



Community Economic
Development Strategy

CEDS



2011 Five Year CEDS Regional Project - Action Initiative

Title or Name of the Project:

Research & Development expansion in Southeast Alaska

Motivation:

Serving as a research consortium, the Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center (ACRC) seeks to enhance communities in the coastal temperate rainforest region by developing Southeast Alaska as a true research and development hub.

The Research and Development Sector is not recognized as an industry sector in either state, regional, or local planning or resource allocation initiatives. Where subsectors of Alaska's Research are tracked, most appear to have high resident employment rates but personnel are often transient. The ACRC is in a unique position. The ACRC is a collaborative organization linking the University of Alaska, state, federal, & local agencies, industry, and non-government organizations. ACRC develops and delivers educational opportunities and facilitates research in coastal temperate rainforest environments. Through our mission programs, we foster a greater understanding of the interactions among ecological, social, and economic systems. By developing research and development initiatives, we seek to grow professional jobs in this untapped sector.

Unlike the rest of the nation, Southeast Alaska has a very small amount of private and municipal ownership (less than 1%). Lack of lands, or ability to ever own lands is a huge impediment when it comes to economic growth potential. Instead of following examples from other areas for economic development, we need to create opportunities through what we have. In Southeast Alaska, the 95% federally owned lands and the waters within and adjacent to them do provide one excellent opportunity: research. Although Southeast Alaska is not NOW known as a research and development center – it could be. As with some past marine research, this can pay enormous dividends for cross-cutting industries, especially the linkage of research to small business growth.

Research and development has influenced several major small cities across the US and the world. The growth in Fairbanks and Anchorage can be attributed to a number of factors, but several million dollar research grants helped drive the research growth. We know from other studies that research and development can bring a great deal of capital into an area. Transforming a resource-based economy to a research-based economy could have some impressive returns down the line: High paying jobs, long term investments, and a high rate of return on each dollar invested. **Let us become one of the top research centers in the world.**

Objective:

Enhancing the capacity of ACRC to develop a research hub in Southeast Alaska will support a wide array of existing and emerging economic activity. It will continue to provide a sustainable development framework which addressed environmental change, provides enormous social



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benefits through the creation of professional jobs, and build a resource base for professional growth. These in turn will enhance the livability of our communities. We will help Southeast Alaska change the long term trend of declining populations, lowered school enrollments, departure of young professionals building families, and closures of business.

A greater portion of the Federal and State forests and waterways could be used for more explicit research. Because we already have several hundred Federal, State, and municipal employees here in Southeast, as shown in JEDCs annual report, we have a base of operations from which research capacity can grow. Juneau's Research and Development teams include the Forest Service Juneau Forestry Sciences Laboratory, the NOAA Ted Stevens Marine Institute, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences), and several professors at the largely undergraduate-oriented University of Alaska Southeast. Only ACRC cuts across those organizations to serve the growth and capacity of all.

With 10 partner institutions and growing, the ACRC embraces all natural resource sectors. As an example, 5 yrs ago, the Scenarios Network for Alaska Planning (SNAP) Program at UAF began; it now provides 28 full time professional jobs in the Fairbanks area. ACRC already has partnered with SNAP on a large scale million dollar project. Growth at ACRC will result in synergistic growth of other local programs as well. ACRC has partnered with the SE Alaska GIS library, another small organization at UAS, and has already been successful with several research and education grants. Our strategy is to develop relationships and expand on research funding to support job growth. We will generate environmental and social benefits for our communities and provide good science for all. In addition to enhancing existing businesses activities, the growth of the Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center is vital to supporting emerging opportunities, as it is the only cross-cutting Center in Southeast.

Obstacles:

Research is not an institution in Southeast Alaska. Indeed, it is poorly understood. This initiative will identify the existing Research Cluster in Southeast Alaska and build a plan to support the existing framework, enhance programs, and build capacity. Without the support of the CEDS initiative program, growth will be slow; with the CEDS support, we will build an effective research development strategy that will link existing programs, engage industry in research needs, and invest in new technologies.

Outcomes/ Results:

We will measure our success through the financial growth of the ACRC and partner organizations, as seen through jobs created through the funding received for research.



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Leadership:

The Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center Director, Mike Goldstein, developed this paper in conjunction with ideas generated from the ACRC member institutions, and Meilani Schijvens. For this to be successful, a broad array of partners needs to collaborate on large research initiatives, and that requires trust amongst participants. These include, at least, the NOAA Ted Stevens Marine Institute, the FS Pacific Northwest Research Station Forestry Sciences Laboratory, the UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, and UAS.

Action Plan and Implantation:

The Project promotes a cluster development in research, and promotes sustainable economic development and environmental stewardship through professional research programs.

Performance Measures:

1. Number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS = 5 program managers and 20 scientists and technicians
2. Number/types of investments undertaken in the region = 40 major research projects > \$100k
3. Number of jobs retained in the region = 25
4. Amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS = \$1MM
5. Changes in the economic environment of the region; major benefits through job stability

Funding:

1. Design/Start-up: \$500k operating expenses (funding sources for half is identified)
2. Ramping Up: \$2MM
3. On-going annual: \$1MM