

State of Alaska  
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
**Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA)**  
**2008 Annual Report**  
Tara Jollie, Director



**COMMUNITY &  
REGIONAL AFFAIRS**



Sarah Palin, Governor  
Emil Notti, Commissioner

**Article X, Section 14, of the Alaska State Constitution states:**

“An Agency shall be established by law in the executive branch of the State government to advise and assist local governments. It shall review their activities, collect and publish local government information, and perform other duties prescribed by law.”

*The Division of Community & Regional Affairs (DCRA) is this agency.*

## **DCRA's Mission**

Promote strong communities and healthy economies by providing information, technical and financial assistance, and other capacity-building resources.

## **Guiding Principles**

- ★ DCRA assists communities to acquire necessary tools to promote accountability and sustainability.
- ★ DCRA works collaboratively with others to accomplish our goals.
- ★ DCRA promotes rural leadership to encourage thriving economies.
- ★ DCRA promotes fiscal and civic responsibility.
- ★ DCRA is the information source on rural communities.
- ★ DCRA values and respects staff and encourages their personal and professional growth.

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## Introduction

**D**CRA coordinates the resources of State agencies and commissions, federal agencies and commissions, regional nonprofit organizations, municipal governments, and tribal governing bodies to develop public service facilities and efficient public service delivery. DCRA also fulfills its mission by providing technical assistance, financial assistance, statistical information, capacity-building and economic development resources to communities, the public, and private agencies.

In order to provide direct service, DCRA has staff in seven locations across Alaska. Staff in each office are in frequent contact with the surrounding communities, helping to develop and maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the communities' local governments.



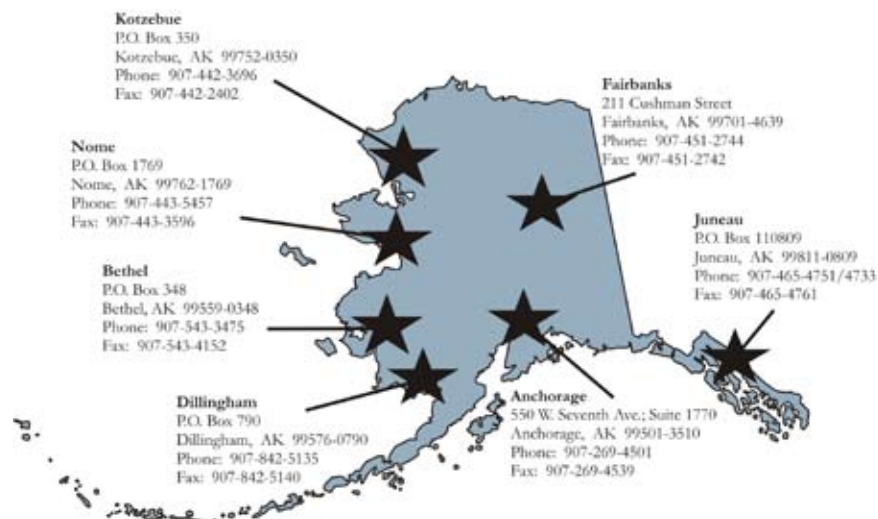
Utility Management Training



Local Boundary Commission hearing in Delta Junction



Multiuse facility in Girdwood



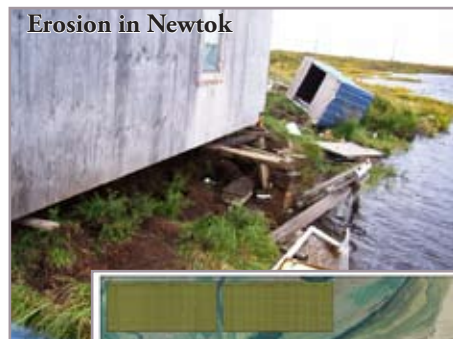
DCRA is composed of the following sections:

- Local Government Technical Assistance and the Rural Utility Business Advisor Program
- Community Planning and Land Management
- Grants Programs
- Community Financial Assistance
- Local Boundary Commission
- Office of the State Assessor
- Research and Community Information

### Advocating for Sustainable Solutions

DCRA works to address long-term and short-term issues that affect the sustainability and success of Alaskan communities across the state. The Division is especially focused on providing technical assistance to small local governments, financial assistance, and grant resources. The Division's efforts in the last year addressed key issues such as:

- Administrating a wide range of State and federal grants and other funding for communities. On average, each Grants Administrator manages more than 200 grants. The Division is also responsible for allocating and disbursing financial aid to communities through the Community Energy Assistance Program (CEAP), Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), National Forest Receipts, and other shared revenue programs whenever funds are available.
- Serving as a key facilitator in the formation of regional governments and the incorporation process by providing staff for the Local Boundary Commission.
- Helping educate the public, agencies, and communities about land ownership issues, and taking an active role in the 14(c) process.
- Serving as a mediator to coordinate services and find solutions that help communities affected by flood and erosion, specifically working with communities such as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kotzebue, and Bethel.
- Mitigating the impacts of the high cost of energy in Alaska by maintaining statewide and interagency focus on the energy issues through timely and pertinent research, development of funding programs, and ongoing dialogue with communities. In an effort to document the changes in the cost of fuel in rural Alaska, the Research and Community Information Section produced the Current Community Conditions:





Fuel Prices Across Alaska series, which reports on the spot price of fuel at the pump/retailers for 100 communities.

- Working with communities to ensure that they can sustain basic water/utilities system operations via the Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program. In 2007, RUBA staff made 275 trips to 203 communities for a total of 831 days on-site to conduct utility assessments and provide a wide variety of on-site assistance. In addition, RUBA funded a contractor to present four regional QuickBooks Pro Accounting classes to 46 rural participants and furnish each student with a copy of the most current QuickBooks Pro version for their community.
- Developing online resources to enable communities to plan better, have full access to their own information, and contribute to growing mapping, photographic, and document resources. The Community Profiles database continues to be the leading online resource for information on communities across the state. DCRA brought new systems online such as the Financial Documents Delivery System, the Municipal Officials Directory, and overhauled static web pages to make them more intuitive, easier to navigate, and faster.
- Working to support local governments by providing information and resources ranging from statutory guidelines, election information, and other training. Division staff presented eleven 32-hour Utility Management Classes in seven regional centers throughout the state. Division staff also presented a number of educational opportunities in the form of workshops and courses on Newly Elected Officials, Title 29 information, and on-site training of local government issues.
- Monitoring local assessment practices to ensure compliance with State and local assessment laws and practices. The Office of the State Assessor (OSA) provided educational training opportunities for assessment personnel to enhance competent job performance and professional growth and to focus on continued improvement of assessment processes and systems. These efforts assist in equalizing values around the state which are used in conjunction with a variety of other programs, including educational funding and various forms of revenue sharing.



Utility Management Training



## Local Government Technical Assistance and the Rural Utility Business Advisor Program

A significant portion of DCRA's personnel resources are dedicated to providing technical advice and assistance directly to communities. This assistance is provided under two main sections, Local Government Technical Assistance and the Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program that primarily focuses on assistance to management of sanitation services.

### Local Government Technical Assistance

Alaska's Constitution, statutes, and regulations define the powers and responsibilities of local governments. Examples of assistance and training frequently requested of DCRA include:

- Ordinance development and codification;
- Elections training;
- Personnel practices;
- Tax assessment and collection;
- Title 4 (Alcohol) local option laws;
- Council powers and procedures;
- Interpretation of State and local laws;
- Development of land disposal ordinances; and
- Newly Elected Officials (NEO) training.

With a demanding workload and limited resources, DCRA prioritizes which services to provide and how to most effectively deliver those services. The Local Government Technical Assistance section provides guidance through the following methods:

- One-on-one assistance on-site;
- Development of training materials and presentation in regional workshops; and
- Development of the Local Government Online (LOGON) web-based information system.





### One-on-One Assistance

Each Local Government Specialist (LGS) is assigned to specific communities in Alaska. The LGS is trained to answer technical assistance questions asked by communities. As necessary (and given available resources), the LGS travels to communities to provide one-on-one technical assistance. With the large increase in the cost of fuel and insurance, sound budgeting, accounting systems, and financial reporting systems received renewed attention in many communities. DCRA staff spent a significant amount of time working to address specific community concerns, especially regarding the financing and purchase of fuel oil.

### Coordinating with Other Agencies

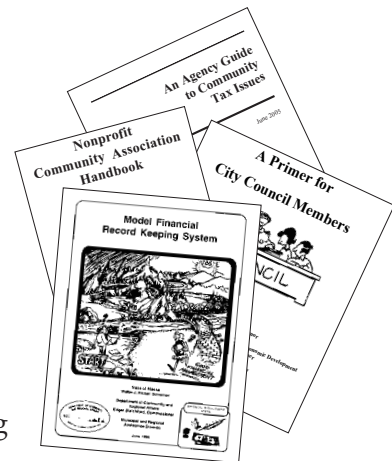
Local Government Specialists frequently work with other agencies to assist in the delivery of programs to rural areas. In 2007, LGS staff collaborated with the Department of Administration to redesign an outreach program for the use of state contracts by political subdivisions. Within weeks following a joint presentation on the program at a regional conference, local governments reportedly began using the state contracts to save on purchases and realized a substantial savings for their communities.



Fuel barge delivering fuel to Chignik Lake

### Development of Training Materials and Presentation in Regional Workshops

DCRA has provided a wide distribution of technical assistance through the development of training materials and presentations. Division staff presented information during statewide gatherings such as the Alaska Municipal League Conference, and the Alaska Conference on the Environment. Staff also presented information at regional meetings such as the Yukon-Kuskokwim Housing Conference, and the Norton Sound Regional Economic Conference. In addition, specific subregional workshops were presented on topics such as payroll tax reporting and financial accounting systems. DCRA also provides training for newly elected officials. This training is an effective way to reach a larger number of constituents. DCRA has, over the years, produced a large number of technical assistance publications which are used for many of these trainings. A complete list of publications is available on the following website:



<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/StaffDir/GetPubl.cfm>

## Local Government Online (LOGON)

LOGON is a website created by DCRA to provide information to municipal and tribal governments and to nonprofit corporations serving the public. LOGON's web-based availability makes it an accessible source of information on local government concerns and procedures.

LOGON chapters provide information on topics as wide-ranging as the following:

- Contracts and Agreements
- Records Management
- Conducting and Certifying Elections
- Local Option Elections
- Reading and Evaluating Financial Reports
- Budgeting
- Maintaining Grant Records
- Federal Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)
- Filing Small Claims
- Risk Management
- Conducting Effective Public Meetings
- Meetings Held in Executive Session
- City or Borough Incorporation, Consolidation, Annexation, or Detachment
- Floodplain Management
- Site Control
- Codification of Ordinances
- Code, Non-code, and Emergency Ordinances
- Property Taxes
- Sales Taxes
- Gaming

Each LOGON chapter contains an overview of the topic, frequently asked questions, and links to publications, applicable Alaska Statutes, regulations, and sample documents.

During 2007, a LOGON Steering Committee was created to improve both the content and usability of the site. The committee is working to incorporate more user-friendly features such as drop-down or scroll-over menus, search capability within the site, tracking or monitoring of usage, and a text-only version for quicker download in remote areas. To explore LOGON further, click here:



<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/LOGON/home.cfm>

## Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program

The RUBA Program prepares rural communities for, and helps them meet, the challenge of managing and operating sanitation utilities. RUBA staff provides assistance in the areas of business, finance, personnel, and general management to governments and organizations responsible for operating water and sewer utilities in rural Alaska.

Visit RUBA at:

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/ruba/ruba.htm>

The RUBA staff activities included the following:

- Completed 275 trips to 203 communities for a total of 831 days on-site to provide RUBA assistance on a wide range of topics such as utility management, financial management, personnel, ordinances, elections, and much more.
- Presented eleven 32-hour Utility Management classes in seven regional centers throughout Alaska. One hundred twenty utility managers completed the classes.
- Coordinated and funded contractors who presented four regional QuickBooks Pro accounting classes. Each of the 46 participants received a student manual and a current copy of QuickBooks Pro to install in his or her respective community. The contractors also completed three community on-site installation and trainings in Tanana, Angoon, and Nondalton. These installations include leaving a customized instruction manual as a resource for future local hires.



QuickBooks Pro Training

- ➔ Contracted with Turnagain Press to develop a training manual addressing specific installation, set-up, and use of QuickBooks to do governmental accounting. This manual will be made available to communities, agencies, and the public who participate in the sanitation service field.
- ➔ Recognized the restriction for travel costs which many utility budgets cannot afford and awarded 166 scholarships to pay airfare and lodging of utility staff who successfully attended and completed RUBA-sponsored management courses.
- ➔ Hired an independent contractor to complete a third-party evaluation of the RUBA Program. The contractor conducted on-site interviews, personal staff interviews and mail surveys to collect information. The contractor's completed evaluation will contain recommendations for internal processes to assist or improve program services.
- ➔ Presented information sessions at the following conferences: Alaska Municipal League (AML), AML/JIA Public Entity Risk Management Seminar, Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association (AWWMA), Alaska Rural Water Association (ARWA),



#### **City of Mekoryuk and Native Village of Mekoryuk**

The City of Mekoryuk applied for and received funds for repair of a failing water system and expansion of new connections to homes currently without water service. The City was responsible for the operations and maintenance of all sanitation services within the community. A condition of the grant was to receive a RUBA Management Capacity Assessment with all essential management indicators met. RUBA staff identified several deficient indicators in the accounting, personnel and operations sections. These deficiencies were largely related to shrinking revenue sources, a lack of trained personnel, and the rising costs for fuel, electricity, and insurance.

RUBA staff proposed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) be signed by the City and the Native Village of Mekoryuk which would combine and take advantage of the strengths of both entities to provide reliable safe water to the community. The city had the funding and prior experience and the tribe had the labor pool, additional revenues and stable management. With RUBA assistance, both entities adapted the MOA to the needs of the community, signed it in January 2007, and the tribe assumed management of the utility service. Since that time, the utility has passed all required management indicators necessary to continue receiving funding for capital projects and/or the repair or expansion of the current system. The facilitation of RUBA and the cooperation of the city and the tribal staff resolved the challenges of sanitation in Mekoryuk.



Southeast Conference of the AWWMA, Kodiak Rural Regional Leadership Forum, Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation, Office of Environmental Health, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Department of Environmental Conservation, Kawerak Regional Conference, and the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

- Attended and participated in the Alaska Sanitation Facilities Organization Joint Meeting. This inter-agency meeting was well attended by staff from Village Safe Water, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Environmental Protection Agency, Remote Maintenance Workers, health corporation representatives, and all regional RUBA staff. The event provided management and leadership of all the entities with an opportunity to present an overview of current issues and field questions from participants. Small working groups were also formed to learn firsthand about the roles of their counterparts at other agencies.
- Served on the evaluation committee for DEC Village Safe Water grants.



#### **City of New Stuyahok - Partnering for Success**

The City of New Stuyahok's water and sewer utility faced severe financial difficulties in 2006. The utility's 90 customers owed \$160,000 in past due water and sewer bills, and shut-off notices had been sent to 60 households. The City's utility account was routinely used for general fund expenses, leaving the utility with insufficient funds for routine maintenance, equipment, and supplies. The city administrator resigned in August 2006, citing conflict regarding the City's collection efforts.

The water plant operator was named acting city administrator and maintained weekly contact with RUBA Program staff. The City of New Stuyahok had an agreement with the RUBA Program for assistance to resolve its managerial issues. RUBA worked with the acting city administrator to complete the certified financial statement and create a balanced, realistic budget, which then allowed the release of State municipal assistance funds. The City used those funds to pay for insurance, past due electric bills, and a portion of its past due payroll taxes. QuickBooks Pro support was provided, which improved the City's ability to monitor cash flow, track accounts, and create financial reports.

In March 2007, a permanent city administrator was hired. With a full management team in place, the City progressed rapidly. City staff participated in RUBA-sponsored training for utility management and QuickBooks Pro usage. Plans were implemented to improve past due bill collection, and the City entered into a repayment agreement with the Internal Revenue Service to eliminate its past due payroll tax bill. On June 25, 2007, the City of New Stuyahok satisfied all RUBA essential management indicators — a prerequisite to receive grant funding for its water and sewer projects. The partnership between RUBA and the City of New Stuyahok allowed this utility to become a model for success in less than a year.



- Developed two new 32-hour training courses in response to community requests. The goal of the Utility Clerk Training is to provide an understanding of a utility clerk's responsibilities and how that role affects the utility. The goal of the Elected Officials Training is to provide an understanding of the governing body's responsibilities and how those roles affect the utility.



#### **City of Thorne Bay**

The City of Thorne Bay faced a financial crisis, but with \$2.3 million in the utility fund it was difficult for residents to see it that way. However, a RUBA management capacity assessment conducted for the City in May 2006 found a budget with \$196,000 in anticipated revenues to offset expenditures of \$670,000. Subsidizing utility operations with the investment account would deplete savings in less than five years.

In November 2006, the city council requested a work plan agreement between RUBA staff and the City to help the utility run more efficiently, set a realistic utility rate, and correct managerial deficiencies. In a coordinated effort, staff members from the Alaska Rural Water Association (ARWA) and RUBA staff evaluated the City's water and wastewater system for operational inefficiencies.

Actions to improve the efficiency of the physical plant were proposed by ARWA, and corrective action was taken. RUBA staff then assisted City staff to gather data, develop collection strategies, and correct discrepancies in the billing system. Following more than a year of work, the city council and RUBA staff presented a balanced budget to community residents.

After making improvements to operations and the billing system, only a modest rate increase was required. By working together, the City of Thorne Bay and RUBA staff were able to put the utility back on track to financial sustainability by increasing revenue and lowering expenses without creating a financial burden for utility customers.

## Community Planning & Land Management

The Community Planning and Land Management section provides assistance to communities on regional and local land issues. The main areas of assistance are technical advice and training on local planning and land management efforts, the Alaska Coastal Management Program, the Municipal Lands Trustee Program, and the National Flood Insurance Program. The section performs an integral role in the Denali Commission's Planning Workgroup.

### Alaska Coastal Management Program

Through balanced stewardship, the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) strives to sustain the long-term economic and environmental productivity of the Alaska coast. The ACMP provides a balance of decision-making that addresses all interests, coastal resources, and coastal uses. Twenty-eight coastal districts participate in the program by developing local coastal management plans, implementing local plans through the consistency review process, and informing and educating the public about the ACMP. The Division's role in the program, established in Alaska Statute (AS 44.47.095), supports the coastal districts through research, training, and technical assistance. DCRA also manages the ACMP grant program, which awards approximately \$1 million annually in grant funds to the coastal districts.

Fourteen ACMP coastal districts have completed the district plan amendment process and have filed plans with the Lieutenant Governor's office. The remaining 14 coastal districts are in the process of finalizing district plan amendments to bring the local plans into compliance with revised ACMP statutes and regulations. Staff provided technical assistance and administered the grants through which completion of the plan amendment and required tasks were conducted. In addition to overseeing and providing assistance with the development and implementation tasks of ACMP coastal districts, DCRA staff provided the following:



- Technical assistance to coastal communities: Staff visited the communities of Kotzebue, Buckland (Northwest Arctic Borough), Bethel, Newtok, King Salmon, Naknek, Tyonek, Kenai, Soldotna (Kenai Peninsula Borough), Nome and the Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area (CRSA). DCRA staff provided technical assistance on district coastal management plan amendments, district plan implementation, and other required tasks of coastal districts in the ACMP.

### Newtok Planning Group

DCRA has served as the lead coordinator for the Newtok Planning Group, a multi-agency group assisting the Native Village of Newtok in its relocation efforts. The Village of Newtok has been threatened for years by high rates of erosion and more recently a dramatic increase in seasonal flooding. Federal and State studies have concluded that there is no permanent and cost-effective way for Newtok to remain at the current village site. In 2003, after Congress passed Senate Bill 924, the village was able to acquire land to relocate to Mertarvik on Nelson Island. Division staff facilitated Newtok Planning Group meetings on a monthly basis to coordinate agency efforts in the village relocation. In addition to coordinating the Newtok Planning Group, the Division has provided critical technical assistance to the Newtok community in its relocation efforts:

- DCRA prepared, on behalf of the Newtok Traditional Council, a grant application for Investment Assistance to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the design and construction of a Multi-Use Marine Support Facility at the village relocation site on Nelson Island. The Division, in co-application with the Newtok Traditional Council, was awarded an EDA grant of \$800,000 for the project. This facility, which includes a barge ramp, floating dock, and upland staging area, will provide critical support to the delivery of equipment and materials for construction of the new village site. The Division is currently working out a project agreement with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to co-manage this project, which is expected to be completed at the end of construction season 2008.
- DCRA also provided technical assistance to the Newtok Traditional Council in its application for a Mini-Grant for the development of a community layout plan for the new village site. The Traditional Council was awarded a Mini-Grant of \$30,000 for this project, which will guide the efficient and orderly development of the new village site. DCRA staff is closely involved with the community layout planning process, traveling to Newtok with the planning contractor, and working with the community and agencies. The community layout is expected to be completed at the end of March 2008.
- DCRA staff submitted two proposals for funding under the new Alaska Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP), which received Tier 1 status following review by the Alaska Ocean Policy Sub-Cabinet. Tier 1 projects are the projects selected for grant funding under the CIAP. The DCRA proposals include:
  - **The Mertarvik Waterfront Management and All Hazards Plan.** This proposal is for the development of baseline data and a strategy for relocation and community development activities at the village of Newtok's relocation site, Mertarvik, on Nelson Island.
  - **The Newtok Environmental Site Inventory and Assessment.** This proposal is for an inventory, assessment, and cleanup strategy for the current Newtok village site, and would be implemented after the village has relocated to the new village site on Nelson Island.



Members of the Newtok Planning Group meeting with local residents in Newtok

- Technical assistance teleconferences with board members of the Bering Straits CRSA and Ceñaliulriit CRSA.
- Participation in federal initiatives funded through the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) and related programs. Staff participated in federally funded initiatives led by the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Project Management and Permitting, including:
  - CZMA Section 309 Enhancement Grants Program: DCRA administers Section 309 Enhancement Grants to ACMP coastal districts. Staff also participated in the review of FY 08 Section 309 Enhancement Grants submittals and in the development of grant agreements for the selected projects.
  - Submission of project proposals for the new Alaska Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) that received Tier 1 status following review by the Alaska Ocean Policy Sub-Cabinet.

### Land Management and Mapping

Unresolved land claims and inadequate information about land sometimes hinder development for both the private and public sectors. The Land Management and Mapping section provides information, maps, and assistance to agencies, contractors, and rural communities to help them overcome land problems that currently impede development. The services provided include the following:

- **Site Control.** This includes preparing title opinions and providing maps, sample documents, and technical assistance to ensure a proper ownership interest for publicly funded projects. Site control helps protect State and local government investment in buildings and facilities. To assist local governments in obtaining site control, DCRA staff partnered with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Bureau of Land Management to develop course work and present training statewide and in the Anchorage area.
- **Community Profile Mapping.** DCRA staff work in partnership with communities, regional groups, and agencies coordinating and pooling resources to produce aerial photo-based maps of rural Alaska communities. Through coordination, a standard scope of work is created and used so that the maps meet many of the engineering,



Land management staff



planning, and management requirements for State and federally funded infrastructure development. Completed maps are added to the Division's map library and are available to the partners and the public in digital and hard copy form. The maps are an important tool to expedite development and reduce property loss due to site control problems and natural hazards. DCRA and its partners completed mapping in four communities in the Western Aleutians, nine communities in the Copper River Basin, and 10 communities in the Lower Yukon for an overall total of 124 communities that have been mapped with community map partnerships. Current partnerships are preparing new maps in 18 communities.

- **Land Management.** Section 14(c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) provides that certain land in ANCSA communities be made available to residents, businesses, nonprofits, communities, and airport operators. DCRA provides community mapping and land management assistance to municipalities, unincorporated communities, and Native village corporations so that they may carry out the process of identifying and conveying 14(c) land claims.

DCRA's assistance was instrumental in the settlement of land claims and the submission of boundary maps for the communities of Tyonek and Napaimute. ANCSA 14(c) plans were approved for survey by the Bureau of Land Management in Mekoryuk, Ninilchik, Kaktovik, and Shaktoolik.

To encourage the settlement and transfer process, DCRA staff held training in Fairbanks and Bethel. The settlement of the ANCSA 14(c) land claims is an essential step in clearing land title in the community and providing a base of land for private and public land development. In unincorporated communities, DCRA carries out the community planning and negotiation of the 14(c)(3) community land on behalf of a future municipal corporation, in accordance with AS 44.33.755. Leases, deeds, and easements of Municipal Trust Land were issued this year for housing, sanitation facilities, clinics, consolidated bulk fuel storage, roads, and other community facilities.

### Land Planning

DCRA is involved with communities on a daily basis concerning land planning, site control, and land disposal. The Division is involved in planning commission training, planning for utilities management, and developing proposals for community plan development through partnering agencies.

### Floodplain Management

The mission of the Division's Floodplain Management Program is to reduce public- and private-sector loss or damage from flooding and erosion. The Floodplain





Management Program carries out this mission by providing coordination, funding, and technical assistance to cities and boroughs statewide, particularly within communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

DCRA serves as the State coordinating agency for the NFIP. This program provides an opportunity for more than 86 percent of the population to purchase flood insurance coverage for individuals, businesses, and renters in 32 cities and boroughs, and for regulations of land use in flood-prone areas.

### **Floodplain Management Programs/National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**

Alaskan communities experienced about a dozen flooding events, most of which had only minor impacts. The most significant flooding occurred when three glacier-dammed lakes released, causing rare mid-winter breakup flood impact on the Kenai, Tazlina, and Kennicott rivers. Spring breakup was mild due largely to Alaska having its fourth warmest April temperatures, with an average temperature nearly 6° F above the 1971 – 2000 average.

Two state disasters were declared, one of which was the Kenai River Flood (Kenai Peninsula Borough and City of Soldotna). Division staff provided extensive technical assistance to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM), and the communities involved. DCRA staff assistance included, but was not limited to, the following:

- NFIP training was provided to the Kenai Peninsula Borough, Seward/Bear Creek Flood Service Area, City of Seward, City of Homer, Northwest Arctic Borough, City of Kotzebue, City of McGrath, and City of Kwethluk.
- Community Assistance visits were performed in the Kenai Peninsula Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, and City of Homer.
- Flood Damage Prevention ordinances were reviewed for NFIP compliance in Bethel, Kotzebue, Seward, Homer, the Municipality of Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, City and Borough of Juneau, City and Borough of Sitka, and Ketchikan Gateway Borough.



Technical assistance requests can average, at a minimum, between five and seven daily, for a conservative annual average of 1,200 responses. The complexity ranges from just minutes to several hours of research and response time, as necessary. Technical assistance has included:

- **Bethel:** DCRA staff reviewed the City's floodplain management program for eligibility, and recommended the City of Bethel to enter the Community Rating System (CRS). Review of that request will occur in the 2008 cycle.
- **Kwethluk:** Division staff toured the City of Kwethluk's floodplain and saw the current erosion occurring along the bank of the Kwethluk River. DCRA staff provided training to the city staff and city council. In 2005 Kwethluk experienced a flood that exceeded the community's previous high water mark of record. During the training, staff explained that when planning for new buildings, developers would need to use the new high water mark of record.
- **Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB):** DCRA staff met with the new Planning Director, Tom Okleasik, and staff in Kotzebue to discuss primary responsibilities under the floodplain reduction ordinance and the code of federal regulations. The NWAB participates in the emergency phase of the program on behalf of 11 small villages. Located within the NWAB is the City of Kotzebue; however, the City of Kotzebue participates independently and is in the regular phase of the NFIP. Division staff traveled to the City of Buckland to tour the floodplain and become acquainted with some of the smaller communities. Staff got a better understanding of how the communities view land use, floodplains and regulatory requirements, as well as the best way to communicate flood risk and possible recovery methods.
- **City of Kotzebue:** DCRA staff met with Planning Director, Dean Westlake, to discuss the Map Modernization needs in the City of Kotzebue. All map panels were reviewed and needed updates noted. Staff toured the floodplain and surrounding areas which included potential development sites. The City is very interested in a project, but is deficient regarding aerial photography with topography. The State Coordinator pursued a request through FEMA to provide a small portion of seed funding based on Kotzebue's situation, develop further discussions, and partnerships necessary to acquire new aerial photography with topography for base maps. FEMA approved a one-time variance to facilitate this request.
- **Training:** DCRA offered workshops on Floodplain Management and Map Modernization to staff and members of the public in the Northwest Arctic Borough, City of Kotzebue, City of McGrath, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Seward/Bear Creek Flood Service Area, City of Seward, and City of Homer.



- **Interagency Hydrology Committee for Alaska (IHCA):** The IHCA approved a motion to offer a presentation on Water Resources in Alaska to the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet and its working groups. The presentation will cover precipitation data, how it is used, monitoring, and existing gaps.

## ➤ **Outreach and Education**

- DCRA staff collaborated with the DHS&EM to produce and air a flood awareness campaign on television to prepare for potential spring floods. The television campaign reached 64 percent of all people age 25 and older with an average view time of three times per adult in a two-week period. Staff also developed a new website related to this public awareness campaign. Originally, radio was to be used as another delivery method, but DHS&EM was unable to secure air time. Implementation of a radio campaign will again be pursued in spring 2008.
- Staff participated in the State Hazard Mitigation Advisory Committee (SHMAC), Disaster Policy Cabinet (DPC) meetings and as the commissioner's delegate to the State Emergency Response Committee (SERC).

- DCRA printed 150 Alaska Floodplain Management Quick Guides and other reference material for various outreach opportunities at local trainings, the Alaska Municipal League (AML), and the State Fair. Staff coordinated a local mailing to eight of the small communities in the NFIP. DCRA provided bulletins to be hung on local bulletin boards for outreach in Aniak, Cordova, Delta Junction, Emmonak, Galena, Koyukuk, Kwethluk, and McGrath. Development of outreach packages will continue in 2008.



- The DCRA NFIP Coordinator participated in the FEMA Region X State Coordinators Workshop and the Association of State Floodplain Managers Conference. Both required trainings are intended to enhance the education at the state level, which in turn enhances technical assistance provided to the local floodplain administrator.
- DCRA encourages local floodplain administrators to seek and apply for training in floodplain management at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This training is a primary opportunity for floodplain administrators to further develop a knowledge base.

- Division staff participated in the Statewide Preparedness Workshop. The goal is to increase coordination between agencies that have preparedness messages to deliver to the public. A collaborative calendar was developed to enhance information exchange.

### **FEMA Flood Map Modernization Program**

- FEMA experienced technical delays over the past year; as a result, no Alaska maps were released. However, in anticipation of eight to ten maps expected to be released in 2008, a contract was let to review 11 flood reduction ordinances for compliance with the federal regulations. Additionally, with the loss of the long term-nonpermanent position for FEMA mapping activities, other DCCED staff agreed to assist in future public meetings required with the release of the maps. With increasing requests for technical assistance and additional deliverables required of the Floodplain Management staff and the retirement of the Senior Planner III, the Floodplain Management staff will continue to be challenged with required tasks, integration of new staff, and development of contracts to manage the Map Modernization program.
- Levee certification agreement regarding the Tanana levee in Fairbanks North Star Borough has allowed the Map Modernization project to continue. The Japp Creek levee in Seward may not be able to be certified. If the levees are not certified as providing flood protection, the resulting effects could be considerable.
- FEMA reprioritized funding for Map Modernization. Rather than start new projects, communities are encouraged to focus on reinvestment opportunities. DCRA staff agreed it would be best to ensure full funding for mapping projects that are already started. An example of a reinvestment opportunity includes the Girdwood and Furrow Creek studies. The NFIP Coordinator is currently coordinating and managing 11 small communities under the State's Cooperating Technical Partnership agreement with FEMA.
- The Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program is managed by the Floodplain Management staff. Staff acquired grant funding to elevate or buyout a home that has experienced repetitive flooding in Seward. The home was subsequently damaged again by the October 2006 flood. Unfortunately, the homeowner could not acquire the matching funds and the project was terminated.
- Division staff oversaw completion of the Flood and All-Hazards Mitigation Plan for the City of McGrath. The Seward/Bear Creek Flood Service Area plan is currently under development. Additional review of five Flood and All-Hazard Mitigation Plans was completed for the cities of Bethel, Kotzebue, Kivilina, Emmonak, and McGrath. Continued coordination between DCRA and DHS&EM continues to be a valuable and vital partnership for mitigation and preparedness efforts.
- **Climate Change Sub-Cabinet:** DCRA staff is providing technical assistance and information to the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet and the working groups.



## Grant Programs

In any given year, DCRA's Grants Section is responsible for administering between \$500 and \$600 million in federal and State grant programs. Responsibilities include preparing, updating, and amending federal and State plans for receipt of program dollars under each program as well as quarterly reporting to the federal or State government. Staff provide limited technical assistance to municipalities, unincorporated communities, nonprofit organizations, tribal governments, and the public on grant management.

The Grants Section consists of 11 permanent staff including a Grant Manager, nine Grants Administrators, and a Training Specialist. On average, Grants Administrators manage more than 200 grants each. The Grants Section website is:

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/grt/grantsMenu.cfm>

| Year | Number of New Grants | Total Number of Grants | Grants per Administrator |
|------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2004 | 338                  | 1196                   | 170                      |
| 2005 | 496<br>+46.75%       | 1475<br>+23.33%        | 211<br>+24.12%           |
| 2006 | 709<br>+42.94%       | 1620<br>+9.83%         | 232<br>+9.95%            |
| 2007 | 462<br>-34.84%       | 1744<br>+7.65%         | 249<br>+7.33%            |
| 2008 | 637<br>+37.88%       | 1875<br>+7.51%         | 268<br>+7.63%            |

## Grants Tracking Database

An Internet-based management system was implemented in May 2000. The database tracks detailed information needed by the Grants staff. View-only grant information from the Grants Tracking System is available to the public in the Community Funding Database at:

[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF\\_Grants.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF_Grants.htm)

## Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

The federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program's goal is to enhance the quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents, particularly in rural Alaska. The CDBG Program provides grants for public facilities and planning activities that address conditions detrimental to the health and safety of local residents. The grants reduce the costs of essential

community services. Special economic development funds may be used to provide capital to assist in the creation or retention of jobs that principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons. During FY 07, approximately \$3 million was awarded in grants.

During the fall of FY 08, Division staff provided four Grant Writing workshops in communities throughout the state. Approximately 60 local government officials participated. The purpose of the workshops was to provide an overview of the CDBG grant program and to train potential grant applicants to successfully complete the CDBG application packet. Feedback from the workshops was very positive, and the Division hopes to continue and perhaps expand those workshops in FY 08.

### **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program**

The goal of the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program is to reduce and/or prevent poverty through community-based educational activities, which lead to a greater degree of self-sufficiency on the part of low-income persons. Services are provided by Alaska's only Community Action Agency, RurALCAP. During FY 07, approximately \$2.5 million was made available to RurALCAP to provide eligible services to people in poverty across the state.



Clarks Point Health Clinic



Outside Yakutat Elementary School

### **Emergency Shelter Grant Program**

The federal Emergency Shelter Grant Program grants are to assist with the following activities to provide emergency shelter for the homeless: renovation, major rehabilitation, or conversions of buildings for use as emergency shelters for the homeless; payment of maintenance, operation, insurance, utilities, and furnishings; and payment for provision of essential community services including those concerned with employment, health, substance abuse, education, food, or prevention. During FY 07, approximately \$120,000 was made available statewide for the program.

### **Legislative Grants Program**

Legislative grants are awarded by the State legislature, with final approval by the Governor. Most of these are delegated to the Division for administration. It is DCRA's responsibility to notify grantees of their awards, develop and execute grant agreements based on each project, monitor performance, and manage the reimbursement process. These awards can be for a variety of projects such as health, fire and safety, water and sewer, construction of community facilities, economic development initiatives, cemetery restoration, and program operations. DCRA also ensures that grantees obtain site control, State Fire Marshal approval, and other regulatory agency permits, as required. The Division currently administers approximately 1,600 active legislative grants for a total value of \$400 million.

## Denali Commission

The Grants Section administers several Denali Commission grants, including the Mini-Grant Assistance Program and the Multi-Use Facilities Grant Program. Since 2001, DCRA has administered more than 150 Denali Commission grants totaling approximately \$18 million. Over 50 grants are currently open and active, totaling about \$15 million. The Division also supports a position to liaison with the Denali Commission full-time on development issues, as do several other State and federal agencies.



Brevig Mission Multi-Use Facilities

### Mini-Grant Assistance Program

The Mini-Grant Assistance Program is federally funded by the Denali Commission and formerly the U.S. Forest Service. The program provides grants on an annual competitive basis to rural Alaskan communities for a wide range of development projects and development strategies. Grants are awarded to the most viable projects that promote diversifying the economic base to provide jobs, income, and long-lasting economic benefits to the communities served. One application per community is accepted annually for a maximum of \$30,000. The funding level in FY 07 was approximately \$400,000. Currently there are 17 active grants totaling \$447,000.

The Mini-Grant Assistance Program is one of the most popular grant programs the Division administers. DCRA generally receives between 75 and 100 applications requesting in excess of \$1.5 million. The program provides a source of funding for many activities that are not funded through other means. Planning activities (including feasibility studies, business plans, and community development plans) are very popular, as are projects that provide seed money for economic development activities. Without the Mini-Grant Assistance Program, many innovative and exciting projects would likely never get off the ground. Although a small investment, the Mini-Grant Assistance Program provides significant benefits to a large number of communities across the state annually. Continued funding beyond FY 07 for the program is uncertain.

### Multi-Use Facility Grants

DCRA administered 11 active projects totaling approximately \$3.3 million in FY 07.

### Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program

The Flood Mitigation Assistance Program is a federal grant program that provides assistance to communities participating in National Flood Insurance for flood mitigation planning and project activities. Project grants are provided to elevate, relocate, or buyout flood-prone, flood-insured

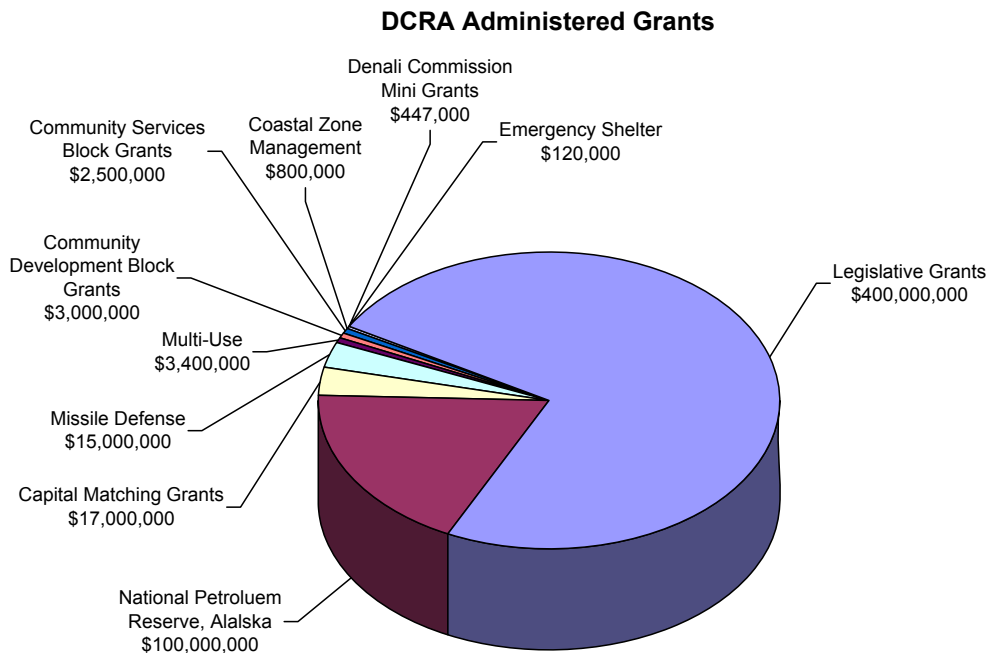
structures. The Division administers these Federal Emergency Management Agency pass-through grants. For detailed information on these grants please see the Floodplain Management section of this report.

### National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska (NPR-A) Impact Program

The State receives 50 percent of the revenues from federal oil and gas lease sales in the NPR-A under Title 42, Section 6508 of the U.S. Code. Oil and gas development in the NPR-A region places economic and environmental stress on municipalities in the area. To minimize the impact of oil and gas development to these communities, Impact Program funds are allocated to municipalities, with priority given to those most heavily impacted. These funds are used for planning, construction, maintenance, and operation of essential public facilities, and other necessary public services.

In September 2006, DCRA staff traveled to Barrow to conduct a workshop for communities within the NPR-A. This was the fourth year that the Grants Section offered an NPR-A workshop. Staff reviewed the overall program objectives, eligible activities, completion of application forms, the level of funds anticipated to be available, and answered specific questions from community representatives. Staff also reviewed general grant management expectations. Feedback was positive and the Division plans to continue offering similar workshops bi-annually in future years.

In March 2007, the Division recommended funding awards in the amount of \$10,563,218 for 18 NPR-A projects. In FY 08 there were 85 active NPR-A grants totaling approximately \$90 million. For FY 09, the Division anticipates that approximately \$5.2 million will be available for NPR-A grant awards during February 2008.





## **Community Project Capital Matching Grant Program for Incorporated and Unincorporated Communities**

As of FY 2004, the Capital Project Matching Grant Program has not received new funds and is not expected to receive funding in the future. However, there are approximately 300 active Capital Project Matching Grants totaling approximately \$17 million that the Division continues to administer.

## **Department of Defense Ground Based Missile Defense Impact Grants**

The Division administered two Missile Defense Impact Grants for the community of Delta Junction totaling more than \$24 million during years FY 04 through FY 07: one for the City of Delta Junction and one for the Delta Greely School District. Both grants are expected to be closed by December 31, 2007.

## **Alaska Coastal Management Grants**

The Grants Section assists other Division staff in the administration of 46 Alaska Coastal Management Grants totaling approximately \$800,000 in FY 08.

## **Community Financial Assistance**

DCRA administers five different funding programs, described below, that provide financial assistance to communities to supplement local revenue generation. DCRA also administers grant programs which can help communities with the finances to build infrastructure needed to support community and business development.

## **Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)**

In FY 09, the Division will distribute \$6,426,581 to 98 Alaska cities under PILT. These federal funds are especially crucial for many cities as they continue to deal with increasing fuel costs, insurance, Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) liabilities, and reduced revenues while attempting to provide basic public services.

### **Shared Fisheries Business Tax Program**

This program provides for an annual sharing of State fish tax collected outside municipal boundaries on the basis of 19 “fisheries management areas.” The funding available within each of these management areas is distributed among municipalities in that area based on the level of significant impacts resulting from fishing industry activity compared to the level of impacts experienced by other municipalities in that area. In FY 08, \$1,530,472 in State Fisheries Business Tax was distributed to 106 eligible municipalities.

### **Fisheries Resource Landing Tax**

A Fisheries Resource Landing Tax is levied on processed fishery resources first landed in Alaska or on any processed fishery resource subject to Section 210(f) of the American Fisheries Act. The State tax is based on the unprocessed value of the resource. The unprocessed value is determined by multiplying a statewide average price per pound (based on Alaska Department of Fish and Game data) by the unprocessed weight. Fisheries Resource Landing Tax is collected primarily from factory trawlers and floating processors which process fishery resources outside of the State’s three-mile limit and bring their products into Alaska for transshipment. The Fisheries Resource Landing Tax revenues are allocated to eligible municipalities on the same basis as the Shared Fisheries Business Tax Program. The Division distributed \$875,527 to eligible municipalities in FY 08.

### **National Forest Receipts**

The Division distributes federal National Forest Receipts under the authority of 16 USC 500 and under AS 41.15.180. The federal law was amended in 2000 under the “Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act.” The Act provides that for State fiscal years 2002 - 2007, the State shall receive an annual payment equal to the average of the three highest National Forest Receipts payments made to the State during fiscal years 1987 - 2000. In 2007, Congress extended the program for an additional year. In FY 08, the Division allocated approximately \$9 million to ten boroughs, 18 cities, four Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAs), and the Metlakatla reservation.

### **Community Energy Assistance Program**

The State of Alaska implemented the Community Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) for FY 08; CEAP is an expanded version of the previous Municipal Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and Small Municipality Energy Assistance Program (SMEAP).

Under the CEAP, the State legislature appropriated \$48.7 million to municipal governments, unincorporated communities located within the unorganized borough, and certain unincorporated communities located within organized boroughs “for the purpose of defraying increased energy and other costs.”

With the elimination of funding for the long-standing State Revenue Sharing and Safe Communities programs in 2003, programs such as CEAP will prove vital to local governments in providing basic local government services and addressing increased fuel costs and escalating local taxes.

## Local Boundary Commission

Of approximately 120 State boards and commissions, the Local Boundary Commission (LBC or Commission) is one of only two executive branch boards named in Alaska's Constitution. The University Board of Regents is the other. The framers of Alaska's Constitution established the LBC to adjudicate municipal boundary matters. The framers recognized that city and borough governments were the fundamental political subdivisions of State government for the delivery of vital public services at the local level.

The LBC has the duty to judge proposals for the following:

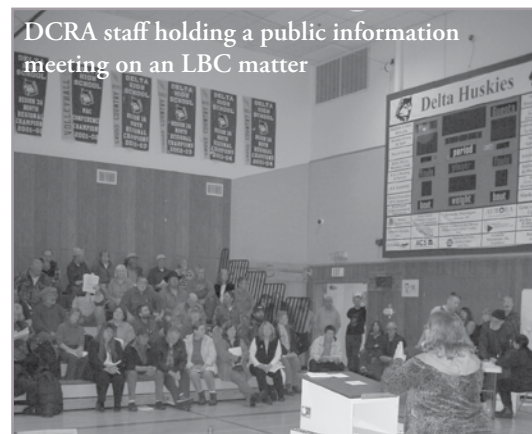
- Incorporation of cities and boroughs;
- Annexation to cities and boroughs;
- Detachment from cities and boroughs;
- Dissolution of cities and boroughs;
- Merger of cities and boroughs;
- Consolidation of cities and boroughs; and
- Reclassification of cities.

DCRA carries out the Department's statutory duty under AS 44.33.020(a)(4) to provide staff for the LBC. Those duties are further defined in AS 29.04 – 29.06. The LBC has other duties set out in AS 44.33.812, including the responsibility to "make studies of local government boundary problems."

The LBC also has authority and duties established under the Alaska Constitution, Article X, Section 12.

Staff provide technical support to the LBC, petitioners, respondents, and other interested individuals and organizations.

The Local Boundary Commission reports annually to the State legislature, detailing the Commission's activities and decisions. In January 2008, the Commission expects to submit to the legislature the Commission's amendment and approval of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough annexation proposal. The proposal was submitted and approved by the LBC under the legislative-review provisions of Article X, Section 12, Alaska Constitution.



DCRA staff holding a public information meeting on an LBC matter

## LBC Activity Highlights

The Local Boundary Commission worked diligently on a wide range of activities encompassing incorporations, annexations, detachments, and much more. Here are some of the year's highlights.

### City Incorporation

City incorporation activities and inquiries occurred to various degrees for seven communities.

- Anchor Point
- Chena Hot Springs
- Iliamna
- Kachemak-Selo
- Manley Hot Springs
- Sterling
- Whitestone



### City Annexation

City annexation was explored or pursued to various degrees for nine city governments listed below.

- Akutan
- Aniak
- Newhalen (annexation of Iliamna)
- Nome
- North Pole
- Palmer
- Seward
- Soldotna
- Wasilla

The LBC approved two local-option annexations in 2007: 1,722 acres to the City of Soldotna in June and 134.5 acres to the City of Wasilla in September.



### City Dissolution

The LBC received a petition for dissolution of the City of Togiak. It was denied because of significant deficiencies in the petition.

### City Reclassification

The LBC received several expressions of interest in the City of Houston reclassifying to home-rule. Houston is currently a second-class city. Under AS 29.10.010, only a general law borough or first-class city may become a home-rule city. Under AS 29.04.040(a), a second-class city, such as Houston, may reclassify as a first-class city.

### City Detachment

Division staff received an inquiry about detaching a 150-acre parcel from the City of North Pole.

### Borough Incorporation

Activities regarding borough incorporation occurred to varying degrees in eight areas of the state.

- Deltana
- Glacier Bay-Chatham region (Angoon, Elfin Cove, Hoonah, Pelican, Gustavus, and Tenakee Springs)
- Prince of Wales Island
- Kake
- Middle Kuskokwim region
- Petersburg
- Skagway
- Wrangell

Three formal proposals to the Commission were approved during 2007 (for Deltana, Skagway, and Wrangell). Skagway voters approved borough incorporation, but the Deltana area voters did not. In early 2008, Wrangell residents will vote on borough formation. An incorporation proposal is being explored by the City of Petersburg. Unified home-rule borough incorporation, such as for Skagway or Wrangell, requires concurrent city dissolution, as specified in Title 3, Section 110.630(d) of the Alaska Administrative Code.



Extensive borough incorporation studies were conducted in four areas of the state. The four areas were Eagle River-Chugiak, Glacier Bay-Chatham, Middle Kuskokwim, and Yukon Flats.

### Borough Annexation

The LBC amended the Ketchikan Gateway Borough's annexation petition and approved it, excluding the Meyers Chuck and Union Bay area.

### Borough Detachment

Eagle River-Chugiak expressed interest in borough detachment from the Municipality of Anchorage and incorporation as a separate borough.



### **Merger and Consolidation**

No interest in municipal merger or consolidation was expressed this past year.

### **Special Projects**

In addition to the activities listed above, LBC completed the following special projects:

- LBC published notice of a comprehensive review of its regulations. The Commission held multiple public hearings in several locations throughout the state, and by teleconference statewide.
- LBC staff reviewed the Commission's bylaws and proposed changes to update them.
- LBC held several meetings with the Director of Elections regarding by-mail municipal elections. A four-page letter on policy issues/concerns was sent to the Director of Elections.
- At the request of Commission members, LBC staff drafted a 28-page paper identifying the proper application of borough incorporation standards.
- A Local Government Forum was held in May 2007 to address the constitutional framework of Alaska local government.
- Three new members were appointed to the Commission. Commissioners Kermit Ketchum, Lynn Chrystal and Lavell Wilson replaced former members Darroll Hargraves, Bob Hicks, and Tony Nakazawa.
- Newly appointed members attended an orientation session organized by LBC staff.

Further information on the Local Boundary Commission is available at:

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/lbc/lbc.htm>

## Office of the State Assessor (OSA)

In accordance with Alaska statutes, the Office of the State Assessor (OSA) conducted the annual full value determination (FVD) for taxable property in 92 municipalities. These determinations or assessments occurred within 16 organized boroughs and 76 home rule, first class, and second class (with a population over 750) cities across the state. The results are published in a report titled "Alaska Taxable."

To review the report, contact the OSA or visit the Division's website at:

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/osa/assessor.cfm>

The OSA worked on a proposal that would dramatically change the method for making assessments throughout the state. This proposal consists of changing assessments from a "market value" concept to a concept for land valuation built around the cost approach for improvements and an allocation, based on the ratio of improvement to land value. This change would alleviate the volatile market concept whereby assessed values change based on the drastic changes shown in the local market. This proposal was made in reference to legislation introduced that would cap assessments at no more than a two percent increase from the previous year.

The OSA hired a new Assistant State Assessor, which was made possible through legislation passed the previous year. This hire allowed for new models to be built that would more accurately reflect full values throughout Alaska. New models built for personal property identify those municipalities with higher than normal personal property values due to local economic indicators such as mining and fisheries.

Several questions were fielded from municipalities regarding the need to update these values.

The OSA was also asked to assist the City and Borough of Juneau with interviews for a new assessor. In addition, the OSA responded to a request to investigate a complaint filed in the City and Borough of Skagway. The complaint

alleged that special treatment was afforded to council members for land leased from the City. The allegations were found to be without a basis and no special treatment was found to exist. The OSA did find, however, that the assessments in Skagway were lacking in justification and strongly suggested that a complete reappraisal be undertaken to correct these shortcomings.

The OSA conducted several Board of Equalization training workshops for Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su and Valdez. Workshops on "Revenue Alternatives" were provided for Cordova and Dillingham. Assessment/appraisal training was also offered for assessment personnel in Fairbanks, Mat-Su and Anchorage.



## Research and Community Information

DCRA collects and publishes accurate and timely information on local communities, local government, and economic development in Alaska, and makes this information readily accessible to the public. The Research Section of DCRA is responsible for the online resources and community information provided to the public, State and federal agencies, and Alaskan communities.

The Research Section supports DCRA and DCCED by assisting in the development and implementation of research projects, publications, web-based applications, and the management of contracted research projects.

Notably, the two most important contracts managed in 2007 resulted in the following publications: *The Fiscal Effects of Detaching the Eagle River and Chugiak Area from the Municipality of Anchorage*; and the *Rural Utility Business Advisor Program Evaluation*. This section responds to inquiries from the public and other State and federal agencies, collaborates with the U.S. Census Bureau, and regularly provides information to the Commissioner's and Governor's offices regarding communities' demographics and other ongoing issues.

The Research Section has furthered relations with other departments and organizations such as the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Energy Authority, and Denali Commission to foster a collaborative environment and increase data sharing activities and information outreach.

DCRA Research staff regularly present data and information at workgroup meetings, workshops, and conferences. Staff presented a workshop titled "Turning Boring Data and Research into Fun" at the Alaska Basic Economic Development Course (BEDC) through the University of Alaska Anchorage, Center for Economic Development. The BEDC course was the first of its kind in Alaska and featured a wide variety of topics and speakers from all over the nation. "Turning Boring Data and Research into Fun" was the highest ranked workshop of the week-long course.



## Key Research Section Products

- Alaska Community Database/Community Profiles
- Current Community Conditions: Fuel Prices Across Alaska, September 2007
- Current Community Conditions: Fuel Prices Across Alaska, December 2007
- Chenega Bay, Alaska: A Community and Shareholder Survey Report, 2007
- The Fiscal Effects of Detaching the Eagle River and Chugiak Area from the Municipality of Anchorage (outsource project management)
- Rural Utility Business Advisor Program Evaluation (outsource project management)
- Alaska Economic Performance Report, 2006, in conjunction with the Office of Economic Development (OED)
- Industry Net Return to the State of Alaska, 2006 (in conjunction with OED)
- Economic Development Resource Guide, 2007
- Community Directory
- City of Gustavus: Three-Year Anniversary Review



### Online Information Resources

Internet users can access a wealth of information about Alaska's communities, local government, and economic development by visiting the Division's website.

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra>

### Alaska Community Database/Community Profiles

The Alaska Community Database is an interactive database on the Division's website that provides a wide range of community-based information and data for planning, policy-making, and technical assistance decisions. Users who access this online database include State and federal agencies, private nonprofit organizations, legislators and their staff, and the general public. Users can obtain community information summaries and in-depth community profiles for each Alaskan community. Users also have the option of creating customized queries that can be viewed online or downloaded into a Microsoft Excel file, which is automatically transmitted by e-mail to their personalized e-mail accounts.



[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF\\_COMDB.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF_COMDB.htm)



### Capital Projects Database

The Capital Projects Database provides information on capital projects administered by more than 20 State and federal agencies. The public can access this web-based system to obtain project descriptions, funding levels, and project status for more than 15,000 capital projects in Alaska communities.

[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF\\_RAPIDS.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF_RAPIDS.htm)

### Community Funding Database

The Community Funding Database tracks detailed information needed for all grants administered by DCRA. View-only grant information from the Grants Tracking System is available to the public.

[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF\\_Grants.htm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commdb/CF_Grants.htm)



### Community Photo Library

The Community Photo Library is an online photo album organized by community. Photos of each community are submitted by the public or are taken by Division staff and posted on DCRA's website for public viewing and use.

[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/photos/comm\\_list.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/photos/comm_list.cfm)

### Community Profile Maps

DCRA provides mapping services that assist Department staff and communities in accomplishing the goals of increasing economic development and strengthening local governments in Alaska. Maps are produced to display land use, land suitability, land ownership, and boundaries set out in ANCSA 14(c) land settlements.

<ftp://ftp.dcbd.dced.state.ak.us/profiles/profile-maps.htm>





## Economic Development Resource Guide



The Economic Development Resource Guide (EDRG) is designed to bring together, in one place, an inventory of programs and services that can provide economic development assistance to Alaskan communities, individuals, and businesses. The EDRG includes over 100 financial and technical assistance resources provided by federal and State agencies, national and State nonprofit organizations, and private for-profit organizations. This resource is available as an online database that provides users with the opportunity to perform targeted searches to retrieve resources that meet their specific eligibility and needs. The EDRG is also available in CD-ROM format and is free to the public.

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/edrg/EDRG.htm>



## Financial Documents Delivery System

For nearly four decades, critical financial records have been collected and used by Division staff to implement various financial assistance programs, provide local government technical assistance, and advise State agencies and officials regarding local fiscal conditions. In response to increasing demand for copies of these financial documents, DCRA has designed the Financial Documents Delivery System. Now access to every municipal budget and year-end financial statement submitted to DCRA is available with a simple click of a button.



[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commfin/CF\\_FinRec.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/commfin/CF_FinRec.cfm)

## Local Government Online (LOGON)

Local Government Online (LOGON) is a web-based information resource system created by the Division to assist members of the public, elected and appointed officials, public administrators, community leaders, and others interested in local government operations, public services, and community development in Alaska.

LOGON provides information on local government functions such as administration, elections, financial management, planning and land use, taxation and assessment, and grants and revenue sharing



## Alaska Community Directory

The United Community Directory (UCD) Online System provides current information on Community Offices and Contacts. The system is used to establish linkage and the working link to various sectors of the Alaska Community Directory. It is the most current directory for the community, rural, tribal, and national organizations.

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The Alaska Community Directory, formerly known as the Municipal Officials Directory, provides current contact information for communities across Alaska. The information is for both incorporated and unincorporated communities and includes regional contacts, as well as elected officials and key staff within a specific community. The Alaska Community Directory online is found at:

## Plans Library

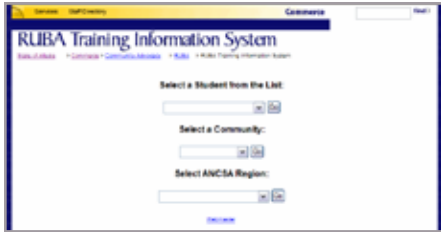
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The Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program provides rural communities with technical assistance and training on the business and financial administration of their utilities. RUBA conducts assessments for communities that have sanitation projects or have a signed RUBA Agreement requesting management assistance. Assessments help to benchmark a community's performance and document ongoing efforts by RUBA staff in each community. Each assessment is designed to methodically and consistently measure

a number of essential and sustainable indicators for performance areas such as operations, personnel, finances, and organization. The RUBA Quarterly Reports are available to the public as printed publications and are also available online.

[http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/ruba/report/Ruba\\_Report.cfm](http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/ruba/report/Ruba_Report.cfm)

### RUBA Training Information System



The RUBA Program provides rural communities with technical assistance and training on the business and financial administration of their utilities. To assist communities and RUBA staff in tracking participation in these training opportunities, the Division created the RUBA Training Information System.

This training system is an online, searchable database that contains a student profile for each participant in the training program, including the training classes attended by that participant. This resource is available on the web.

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra/train/rubatrain.cfm>

## Publications

DCRA publishes a variety of resource materials on local government, economic development, community planning, grants, and other topics. These materials are available on the Division's website at:

<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dcra>

In addition to the numerous publications produced and maintained yearly, the Division's website also makes available other related topics and older publications. Significant publications include:

### General Division

- Division of Community Advocacy Annual Report, 2007

### Local Government

- Alaska Taxable, 2007
- City Budget Manual - FY 2007
- City Financial Statement - FY 2007
- Alaska Statutes: Title 29 (Municipal Government)

### Grants

- Labor Standards Guide
- National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska 2008 Application
- Mini-Grant Program Report

### Research & Community Information

- Current Community Conditions: Fuel Prices Across Alaska, September 2007
- Current Community Conditions: Fuel Prices Across Alaska, December 2007
- Chenega Bay, Alaska: A Community and Shareholder Survey Report, 2007
- The Fiscal Effects of Detaching the Eagle River and Chugiak Area from the Municipality of Anchorage (outsource project management)
- Rural Utility Business Advisor Program Evaluation (outsource project management)
- Alaska Economic Performance Report, 2006, in conjunction with the Office of Economic Development (OED)
- Industry Net Return to the State of Alaska, 2006 (in conjunction with OED)
- Economic Development Resource Guide, 2007
- Community Directory
- City of Gustavus: Three-Year Anniversary Review
- FY 08: Head Count Census Manual
- FY 08: Housing Unit Method Manual

### **Local Boundary Commission**

- 2007 Annual Report to the Legislature
- Final Report on the Deltana Borough Proposal
- Preliminary and Final Reports on the Wrangell Borough Incorporation Proposal
- Preliminary and Final Reports on the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Annexation Proposal
- Report on the Soldotna Annexation Proposal
- Report on the Wasilla Annexation Proposal



## Division of Community & Regional Affairs

# Contact List

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## Success through Partnerships

DCRA leverages its experience and resources through key partnerships and relationships with local governments, nonprofits, State and federal agencies, as well as other entities. The Division works with a large number of partners on a wide range of projects. Some key partnerships that help maximize DCRA's positive impacts on communities include the following:

- Alaska Association of Assessing Officers
- Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks
- Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Alaska Energy Authority
- Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN)
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)
- Alaska Inter-Tribal Council
- Alaska Mental Health Authority
- Alaska Municipal League (AML)
- Alaska Training and Technical Assistance Center (ATTAC)
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)
- Alaska Water and Wastewater Managers Association
- Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA)
- Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC)
- Denali Commission
- Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Federal Department of Defense
- Federal Department of Health & Social Services
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)
- Internal Revenue Service
- National Rural Water Association
- Norton Sound Health Corporation
- Office of Economic Development, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED)
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA)
- Rural Alaska Fuel Services
- Rural Alaska Pilot Project (RAPP)
- RurAL CAP
- Rural Community Action Corporation (RCAC)
- Rural Utility Cooperative (RUC)
- SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)
- Technical Assistance Providers (TA)
- University of Alaska College of Rural and Community Development
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Village Safe Water (VSW)
- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC)