

Testing the robustness of institutional design with Alaskan ocean policy decision-makers

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Panel: Resilience and Transformations in a Rapidly Changing North

Institutionally neglected for many years, ocean policy is once again on the agenda of the American government. The aim of the recent Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force is to establish a vision, purpose and plan for more carefully managing human uses of the oceans in the United States. Under the plan, each coastal region would house a coordinating body to self-organize an institutional venue and create marine spatial plans for the ocean. However, given the considerable unknowns in future Alaskan ocean uses, it is unclear which configurations of rules, authorities, and partnerships would create the most robust venues for decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. In this presentation, we outline the process for an experimental workshop with federal, state and regional governments as well as tribal co-management partners in visioning and evaluating institutional designs for robustness. Drawing on the fields of democratic theory and institutional analysis, we have developed a template for evaluating five institutional designs. Venue designs differ through the following characteristics: purpose, lead actors, network characteristics, empowerment of stakeholders, nature and frequency of deliberations, and reflexivity. Workshop participants will examine how well the designs are likely to achieve goals of democratic process and robustness to a suite of disturbances, as well as their administrative feasibility.