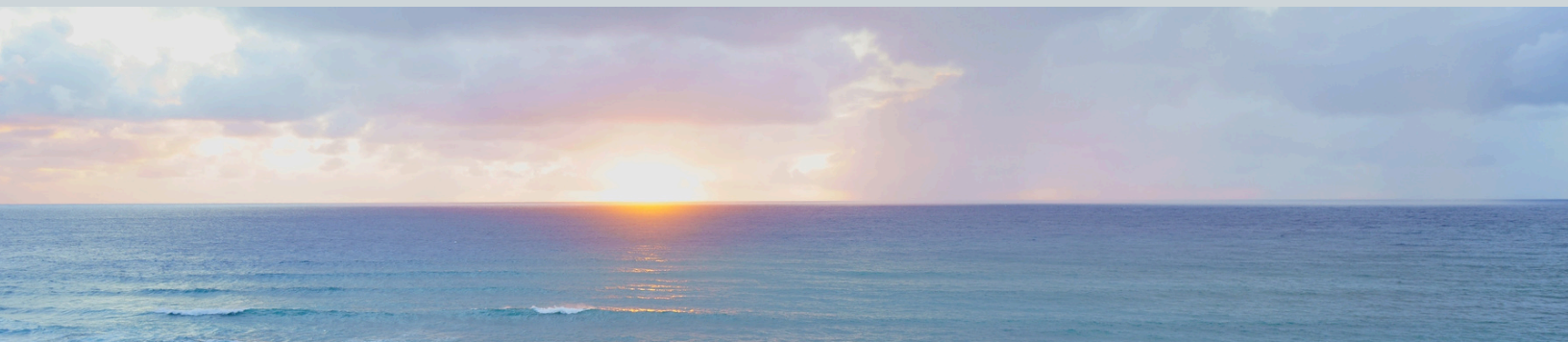




People on the Move in a Changing Climate

THE GREATER PACIFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP SYNTHESIS

April 2023



PEOPLE
ON THE
MOVE IN A
CHANGING
CLIMATE



Background

People on the Move in a Changing Climate (PEMOCC) is a Sea Grant led project to facilitate the involvement, research coordination, and knowledge sharing of the exacerbating effects that climate change may have on human migration or relocation needs. This workshop series was designed to explore the major research, policy, and extension needs surrounding human mobility associated with climate change. This briefing document summarizes outcomes from a workshop held in April 2023 covering Alaska, the greater Pacific Region, the Pacific Northwest, and international perspectives.

The workshop was held in Anchorage, Alaska and led by Alaska Sea Grant from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and focused on the current state of knowledge on climate-induced human mobility. This included general areas of climate resilience, where people are migrating from and the underlying climate and social issues related to human mobility, and where people might move. The goal was to bring together participants from across this broad region to create a conversation and dialogue around climate resilience and explore shared climate-induced stress, but also resilience and adaptation solutions to enhance community well-being. A special emphasis was placed on underserved and underrepresented coastal communities, specifically in Alaska, Hawai'i, and the Mariana Islands. The workshop began with opening remarks as well as ice breakers to ensure participant familiarity and comfortability. The workshop was divided into four sections, each followed by an engagement session. The summary below is derived from the report, "People on the Move in a Changing Climate: The Greater Pacific, A Workshop Summary" written by Holen and Kelly (2024) from Alaska Sea Grant, and involves both speaker and the engagement session perspectives.

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<https://www.pemocc.org/>

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Image of Sand:

Karina Alvarez

Speakers:

Gabriela Olmos Rosas, Newspaper editor, Scholar

Sonya Gray, Anthropologist from Hoonah, Southeast Alaska, lifetime member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, tribal member of the Hoonah Indian Association, and shareholder of Huna Totem Corporation

Casey Ferguson, Indigenous Engagement Coordinator for the Alaska Coastal Cooperatives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

Key Highlights

- **Gabriela Olmos Rosas highlighted a story about Mexican immigrants in Anchorage.** This tight-knit community has been there for many years and shares homes in close proximity as well as cultural traditions.
- **Sonya Gray told the story of the Tlingit of Icy Strait.** They have had a fraught relationship with the United States government over migration due to the establishment of Glacier Bay. Sonya discussed how the Tlingit of Hoonah and the National Park Service have come to heal this relationship by reestablishing a clan house in the park and through cultural activities.
- **Casey Ferguson discussed stories and challenges of flooding and coastal erosion in the Chevak region.** This is an underserved network of 56 communities that are not connected by road. Many houses do not have sanitation and household water systems.

Image (right):

Graphic narrative of key highlights touched on by the speakers.



Speakers:

Sheila Babauta, former legislator and current owner of Community Solutions, Northern Mariana Islands
Kyana Tuncap, Guam Water Project
Harmonee Williams, Sustainable Moloka'i
Katy Mokuau, Sustainable Moloka'i
Heather Place, Sustainable Moloka'i

Key Highlights

- **Communities facing relocation due to climate-related events encounter several limitations despite the support offered by state and federal governments.**
- **Sustained support for communities facing relocation requires community engagement at a local level.** For example, in Molokai, involving representatives from all ages and backgrounds, including Native Hawaiians, in discussions about relocation was crucial to the success of this community. Having diverse voices at the table - ranging from experts, government officials, immigrants, and community members - fosters a more inclusive process. Involving communities in research and modeling early on can also be beneficial.
- **Local and Indigenous leaders play a vital role in the planning process for adapting in place or a relocation process.** Community elders are especially vital as they possess long term knowledge of their community and natural environments. They are essential for bridging gaps between communities and government agencies.
- **Youth involvement is also crucial in the relocation process as they are among the most impacted by climate change.** Youth should be actively engaged with school and youth clubs to advocate for their needs, while sometimes even challenging and influencing their parents.
- **Decisions about whether to stay or relocate are influenced by various factors.** Simply discussing relocation can lead to tension between community members. Economic factors (housing, cost of living, job availability) play significant roles in these decisions as well as proximity to family, healthcare, legal land rights, and personal trauma from past relocations.
- **Communities often face difficulties with slow disaster response and inadequate disaster assistance, especially in rural areas.** Traditional grant writing can be a slow process and prompts questions about alternative funding sources (such as direct support from land-owning corporations or parametric insurance). It is crucial to ensure that resource allocation meets community needs.

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Heather Place, Sustainable Moloka'i



Speakers:

Sydney Fishman, Washington Sea Grant

Jackie Qataliña Schaefer, Division of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Corporation, lead of Climate Programs Initiative

Paula Dobbyn, reporter with the Civil Beat in Hawai'i

Idowu Jola Ajibade, Portland State University

Key Highlights

- **Cultural values and practices are integral to community cohesion and identity.** Elders are highly regarded as leaders. Many communities practice the subsistence way of life which reinforces strong cultural ties and social cohesion. Communities are often open to growth and want their communities to be safe places for their family now and in the future. Connection to others and the land is an important value for many of these communities.
- **Ensuring decisions are made with cultural respect is vital.** Effective governance involves community input, thereby building trust. Essential decision-making elements include having a functional regulatory system, an evacuation plan, and a willingness to meaningfully address environmental and climate-driven changes.
- **Addressing environmental and climate-induced risks often involves difficult trade-offs.** These trade-offs include the potential compromise of cultural practices to secure funding to meet regulatory requirements. For example, cultural sites, such as burial grounds, may be affected by environmental hazards, and sometimes government agencies are unaware of their significance. Additionally, the thawing of permafrost threatens infrastructure stability.



Speakers:

Mathew Berman, Economist, University of Alaska Anchorage

Ryan Foster, City Planner, Homer, Alaska

Kelsey Anderson, Planner, Matanuska Susitna Borough

Sonya Gray, Anthropologist from Hoonah, Southeast Alaska, lifetime member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, tribal member of the Hoonah Indian Association, and shareholder of Huna Totem Corporation

Momi Afelin and Katy Mouau, Sust'āinable Molokai

Key Highlights

- **Building resilient local economies involves fostering a diverse range of industries, skills, and ownership structures.** Education and workforce development should align with local job opportunities. Emphasizing natural resources (such as fishing) and tourism can help drive economic growth. Local ownership helps keep financial benefits in a community and aids in resilience. Infrastructure needs include public facilities, those tailored to specific industries, and adequate housing to support a growing workforce and economic development.
- **Maintaining cultural heritage is essential for community health and cohesion.** This includes preserving and practicing traditions along with ensuring the health of natural spaces. A holistic approach to health—encompassing mind, body, and spirit—is vital. Affordable, culturally appropriate healthcare (and mental health resources) is crucial for preventing migration due to inadequate services.
- **Developing sustainable infrastructure is critical to supporting future community needs.** However, there are many barriers to accessing funding (proposal writing, grant management, fulfilling cost matching requirements). Funding structures that promote accessibility and equity should be considered. Investing in updated, resilient infrastructure should be prioritized with local and traditional knowledge in mind. More roads may not be the answer to connectivity, so alternative means of transportation should be considered.
- **Ensuring food security involves providing access to diverse food types and fostering traditional subsistence practices.** Protecting biodiversity and resources through community management is essential for a secure food supply and secure and culturally appropriate food storage systems. The management of subsistence resources needs to be responsive to species' spatial and temporal distribution. Land tenure issues that act as barriers to traditional subsistence practices must be addressed and ameliorated. Publicly funded programs and policies that support educational experiences in food production, favor the inclusion of nutritionally rich subsistence foods, will help sustain community well being moving forward.

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Image (left):

Breakout group of participants discussing key themes from the future coastal communities segment.

Needs Identification

In this section, we summarize the **RESEARCH**, **POLICY**, **COALITION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**, and **COMMUNICATION** needs identified during the workshop.

RESEARCH NEEDS:

- 1 Include community.** Recent efforts have emphasized community engagement in the modeling process to better address local needs. For example, in Alaska, there are significant challenges for adapting in place or relocation. Efforts require thorough research and planning, including permafrost and GIS mapping and forecasting models for water levels.
- 2 Understand mobility patterns.** More research is needed to understand how shifts in population patterns intersect with underlying socioeconomic, cultural, political, and environmental processes.
- 3 Engage diverse stakeholders.** Research in this area would benefit from more diverse perspectives and stakeholders from coastal communities around the United States.
- 4 Foster analysis and synthesis.** Research, analysis, and synthesis on climate-induced human mobility can be conducted using current data and legal/policy frameworks.

POLICY NEEDS

- 1 Create policy with community in mind.** It is important to consider policy decisions that are culturally sensitive.
- 2 Consider alternative funding options.** Federal and State funds are often difficult for communities to apply for. Thus, alternative means of funding may be necessary to help communities with coastal adaptation, resilience, and relocation.
- 3 Build better infrastructure.** Updated infrastructure needs to be built (and funded) to support a growing workforce, economy, and sustainable job industry for community members to have a resilient future.

Needs Identification (*continued*)

COALITION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING NEEDS:

- 1 **Communicate thoughtfully.** Stories throughout the workshop highlighted that one-on-one communication often yielded good results. Although one-on-one communication may not always be possible, the workshop speakers highlighted the need for individualized attention to communities.
- 2 **Produce educational materials.** Publicly funded programs that favor the inclusion of nutritionally rich traditionally gathered foods (whether through subsistence or Indigenous practices) and policies that support educational experiences in food production and preparation for community members will help to sustain community well being moving forward.

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

- 1 **Build partnerships.** Communities are often open to change and are willing to make decisions for the safety of their communities. Thus, building partnerships between agencies and communities is the most effective way to create resilient adaptation plans.
- 2 **Involve all voices of the community.** Many of the communities highlighted in this workshop have strong reverence for their elders. Elders are often a wealth of traditional and environmental knowledge. Elders have much to share and can be a bridge between communities and agencies. Additionally, youth are among the most impacted by climate change. They can be involved in advocating for their futures, often have creative solutions, and can be forces of change.

Summary

Hawai'i, other U.S. islands in the Pacific, and Alaska are home to large Indigenous populations, including Native Hawaiians, Chomorro, and Alaska Natives. These communities often sit at the periphery of wealthy urban centers and federal infrastructure, such as military bases and lands controlled by federal agencies. This workshop heard from researchers, practitioners, and residents of the region, who live in or work with mainly rural Indigenous communities. Equity became a central focus of this workshop. There are deep historical structural inequities that still need to be overcome. In small group discussions, one of the central themes is that these rural communities need to have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives, and specifically, elders and youth should have a say in decisions.

Residents of predominantly Indigenous communities of the Pacific region have a close, often spiritual connection to the land and the resources on which they depend for their livelihoods. Communities are often multi-generational, encompassing close kin networks, so family is an essential community aspect that ties people together. Elders have deep knowledge of the lands and waters on which they depend, and youth are inspired by the ability to innovate their communities by drawing on their elders' knowledge. It is for these reasons that people continue to live in the places where they have generational connections to place, and in light of the changing climate and structural inequities, they will continue to innovate, thrive, and live successful lives.



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