

Rights and Resilience: Climate-Induced Community Relocation



**Connected Futures: Sea Level Rise Summit
Florida Atlantic University
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Robin Bronen, Alaska Institute for Justice

WHAT IS RELOCATION?

- **Voluntary**
- **Preventive— prior to displacement of populations caused by extreme weather event**
- **Planned**
- **Rebuild homes, infrastructure and livelihoods**
- **Maintain social and kinship connections**

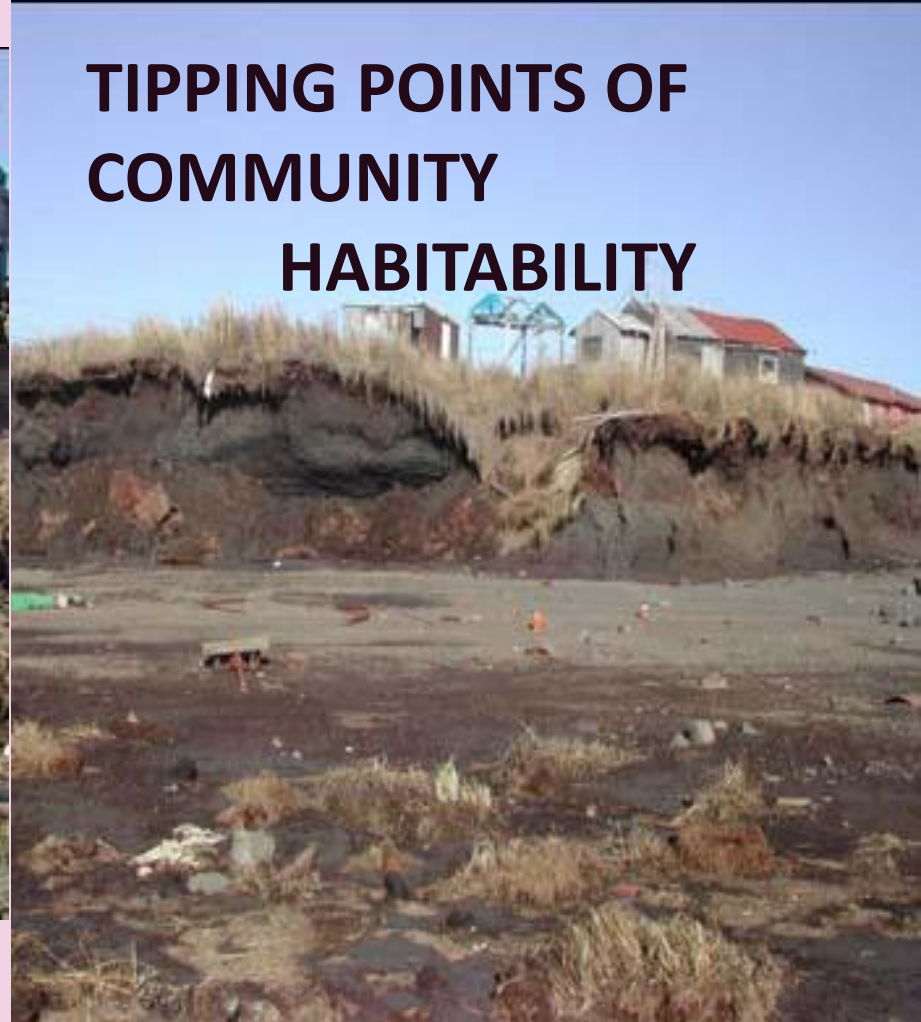
Causes for Community Relocation



Combination of repeated extreme weather events and ongoing environmental change: Sea level rise and accelerated rates of erosion.

- Protection in place can not provide long-term protection.**
- Infrastructure repeatedly damaged or destroyed.**

TIPPING POINTS OF COMMUNITY HABITABILITY



Photos: Frank Myoumick-Kawerak

2003 US government report found 3 communities seeking to relocate in Alaska and 184 other communities are being affected by flooding and erosion

2009 US government report found 12 seeking to relocate.

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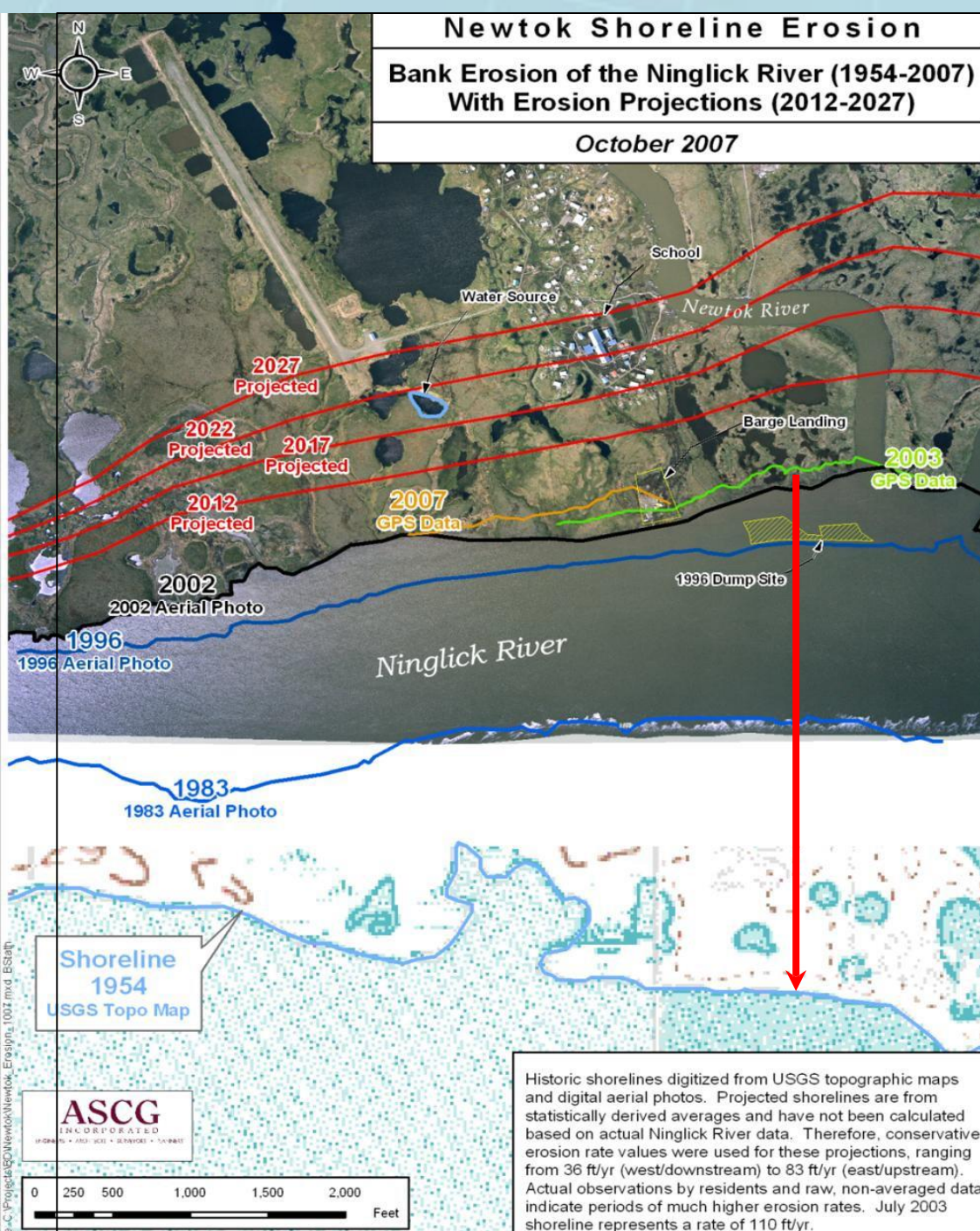
Newtok



Historical and Projected Erosion

Newtok Shoreline Erosion
Bank Erosion of the Ninglick River (1954-2007)
With Erosion Projections (2012-2027)
October 2007

- Ninglick River eroding 9 -33 meters annually
- Red arrow points to the shoreline in 1954
- Landfill and barge landing have already eroded away.



NEWTOK'S RELOCATION CHALLENGES

- **Newtok Planning Group**
 - **25 different federal, state, tribal and non-profit agencies**
 - **No statutory guidance to relocate**
 - **No relocation funding**
- **Agencies lack technical, financial and organizational capacity to relocate communities**
- **Statutory barriers**
 - Federal disaster legislation: Repair and rebuild in place**

TWO GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- **No government agency has the mandate or funding to relocate a community**
- **No institutional framework to determine the point in time when relocation needs to occur**

ADAPTIVE RELOCATION GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

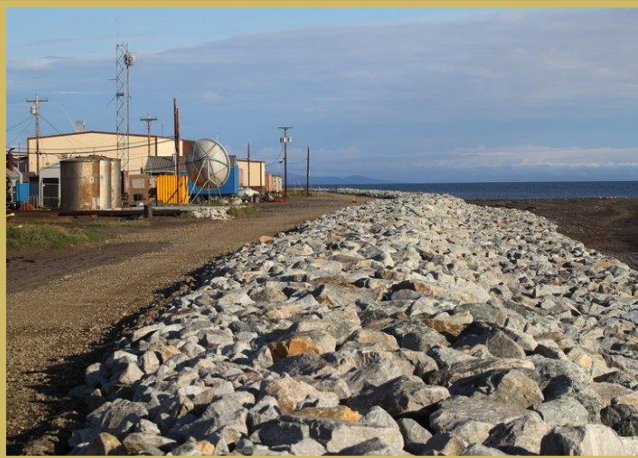
HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

Protection in Place



Community
Relocation

Relocation
Indicators



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NOAA CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROJECT

- **Community-based monitoring**
 - Environmental change
 - Impact on community health and well-being
 - Impact on infrastructure
- **Collaboration between local community residents and tribal, state and federal government agencies to provide technical assistance and funding**

Thank you

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- **Newtok Planning Group**