

PRI presents its research at public forums and seminars.

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What: Alaska Oil and Gas Industry Water Quality Issues and Permitting:
An exercise of Newton's 3rd Law?

Why Important: US laws do not allow pollution in the Waters of the US. Successful permitting assures protection of the environment while allowing responsible development to move forward. Unsuccessful permitting can lead to either economic stagnation or to environmental degradation. This presentation focuses on how to avoid either of the unwanted extremes and why both conflict and cooperation have their time and place in the permitting process.

Who will benefit from attending?:

Anyone who is interested in successfully planning and executing permitting projects.

Objective: Advocate public involvement in permitting process, educate Alaskans about impacts of permitting uncertainties on projects and what it means for Alaskans.

Speaker: Rada Khadjinova, PMP, UAA School of Engineering, Applied Environmental Science & Technology (AEST) Program.

Research Abstract.

Alaska Oil and Gas Industry Water Quality Issues and Permitting: *An exercise of Newton's 3rd Law?*

The goal of this research is three-fold. First, it is to outline water quality issues as they apply to the Alaska oil and gas industry; Second, is to look at those issues through the eyes of major stakeholders in the water quality related permitting; Third, is to assess where those perspectives intersect or diverge from each other so that environmental concerns are resolved in accordance with regulatory requirements.



To achieve this objective, subject matter experts from permitting and regulatory departments of federal, state and local governments, NGOs and members of the public, project owners and industry were given nearly identical sets of questions and were interviewed.

The research found that actions, in aggregate, that hinder stakeholders' ability to execute their duties successfully, beget a reaction. While it is similar to what Newton describes in his 3rd Law of motion where to every action there is always an opposed and equal reaction, permitting is a complex and multi-dimensional system. Swings can occur so that while there is a push and push-back, pushes from one side could be stronger than from the other(s) which, over time, can shift the entire system in one direction; Even in the best-designed systems status quo may be hard to preserve forever and swings can destabilize the system. Depending on the speed of the swing, consequences could include economic stagnation/crises on the one hand or environmental degradation/disasters on the other. Finally, people are not objects. Both conflict and cooperation have their time and place in the process.

To succeed, acknowledgment of sometimes creative, sometimes destructive tensions is a must. A concerted push toward cooperation and partnership must exist. The ability of the decision-makers at all levels to understand human nature and each others' legal rights and limitations is key in resolving what on the surface may seem like irrational behavior.