

ALASKA RURAL UTILITY COLLABORATIVE 2024 REPORT ON ACTIVITIES



Table of Contents

About ARUC	1
Assisted Billing Program	3
ARUC Benefits	3
ARUC Expansion	3
ARUC Advisory Committee	4
Community Management Accomplishments	5
Hooper Bay Joins ARUC	6
Quinhagak Water Treatment Plant Rehab	6
Toksook Bay Service Line Upgrades	7
Kiana Rebounds After Power Outage	7
American Rescue Plan Act	8
Engineering Accomplishments	9
Remote Monitoring Upgrades	9
Hooper Bay System Upgrades	10
Russian Mission Temporary Water Storage Tank System Installation	10
Shungnak Heat Recovery Expansion	10
Toksook Bay Heat Recovery Expansion	11
Saint Michael Landfill Fence Installation	11
Chevak Home Service Lines Installation	11
Deering Vacuum Control System Upgrades	11
Operator Training	12
Financials	13
Quyana/Taikuu to Our Partners	14
Contact ARUC	14

About ARUC

The Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative (ARUC) is a program of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) created to assist and empower member communities to manage, operate and maintain water and sewer systems in rural Alaska. Each member community's system operates as a stand-alone, nonprofit business. Revenue from local customers, user fees and local community and regional support, covers each system's direct expenses and contributes to a reserve fund.

ARUC services include helping set sustainable water and sewer rates in each community, billing local water and sewer customers, providing guidance to local water plant operators, and offering operations and maintenance support. Through safe, reliable service, ARUC strives to maximize the public health benefits of water and sanitation facilities while building local capabilities.

Communities in the ARUC program enhance public health and residents' quality of life by:

- ▶ Ensuring qualified staff operate and maintain facilities to provide high-quality drinking water and safe sewage disposal.
- ▶ Providing emergency utility response.
- ▶ Extending the lifespan of water and sanitation systems through preventive maintenance, saving millions in federal, state and local replacement costs.
- ▶ Hiring and training water plant operators and backup staff in each community and offering good wages and benefits.
- ▶ Setting water and sewer rates through community council agreements. Each community's rates are set to be self-supporting, and rates vary per community.
- ▶ Working with ANTHC engineers, operations and maintenance specialists, utility managers, and grant specialists to support utilities at no additional cost to customers.



Assisted Billing Program

To qualify for full ARUC membership, a community must first participate in the assisted billing program for at least one year. This program provides water and sewer customer billing services to enrolled communities. Ensuring financial consistency through a steady and accurate utility billing schedule helps communities generate revenue and supports sustainable utility operations. Collected fees are returned to the community (minus a monthly service fee).

Kiana

ARUC Benefits

When ARUC communities generate more revenue than expenses, surplus funds are placed into a cash reserve account. This savings account allows communities to quickly purchase replacement parts or bulk fuel or to cover emergency expenses and repairs. Once ARUC communities meet the required reserve amount, these funds can be used for larger projects, such as energy efficiency improvements or facility upgrades. Meeting reserve requirements also enables utility rate reductions, which helps keep costs lower for customers.

ARUC Expansion

The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allocates \$700 million annually from FY22 to FY26, totaling \$3.5 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) Sanitation Facilities Construction Program. This funding is bringing first-service infrastructure projects to communities, potentially providing water and sanitation services to more than 30 rural Alaska communities within the next 10 years.

With ARUC's proven success, expanding the program to include an additional 30 members will help build local leadership and operator capacity and ensure more rural Alaska communities benefit from sustainable water and sanitation services. In 2024, Hooper Bay joined the ARUC program.



ARUC Advisory Committee

The ARUC Advisory Committee serves a vital role as the liaison between ARUC and participating communities. Each community selects a representative to serve on the committee. The committee meets four times a year, once in person and three times via teleconference, to represent their communities and provide guidance on water and sewer operation and rates.

On April 29-30, 2024, the ARUC Advisory Committee met in Anchorage to discuss financial updates and system operations and to vote on resolutions. With enough attendees to meet quorum requirements, resolutions or directives could be adopted with a simple majority vote (50 percent plus 1).

During the meeting, attendees passed a resolution supporting an operations and maintenance subsidy and approved a policy change capping the annual carryover of operator PTO balances at 260 hours.

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| AMBLER | KOBUK | SAINT MICHAEL |
| CHEVAK | KOTLIK | SAVOONGA |
| CHIGNIK LAKE | LOWER KALSKAG | SCAMMON BAY |
| DEERING | NEW STUYAHOK | SHUNGNAK |
| GOLOVIN | NEWHALEN | SLEETMUTE |
| GOODNEWS BAY | NOORVIK | SOUTH NAKNEK |
| HOLY CROSS | PITKAS POINT | TOKSOOK BAY |
| HOOPER BAY | QUINHAGAK | TYONEK |
| KIANA | RUSSIAN MISSION | UPPER KALSKAG |



2024 ARUC Advisory Committee

'24 COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ARUC partners with member communities using a strength-in-numbers approach, assisting with the management, operation and maintenance of local water and wastewater system so communities don't have to do it alone. Community councils play a key role in utility rate decisions, billing processes and collections, and defining responsibilities for ARUC staff, operators, and community representatives.

By collaborating with community leadership, ARUC helps address financial and infrastructure challenges to ensure long-term system sustainability and reliable access to clean water and sanitation. We are honored to highlight a few of the many successful community-led initiatives to improve finances, management and utility operations.



Sleetmute



2024 ARUC Advisory Committee meeting in Anchorage

Hooper Bay Joins ARUC

Hooper Bay is ARUC's newest community. After four years in ARUC's assisted billing program – the final step before full membership – Hooper Bay officially joined the program.

In April 2024, ARUC staff traveled to Hooper Bay to meet with city council members to discuss the ARUC partnership, including roles and responsibilities for maintaining a successful water and wastewater facility. After the meeting, Dennis Hunter, the city's utility manager, and Victor Seton, the water plant operator, led ARUC staff on a tour of the water treatment plant, vacuum pump station, and several other utility buildings.

This transition was possible through strong collaboration between City of Hooper Bay officials and ARUC leadership, ensuring a successful partnership for the community's water and sanitation services. Welcome, Hooper Bay!

Quinhagak Water Treatment Plant Rehab

Quinhagak self-funded this \$130,600 project to address severe settlement issues at its water treatment plant caused by permafrost degradation. Thermosiphons were installed to re-freeze the ground, preventing further movement and improving the plant's stability.

Hooper Bay ARUC contract signing



Golovin



Toksook Bay Service Line Upgrades

The Nunakauyarmiut Tribe provided \$54,990 in funding to upgrade the sewer service lines for the city office building and public services building. The work was completed by the local water plant operators in collaboration with ARUC operations engineers.

Kiana Rebounds After Power Outage

The community of Kiana came together to recover from a widespread freeze-up event caused by a power outage that disabled the community's well transmission line supplying water from two community wells. As a result, the freeze-up disrupted water service on the community's two distribution loops, impacting more than 80 customers, including the clinic and the school.

Community leadership developed a thaw recovery plan, organizing round-the-clock shifts of locally hired laborers. The first priority was restoring the well transmission line, followed by the west and east water distribution loops. Once the loops were operational, efforts shifted to individual service lines, which had frozen due to lack of water pressure and inoperable heat trace lines.

This quick and coordinated response not only minimized the impact of the crisis but ensured the timely restoration of service to residents.



ARUC collaborated with community volunteers, the Northwest Arctic Borough and RMWs to assist Kiana.

American Rescue Plan Act

ARUC member communities provided individual grants from the American Rescue Plan Act to apply as payment toward customer accounts to ensure continued access to critical health improving water and sewer services.

Below are the ARUC member communities and the funding they received:

\$33,272	Newhalen	\$16,631	Kobuk	\$102,490	Hooper Bay
\$225	Pitka's Point	\$97,170	Quinhagak	\$110,771	Holy Cross
\$6,200	Kotlik	\$300	Noorvik	\$20,400	Russian Mission
\$600	Scammon Bay	\$2,764	Goodnews Bay	\$16,272	Golovin
\$38,850	New Stuyahok	\$500	Tyonek	\$65,500	Shungnak

Russian Mission



'24 ENGINEERING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Engineering projects in ARUC communities focus on three key goals:

1. Reducing sanitation system energy, fuel and operational costs.
2. Expanding service by increasing the number of customer connections.
3. Providing operator support for issues arising during normal operation.

In 2024, the ARUC engineering team and local operators worked together on several projects to achieve these goals. ARUC also partners with member communities to secure additional funding for critical system repairs and upgrades, ensuring continuous delivery of safe and reliable service to customers.

Remote Monitoring Upgrades

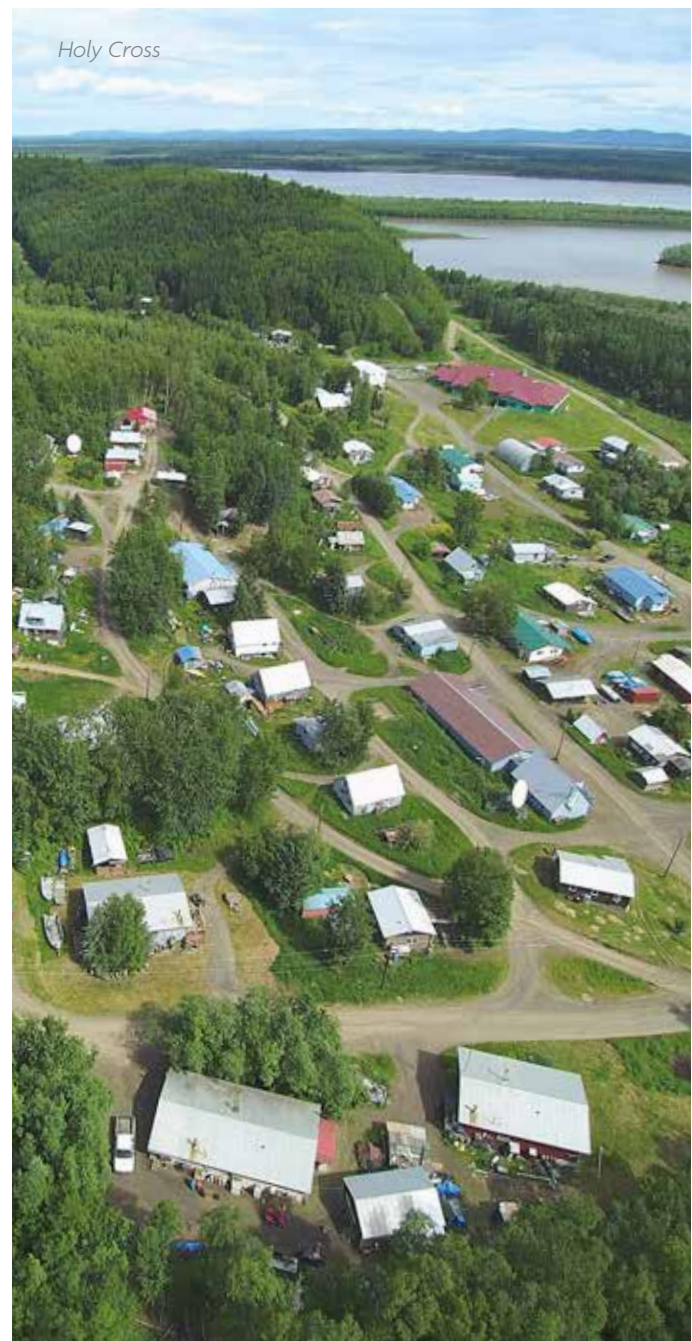
Remote monitoring systems allow operators, community leadership, remote maintenance workers and the ARUC operations team to track key water plant metrics, such as water temperature, levels, and flow rate. These systems have proven invaluable in protecting water and sanitation utilities from major disasters and costly repairs.

In 2022, the Helmsley Charitable Trust provided about \$1.5 million to Engineering Ministries International to upgrade remote monitoring systems across Alaska. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also contributed \$32,657 per community for installation.

The following ARUC communities received upgraded systems in 2024:

- ▶ Deering
- ▶ Kotlik
- ▶ Hooper Bay
- ▶ Tyonek
- ▶ Kiana

The upgraded remote monitoring systems provide extended sensor range, allowing more buildings to be monitored. The upgrades also enhance system reliability and connectivity, keeping these systems up to date with the latest technological advances.



Hooper Bay System Upgrades

This ongoing project, funded by the community and EPA totaling \$1,537,140, aims to improve the operability and maintainability of Hooper Bay's water and wastewater infrastructure. Key upgrades include:

- ▶ Repairing the glycol circulating systems
- ▶ Replacing pumps
- ▶ Addressing water main and service leaks, and
- ▶ Improving the reliability of the heat recovery system.

Russian Mission Temporary Water Storage Tank System Installation

Funded by multiple agencies, including the Denali Commission, EPA, and IHS for \$828,819, this project addressed deterioration in Russian Mission's main water storage tank, which was leaking.

A temporary water storage tank was installed to maintain water service while the primary storage tank was recoated and lined to prevent further deterioration and leaks.

Shungnak Heat Recovery Expansion

The Alaska Energy Authority and the Village Improvement Fund provided \$1,564,918 for this ongoing project to expand and improve the Shungnak heat recovery system.

Waste heat recovery systems use excess heat from a community's power plant to heat other buildings, including the water treatment plant. This reduces fuel usage, lowers utility energy costs and improves long-term sustainability.

Chevak



Toksook Bay Heat Recovery Expansion

The U.S. Department of Agriculture High Energy Grant and IHS provided \$766,425 to expand Toksook Bay's heat recovery system to include two additional community buildings. This expansion will lower energy costs while providing reliable heating to more community facilities.

Saint Michael Landfill Fence Installation

Funded by IHS for \$541,300, this project installed a fence to clearly define the landfill area and prevent trash and debris from escaping into the community or surrounding environment.

Chevak Home Service Lines Installation

The IHS provided \$540,500 to install four new water and sewer service lines, giving four additional households access to safe water and sanitation services. This expansion also increases the customer base, which helps keep overall rates low for the entire community.

Deering Vacuum Control System Upgrades

Self-funded by Deering for \$11,209, this project improves the functionality of the community's vacuum control system. These systems use powerful vacuums to move wastewater, and proper functionality is critical to maintaining efficient operations.

Toksook Bay local operators Noah Lincoln and Jeffrey Curtis working on service line upgrades.



Operator Training

Well-trained operators are key to providing safe drinking water and sanitation. The Alaska Rural Water Association (ARWA) provided \$52,407 to fund on-site training to the following communities: Goodnews Bay, Ambler, Deering, Newhalen, Shungnak, Russian Mission, New Stuyahok, Sleetmute, Pitka's Point and Kiana. The training covered a wide range of topics, including operations and maintenance support, emergency response planning, financial and managerial expertise, sanitary survey support, and source water preservation.

Additionally, ARUC operators attended off-site trainings in various communities, including: Chevak, Lower Kalskag, Goodnews Bay, Chignik Lake, Pitka's Point, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Russian Mission, New Stuyahok, Kotlik, Newhalen, South Naknek, Holy Cross, and Toksook Bay.

In addition to these training opportunities, utility management specialists organized off-site and virtual training sessions for water plant operators. In 2024, a total of 47 operators from 14 communities participated in a variety of these training activities, including:

January

- ▶ Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Lagoon Training, Anchorage
- ▶ ANTHC Small Treated Systems, Anchorage

February

- ▶ Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation Level 2 Water Treatment, Bethel
- ▶ YKHC Electric Controls 1, Bethel

March

- ▶ YKHC Electric Controls 2, Bethel
- ▶ YKHC Boiler Maintenance and Repair, Bethel
- ▶ YKHC Level 2 Water Treatment, Bethel
- ▶ Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation Wastewater Collection, Dillingham

April

- ▶ YKHC Boiler Maintenance and Repair, Bethel
- ▶ YKHC Small Treated Systems, Bethel

May

- ▶ ANTHC Level 2 Water Treatment, Anchorage Virtual

June

- ▶ BBAHC Electrical Controls, Dillingham

August

- ▶ Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council Water/Wastewater Plant Safety, Anchorage

October

- ▶ ARWA 24th Annual Training Conference, Anchorage
- ▶ YRITWC Water/Wastewater Safety, Anchorage
- ▶ YKHC Introduction to Small Water Systems, Bethel

November

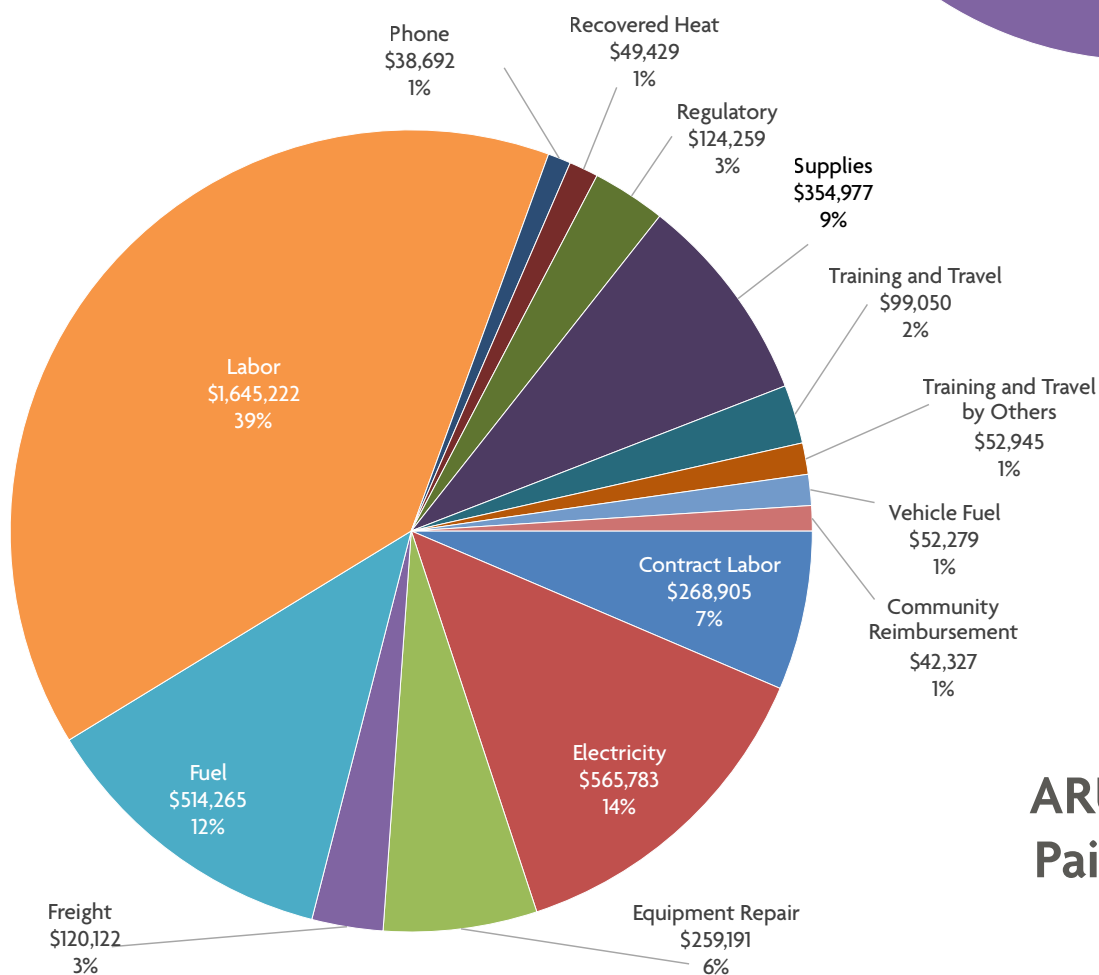
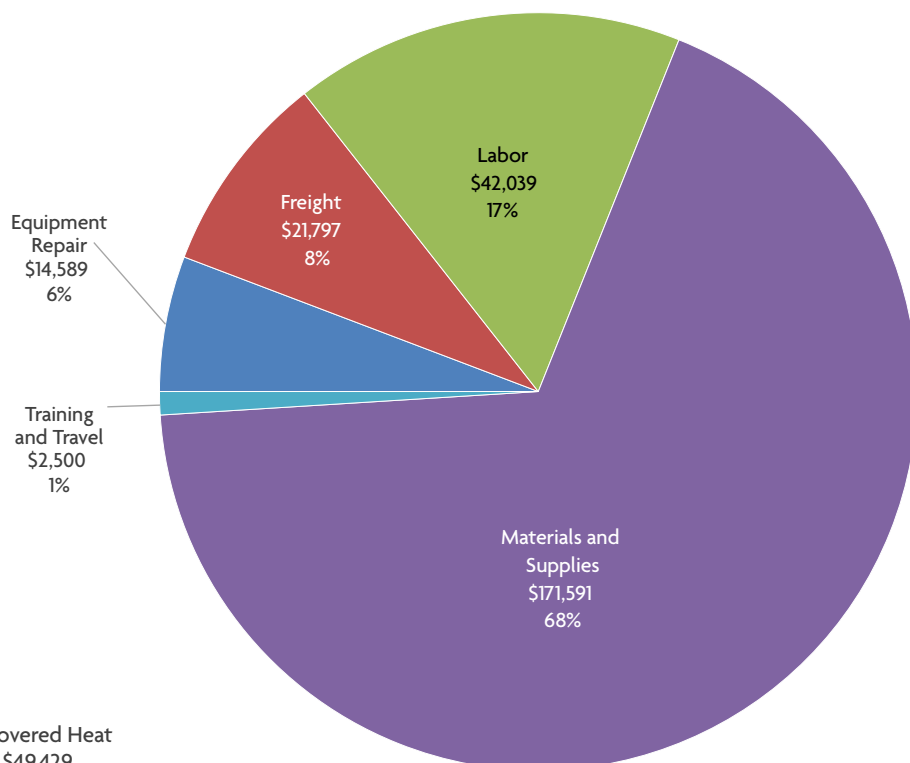
- ▶ ANTHC Water Treatment Level 1, Anchorage

December

- ▶ ANTHC Intro to Small Water Systems, Anchorage

FY 24 FINANCIALS

Community-Funded Projects from Reserves



FY 24 ARUC Operations Paid by User Fees

QUYANA/TAIKUU TO OUR PARTNERS

Alaska Energy Authority	City of Lower Kalskag	Lake and Peninsula Borough	Pitka's Point Village Council
Alaska Rural Water Association	City of New Stuyahok	Manilaq Association	Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Alaska Vocational Technical Center	City of Newhalen	NANA Regional Corporation	Sleetmute Traditional Council
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation	City of Noorvik	National Tribal Water Center	State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Bristol Bay Borough	City of Quinhagak	Native Village of Goodnews Bay	State of Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs
Chignik Lake Traditional Village Council	City of Russian Mission	Native Village of South Naknek	State of Alaska Remote Maintenance Worker Program
City of Ambler	City of St. Michael	Native Village of Tyonek	State of Alaska Village Safe Water Program
City of Chevak	City of Savoonga	Northwest Arctic Borough School District	U.S. Department of Agriculture
City of Deering	City of Scammon Bay	Norton Sound Health Corporation	Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation
City of Golovin	City of Shungnak	Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation	
City of Holy Cross	City of Toksook Bay		
City of Kiana	City of Upper Kalskag		
City of Kobuk	Engineering Ministries International		
City of Kotlik	Helmsley Charitable Trust		
	Indian Health Service		

Contact ARUC



anthc.org/aruc



[ANTHCaruc](#)



1-866-205-7581

Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative - Program of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM

