Recovery & Resiliency in Southwest Alaska
Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic – For Now and the Future

PREPARED FOR:

March 2022
About McKinley Research Group

• Formerly McDowell Group
• Research and consulting since 1972 - 50th Anniversary
• Offices in Anchorage and Juneau
• Community Economic Research, Planning, and Development
• Projects based in SWAMC region including seafood industry, transportation and planning development, visitor industry, healthcare and social services, Alaska Native regional and village corporations, and many more
• Numerous economic development strategies
Plan Purpose

• **Build** from lessons learned during the current pandemic
• **Forward looking** preparedness and response plan for building resiliency to future economic shocks
• Shows the region has **prioritized** strategies and is ready for funding to address these goals
• Not a plan to be “shelved”
• A plan for SWAMC and **YOU**

Resiliency
The ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, and other events.
Planning Process

- **Resident Survey**: 150 Respondents
- **Baseline Data Scan**
- **Regional Plan Review**
- **Stakeholder Interviews**: 20 + Participants representing local government, seafood, education, visitor industry, transportation, and others
- **Strategic Recommendations**
Plan Overview

• Situational awareness
  • Sets socioeconomic context
  • Identifies major impacts of COVID-19
  • Estimates select COVID-related mitigation funding sources to individuals, businesses, local governments, and others

• Lessons learned
  • Describes interview and survey findings

• Strategic recommendations, action plan, SWAMC roles
Relationship to Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

- CEDS articulate and plan for the economic direction for the region
- Resilience is a common thread throughout CEDS
- Recovery & Resiliency Plan complements SWAMC’s current CEDS
- SWAMC CEDS 2020-2024 Goals:
  - Resource Management Advocacy
  - Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy
  - People and Partnerships Networking
  - Quality of Life Initiatives
**Goal A: Resource Management Advocacy**
1) Maintain Functioning Commercial Fisheries
2) Support Ongoing Seasonal Tourism

**Goal B: Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Advocacy**
1) Improve Broadband Capacities
2) Improve Supply Chain Systems

**Goal C: People and Partnerships Networking**
1) Maximize Capture of Federal and Other Support Funding
2) Strengthen Emergency Operations Center Structures
3) Continue Building Communications between Industry and Communities

**Goal D: Quality of Life Initiatives**
1) Enhance Childcare Services and Support

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**Strategic Recommendations**
Strategic Recommendations

1) Does this reflect the actions that should be taken?

2) Does this reflect SWAMC’s role?

3) How can my organization partner with SWAMC?
GOAL A: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT
Strategic Recommendation 1: Maintain Functioning Commercial Fisheries

Commercial fisheries are the biggest economic driver in the Southwest Region.

Action Plan
- Develop a simple seafood industry reference guide for emergency managers
- Assess/identify quarantine options for individual communities
- Identify support mechanism for relief resources and funds

SWAMC Roles
- Identify funding/manage development of seafood industry reference guide
- Facilitate community conversations around best practice quarantine options
- Develop a resource describing regional seafood industry to aid policymakers and regional leaders with fast-paced response situations
Strategic Recommendation 2: Support Ongoing Seasonal Tourism

Support for the tourism industry increases economic diversification, building resiliency to economic shocks in other sectors.

**Action Plan**

- Assess current position and visitor marketing in the region
- Deploy additional marketing to attract travel-ready market segments
- Continue support of entrepreneurial ventures
- Engage with Alaska Native Cultural Tourism plan to expand market awareness and promotion

**SWAMC Roles**

- Advocate for marketing funding for operators
- Promote responsible tourism to help minimize visitor impacts on small communities
- Convene tour operators to develop regional tour packages
- Advocate for National Park infrastructure improvements
- Promote ecotourism
GOAL B: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE
Strategic Recommendation 1: Improve Broadband Capacities

Internet access is essential to access relief funding and spread information, as well as business competitiveness.

Action Plan
• Capitalize on funding opportunities for broadband access improvements
• Continue support for further tribal broadband funding
• Implement “Broadband-in-a-Box” plan

SWAMC Roles
• Continue to educate and advocate with Alaska’s congressional delegation and State of Alaska
• Connect communities to funding and operational plans that best suit their community
• Convene stakeholders to identify strategic funding partnerships
Strategic Recommendation 2: Improve Supply Chain Systems

*Maintaining essential air and waterborne transportation is critical to the flow of people, goods, and fuel into the region. Infrastructure to warehouse goods, including temperature-sensitive medical supplies and food, could build resilience and mitigate food insecurity.*

**Action Plan**
- Assess need for/capacity to provide added food and materials storage for emergency purposes
- Enhance necessary fuel storage
- Seek opportunities to incorporate renewable energy solutions
- Restore, augment, and enhance regional transportation services

**SWAMC Roles**
- Monitor and promote energy-related funding opportunities
- Advocate for increased funding to meet energy needs
- Advocate for ferry system funding and routes serving Southwest
- Advocate for essential air service designation in the region
GOAL C: PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS NETWORKING
Strategic Recommendation 1: Maximize Capture of Federal and Other Support Funding

*Increased capacity to support awareness of, applications to, and effective spending of these available emergency resources and relief is critical and time sensitive*

**Action Plan**
- Strengthen communication between tribal, municipal, and state organizations/governments
- Create a plan describing how support can be provided to residents and businesses
- Inform federal officials of unique characteristics of the region in implementing federal funding

**SWAMC Roles**
- Advocate for regional needs and relevant funding
- Provide technical assistance to communities and regional organizations
- Develop tools and materials to build awareness of and ease access to funding
- Ensure regional CEDS encompasses all communities
Strategic Recommendation 2: Strengthen Emergency Operations Center Structures

Continued training on EOC best practices will position communities for effective disaster response.

Action Plan

• Increase training on how to activate an EOC and strengthen preparedness
• Conduct emergency drills to enhance preparedness
• Leverage health care providers’ networks and capabilities

SWAMC Roles

• Develop a list of important emergency management contacts at the State/regional levels
• Provide resources such as emergency management toolkits or guides, updates on essential services, public health guidelines, best practices and tips for developing employee policies, and available financial resources
Strategic Recommendation 3: Continue Building Communications between Industry and Communities

Effective communication regarding emergency plans will ensure organizations have the capacity to meet objectives.

**Action Plan**
- Build productive community networks and relationships
- Develop emergency communications plan
- Develop/update list of regional and community emergency contacts
- Host online versions of community emergency response plans
- Use common platforms for hosting webinars or online meetings

**SWAMC Roles**
- Hub for relaying and interpreting information flowing between government, industry, nonprofits, and residents
- Help inform residents about local businesses they can support during and after a disaster
GOAL D: QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES
Strategic Recommendation 1: Enhance Childcare Services/Support

Childcare should be viewed as critical infrastructure for workforce and community development. Enhanced childcare access supports labor force participation and helps families stay in the region.

**Action Plan**
- Secure funding for childcare infrastructure development
- Support workforce development for early childhood educators
- Develop or attract new and expanded after-school programs

**SWAMC Roles**
- Elevate childcare workforce as an economic development initiative
- Advocate for additional funding to support childcare sector development
- Connect in-region organizations to childcare training opportunities
- Advocate for state childcare licensure policy review to better understand implications for Southwest Alaska
WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Download the Recovery & Resiliency Plan: www.swamc.org
THANK YOU!

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