with them.



Beach and/or river bank erosion

Erosion of the river bank or beach means that soil or sand at the river, lake or ocean-side is being washed away by weather. Erosion can prevent fish from living and reproducing. Erosion also threatens housing, roads and old landfills.



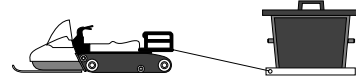
Annual clean-up program

Annual clean-up programs are a way to involve the community in improving the appearance of the village.



Raw sewage spills in the community and improper sewage disposal at the lagoon

In honey bucket communities, sewage spills can lead to the spread of infectious diseases.



Fuel oil contaminated soils in and/or around the village

Fuel from snowmachines, ATVs, cars, fuel tanks and the power plant generator is a potential source of pollution. Small amounts of oil dripping on the ground can add up to a large amount over time. Oil can pollute the drinking water.

Air pollution problems caused by the village electric generator, open burning at the dump, vehicles or smoke from burn barrels in the village

The air that comes out of generators, vehicles and from burn barrels may contain chemicals that are toxic, or poisonous, to your body. Some materials are known to cause cancer.



Abandoned drums in and/or around the village

A 55-gallon abandoned drum may contain hazardous materials that eventually leak into the ground and contaminate the water. Empty drums are ugly and can potentially be harmful to children.



Village dump/landfill

Many landfills in rural areas are uncontrolled and present public health problems. Some landfills contain hazardous materials that could potentially get into the drinking water.



Dead animals and dead fish left in or around the village

Dead animals and fish attract organisms that spread diseases.



Trash left in and/or around the village

Trash left around the village is ugly and can also contribute to the spread of disease.



Old military sites cleanup

Many old military sites have not been cleaned up and materials remain in or near villages. Some of these materials may be hazardous. Not every village has old military sites.



Contaminated subsistence foods

Hazardous materials that are not properly disposed of can potentially poison the subsistence foods your community relies on and make the food unsafe to eat.



Indoor air pollution, such as cigarette/wood stove smoke

Cigarette smoke and wood stove smoke are sources of indoor air pollution and can be hazardous to your health.



Construction materials that are left behind by contractors

Contractors often leave behind materials such as paints, thinners, and plywood that are not used up completely. Some of these materials may be hazardous.



Environmental issues beyond village control, such as ozone depletion, polluted oceans and/or rivers

There are many issues that may affect your village that you have no control over. For example, pollution created in places far away from Alaska contributes to the depletion of the ozone layer. This increases the chances for cancer caused by the sun's radiation.



Hazardous or toxic materials left in dump sites and/or other areas around the village

Hazardous or toxic materials include things such as antifreeze, lead-acid batteries, fuel oil, many household cleaners, old lead paint, paint thinners, gasoline, aerosol cans and asbestos. These materials should not be placed in your landfill because they can potentially get into the ground and contaminate the drinking water.



Other?

Add any other environmental issues that are specific to your community. For example, dust on the roads, polluted water upstream, environmental effects of logging, improper use/disposal of toxic household cleaning products, mining operations, leaking fuel transfer pipes, tourism, etc.

Why do you use the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

The Village Environmental Planning Survey is a powerful tool that can be used to build community consensus. Community-based environmental planning begins by finding out which environmental issues the community sees as the most important issues. The Village Environmental Planning Survey can be used to rank your community's perception of environmental issues. The results show a consensus, or agreement, over village environmental issues.

"While environmental issues often polarize communities dealing with questions of economic development and the health of the environment, this survey gave the Tribe consensus about environmental issues without involving politics."

Kate Williams, Eyak Environmental Program Coordinator

Benefits of doing a Village Environmental Planning Survey:

- *Allows for input from each person in the community*
- *Involves the community in environmental planning*
- *Serves as an educational tool for the community*
- *May help your village get funding*
- *Shows potential funders that the community is involved in environmental planning*
- *Helps people in the village work together*

The Council for Athabascan Tribal Governments is using the results from the Village Environmental Planning Surveys in their region to leverage funding for various projects.

How is the Village Environmental Planning Survey used in planning?

Steps 2 and 3 discussed on pages 14–22 of the manual describe how to use the Village Environmental Planning Survey in the planning process.

The Village Environmental Planning Survey should be developed with the help of your community. Use the sample survey on pages 38–39 as a model, and add or delete issues from it based on input from the community. The Village Environmental Planning Survey provided in this manual can be used as a guide to help write a survey specific to your community's needs. Refer to Appendix A for examples of Village Environmental Planning Surveys developed by different villages in Alaska.

Native Village of Eyak:

The Native Village of Eyak has involved the community in the environmental planning process. Encouraged by the success stories of other villages that had conducted environmental surveys, the Village of Eyak developed a survey adapted to their local issues. The survey was a list of 31 environmental issues that were to be ranked, or prioritized, by tribal members. One hundred and fifty-eight people were surveyed. In a community like Cordova, with such a variable population between the summer and the winter, it was a big success to get such a large response at the end of the fishing season.

Two tribal members were hired as field assistants to conduct the survey door-to-door. It took almost the entire month of September to go through the tribal membership lists and then to survey people. Perhaps most encouraging were the positive comments that were written on the surveys about the need for the village to take an active role in environmental issues. There were 31 people who expressed an interest in serving on the Eyak Environmental Committee.

The results of the survey will be used to narrow workplan objectives and goals under Eyak's environmental program, based on the issues tribal members felt were a top priority. An environmental committee will be formed to provide input to the council and the coordinator regarding environmental issues in the village.

—Kate Williams, Eyak Environmental Program Coordinator

When do you use the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

The Village Environmental Planning Survey is used at the beginning of the planning process to help identify the environmental priorities of the community. Part 1 of the manual describes in further detail when to use the Village Environmental Planning Survey in planning (Steps 2-3 of the Environmental Planning Process).

What other information can be added to the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

You may choose to add items to your survey to get more information. For example, the sample Village Environmental Planning Survey in this manual asks people to rank the importance of different issues. You may also want to find out how satisfied people are with the community's efforts on each of the issues. One way you could find out this information is by using the format below on your survey:

Example

	Importance of issue					Satisfaction with the community's efforts				
	<i>Not</i>				<i>Very</i>	<i>Not</i>				<i>Very</i>
Safe drinking water	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Abandoned vehicles, boats or other equipment left in and/or around the village	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

When you are developing your survey, remember to keep the survey simple and easy to understand. A complicated survey is difficult to answer and may end up giving you false information. Also, it is important to develop a survey that can be used again in the future to monitor the environmental changes that take place in your village. If you keep the survey the same, you will be able to see the progress your village has made over time.

Village Environmental Planning Survey

ver 2.0

Village of _____

There may be very serious environmental pollution problems in our village. We need your help in ranking the environmental issues listed below.

This *survey form* is designed to obtain your input to develop our village environmental plan. Our goal is to make our community an environmentally safe place to live and raise families. Your participation in this survey will greatly assist us in reaching this goal. This survey will help us address serious problems with solid waste, hazardous/toxic pollutants and other environmental issues in our village. Listed below are some environmental health problems or issues that may need to be addressed.

Each environmental issue listed below should be **ranked** as to how important you believe the issue is in our village. “1” is the lowest ranking (not important), and “5” is the highest (very important).

Circle the value of importance that you would give to each of the issues below. Please respond to each issue.

	<i>Not important</i>		<i>Very important</i>			
<i>A</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
<i>B</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Abandoned vehicles, boats or other equipment left in and/or around the village.
<i>C</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Beach and/or river bank erosion.
<i>D</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Village dump/landfill.
<i>E</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Construction materials that are left behind by contractors.
<i>F</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Abandoned drums in and/or around the village.
<i>G</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Raw sewage spills in the community and improper sewage disposal at the lagoon.
<i>H</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Annual clean-up program.
<i>I</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Indoor air pollution, such as cigarette/wood stove smoke.
<i>J</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Fuel oil contaminated soils in and/or around the village.

	<i>Not important</i>		<i>Very important</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	
K	1	2	3	4	5	Air pollution problems caused by the village electric generator, vehicles or smoke from burn barrels in the village.
L	1	2	3	4	5	Dead animals and dead fish left in or around the village.
M	1	2	3	4	5	Trash left in or around the village.
N	1	2	3	4	5	Contaminated subsistence foods
O	1	2	3	4	5	Old military sites cleanup.
P	1	2	3	4	5	Hazardous or toxic materials left in dump sites and/or other areas around the village.
Q	1	2	3	4	5	Other environmental issues beyond village control, such as ozone depletion, polluted oceans and/or rivers
R	1	2	3	4	5	Other?

Please use the space below for comments or if you feel that there are other environmental health issues in our village that you feel need to be addressed.

This survey information is very important to our village. Thank you for taking time to complete it.

OPTIONAL. If you would like to receive a copy of your survey along with the results of the survey, please write your name and address below:

_____ (name)

_____ (address)

Conducting the Village Environmental Planning Survey:

Who do you give the survey to?

Ideally, every person in your community should complete a survey. The information that you collect will better represent the village's concerns if more people fill out the survey.

It is important to involve teachers and students in taking the Village Environmental Planning Survey. It would be interesting to compare the children's perceptions of environmental issues to those of the adults.

What is the best way to survey the community?

The best way to survey the community is by going door-to-door and to wait while the survey is being filled out. You will get the most responses if you administer the survey this way. This also allows people to ask questions in case there is confusion. The disadvantage to this method, however, is that it can take a lot of time. Other methods, such as mailings or dropping the survey off at a person's house, may take less time but will also yield fewer responses.

You may need to interview people and fill in the survey for them. Do not exclude people from taking the survey if they cannot read or understand the survey. Each person's input is very important. The pictures and explanations of survey questions on pages 31–34 may be helpful when giving the survey.



Illustration by Natalie Garber

It's a good idea to get feedback on your survey from a few people before giving the survey to the entire community. This way you can correct any problems and make improvements to your survey.

How do you fill in the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

Each issue on the survey should be ranked with a number between 1 and 5 with the number 1 indicating "not important" and 5 indicating "very important." It is important that a response is given for each issue, otherwise the results will not accurately show the community's views. You will be able to control this better if you give the survey door-to-door. If a person has a question about a certain issue on the survey, you will be there to assist him/her.

Each person should rank the issues on the Village Environmental Planning Survey according to how important each issue is to him/her EVERY DAY or all of the time. For example, you are not trying to determine if people think “safe drinking water” is an important issue only at a certain moment. Rather, you want to know how important they feel “safe drinking water” is *all of the time*.

If the person filling out the survey does not understand one of the statements, make sure you help him/her without giving your opinion about the statement. For example, when you explain the statement “safe drinking water” on the survey, don’t change the intent of the statement by the way you ask the question. Do not say, “Safe drinking water is an issue, *isn’t it?*” Instead, say “Is safe drinking water an issue with you?”

Encourage people to fill in the section on comments. This is a valuable part of the survey and can reveal important information that is not addressed in the rest of the survey.

Why is there a space for people to put their name and address on the Village Environmental Planning Survey?

At the end of the Village Environmental Planning Survey, there is a section for the person being surveyed to put their name and address. This allows you to return a copy of the survey to that person along with a copy of the survey results for the entire community. Encourage people to fill this information in but let them know that it is optional. Some people may prefer not to put their name on the survey.

It is a good idea to make a list of all the people who have completed the survey just in case some people do not fill in their name and address. Then, you will know who has completed the survey.

Make sure that each person who filled out a survey gets a copy of his or her survey along with the results from the community. Bringing the survey back to each person gives ownership in the whole planning process.

Compiling the results from the Village Environmental Planning Survey:

After all of the surveys are filled out, the next step is to take the answers from the surveys and summarize them to show the results for the entire village. One way you can put together the results is described below.

Using the example of “Safe drinking water” on the sample Village Environmental Planning Survey, we will go through one way to compile the information. For example, let’s say that the answers below for “Safe drinking water” came from ten people who filled out the survey:

A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.
A	1	2	3	4	5	Safe drinking water.

If you add up all the points for the drinking water statement, the total points equals 35. You can then use this number and compare it with the total points you get for other statements. For example, if you do the same for “Village dump/landfill” and you get a total of 39 points, then you can conclude that the community sees the dump as a higher priority issue than safe drinking water. After adding up the answers for each issue, you can arrange the numbers in order from highest to lowest to show the issues from highest to lowest priority.

For examples of how some communities have compiled their Village Environmental Planning Survey results, see Appendix B.

Your final results might look something like this:

Example

Priority	Position on Survey	Issue	Number of People Responding	Total Points
1	D	Village dump/landfill	10	39
2	N	Contaminated subsistence foods	10	38
3	P	Hazardous/toxic materials left in dump	10	36
4	A	Safe drinking water	10	35
5	C	Beach and/or river erosion	10	34
6	G	Raw sewage spills in the community	10	34
7	K	Air pollution problems...	10	33
8	O	Old military sites cleanup	10	31
9	J	Fuel oil contaminated soils	10	30
10	M	Trash left in or around village	10	30
11	B	Abandoned vehicles, boats...	10	28
12	H	Annual clean-up program	10	27
13	F	Abandoned drums in village	10	26
14	L	Dead animals and fish left around village	10	22
15	Q	Other environ. issues beyond village control	10	20
16	I	Indoor air pollution	10	16
17	E	Construction materials left behind	10	14

TIP FOR GOING THROUGH THE SURVEYS:

On a piece of paper, make a list of all the issues on the Village Environmental Planning Survey. As you go through each person's survey, write his/her response next to each of the issues. Do this for each survey. When you are done, add up all of the responses to get your total.

