

**TESTIMONY OF  
THE SHISHMAREF EROSION AND RELOCATION COALITION  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Sub Committee on Disaster Recovery  
OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE  
October 11, 2007  
HEARING ON  
“The State and Federal Response to Storm Damage and Erosion in Alaska’s Coastal  
Villages”  
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The Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I am Tony A. Weyiouanna Sr. - Transportation Planner for Kawerak, Inc. providing staff assistance to the Coalition and a member of the Relocation Coalition. The Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition, made up of the governing bodies of the Native Village of Shishmaref (the federally recognized tribe), City of Shishmaref, and the Shishmaref Native Corporation. I have provided for you today a packet of additional information, photos and a video file of storm footage of the November 2003 storm in Shishmaref available for downloading at the Coalition’s web site at <http://www.shishmarefrelocation.com/index.html>.

We value the working relationship that we have developed with Congressional and State Representatives, agencies and different non-profit organizations and look forward to the continued progress of relocating our community with your continued support. We understand that the complete relocation of our community to the mainland can take another 5-10 years if funding is appropriated.

Alaska Coastal Erosion and authorized under Section 117 of Division C, Public Law 108-447. This allows 100% Federal funding for the most cost effective solution that satisfies the requirements of the law, providing funds are available. Section 117 states, *“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of the Army is authorized to carry out, at full Federal expense, structural and non-structural projects for storm damage prevention and reduction, coastal erosion, and ice and glacial damage in Alaska, including relocation of affected communities and construction of replacement facilities.”*

I plan to address three main points that are important to the community of Shishmaref. They are: (I.) relocation of the community to the mainland; (II.) projects completed to date and effectiveness; and (III.) recommended projects to help move the relocation project forward.

- I. The Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition honorably request your assistance in both funding and technical support from the State and federal government for the expedited relocation and beach front protection of our community. We also are asking the State of Alaska to assist our community in this project and will work with the State representatives to find ways to fund the relocation project for Shishmaref. We respectfully request **that the State of Alaska and Congress authorize and appropriate funds for the near term protection of our existing community while we prepare for a move and for relocation to a new site at Tin Creek under a pilot joint Federal-State-local coordinated project.**
  
- II. We have completed the following projects regarding flooding and erosion, and the relocation project since 2001:
  1. 2001 Formation of the Erosion and Relocation Coalition consisting of the City Council of Shishmaref, IRA council and of the Board of directors of Shishmaref Native Corporation to work on a solution to the ongoing beach erosion and to represent the community in all activities associated with the relocation to the mainland. This Coalition group is still being used today and has been beneficial to the project for the community.
  2. 2001 Kawerak funded the Nayokpuk Stores' beach front protection project- 101' gabion project. \$36,000.00, Project protected thee tanks until they were replaced by Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) through funding from the Denali Commission.
  3. 2001 USDA-NRCS started evaluation of 11 potential relocation sites identified by the Coalition. Project completed, two sites recommended by NRCS for relocation site consideration, Tin Creek and West Tin Creek, Tin Creek site ultimately selected on December 12, 2006 as the relocation site for the community.
  4. 2001 A storm prompted Governor Tony Knowles to appropriate \$110,000 to complete placing sand-filled gabions along the worst hit shoreline. Single-line gabions constructed- approximately 1200' feet of temporary protection. Held for only one storm.
  5. 2002 Shishmaref completed Strategic relocation plan. State mitigation funds provided- \$50,000.00. Kawerak Transportation also provided assistance. Plan still being used and in place; updating of plan to be made by the Coalition.
  6. 2002 On July 10<sup>th</sup> Shishmaref voted to relocate to the mainland by a City of Shishmaref sponsored vote July 19, 2002, realizing that the relocation could take 15 to 20 years to accomplish. The Coalition is currently working towards relocation as decided by the vote based on community consensus.
  7. 2002 October- Senator Stevens calls for GAO study of villages experiencing flooding and erosion. Delegation from Shishmaref testified at the hearing in Anchorage-June 2004. The Coalition requested that

Shishmaref be a community involved with the study and provided information to the GAO. We were happy that we were able to assist in this project.

8. 2002 AVEC/Denali Commission constructed replacement bulk fuel tanks for the Nayokpuk General store. The rest of the community bulk fuel tanks also need replacement.
9. 2002 USDA-NRCS recommended 5 potential sites for further studies.
10. 2003 USDA-NRCS Reconnaissance Study done” Shishmaref Site Analysis for Potential Emergency and Evacuation and Relocation sites. In this report, NRCS recommends, based on the team’s evaluation that Shishmaref relocate to the Southwest site, West Nantuuq, with Igloot being the second choice of the team.
11. 2003 GAO report to Congress completed December 2003. This report confirms that Alaskan villages are encountering flooding and erosion and 186 villages are affected by this. Shishmaref was identified as one of the top four communities most affected by flooding and erosion that need to be relocated to a safe place away from flooding and erosion. 18 of our 20 villages in the Bering Straits Region are being affected by flooding and erosion.
12. 2004 Army Corps of Engineers Partnership Program Project funded \$1m for a Cost of Alternatives for the relocation of Shishmaref. This study includes the Cultural impacts and subsistence use by the residents of Shishmaref. Study completed. Options for the community include relocating to a nearby location on the mainland at a cost of \$180m, staying in place- \$110m, Collocating to Nome-\$93m and collocating to Kotzebue-\$141m. Of the four alternatives identified by the Army Corps of Engineers, the community stands by its’ decision to relocate to Tin Creek nearby the existing site of Shishmaref to keep its’ unique, 4000 year old Traditional lifestyle intact.
13. 2004 Army Corps of Engineers completed a Design Analysis for emergency shelters on the mainland for Shishmaref. The Coalition has requested for funding from Congress to construct these emergency shelters at the relocation site.
14. 2004 five sites researched by USDA-NRCS narrowed down to two sites- Tin Creek and West Tin Creek. Tin Creek site being the better of the two based on space availability and potential for having more options for infrastructure development.
15. 200’ Kawerak rip rap seawall constructed along the west end of town funded through the BIA/IRR roads program at a cost of \$2.2m.
16. 2005 Further construction of rip rap seawall by the City and the Army Corps of Engineers of Engineers. Legislative funding \$2.45m and the federal funding \$1.5m through the Army Corps of Engineers of Engineers Section 14 program.

17. USDA-NRCS completed depth sounding of port and gravel fill needs for Tin Creek. Report given to Coalition January 2006. Report is preliminary and needs further assessment.
18. 2005 Funding received by the Army Corps of Engineers of Engineers for the full design of beach front protection to be completed by the end of the year.
19. 2005 Funding received in the Transportation bill to start construction of the relocation road. - \$4.25mm appropriated by Congress in SAFETEA-LU and \$500,000.00 match requirement obtained through the State Legislature. The Reconnaissance study is to be started in the late fall 2007 by ADOT and Kawerak Inc., with an estimated \$1.5m to be left over for construction. Once project construction starts, Kawerak, Inc. will consider partnering with ADOT to help with project funding.
20. 2006 Army Corps of Engineers completed "Section 117 Shoreline Erosion Protection, Shishmaref, Alaska Technical Report, Environmental Assessment and Finding of no Significant Impact" - An examination of erosion issues in Shishmaref (not you have the " in the right place?0. This report states that 3,400' of beach needs protection; if the rest of the beach is not protected similar to the BSSD project, the rest of the community will be jeopardized by the flooding and erosion. Based on aerial comparisons of photos, we are losing 8.9' of shoreline per year. Since 2001 we have been taking measurements and based on these actual measurements we are losing an average of 22.6' of shoreline per year. No findings of negative impacts were found and the Army Corps of Engineers recommend that we move forward with the proposed project to construct additional rock seawall in Shishmaref. The FY 2008 Presidents Budget contains \$1 million for the Tribal Partnership nationwide, and nothing for the Alaska Coastal Erosion work. At Shishmaref, there is 700 additional feet of revetment that is designed and is ready for construction at a cost of \$7.5 million. This work can be incremented into a \$5 million base amount with \$2.5 million in options. The estimated cost to complete the authorized shore revetment is \$25 million (includes the FY 08 capability)
21. 2006 Army Corps of Engineers completed the examination of Erosion issues of the following villages- Bethel, Dillingham, Kaktovik, Kivilina, Newtok, Shishmaref and Unalakleet, the report is entitled "Alaska Village Erosion Technical Assistance Program". This report highlights the Army Corps of Engineers assistance they have provided to these communities listed through their Tribal Partnership Program. In this report they mentioned that Shishmaref needs help in constructing more revetments to protect the community from flooding and erosion and that the Army Corps of Engineers is ready to provide assistance to our community.
22. 2006 Construction of the City of Shishmaref HUD project constructing 297' of HESCO baskets funded by HUD (\$500,000.00) and the City of Shishmaref (300,000.00) - \$800,000.00 project. Project served

its purpose for a year and is currently being replaced with rip-rap by the Army Corps of Engineers project.

23. 2006 Public meeting in Shishmaref held. Coalition to have work sessions to consider the relocation sites for recommendation to the community for selection. Decision made by the community to ratify the Tin Creek location as the new relocation site during a public meeting on December 12, 2006.
24. 2007 \$6,500,000.00 received by the Army Corps of Engineers for seawall construction for Shishmaref through the Army Corps of Engineers Section 117 program.
25. Started the Reconnaissance Study for the Gravel haul/ Relocation road. The new airport master plan development also is in process by ADOT. The wind study data collection for the new airport at Tin Creek is scheduled to get started this coming winter 2008. This project will gather two years of wind data to determine whether or not a cross wind runway is needed and the data collected can also be used to determine whether or not wind generation is feasible at the new site. The airport wind study is a part of the Airport Master Plan Development project for the new site of Shishmaref. The first community meeting was held here in Shishmaref on October 1, 2007 by ADOT and was the first step in the project.

### III. Recommended projects to help move the relocation project forward:

1. That funding to the Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition for administrative capacity building, comprehensive relocation planning and technical assistance funding of our office here to ensure that the relocation of our community is completed in the most effective, efficient and suited for the traditional values of our community. We request funding in the amount of \$950,818.00 for the first year funding and \$1,100,000.00 per year until the relocation of our community is completed. Local coordination for the relocation project is essential; if we are to be successful. This is an extremely complicated venture and the people of Shishmaref need help planning for many more generations of our unique subsistence lifestyle. We have been established here for the past 4,000 years and have passed on our traditions and culture from generation to generation and are not about to give up our unique and inherent lifestyle that we continue to enjoy today.
2. Authorize and appropriate \$30 million to the United States (Department of Transportation) as a project in the coming year's Appropriations budget for the construction of a 21 mile long road from Tin Creek to Ear Mountain, a rock and gravel source. The SAFETEA-LU bill passed by Congress in 2005 provided seed funding in the amount of \$4.25m for the start of the construction of this road, but is only enough to get the reconnaissance study done for the road. Funds are desperately needed for the complete construction of this project. Currently, the Alaska Department of Transportation has started the process of the reconnaissance study for the road and has targeted the fall of 2008 for completion of this study. Kawerak Inc. For the Native Village of Shishmaref, identified in the Long Range

Transportation Plan to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Inventory of Roads Program (BIA-IRR) the need to construct this road and has been approved by the BIA-IRR program and is an eligible project to move to the construction phase once funding is provided to Kawerak, Inc.

3. Continued seawall funding to complete project, the Army Corps of Engineers has identified an additional \$25m is needed to complete this project. The FY 2008 Presidents Budget contains \$1 million for the Tribal Partnership nationwide, and nothing for the Alaska Coastal Erosion work. At Shishmaref, there is 700 additional feet of revetment that is designed and is ready for construction at a cost of \$7.5 million. This work can be incremented into a \$5 million base amount with \$2.5 million in options. The estimated cost to complete the authorized shore revetment is \$25 million (includes the FY 08 capability)
4. Authorize and appropriate \$5 million for the construction of emergency evacuation shelters on the mainland for the community of Shishmaref. Once again, The Army Corps of Engineers has provided a Design Analysis for the emergency shelters and are aware that constructing these shelters is vital for the safety of our community. An alternative design for smaller modules, which can be used as family housing, is included in the attachment summary.
5. That Congress authorizes the National Park Service to dedicate a public roadway easement for an access corridor across the Bering Land Bridge to provide access to Ear Mountain (gravel source) to the community of Shishmaref without the requirement of a land exchange with our local Native Corporation.
6. The Native Village of Shishmaref council is the legal remnant of the Native traditional government who are organized and recognized as a tribal government under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Native Village of Shishmaref is organized as a public non-profit recognized by the federal government. With programs ranging from education to housing, and natural resource management to economic development, with the assistance of Kawerak, Inc. our regional non-profit, The Native Village of Shishmaref also seeks to improve the Region's social, economic, educational, cultural and political conditions.
7. In addition, Kawerak Inc. is the Regional non-profit established to serve the Native Villages in the Bering Straits region and has the capability to compact the federal programs under 638 compacting and is an authorized participant with P.L. 102-477 programs.
8. We recommend that consideration be given to identifying, tasking and funding an appropriate entity (e.g. Denali Commission or the Corps of Engineers) to take the federal lead to provide leadership and additional assistance to communities in Alaska needing relocation and flooding assistance.
9. Lastly, we would like to thank Governor Sarah Palin her leadership in setting up the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet. We hope that this will help the

process in getting more assistance from the State of Alaska to communities like ours and others to get more constructive assistance in the future.

In conclusion, we understand that other communities are faced with the similar problems as we are here in Shishmaref and also are working to relocate their communities. Shishmaref has tasked the Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition to advocate for funding and coordination of the erosion and relocation project by forming the Coalition in 2001 and to move forward by consensus of the community. Since then, we have worked for the best possible solution for the community of Shishmaref and express our community's desire to move forward with the relocation project by presenting to you, our respected elected State and federal representatives our request for funding of the relocation project. We appreciate your support in working to reestablish Shishmaref to a site on the mainland safe from the dangers of being washed away and to exist as one people continuing to enjoy our unique subsistence lifestyle. We, as American people, deserve the attention and help of our fellow Americans.

Once again, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify regarding our flooding, erosion and relocation projects in my home Shishmaref.

## **Attachments**

Will hand deliver to Anchorage Hearing.