



GAO's Work on Climate Change and Climate Migration

Environmental Law Institute

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Micah McMillan

Natural Resources and Environment Team

U.S. Government Accountability Office

GAO's High Risk Series: Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks

Technical Assistance to Federal, Tribal, State, Local, and Private-Sector Decision Makers



Federal Insurance Programs



Rating changes since last update

The rating for Monitoring increased from not met to partially met.

Criteria still needing attention

Leadership Commitment, Capacity, Action Plan, and Demonstrated Progress

Disaster Aid and Resilience



Federal Government as Leader of National Climate Strategic Plan



Federal Government as Property Owner



Rating changes since last update

The ratings for Capacity and Monitoring increased from not met to partially met.

Criteria still needing attention

Leadership Commitment, Capacity, Action Plan, Monitoring, and Demonstrated Progress

Two Categories of Recommendations

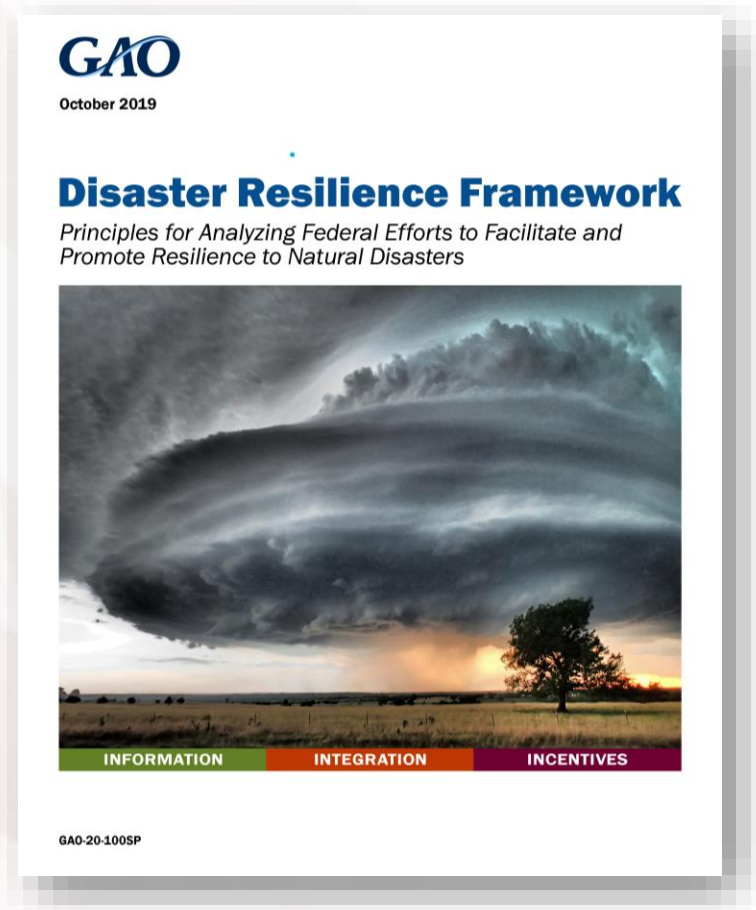
Agency Mainstreaming

- Water systems
- Roads and bridges
- Defense facilities
- Energy infrastructure
- Superfund sites

New Institutions

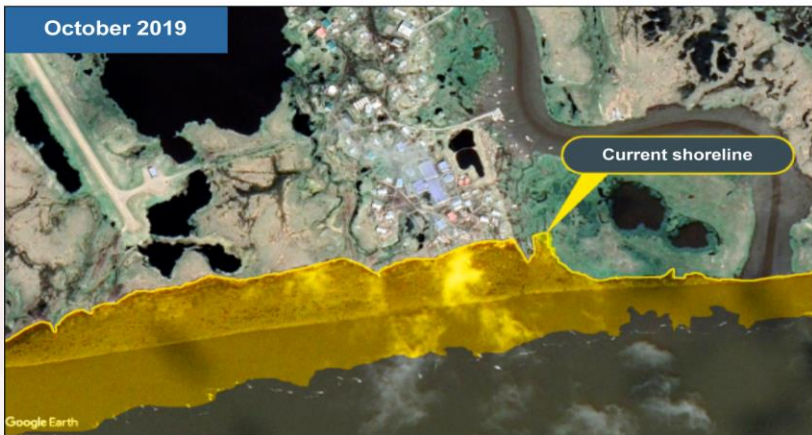
- National Climate Information System
- Identify high-priority adaptation projects
- Address climate migration

Disaster Resilience Framework



- Framework organized around 3 principles—information, integration, and incentives—and a series of questions.
- Framework principles can help:
 - Officials that manage federal agencies/programs consider actions they might take to increase resilience to natural hazards.
 - Identify gaps in existing federal efforts or analyze any type of existing federal effort.

Domestic Climate Migration



Shoreline erosion at Newtok, AK, July 2007 to October 2019

Methodology:

- Literature review.
- Interviews with experts and federal, state and local stakeholders.
- Case studies: Newtok, AK; Isle de Jean Charles, LA; Smith Island, MD; Santa Rosa, CA.

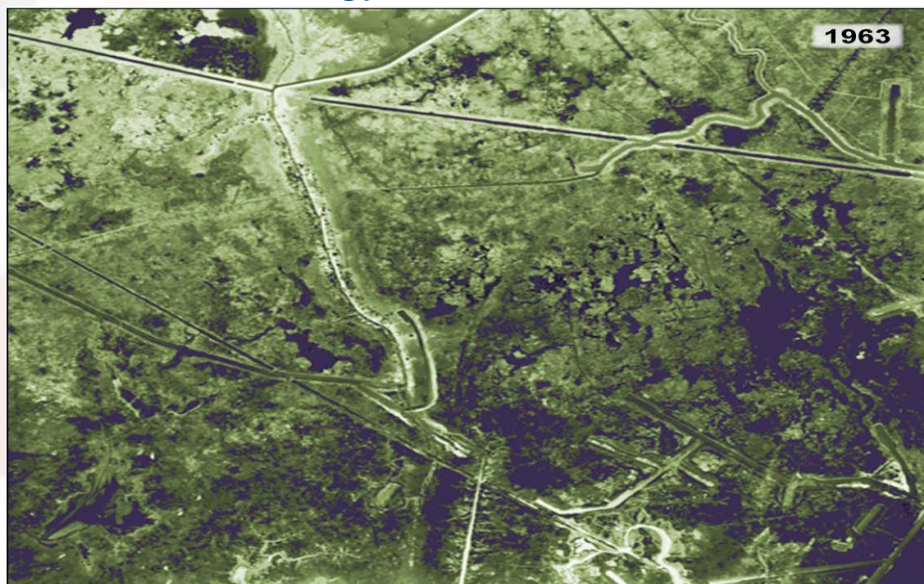
We found:

- Federal programs provide limited support to climate migration efforts.
- No federal agency has the authority to lead federal assistance for relocating communities.
- Lack of federal coordination has contributed to delays in Newtok and Isle de Jean Charles.

Domestic Climate Migration

We recommended:

Congress should consider establishing a pilot program with clear federal leadership to identify and provide assistance to communities that express affirmative interest in relocation as a resilience strategy.



Source: U.S. Geological Survey. | GAO-20-488

Isle de Jean Charles Land Loss, 1963 to 2008

Climate Change: A Climate Migration Pilot Program Could Enhance the Nation's Resilience and Reduce Federal Fiscal Exposure (GAO-20-488)

Domestic Climate Migration



Source: G. Crutsinger, Scholar Farms. | GAO-20-488

Coffey Park Neighborhood, Santa Rosa, after the October 2017 Wildfire and in April 2019

Climate Change: A Climate Migration Pilot Program Could Enhance the Nation's Resilience and Reduce Federal Fiscal Exposure (GAO-20-488)

Factors to consider when creating a pilot program:


- Promote community led planning.
- Address limited community capacity and access to funding.
- Promote coordination across all relevant levels of government.
- Emphasize public service delivery in receiving and migrating communities.

Domestic Climate Migration

How will climate migration fit into government-wide climate resilience efforts?

- Climate change strategic planning ([GAO-23-106203](#))
- National climate information system ([GAO-16-37](#))
- Expanded use of climate change economics ([GAO-17-720](#))
- Prioritizing climate resilience investments ([GAO-20-127](#))
- Climate migration pilot program ([GAO-20-488](#))


Barriers to Accessing Federal Programs

 United States Government Accountability Office
Report to Congressional Requesters

May 2022

**ALASKA NATIVE
ISSUES**

Federal Agencies
Could Enhance
Support for Native
Village Efforts to
Address
Environmental
Threats

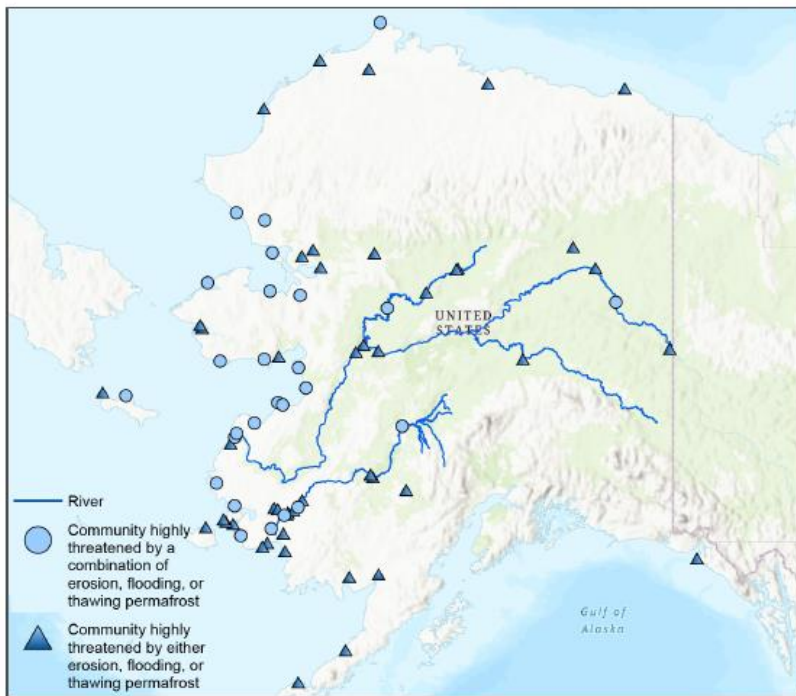
 United States Government Accountability Office
Report to Congressional Committees

December 2022

**COVID-19 RELIEF
FUNDS**

Lessons Learned
Could Improve Future
Distribution of Federal
Emergency Relief to
Tribal Recipients

Barriers to Accessing Federal Programs



Source: GAO analysis of Denali Commission information. | GAO-22-104241

The 73 Native Villages Identified by the Denali Commission as Highly Threatened by Erosion, Flooding, or Thawing Permafrost, as of 2019. (GAO-22-104241)

Common themes to reduce barriers:

- Reducing administrative and financial burden.
- Transferring appropriations among agencies to use existing mechanisms familiar to Tribes.
- Maximizing flexibility and longer timeframes.
- Coordinating across agencies and with partners.
- Targeted technical assistance.

We recommended:

- Agencies and/or an interagency coordinating body review programs and identify ways to address existing barriers. (GAO-22-104241)
- Congress consider enabling agencies to use existing mechanisms to provide future relief. (GAO-23-105473)



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Congressional Relations

Nikki Clowers, Managing Director, clowersa@gao.gov
(202) 512-4400, U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548

Public Affairs

Chuck Young, Managing Director, youngc1@gao.gov
(202) 512-4800, U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, Room 7149, Washington, DC 20548

Strategic Planning and External Liaison

Stephen Sanford, Managing Director, spel@gao.gov
(202) 512-4707, U.S. Government Accountability Office,
441 G Street NW, Room 7814, Washington, DC 20548

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