



# Bristol Bay Regional Vision

RC#55

Final Report

November 2011

## Celebrating Our Unity

Over the past year, the residents of the Bristol Bay region have engaged in a dialog about the future. In schools and community halls across the region, we spoke about our values and shared our hopes for our families and communities. The Vision that emerged is one of optimism and common values.

Throughout the region people said the foundation of their lives is strong families connected to the land and waters of the area. We want excellent schools, safe and healthy families, local jobs, access to subsistence resources, and a strong voice in determining the future direction of the region. We are willing to work together so our grandchildren can live successful lives here.

The Vision we created will become a guiding document for communities, regional organizations and all entities that have an interest in the Bristol Bay region. It is time to celebrate all that unites us!

### A PROJECT OF

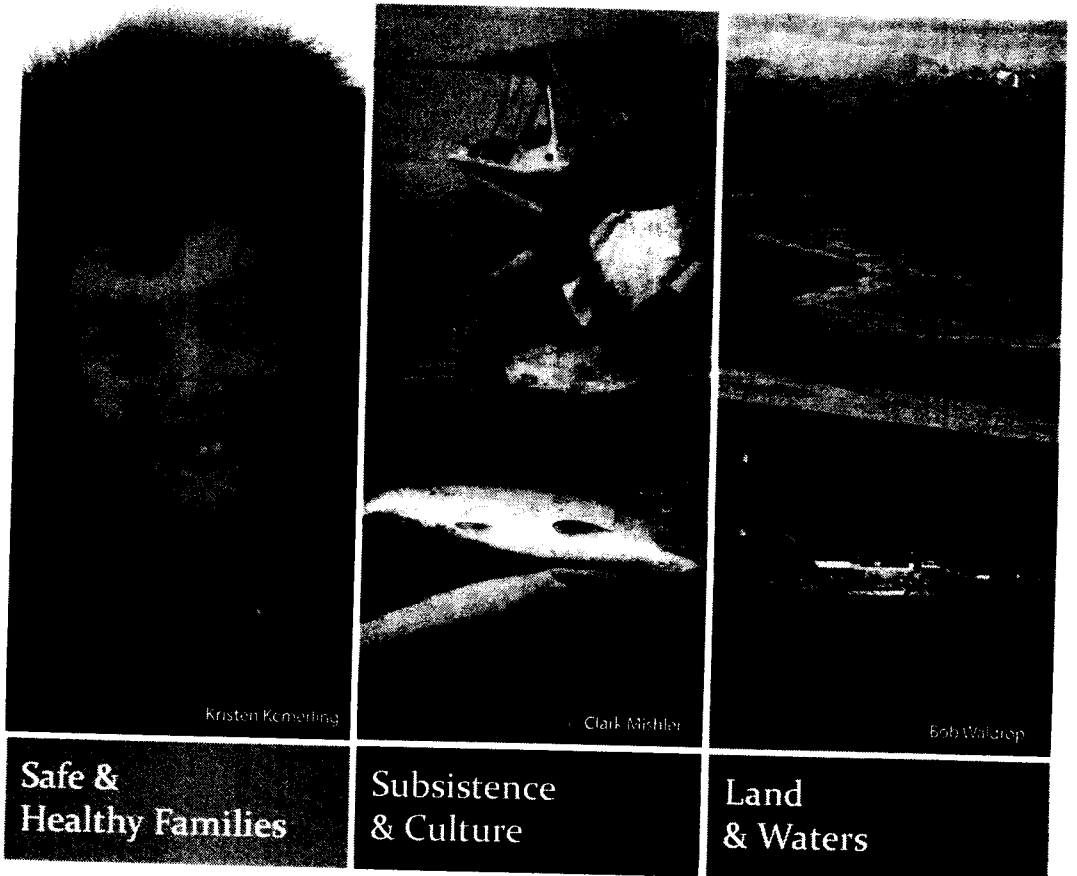
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation
- Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
- Bristol Bay Housing Authority
- Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation

### WITH SUPPORT FROM

- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- Alaska Conservation Foundation
- Oak Foundation
- Rasmuson Foundation (through Bristol Bay Housing Authority)
- Tiffany & Co. Foundation
- Bristol Bay Native Corporation

### PREPARED BY

ation Insights, Inc.  
www.ialaska.com



Kristen Kemerling

Clark Miehler

Bob Waldrop

**The Bristol Bay Regional Vision Project convened over 50 meetings in 26 communities. Participants in every community were asked the same questions about their vision for the future. Many common themes emerged.**

**Culture & Subsistence**

- Family, connection to the land and water, and subsistence activities are the most important parts people's lives today and in the future
- Maintaining a subsistence focus by teaching children how to engage in subsistence activities and encouraging good stewardship practices is important.
- Gatherings that include instruction by Elders about culture-based skills are important tools in maintaining cultural values.

**Economic Development**

- People welcome sustainable economic development that is based largely on renewable resources. Any large development must not threaten land and waters.
- True economic development will require a regionally coordinated approach to reduce energy costs, provide business training, and ensure long-term fish stock protection.
- Residents want to see increased access to limited entry permits, continued quality improvement of fish, and regional efforts to expand markets. Young people need to be able to afford entry into the fishing business.

**Safe & Healthy Families**

- People would most like to change alcohol/drug abuse and/or fear of domestic violence.
- Strengthening wellness efforts is a strong way to reduce substance abuse and family violence.
- Community gatherings help to create stronger families and healthier communities.
- The vast majority believe, "We can live healthy and productive lives here in the next 25 years."

**Education**

- Education should prepare youth with skills needed for success in college or vocational schools.
- To create success for our students, adults need to model the values and behaviors we expect from them. Modeling how to live is the most important factor for creating successful students.
- Families and communities need to communicate values and priorities to the schools.

**Fostering Cooperation**

- To create community-wide agreement on initiatives or projects there should be joint planning meetings among tribes, local governments and corporations.

# The Vision

**The foundation** of the Bristol Bay Region is committed families, connected to our land and waters.

**We believe** future generations can live healthy and productive lives here. Across our region, we share common values of community, culture, and subsistence.

**We see** a future of educated, creative people who are well prepared for life. This requires:

- Excellent schools
- Safe and healthy families
- Local jobs
- Understanding our cultural values and traditions

**We assert** the importance of local voices in managing our natural resources to continue our way of life.

**We welcome** sustainable economic development that advances the values of Bristol Bay people. Our future includes diverse economic opportunities in businesses and industries based largely on renewable resources. Large development based on renewable and non-renewable resources must not threaten our land, our waters, or our way of life.

**We foster** cooperation among local and regional entities to coordinate infrastructure planning for stronger, more affordable communities. Investments in energy, housing and transportation promote sustainable communities and spur economic development.

**We recognize** the need to locate new sources of capital to implement this vision with a goal of generating self-sustaining regional economies.

**We are unified** to secure a prosperous future.



**The Vision reflects the common hopes and values expressed by Bristol Bay residents in community meetings across the region. It was endorsed by 89 percent of residents who participated in a second round of community meetings. It now carries the authority of the people of Bristol Bay.**

# Visioning Process

*"When we have similarities we should be partners. We're more effective if we can work together."*  
— Naknek resident

The Bristol Bay Partners invited nine well-respected leaders from across the region to serve as commissioners for the project. The commissioners became the "eyes and ears" of the project: they convened community meetings and listened to residents' aspirations for the future of their region.

Members of the commission included:

- Hjalmar "Ofi" Olson, Dillingham
- Luki Akelkok, Ekwok
- Molly Chythlook, Dillingham
- Annie Christensen, Port Heiden
- Helen Gregorio, Togiak
- John D. Nelson, Kokhanok
- Erin Peters, Naknek
- AlexAnna Salmon, Igiugig
- Annie Fritze, Dillingham

## Round 1: Fall/Winter 2010-11

Between September 2010 and January 2011, visioning meetings were held in 26 communities. Small teams consisting of one or two commissioners, BBNA project staff, and facilitators from the Alaska public policy and management consulting firm of Information Insights, traveled throughout the region to meet with residents. In each community, participants responded to an identical set of questions designed to encourage meaningful dialog and to track opinions across the region in a consistent format.

**Nine commissioners became the "eyes and ears" of the project. They traveled to villages and listened to residents' aspirations for the future of their region.**



Residents of all ages attend a community meeting and potluck in New Stuyahok.

To ensure every participant had an equal voice in the conversation, Consensor™ audience polling was used to capture individual responses to questions. Participants used handheld keypads to vote for their first, second and, in some cases, third priorities from a set of choices developed by commissioners and project staff. Meeting facilitators then engaged community members in discussions about key issues.

Nearly 1,400 participants attended the community meetings. Every age group was well represented, with the greatest participation (23 percent) among residents 46 to 55 years of age, followed by 16 percent aged 56 to 65. The lowest participation rate (9 percent) was for residents over age 65. Forty-five percent of participants were male, and 55 percent female. Commissioners also met with secondary school students

**Nearly 1,400 participants attended meetings in their community.**

**Electronic polling ensured each had an equal voice in the conversation.**



© Bob Waldrop

in four communities to hear about their values, hopes and visions for the future.

Project teams left behind paper surveys so those who missed the community meeting could mail in their viewpoints. An online survey was also available to residents of the region who could not attend a local meeting. Polling results and summaries of community conversations were posted throughout the project on the project website at [bristolbayvision.org](http://bristolbayvision.org).

### **Round 2: Spring 2011**

Following the first round of meetings, commissioners met in Anchorage with project staff and consultants from Information Insights to review the findings and draft a Vision statement that reflected the shared hopes and values expressed by Bristol Bay residents from across the region.

Commissioners returned to communities in the spring to share the Vision and discuss how best to implement it in the community and the region. Audience polling was again used to gather input on the best actions to take in five key areas identified in the Vision: *Safe and Healthy Families, Subsistence, Education, Economic Development and Fostering Cooperation*. Choices offered within each area were taken from the suggestions made by Bristol Bay residents during the first round of community meetings.

Following the second round of meetings, members of the Bristol Bay Regional Vision commission again met to consider what they had heard. They drafted recommendations for implementing the Vision, based on findings from the entire process. They forwarded their recommendations to the Bristol Bay Partnership.

*“You might have a community that works together, but we’re up against challenges at the regional, state, and federal level.” — Igiugig resident*

**Below:** Bristol Bay Regional Vision commissioners at work. **Top of page:** Young participants at a meeting in Levelock.





A sampling of the responses of Bristol Bay region residents to questions asked at community meetings appears on the following pages. The numbers represent totals across all communities. The top responses to each question are shown (those totaling 75% or more of the vote). Complete results, including polling and discussion summaries for individual communities, are available at:

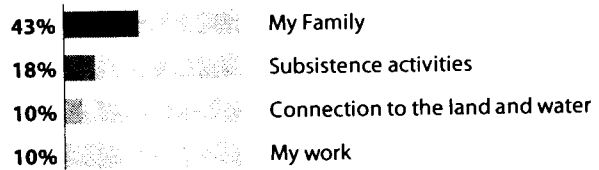
[www.bristolbayvision.org/downloads](http://www.bristolbayvision.org/downloads)

**VALUES & VISIONING**

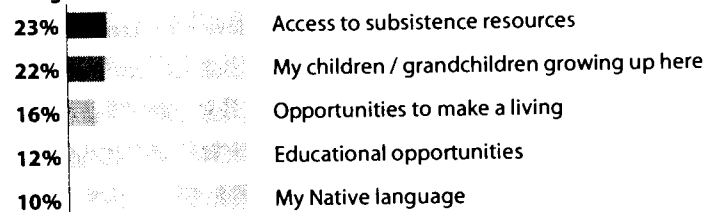
**Do you feel the Vision Statement expresses the values people of the Bristol Bay Region hold?**



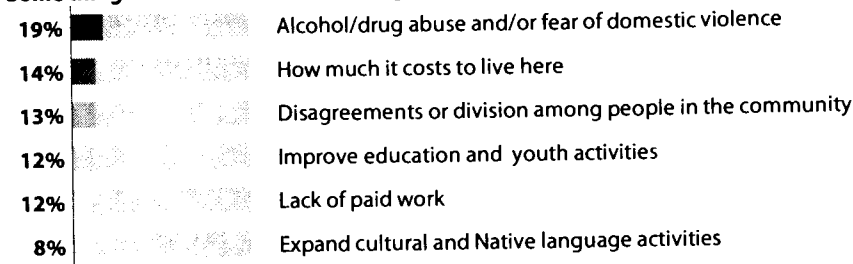
**Some of the most important parts of my life now are:**



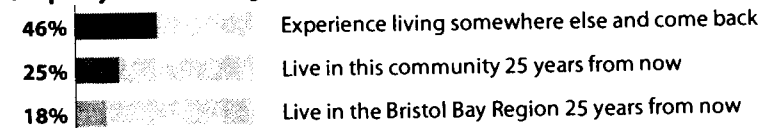
**Things about this community I want to maintain in the future are:**



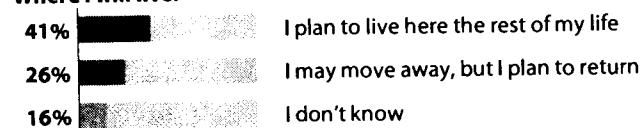
**Some things I would most like to change about my community are:**



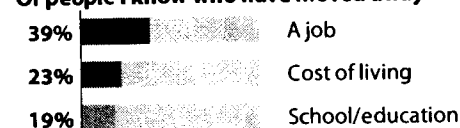
**I hope my children and grandchildren will:**



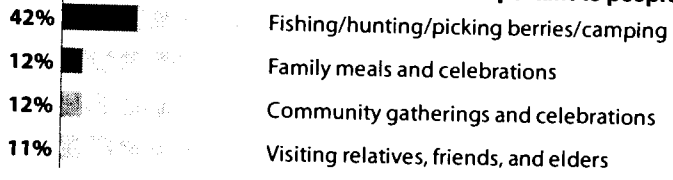
**Where I will live:**



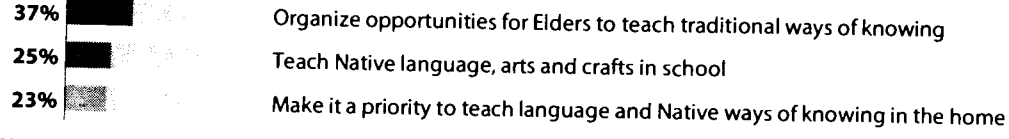
**Of people I know who have moved away from here, I think they left because of:**



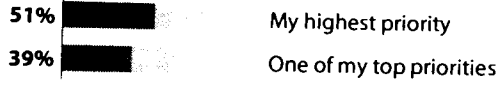
**I hope the following activities will be the most important to people in my community in 25 years:**



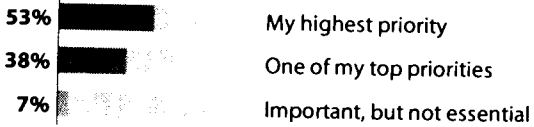
**What is the best way for us to share and pass along culture, values and traditions?**



**How important is access to subsistence uses of fish, animals, birds and renewable resources to you today?**



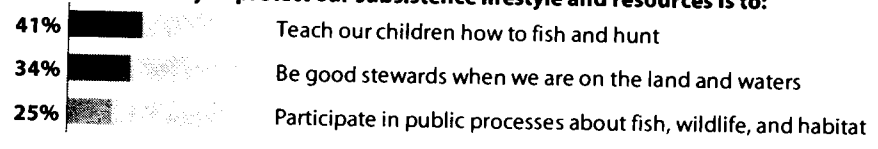
**How important is it that 25 years from now residents have access to subsistence uses of fish, animals, birds and other renewable resources?**



**I hope my family will want to go to fish camp, even if they live somewhere else.**



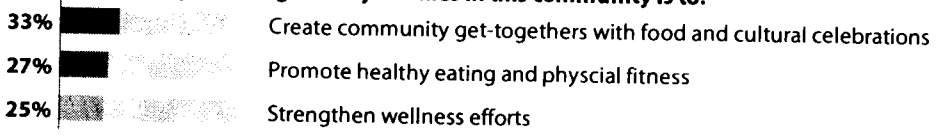
**I think the best way to protect our subsistence lifestyle and resources is to:**



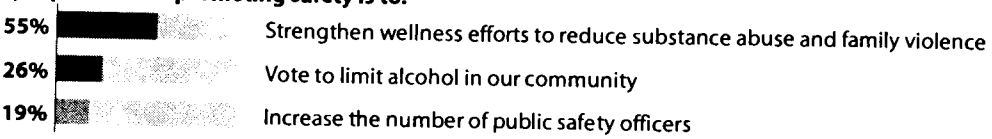
**I believe we can live healthy and productive lives in this community in the coming 25 years.**



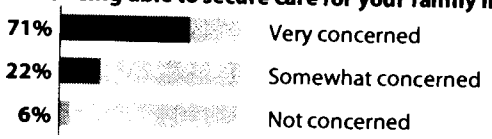
**My top choice for promoting healthy families in this community is to:**



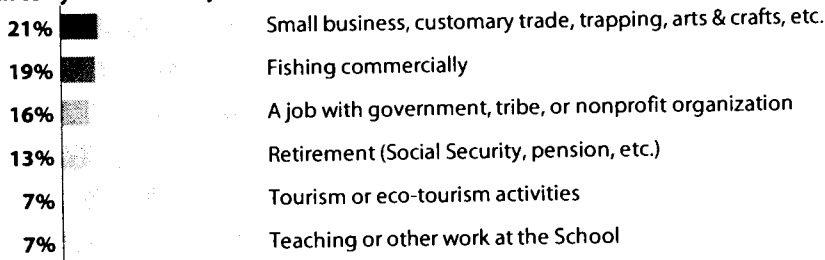
**My top choice for promoting safety is to:**



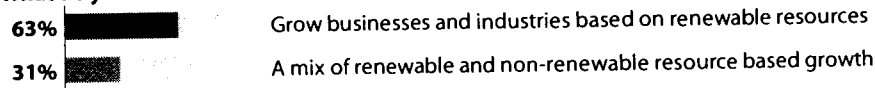
**Today there are new costs associated with securing care for elders and families. How concerned are you about being able to secure care for your family in the future?**



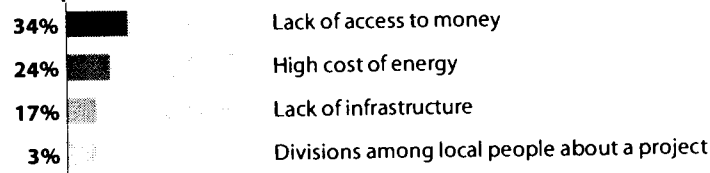
**In ten years I want my cash income to come from:**



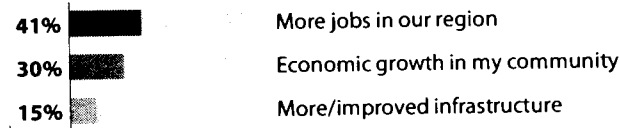
**What do you want in the future as the basis of economic development in the Bristol Bay Region?**



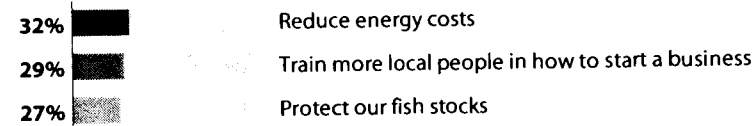
**What prevents local development projects here?**



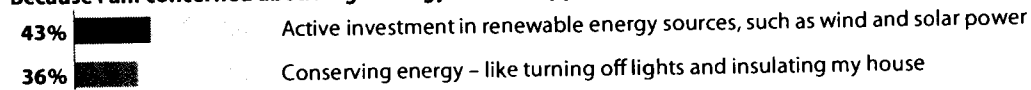
**When I think about any kind of new large or small development, I get most excited about:**



**The top strategy to create a sustainable economy should be:**



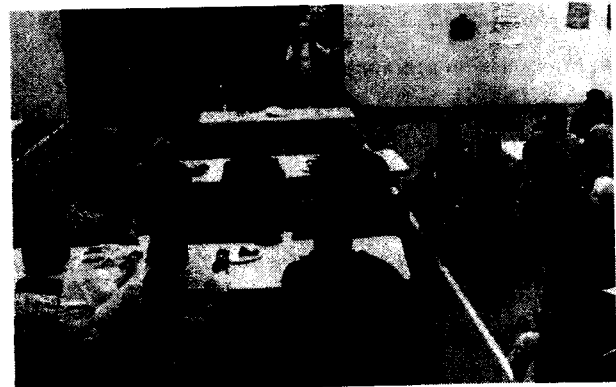
**Because I am concerned about high energy costs, I support:**



**I work or someone in my family works as a commercial fisher, either as a permit owner or a deck hand.**



Port Heiden



Ekwok

© Joseph Davis





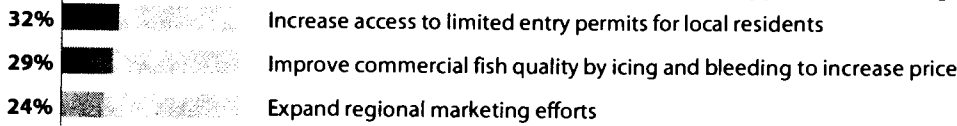
Togiak

© Joseph Davis

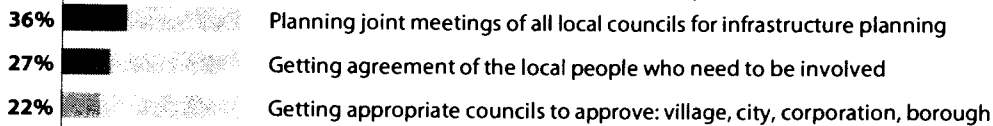
**If our kids are going to be active in commercial fishing, the most important strategy is to increase our local access to limited entry permits.**



**What commercial fishing strategy will have the biggest impact on creating jobs or increasing income?**

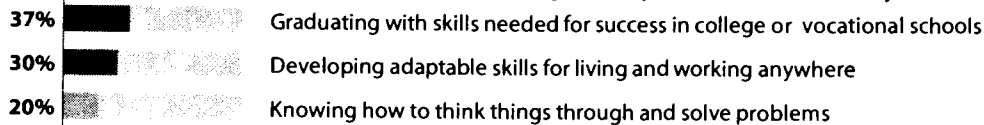


**What is the biggest barrier to creating cooperation about future projects?**

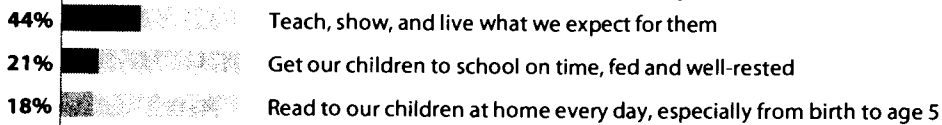


... ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

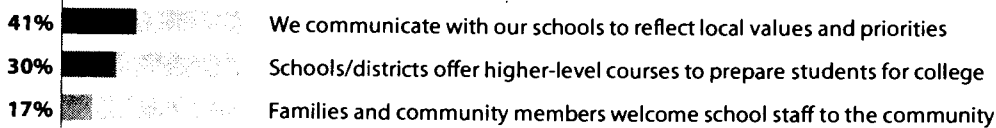
**What is the most important way education should prepare the youth in this community for their lives?**



**Families are our children's first teachers. My top choice for creating successful students is to:**



**The best way to create excellent schools is:**



EDUCATION

## Share the Vision:

### ENGAGE LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE REGION

The Vision is a bold beginning. It will take the work of both local and regional leaders to help make it a reality.

Commissioners recommend that Bristol Bay Partners add presentations about the Vision to their board or annual meetings and to meetings with villages and other local and regional entities, including boroughs, school districts, the UAF Bristol Bay Campus, and others.

Response to the Vision should include coordinated and collaborative initiatives. To make it a reality, we must focus on communication between community residents, community leaders and regional organizations, and cultivate leadership within our communities, village corporations, tribal councils, and local governments. Bristol Bay Partners should take a leadership role in these efforts.

## Partner for Success:

### COORDINATE AND SUPPORT CAPACITY-BUILDING

The Vision will succeed with individual commitment, local and regional collaboration, and the participation of many organizations and agencies. Communities must define their priorities for addressing the issues highlighted during the meetings, but support from regional organizations and policy-makers is also essential to success.

Commissioners recommend developing a collaborative, regional approach to capacity building, including seeking financial assistance to enhance existing oppor-

tunities and explore new initiatives in training and technical assistance, particularly in grantwriting and strategic planning.

Building capacity will require training and supporting new leaders, especially young people, and strategically integrating results of the Bristol Bay Regional Vision project into existing programs like health and safety initiatives.

Good assessment and communication of what is happening with implementation of the Vision will be essential to long-term capacity building across the region.

**While there is strong consensus across the region about values and hopes for the future, communities varied on the best ways to achieve the goals outlined in the Vision. Commissioners met in May 2011 to discuss ideas for implementing the Vision and made these recommendations to the Bristol Bay Partners.**