May 25, 2016

An update on Extension and office closures

By now you’ve seen the headlines that Extension is closing the Anchorage and Sitka district offices on Oct. 28. This was a very difficult decision, made after a committee of faculty and staff spent numerous hours discussing budget numbers and impacts on employees and communities. Because Extension is facing a roughly $1 million budget cut for the coming fiscal year, tough decisions had to be made.

Our goal was to minimize the impact on Alaskans and our employees as much as possible. We also looked at where the greatest need for services is. The clients served by smaller, rural offices have fewer resources to draw upon than those in larger communities. We felt that Sitka could continue to be served through our Southeast office in Juneau. We are also positioning our organization to be more effective while preparing for the likelihood of more challenging years ahead. Because of the budget uncertainties, many details have yet to be worked out, but please be assured we are determined to continue meeting our mission of service to Alaskans.

We will be working with our partners in Anchorage and Sitka to find ways to minimize the impact of closing the offices. Our remaining offices and staff around the state will work to deliver programming by distance delivery and face-to-face.

We are also looking at other ways to cut expenses. If you have ideas on how to help in those efforts, please contact me at snre-comm@alaska.edu.

Finally, I want to thank the many, many supporters of Extension, who use our programs, advocate for us or spread the word about what we do.

Fred Schlutt
Vice Provost of Outreach and Extension