Membership as of May 2013:
Jeannette Altman (Chair), Sara Battiest, Christian Bekis, Kirsten Bey, Travis Brinzow, Deb Jeppsen, Adam Kane, Brad Krick, Ashley Munro, Richard Machida, Evelyn Pensgard, Benjamin Tucker

Achievements, 2013
During 2012, the committee discussed UA’s geographic differentials and their effects on rural campus retention and recruitment, facilities improvements, and how to improve UAF programs for off-campus staff (like WIN for Alaska, Staff Appreciation Day, and audio-streaming Staff Council meetings).

In November, MaryAlice Short and Nichole Kloepfer of the Staff Affairs committee joined our meeting to discuss a possible Rural Affairs/Staff Affairs merger. We did not agree that the committees should merge, but we did agree to try and work more closely together and hold periodic joint meetings.

In January, Brad Krick stepped down as chair and the committee elected new member Jeannette Altman as the new chair. We got to work on continuing business items including a travel proposal to rural campuses and arranging joint meetings with Staff Affairs. Newly elected members from Unit 1, Adam Kane (Dillingham) and Kirsten Bey (Nome) joined our committee.

In February and March, we began discussing the structure of feedback loops and how smaller populations, such as those on rural campuses, might be at risk for retaliation. This led to a discussion on UAF resources, such as the Grapevine (http://www.uaf.edu/grapevine/) as ways to anonymously ask for information. However, nearly all committee members noted the absence of a university ombudsman as a detriment to our organization.

In response to the reorganization suggestions made by the Staff Council Reorg ad hoc committee, Rural Affairs questioned one motion, to eradicate Alternates and replace them with At Large members. It was determined that this may inadvertently marginalize Rural members due to smaller voting populations. More discussion is needed.

In April, the Alaska State Ombudsman was suggested as a neutral third party and discussed at length by the committee. While this was viewed as a good resource, it still lacks the institutional knowledge that an UA ombudsman would retain. The committee will be developing a motion to suggest the addition of such a position to the university.

In May, an ad hoc committee was suggested to create a motion to propose a UA ombudsman, and progress was made on determining details for the travel proposal to rural campuses.