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NON-COMPETITIVE DIVISION

Improving Communication of Coastal Flood Warnings to  
Rural Alaska Communities

Coastal flooding and erosion from strong storms pose an increasing threat to western Alaska communities. The delayed formation of sea ice in the fall and unusual periods of open water during mid-winter are making communities increasingly vulnerable to severe coastal storms. The National Weather Service (NWS) is collaborating with emergency managers from state, regional, local, and tribal organizations to improve impact-based decision support to communities before and during coastal storms. The NWS is also in the process of improving warning messages to rural Alaskans to effectively communicate threat level, convey risk from storm surge, forecaster confidence, and potential impacts of incoming storms.

The NWS is working to incorporate local terminology and place names, traditional knowledge of storm impacts, and storm observations into coastal flood warnings for communities. In order to accomplish these goals, the NWS is engaging in various rurally based workshops, meetings, and performing community visits to interact directly with residents and gain a better understanding of threats to their communities.

This poster will highlight recent success the NWS has had in improving two-way communication and warnings to western Alaska communities during coastal flood

events. Examples of additional decision support tools will be presented as well. Gaps and potential improvements to NWS products and services will also be identified. The overall goal of the NWS is to help make western Alaska communities better prepared and more resilient to coastal storms.