

July 9, 2014

Jacqueline Kozak Thiel
Sustainability Coordinator, State of Hawaii
Department of Land and Natural Resources
1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 130
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Mrs. Thiel,

We, the members of the *Rising Voices* community, are sending you, as the representative for Hawai'i Governor Neil Abercrombie, a list of recommendations for the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience to consider and implement regarding climate change impacts to Indigenous peoples and lands.

Rising Voices is a community of engaged Indigenous leaders, Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental experts, students, and scientific professionals across the United States, including representatives from tribal, local, state, and federal resource management agencies, academia, tribal colleges, and research organizations. Participants of *Rising Voices* convened for a second time at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO on June 30-July 2, 2014 to discuss the needs of Indigenous peoples in the face of extreme weather and climate change. Several of the participants authored the National Climate Assessment chapter on Indigenous Peoples, as well as the Special Issue of *Climatic Change* (2013) on Indigenous Peoples, and our discussions were focused on recommendations related to the Key Messages of the recently released Assessment.

We came together from across the nation – including Hawai'i and Pacific Islands, Alaska, Northwest, Southwest, the Plains, Midwest, Gulf states, and Northeast – for a rich and honest discussion regarding the complex climate change challenges facing Indigenous peoples, current adaptation and mitigation strategies, protection of Indigenous knowledge, sustainable Indigenous practices, and political and institutional barriers. Many of the Indigenous communities represented at *Rising Voices* are already contending with a changing climate, including displacement of Native Alaskan villages and Native Gulf Coast communities due to rising sea levels, loss of sea ice, and/or extreme hurricane activity. Additionally, severe droughts are impacting many tribes, including tribes in the Southwest and the Great Plains, which is resulting in water scarcity for domestic, agricultural, and livestock use. Climate change impacts on Indigenous peoples are particularly significant, disruptive, and deeply felt in that they affect not only the environment but also traditional, cultural, and spiritual livelihoods, practices, and beliefs.

We, *Rising Voices*, collaboratively developed the following list of priority recommendations for the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience regarding climate change impacts on Indigenous peoples and lands:

- **Migration: Convene a Climate Migration Task Force.** A Federal Task Force on Climate Migration would address the identified need to establish a legal

mechanism, institutional framework, and financial support to directly support marginalized communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who are facing displacement due to climate change impacts and who desire to migrate safely and with dignity. Because many Indigenous communities are urgently threatened with displacement, we strongly recommend that this be considered as a near-term action.

- ***National Climate Assessment: Establish a permanent and formalized structure for Indigenous participation in the U.S. National Climate Assessment.*** Determine a mechanism for continued and expanded Indigenous engagement and support for long-term collaborative partnerships that sustain assessment activities, including respectful science support and data collection in collaboration *with*, not *on* or *for*, Indigenous communities. Important Indigenous led literatures and guidelines documents already exist and can be used for advising the Task Force on this recommendation.
- ***Water rights: Establish an institutional framework to ensure support for tribes to define and utilize their water rights.*** Tribes need legal, financial, engineering, and scientific support in water rights adjudication, litigation, and settlement, such as financial support to fund infrastructure and engineering and scientific support to adequately quantify available surface and ground water, water use, water use projections, storage/transport options, and infrastructure development. Tribal governments need to participate in timely water settlement deliberations for all uses. An independent review process should be established to provide information on how settlement discussions are progressing and ensure that the kind of support required to facilitate agreement is provided.
- ***Collaboration to Address Climate Change Impacts on Water: Establish basin-level regional processes for federal, state, local, and tribal governments to develop and implement cohesive strategies for addressing impacts of climate change on water quality and quantity.*** Climate change impacts on surface and ground water will profoundly affect human health, public safety, economies, ecological functions, and cultures. Collaboration is needed among a wide variety of tribal, federal, state, regional, and local entities with jurisdiction over water to contend with upstream and downstream impacts of climate change on water.
- ***Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): Map the TEKs, places, resource uses, and histories of coastal and other (i.e. drought afflicted) Indigenous communities as a resource guide for climate change impact and adaptation efforts, especially cross-community collaborations.*** Indigenous people have a rich knowledge of their environment that is important for filling in lack of data and for developing adaptation and sustainable strategies.
- ***Indigenous Perspectives: Support inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, insights, and knowledge in federally-appointed and/or agency-led assemblies concerned with natural resources, environmental management, and policy,***

such as the National Ocean Council's efforts to improve the health of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. The free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples should be respected when these assemblies are formed and engage with Indigenous peoples.

- ***Youth and Veterans: Create a Climate Change Corps to enhance capacity building of youth leaders and returning Veterans.*** The capacity of our youth needs to be enhanced through mentorships, scholarships, and internships with local federal agency affiliate offices (for example, in the County Extension offices with the USDA; in tribal Housing Authorities with HUD; in the National Renewable Energy Laboratories with the DOE, in restoring National Parks with the DOI, AmeriCorps, Conservation Corps, etc.). The Climate Change Corps, supporting both community youth and returning Veterans, could ensure the persistence and implementation of such capacity to strengthen resilience amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across the country for the near- and long-term.
- ***Education: Support and enhance relations between education institutions and agencies to foster educational needs that address climate change, variability, adaptation, and mitigation in all levels of academic education (i.e. K-12, colleges, and universities), as well as for general public education.*** Youth are the future and need to be involved in learning about climate change and addressing impacts and solutions.
- ***Collaborative Research: Have Indigenous communities most impacted by a changing climate be co-investigators in climate change research.*** This includes helping to set a U.S. research agenda that addresses the unique priorities, contexts, and experiences of Indigenous communities and invites community members' participation as partners. Resources need to be allocated and managed by Indigenous community leaders to enable that participation, including resources to support training, workforce development, data gathering and management, the purchase of appropriate equipment, and the incorporation of research results into community planning.
- ***Conference and Partnerships: Establish an annual event for Indigenous communities to come together with researchers working on climate change.*** The *Rising Voices* I and II workshops provide a model that could be applied for such an annual event. These events could be used as "mileposts" to collaborate and report on the recommendations and activities listed above.

We look forward to your response in considering and implementing these recommendations. The *Rising Voices* family stands ready to assist you to help implement these recommendations, as we represent a broad base of experience and expertise.

Respectfully,
Rising Voices

Participants and Expert Contributors, June 30-July 2, 2014 workshop:

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