Introduction

King Cove is a small fishing town at the end of the Alaska Peninsula. The people who live here are Aleut and they have lived in this region for generations. Over time the people of King Cove have actively participated in global economies, successfully navigating and learning from them. Using a political ecology framework, this poster takes a brief look at the complexities of the fishing industry in the Eastern Aleutian village of King Cove, which is located in the Alaska Peninsula Area, better known as “Area M.”

What is political ecology?

“Understanding the complex relations between nature and society through a careful analysis of what one might call the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods.”


Multiple layers of regulation create a unique context in Alaska where users are also administrators and contributors, regulating and participating in the formal and informal institutions and discussions that shape their futures. The diagram above showcases one example of the layers of governance present in the village of King Cove. Along with these tribal affiliated entities there are also City, Borough and State governing bodies present.

Discussion

“It has become possible for scholars to accept the idea that powerless minorities have accommodated themselves to global forces.”

Lives of Dust and Water: An Anthropology of Change and Resistance in Northwestern Mexico, Anna Tsing, 2005:3

People are active participants in global markets and have been for generations.

Dominant ways of viewing current nature-society relationships do not recognize the historic context that created these relationships.

The ideas of what is “common sense” and what is “natural” are culturally constructed through time, by the more powerful groups in society.

Community members in the Eastern Aleutians are active participants in a regulatory system.

Popular discourse does not always acknowledge the amount of participation from the local user groups.

The social fabric of the Aleut people is based in fisheries; changes in the fisheries policy directly affects this fabric.

Political ecology in practice

F/V Pacific Quest – Alaskan Fisheries and Policy

The graphs below showcase the impacts Limited Entry Fishing have had at the local level. The number of local Aleut people who still hold permits has decreased dramatically overtime.

Future Research

- What repercussions do these legislations have on future generations?
- How much knowledge about the regulatory system is being passed down?

Further Reading

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