

NNA Track 2: Collaborative Research: Planning for Climate Resiliency Amid Changing Culture, Technology, Economics, and Governance

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Heavy equipment being used to launch a boat big enough for large waves but too big for the boat ramp when the water is low at Utqiagvik, Alaska

Project Website Urls & Social Media Accounts:

- N/A

Project Objectives:

As a research planning project, we are using a knowledge coproduction approach to assemble a body with the necessary expertise to identify the research needed to:

- 1) address the most significant challenges to subsistence activities faced by residents of communities in today's Arctic, where the rapid environmental change of recent decades is taking place against a backdrop of social and cultural change spanning multiple generations.
- 2) evaluate adaptation strategies that are being adopted or considered on an individual or community basis and identify which of these are driven by environmental change and which are likely to be effective or sustainable

Keywords: co-production, drivers of change, research plan, adaptation strategies,

Progress to Date/Future Plans:

- We have visited the communities of Kotzebue and Utqiagvik, both located on the Alaska Arctic coast.
- We met with a variety of community members who are both involved in various aspects of subsistence harvesting and knowledgeable about the social and environmental changes taking place in their homeland.
- We sought residents who are familiar with NSF-style research projects as well as those not usually contacted by researchers. We spoke with both male and female residents from a variety of age groups.
- Our discussions were informal, largely unstructured, and primarily intended to inform the topics, structure, and participant list for a subsequent workshop involving members of both communities and academics with knowledge relevant to the issues identified by the communities.

Highlights or Expected Outcomes:

- Our most significant finding to date is a near-consensus from community members that environmental Arctic change is disrupting subsistence activity, but is not the source of the most pressing challenges they are facing.
- Compared to widespread problems related to health, wellbeing, cultural vitality and identity, education, economy, infrastructure, and transportation (none of which are new to the Arctic), community members seem to feel capable of adapting to climate change.

NNA Community Collaboration and Research Coordination:

- Coordination between different NNA research groups is essential to avoid "research fatigue" and other negative outcomes from the incoming tide of researchers to Arctic communities.
- The program solicitation and funding profile to date focus heavily on environmental change and its direct implications. This does not appear well aligned with concerns and challenges shared by community residents.

Advice for Overcoming NNA Project Challenges:

- We are learning that the NNA program may have missed the mark by tacitly focusing attention on the popular narrative that rapid environmental change is the primary driver of disruption in the Arctic
- It is unlikely that any single project, within NNA or otherwise, can fully address the information needs of Arctic residents, even on narrow topics. Aggregating results to better meet the needs of Arctic residents is imperative if NNA is to fill its promise of helping society navigate the uncharted waters of the new Arctic.