



General Community Information

Detailed instructions for completing the Technical Environmental Survey

Village _____ Date _____

Surveyor & Title _____

This survey is a list of questions about environmental issues that may be present in your village. To the best of your ability and knowledge, answer each question that applies to your village. Most of the questions can be answered with a YES, NO or ? (unknown) response. Some of the questions will require that you contact the village council or the person(s) or operator responsible for a particular facility, such as the water treatment plant.

General Community Information

Who to ask: city and/or IRA/Traditional Council, school principal

1. Does your village have a <input type="checkbox"/> City Council <input type="checkbox"/> IRA/Traditional Council <input type="checkbox"/> Both Which council is responsible for the sanitation services in your village? <input type="checkbox"/> City Council <input type="checkbox"/> IRA/Traditional Council <input type="checkbox"/> Both
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Many villages have more than one governing council. The purpose of this question is to identify the council(s) responsible for making decisions about sanitation services in your village. This way concerns can be directed to the correct governing council. The sanitation facilities (i.e. drinking water system, sewage system and the landfill) in your village are owned by one of the village governments. Residents in the community, however, often refer to the water plant or the sewage plant as the “PHS” or the “Village Safe Water Plant.” This name can be confusing because some people believe that these organizations own and are responsible for the operation of these facilities. This is not true.



Village council office in Venetie
Photo Courtesy Bill Stokes

The City Council or Tribal Council owns and is responsible for the safe operation of these facilities. For this reason, it is important to know which council is responsible for providing sanitation services. If there are operational problems with the facilities, the responsible council can take steps to address the problems.

2. Does the village council(s) regularly collect fees for village services?

Yes No ?

If yes, which services?

Water Sewer Landfill

If no, how does the village pay for the services?

Providing safe water, safe sewage disposal, and safe landfills for a village requires money. A village that does not regularly collect user fees will have a difficult time hiring trained operators to properly operate and maintain the village sanitation facilities. If the village wants to improve sanitation services, it is important that the village councils and residents understand that user fees must be collected to pay for those services.

TIP for Fee Collection
If the community agrees that a collection fee is necessary, but don't think that residents will pay it, you will need to get creative. Consider adding it to other utility bills such as electric, cable, phone, fuel, etc.

When applying to the Village Safe Water Program (at the Department of Environmental Conservation) for funding, the Capital Budget Questionnaire awarded fifty points toward funding for water, sewer or solid waste projects if a village had a system for collecting user fees. Another fifty points are possible if your village has identified Operation and Maintenance Costs/Funding. Your village, therefore, has a greater chance of getting funding for projects if there is a system in place for collecting user fees for village services.

The Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program, which is part of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, offers management assistance and financial training related to water and wastewater utilities to cities and villages. The RUBA Program is a helpful resource for questions concerning collecting fees for village services. RUBA regulations concerning water and waste water user fees or other sources to sufficiently cover operating expenses: in order for a community to be considered for a Capital Improvement Project Grant from the Village Safe Water (VSW) Program, a RUBA Assessment must be conducted and all of the "RUBA Essential Indicators" must be met in order for the utility to be eligible for a VSW Grant.

3. Does your village council(s) receive technical help from environmental/public health programs or agencies?

Yes No ?

If yes, from whom?

There are many environmental/public health programs and agencies that provide technical assistance to villages in Alaska. If your village council(s) feels that no technical help is being provided to the village, it may be that the resources available are unknown. Being familiar with the programs/agencies and the services they provide can be a useful tool in environmental planning. Give the agencies a call and let them know what your needs are. Even if the person you're talking to can't help, it's more than likely that they can help guide you to the resources that will most fit your needs.

4. Are local pollution problems an issue with the village councils?

Yes No ?

If yes, what issues?

Pollution refers to contaminating the air, land or water with materials that are harmful to living things. A few examples of different pollution problems that may be issues in your village include: littering in and around the village, an overflowing dump, flooding of the sewage lagoon, unsafe water, improper



disposal of batteries, waste oil, fuel spills, abandoned drums and vehicles, and toxic smoke from burning plastics.

The village councils have the ability to make decisions that affect the entire community. If pollution problems are an issue with the councils, there is a greater chance of these problems getting attention. It is important that the council representatives are educated on pollution issues so they are better able to make decisions that will protect the health of the community. To increase the chances of grant funding being awarded, the proposal would benefit if it provided documentation of incidences of events that have a direct health impact on the community and photos with documented dates and times.

5. Does the village school have an environmental education curriculum?

Yes No ?

If yes, which grade levels?

The school district should include environmental education in the curriculum at all grade levels. Environmental concepts can be included in the school curriculum in all subject areas. There is no need to have a separate class to cover environmental information because with planning this information can be applied to mathematics, language arts, science, history and other subjects.



Third grade class in Emmonak saves aluminum cans for recycling
Photo Courtesy Bill Stokes

Environmental programs that are community-based and centered around local environmental issues can be a very effective way to get information across. They can also benefit the community.

Pollution prevention concepts are often integrated into environmental programs.

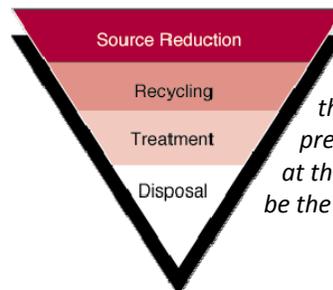
What is pollution prevention?

Pollution prevention means not creating “waste” in the first place. Activities that avoid, eliminate, or reduce waste at its source prevent pollution.

For example, using the same canvas bag over and over again at the village store prevents the waste of many plastic bags.

Pollution prevention requires a change in thinking from asking the question “How do I properly dispose of my waste?” to “How can I prevent waste in the first place?”

The Village of Galena established an excellent environmental education program in their schools. A major factor in the success of this program is the good relationships established between various programs early on. The environmental education program was the result of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Loudon Tribal Council, the Galena City Schools, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Agreement ensures that environmental education is integrated into all the disciplines for all school-age children.



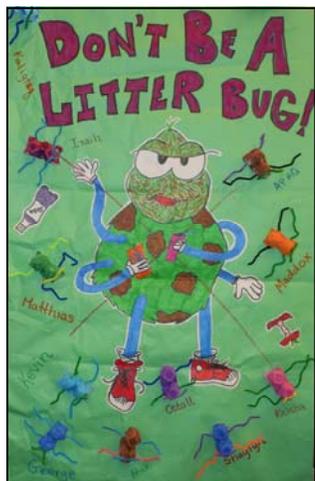
The diagram shows that the first step in pollution prevention is reducing waste at the source. Disposal should be the last option.



Planting seeds in reused cups
Photo Courtesy Ruth Farrens

"Teaching the children first was a joy in itself, because they took this teaching home with them and showed their parents, siblings and grandparents what they had learned. Because of going to our children and teaching them, they have done the job of teaching their elders. It's like a chain reaction. You start on one end and it escalates from there."

*Ruth Farrens,
Former AmeriCorps Member, Sand Point*



Sand Point, Alaska

In Sand Point, former AmeriCorps Member Ruth Farrens, focused on working with the school children of the village to teach environmental education. Some of the projects they worked on included

- reading stories about the environment and coloring pictures of what the stories meant to them.
- planting seeds in reused Styrofoam coffee cups and clear plastic juice cups.

One of the rewards of Ruth's work in Sand Point was having a parent tell her that their daughter came home and told the father not to put his pop can in the garbage. Instead, the daughter told him to keep a bag hanging on the door knob in the kitchen for recycling aluminum!

There are many other communities that have gone into the schools to educate youth about the environment. Many have also put an emphasis on involving youth with the work that they're doing through afterschool or summer jobs.



Recycled egg carton art
Photo Courtesy Desirae Roehl



Recycled soda bottle piggy bank
Photo Courtesy Desirae Roehl

6. Does the community have any environmental programs or groups that meet regularly?

Yes No ?

If yes, what are they?

One way to involve the community in environmental issues is to form groups and/or begin programs that focus on environmental issues. Environmental groups can be helpful in accomplishing the environmental/public health goals of the community. A committed group that meets regularly and gains the support of the community will be a benefit to the community. Examples of groups or programs that cover environmental issues include annual clean-up groups, environmental newsletter committees, environmental work groups and recycling committees. Sometimes, villages include environmental issues within programs such as spirit camps. It is important for these groups to not only discuss local environmental issues, but also solutions to addressing them.



Environmental Focus Groups can help accomplish the environmental goals of the community
Photo Courtesy Dan Lung



Nelson Island Tribal Consortium
www.nelsonislandconsortium.org

Nelson Island Tribal Consortium is a Regional environmental group for the Native Villages of Tununak, Newtok, Cheforak, Tooksook Bay, Kipnuk, Nightmute and Umkumiut. The Consortium was formed in 2003 to protect their traditional ways of life. The Nelson Island Tribal Consortium's "Village Representatives" all take part in the development of Regional Strategic plan to protect subsistence resources from local and regional waste pollution.