
The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs

Anchorage, Alaska, Roundtable Summary

April 14, 2011

Prepared by: The Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

DOE Tribal Roundtable on Tribal Energy
Anchorage, Alaska
April 14, 2011

ANCHORAGE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anchorage, Alaska Roundtable on Tribal Energy Policy convened at 10:00 a.m., Thursday April 15th, at the downtown Anchorage Hilton. The meeting was held by the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs (Office of Indian Energy). Tracey LeBeau, Director of the Office of Indian Energy, and Pilar Thomas, Deputy Director-Policy of the Office of Indian Energy, represented DOE. Approximately twenty-seven people attended the meeting, including representatives of three native Alaskan villages, four Alaskan tribal corporations representing more than 40 tribal governments, as well as representatives from tribal associations and conferences. Interested state, federal, and non-profit representatives also were present. A full list of attendees is at the end of this summary. The meeting was facilitated by the Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute).

Participants introduced themselves and stated their objectives and what they hoped to take away from the meeting, including to:

- Learn about energy efficiency opportunities for tribal facilities
- Explore potential federal/state cooperation on energy programs
- Foster effective communication between tribes and federal agencies
- Learn about increased funding for energy efficient grants
- Advocate for Native Alaska budget equity, e.g. congressional appropriations
- Communicate that Alaska has unique challenges that are different from those in the lower 48 states

Tracey LeBeau and Pilar Thomas introduced the DOE's Office of Indian Energy. JR Bluehouse, facilitator, described the goals of the roundtable, which were to gain feedback on:

1. Native Alaskan perspective on energy priorities
2. Tribal feedback on DOE's policies and programs in Alaskan villages
3. Future DOE Tribal Policies
4. Federal government-wide Energy Issues and Coordination

Participants discussed the four topic areas. Key issues and themes around tribal energy priorities included:

- Increase energy efficiency opportunities for tribal facilities
- Develop alternative energy sources, such as wind or hydroelectric power
- Reduce overall energy costs in tribal communities and for tribal businesses
- Facilitate effective communication between tribes and federal agencies

- Increase cooperation on projects across tribes and build capacity for the grant application process
- Explore budget equity for tribes in Alaska, e.g. congressional budget appropriations for Native Alaska energy development
- Address challenges unique to Alaska, such as limited road systems, high costs of transportation and shipping
- Expedite the permitting process for renewable energy projects and be consistent with permitting across agencies
- Protection of tribal sovereignty and governing authority
- Create access to health care, which is partially dependent on energy costs which impact transportation costs

Key issues related to current DOE policies and programs included:

- Eliminate state pass-through for federal tribal funding, e.g. the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), Energy Efficiency
- Focus energy programs more on education than funding
- Increase DOE outreach in Alaska to help address issues on a local level
- Make funding available for resource assessments, or permitting and design of energy projects

Feedback for future policies and programs included:

- Increase grants for energy efficiency and conservation to reduce overall operational costs for tribal and federal facilities within tribal communities
- Increase education and capacity building for grants, e.g. grant writing, reporting, and research
- Simplify the grant application process by allowing tribes to apply for multiple grants with one application and by making grants more accessible
- Allow tribes to connect alternative energy projects to the grid

Key issues around federal coordination included:

- Increase coordination between federal, state, and local governments on tribal related energy development
- Provide resources to locate energy projects and grants
- Provide more coordination between federal agencies, both for grant application processes and government-to-government consultations
- Explore how agencies, for example: Housing and Urban Development (HUD), can work together and benefit tribes

Ms. Thomas and Ms. LeBeau explained that a summary of the meeting would be made available and the information would be used to inform the issues and provide a foundation for conversation at the May 4th and 5th DOE Tribal Summit in Washington, DC. The meeting concluded at 4:30PM.

DOE Tribal Roundtable Summary Anchorage, Alaska

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I. Introductions and Goals for the Sessions

Participants introduced themselves and stated their objectives for the meeting. Key objectives included:

- Learn about energy efficiency opportunities for tribal facilities
- Explore potential federal-state cooperation on energy programs
- Foster effective communication between tribes and federal agencies
- Learn about increased funding for energy efficient grants
- Advocate for budget equity
- Communicate that Alaska has unique challenges that are different from those in the lower 48 states

Tracey LeBeau and Pilar Thomas introduced themselves. Ms. LeBeau, DOE, explained that the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs is a new office established in the 2005 Energy Policy Act and is now staffed and funded. In order to establish policy, and then programs based on that policy, the Office of Indian Energy is holding roundtables to gain information on tribes' primary energy needs, obstacles, and solutions, as well as how DOE can help. Ms. LeBeau shared a presentation explaining the structure of DOE and how tribes may currently interact with DOE, including funding for feasibility studies and energy efficiency. She explained that the statute establishing the office authorizes the office to develop policy and programs that:

- Promote Indian tribal energy development, efficiency and use;
- Reduce or stabilize energy costs;
- Enhance and strengthen Indian tribal energy and economic infrastructure relating to natural resource development and electrification; and
- Bring electrical power and service to Indian land and the homes of tribal members located on Indian lands or acquired, constructed, or improved (in whole or in part) with federal funds.

JR Bluehouse, facilitator, described the goals for the sessions. The Office of Indian Energy is interested in gaining input on four primary areas:

- Native Alaskan perspective on energy priorities
- Tribal feedback on DOE's Tribal Policies and Programs in Alaskan villages
- Future DOE Indian Energy Policies
- Federal government-wide Energy Issues and Coordination

Participants discussed the four areas of input. The issues and themes are described below:

II. Tribal Energy Priorities

Energy efficiency opportunities for tribal facilities:

Participants expressed interest in learning about available resources to increase energy efficiency for infrastructure such as water, sewer, clinics, building maintenance, water treatment, and other projects in native villages.

Alternative Energy Sources:

A participant stated the need for alternative energy sources to supplement diesel, not replace it.

Participants highlighted the potential for wind energy in native villages.

Hydropower was discussed throughout the meeting, and some participants explained that they were not allowed to install hydropower because of native salmon runs and conflicts with the Endangered Species Act.

Overall cost reduction of energy for tribal communities and businesses:

Participants noted high energy costs in the state of Alaska and the effect it is having on local villages. Participants explained that rising energy costs are a hindrance to small businesses and native people from small villages are moving to larger villages where access to electricity is less expensive. Energy costs are causing villages to disappear.

Participants noted high transportation costs related to fuel prices and remote villages in Alaska and the hindrance this places on people trying to attend listening sessions or government-to-government consultations.

A participant explained that people in tribal communities sometimes go without necessities to pay for heat and light in homes. He stated that without supplemental financing from other agencies like the housing authority, his village would not have electricity.

A participant explained that the high cost of fuel affects the way of life in communities. Some communities do not have large food storage facilities, and if that runs out, more food may need to be flown in at high cost.

Effective communication between tribes and federal agencies:

One participant explained that tribal communities are overwhelmed by communication and that often there is no one being paid to read or respond to letters from federal agencies.

Education and Capacity Building:

A participant explained the difficulty in working on projects with multiple entities that do not communicate effectively.

Another participant discussed the need for a grant writer to help small villages apply for funding. He explained that people in small villages have a number of jobs and applying for grants can be overwhelming.

Budget equity issues:

A participant noted that half of federally recognized tribes are located in the state of Alaska and those tribes should get their share of federal funding. He also stated that the high cost of doing business in Alaska should be taken into consideration.

Address Alaska's Unique Energy Challenges:

Participants reiterated the high cost of travel due to the remote locations of villages and limited or no access by road or railroad. Often the only way to access villages is by plane or boat.

A participant explained that in his village there are no nearby communities and this makes it difficult to build infrastructure and share power with other villages.

Participants also shared their dislike for roads because roads bring in outside hunters and this could impact subsistence food sources.

DOE Response: The DOE representative explained that tribes in Alaska are similar to small tribes in Northern California and the lower 48 because they are small and would like to become more energy efficient and self-sufficient. She discussed the added challenge of isolation and distance in Alaska, but encouraged solutions that would have benefits across small tribes.

A participant discussed that villages in Alaska do not have the same gaming opportunities as those in the lower 48 because of laws in the state of Alaska. He explained that gaming tribes in the lower 48 share revenue with smaller tribes, but that is not available in Alaska.

Expedite permitting processes:

A participant discussed a hydroelectric facility they were attempting to install in a refuge or parks system and the difficulties getting the correct permits.

Another participant described frustration with inconsistency between different federal government agencies' permitting processes. The participant discussed a wind project in the Aleutians called Sand Point and permitting delays from DOE because of avian concerns. Participants felt that their science and models addressed this issue.

Participants explained that permitting delays are hurting communities because they could be paying a lot less for energy if they had installed wind turbines.

A participant suggested a clearinghouse like the state of Alaska uses to explain exactly what needs to be done to acquire permits.

Authority and Sovereignty of Federally Recognized Tribes:

One participant explained that tribal corporations, which are recognized by the state of Alaska, are not the same as federally recognized tribes, and tribal communities need to understand what authority they have as sovereign governments. The participant detailed issues in permitting and power projects experienced with the state bureaucracy.

Access to Health Care:

One participant involved in a tribal health organization explained that energy costs affect health care for villages. The number one cause of death in Southwest Alaska is cancer, and cancer screenings require flying machinery out to clinics. They are looking at a 20% increase in travel costs next year and this could impact screening.

III. Feedback on Current Policies**Consistency and Simplicity in Getting Funding to Tribes:**

Participants explained that federal funding allocated to tribes goes through the state for distribution and never gets to villages. Participants suggested that more government-to-government interaction be used to help solve this issue along with consistency and simplicity in assistance programs. It was mentioned that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Indian General Assistance Programs (IGAP) provide a good example.

Basis of Energy Programs on Education, not Funding:

One participant discussed the need for education on energy efficiency and how much energy is being used by different activities and appliances. The participant stressed solving small-scale issues and not just "throwing money" at the tribes and suggested DOE use resources to create a more effective communication network.

DOE Response: DOE explained that there is widespread frustration that block grant money is not enough and other tribes do not feel like they get enough. The question of what might be the best way to deploy stretched federal resources to achieve the goal of providing technical assistance and capacity building at the tribal or regional levels was raised.

More DOE Influence in Alaska:

A participant discussed the need for more DOE influence in Alaska because issues need to be addressed at a local level. Participants discussed an EPA conference in Alaska where there were 500 people.

DOE Response: DOE explained that this is a funding issue – EPA has more funding than DOE and that that particular EPA program is very mature.

Need Funding for Resource Assessments or Permitting and Design:

Another participant discussed a biomass project in Chugach where using timber resources could keep energy costs down because they would not have to ship fuel. The participant explained that the feasibility study is done, but they do not have funding for resource assessment or permitting and design.

IV. Feedback for Future Policies

More Grants for Energy Efficiency and Conservation:

A participant detailed some retrofits to tribal health clinics that reduced operational costs by increasing energy efficiency and were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). It was suggested that DOE have more energy efficiency grants and federal facilities be more energy efficient to save money.

DOE Response: Public/private partnerships and the need for cooperation among governments, state/federal/tribes, for infrastructure development was discussed by DOE. Tribes might want to look at that as a model and an opportunity to leverage public and private funding for projects. DOE encourages private partnerships because federal funding is not plentiful enough to supplant a private partner, especially with the tax implications of renewable energy.

The need for funding for small-scale projects was discussed at the meeting. Participants discussed difficulty getting private industry partners for small projects that would benefit small villages. Participants also discussed difficulty getting federal grants for smaller projects because they are competing against multi-kilowatt projects. Participants explained that a small 5 kilowatt system on tribal land goes a long way in reducing energy costs.

One participant explained that there is continuing need for money to fund construction, maintenance, and operations training, as well as for research.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) rural development project, which provides low interest loans for projects in rural communities, was described by a participant, and it was suggested that DOE pursue a similar program.

Education and Capacity Building for Grants and Funding:

Participants discussed issues with finding grants they can apply for and explained that they are all applying for the same grants. More education on creative ways to finance projects was requested.

DOE Response: DOE expressed concern with internet-based education tools and asked what would be the most efficient way to educate tribal leaders on renewable project funding.

One participant explained that she is from a Native Village Corporation and that although there are issues between corporations and tribes, their corporation has provided funding for fuel and has helped tribes co-sign loans and with grants. She explained that a working relationship is important.

Success with an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program was addressed by one participant who explained that they worked to develop local capacity to more effectively apply for the grants.

Streamline Grant Application Process:

Participants discussed good experiences with the EPA Indian General Assistance Programs (IGAP) model for distributing grants, and the topic was brought up multiple times during the meeting. Participants suggested DOE use the IGAP model in future funding.

One participant explained that the Department of Justice (DOJ) initiated a program where tribes can apply for all project areas with one application and suggested DOE may be able to follow a similar model.

Participants encouraged DOE to make grants more accessible, and one participant discussed difficulties with FedConnect (a centralized marketplace where individuals and organizations can find opportunities for federal grants or assistance funding). Participants stressed simplicity and clarification in the grant application process.

Another participant described the Indian Energy Parity Act as a "one stop shop" for permitting and said that DOE is currently developing opportunities to cover all stages of energy development. The participant explained that they had difficulty figuring out if Alaskan villages were eligible for these grants because of the language "Indian Land." They encouraged correct and clear definitions of terms in grant language.

Allow Tribes to Connect to the Energy Grid:

Participants explained that there may be an issue with power companies in Alaska not allowing tribes to connect to their grid because they do not want competitors.

V. Federal government-wide issues and coordination

Coordination with State and Local Governments:

The various options for energy project funding on state and national levels were explained at the meeting, including the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG) and housing and energy finance programs in Alaska.

Participants from Alaska state agencies discussed opportunities for collaboration between DOE and state agencies. One participant described a new energy technical fund where the Denali Commission is working with Alaska Energy Authority. University of Alaska Fairbanks is also working with the state and DOE to fund projects. Another participant suggested hiring a networking person to facilitate this cooperation.

A participant asked if there were goals or standards in Indian country for increases in renewable energy.

DOE Response: The DOE representative explained that some tribes have asked about developing their own energy policy. If a state has a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), tribes can benefit from getting energy from a local utility that has to comply with RPS.

Where to Find Energy Projects and Grants:

Participants listed the various resources for finding grants for energy efficiency programs and projects. These included: Alaska Energy Authority and HUD, the Energy Efficiency Consortium, Tribal Energy Department newsletter, the Denali Commission, the Alaska Work Energy Conference in Juneau, and the Nome Energy Summit.

Coordination Between Federal Agencies:

DOE asked the group what their experience had been working with other federal agencies and their grant programs for energy development. DOE representative suggested Commerce's Economic Development Division and USDA grant and biomass programs and asked for feedback about how to develop a more coordinated approach to energy development.

Participant explained that most people do not know what is available for funding and suggested that DOE could also list other agency grants on their list serves or internet page.

DOE Response: Explained that DOE has been surveying grants that tribes could be eligible for and tagging them by topic, such as research and development. They have also started listing opportunities not specifically oriented toward tribes and the next level will be to look across other agencies.

The topic of high travel costs in Alaska was broached multiple times during the meeting and one participant suggested that federal agencies take this into consideration when doing government-to-government consultations and coordinate their timing so that tribes could attend multiple consultations at once.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

DOE representative asked about the HUD sustainable communities program and whether there is a general model of housing design HUD is encouraging in Alaska for more energy efficient housing.

Participants described overall good results from the HUD program, although shipping materials to remote villages remains a consideration in building costs and materials. They also explained that Alaska has many different regions and climates and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to problems with construction such as mold or terrain.

VI. Closing Remarks

Ms. Thomas, DOE, discussed logistics of the upcoming May summit with the Secretary of Energy. She explained that it will be a two day event: the first day, May 4th, is for tribal leadership and is intended to give tribal leaders an opportunity to meet with political leadership at DOE, and the second date, May 5th, is open to everyone interested tribal energy. A keynote speech will be delivered by Secretary Chu, and they will have panel discussions on tribal energy development. Ms. Thomas explained that it was important for DOE to introduce itself to Indian Country and she is hoping for a good turnout at the summit. Ms. Thomas also discussed the possibility of having the summit recorded and streamed online or made available on the web and DVD for those unable to attend.

Ms. LeBeau, DOE, acknowledged the limited interaction between DOE and tribes and encouraged tribes to look at the DOE website and check out some of the programs. She explained that information shared at the roundtables will feed into deliberations and processes for future energy policy and that notes and summaries from these sessions will be made public so that tribes across the country can see what others are saying. She reflected that there are many themes and consensus points across Indian Country and she would like that to be incorporated into the summit.

II. Roundtable Participants

Mike Black, Alaska Native Tribal Health Corporation
Cathie Clements, Rural Alaska Community Action Program (CAP)
Tony Delia, Tanana Chief's Conference (TCC)
Victoria L. Demmett, Yukatat Tlingit Tribe
David Harrison, Alaska Inter-Tribal Council
Brian Hirsch, National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)
Orville H. Huntington, Tanana Chief's Conference (TCC)
Tracey LeBeau, Director DOE Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs
Nathan Lojewski, Chugachmiut Tribal Organization
Bryan Maracle, Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG)
Greg McIntyre, Yukon Kuskokwim Health
Melody Nibeck, Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)
Moses Owen, Akiak Native Community
David Pelunis-Messier, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (YRITWC)
Erica Reith, BIA Alaska Regional Office
Daniel Reitz, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)
Walter H. Rose, Kawerak Inc.
Marcie Sherer, Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
Michaelene Stephen, Tyonek Native Corporation
Bruce Tiedeman, Alaska Energy Authority
Christine Klein, Calista Corporation
Pilar Thomas, Deputy Director-Policy DOE Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs
Moses Toyukak, Manokotak Village Co.
Dennis Wagner, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Robert A. Walker, Tanana Chief's Conference (TCC)
Bridget Wolgemuth, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC)
Bruce Wright, Aleutian Pribilof Island Association (APIA)

Facilitation Team:

J.R. Bluehouse, Program Manager, U.S. Institute
Patricia Lewis, Sr. Program Associate, U.S. Institute
Sasha Stortz, Program Associate, U.S. Institute
Kirsten Nelsen, Note taker, U.S. Institute

Logistics Management:

Charlie May, Chickasaw Nation Industries