



ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

FALL 2004

Center News

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Center News, the newsletter of ACE, is published five times a year. Subscription rate is \$35 annually and includes membership. For subscriptions or information contact:

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

MARKETING 101

It's no secret that Alaska salmon are struggling to compete with a glut of farmed salmon from places like Chile and Norway. Alaska's response has been to market the Alaska brand as an ocean-caught fish that tastes better and is the greener choice for the consumer.

We know that people are willing to pay a premium for well-cultivated brands, as demonstrated by the success of the Copper River Red fishery. Similarly, the Kenai Borough government has invested in a marketing plan for a Kenai Wild salmon brand, and Governor Murkowski has announced a federally-funded \$50 million Salmon Revitalization Plan to support industry modernization and innovation.

To quote from the 2003 Alaska Economic Report, "To better compete, the average quality of Alaska's wild salmon products must improve, domestic markets need to be developed, and marketing efforts need to be greatly expanded."

Most Alaskans would agree that improved quality and expanded marketing efforts are not consistent with dumping lime sludge and fecal coliform in salmon spawning areas- but believe it or not, that's just what the Murkowski Administration has proposed.

Currently, state law prohibits "mixing zones" in salmon spawning areas. A "mixing zone" is an area in a water body where pollution levels exceed the water quality standards designed to protect people and fish. Normally, a pollution discharge must meet water quality standards at the end of the discharge pipe. However, when the discharge is too polluted to meet such standards, regulators often choose instead to measure the discharge downstream from the discharge pipe, calling it a 'mixing zone'.

Mixing zones are simply loopholes that adopt the long-discounted notion that dilution is the solution to pollution, and in practice, they create sacrifice zones where water and habitat quality fails to meet the fish protection goals of the Clean Water Act.

The Governor's proposal will roll back these safeguards by allowing mixing zones in spawning areas, and allow higher levels of mining, sewage, and other pollution to be dumped into our fish streams- despite the fact that fishing provides more jobs and direct revenue to the state than mining and timber put together.

This proposal is bad environmental policy and bad economic policy. Meeting our water quality standards is simply a cost of doing business in Alaska, and protecting our salmon- and our ability to market effectively-should be a no-brainer.

Visit www.akcenter.org to learn how you take action on this issue.



Randy Virgin

BELUGA WHALES IN COOK INLET

by Valerie Brown

OUR BACKYARD, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Beluga whales are an exciting part of living around Cook Inlet. Around Anchorage and up Turnagain Arm, residents and tourists alike keep one eye on the water, hoping to spot a pod of whales chasing eucalon and salmon. The number of people who are rewarded with a glimpse of the whales' white backs, and more rarely a fluke, has been declining in recent years, as the number of whales in Cook Inlet has plummeted.

It is hard to say how far the population has fallen, because it is hard to accurately count beluga whales in Cook Inlet. The water in the inlet is murky with silt, the whales stay submerged for long periods of time, and the young whales are gray, virtually invisible even on the surface. Despite these difficulties, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the federal agency charged with managing beluga whales, does its best each summer to count beluga whales in Cook Inlet.

Modern surveys of Cook Inlet beluga whales began about 10 years ago. Though there were probably at least 1,300 Cook Inlet beluga whales in the 1980s, by 1998 the population was estimated to be only about 350. At least some of this rapid decline was due to hunting by Alaska Natives, which probably exceeded 70 whales some years.

In response to the population drop, the U.S. Congress passed an emergency measure in 1999 that stopped all hunting. Since then, hunting has been limited to one or two whales per year. Despite this, beluga whales in Cook Inlet have not increased. Annual survey numbers have repeatedly failed to show any increase, an increase that state and federal managers predicted at the time hunting was curtailed.

In 2003, the National Marine Fisheries Service confirmed the deaths of at least 21 whales, one from a subsistence hunt, the rest from

stranding-related deaths or unknown causes. Because of the high mortality in such a small population, the agency feared the loss of even one more whale. The 2004 subsistence hunt was cancelled.

The June 2004 survey numbers indicated, again, that the population has yet to begin a recovery. Despite the fact that hunting has been severely curtailed since 1999, despite the large number of known deaths in 2003, and despite the disappointing 2004 survey data, National Marine Fisheries Service has refused to take action to list Cook Inlet beluga whales under the Endangered Species Act.

A TEXTBOOK CASE FOR LISTING

Beginning in 1998, ACE, and other conservation groups petitioned to have the Cook Inlet beluga whale listed as endangered, under both the federal and state endangered species acts. The National Marine Fisheries Service, under enormous political pressure, ignored the potential impacts to the dangerously low population and concluded the whales were not threatened with extinction. Instead, the agency listed the Cook Inlet beluga whale as "depleted" under the less-protective Marine Mammal Protection Act. This designation gave National Marine Fisheries Service the authority to regulate hunting by Alaska Natives, but provided none of the other protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act. This listing also required the agency to develop a conservation plan for the whales.



SPYHOPPING BELUGA WHALE (photo by Robyn Angliss, National Marine Mammal Laboratory)

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BELUGA WHALES IN COOK INLET

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Represented by Trustees for Alaska, ACE challenged the listing decisions in both federal and state court. In a tortured application of endangered species law, the federal court determined that since hunting was the primary cause of the decline, and since that threat had been removed, the National Marine Fisheries Service was correct to refuse to list the whale. The agency and the Court ignored the recommendations of the Alaska Scientific Review group and other independent scientists that the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale was in serious danger from other threats in Cook Inlet and met the criteria for listing.

The State of Alaska has its own Endangered Species Act. Deferring to the federal listing process, the State, too, refused to take action to list the whales. In response to ACE's petition, the State first decided that the Cook Inlet beluga whale was not a separate species that could be listed under the Alaska Endangered Species Act (National Marine Fisheries Service had conceded that Cook Inlet beluga whales are a subspecies and could be listed under the federal act). Then, relying on the National Marine Fisheries Service's position that the whales are not threatened with extinction, the State made the same finding.

In August of 2004, the Alaska Supreme Court agreed with ACE that the State was wrong to conclude that Cook Inlet beluga whales could not be considered a species under the law. The Court then, unfortunately, upheld the state decision that the whales are not endangered. The National Marine Fisheries Service, the State of Alaska, and now the Courts have refused to look beyond the hunting impacts to the fact that the whale population is so low it is now vulnerable to extinction even without any hunting. Until the population rebounds, its existence will be threatened by impacts such

as strandings, oil spills, a proposed causeway across Knik Arm, sewage discharge, increasing vessel traffic, and predation. Both of the court decisions leave open the possibility of a future petition to list Cook Inlet beluga whales as endangered.

MOVING FORWARD

In the four years that have passed since National Marine Fisheries Service first regulated hunting, nothing else has been done to protect Cook Inlet beluga whales or their habitat. The agency is now working on the long overdue conservation plan mandated by the Marine Mammal Protection Act for all depleted species. The draft plan will likely be released for public comment in October of 2004.

Because Cook Inlet beluga whales are slow to reproduce and the current population is small, the recovery is also likely to be slow, taking decades according to some scientists. It is important to move quickly to ensure there is no further decline and that everything possible is done protect the whales during this recovery.

ACE is working with the agency and other entities around Cook Inlet to improve public education about the status of beluga whales and to educate the public about what it can do to help prevent extinction. We'll also be monitoring the Conservation Plan, and we encourage our members to do the same. Be sure to check www.akcenter.org when the Plan is released for comment information.

OTHER RESOURCES:

http://nmml.afsc.noaa.gov/species/species_beluga.htm:

links to other sites, research information, and more

<http://nmml.afsc.noaa.gov/education/cetaceans/beluga.htm>:

a great site for kids to learn more about belugas



ACE SEEKING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

By an unanimous vote at the June meeting, the ACE board amended the by-laws to provide for board election of new directors rather than member election. This change was made to reflect current practice, and the practical needs of the organization to develop a board and fill positions in a timely manner.

We currently have openings on the board, and encourage ACE members to serve. To apply, send a letter of interest to:

ACE
Tim Seaver, Board Chair
807 G Street, suite 100
Anchorage AK 99501

TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY

CELEBRATES ANOTHER INCREDIBLE SUMMER



by Thomas Burek, Trailside Discovery Camp Director

What an incredible summer. Trailside Discovery was able to provide program opportunities to over 1,700 campers. That's 150 more campers who were able to participate in our programs compared to last season. Once again, Campbell Creek Science Center was a perfect location to provide outdoor wilderness experiences in the heart of Anchorage.

Trailside's activities are designed to satisfy children's natural desire for adventure, discovery, and fun. The knowledge they gain from the Trailside programs will help them to gain an appreciation and understanding towards the environment, and become advocates for conservation in the future.

Our Alaskan Quest overnight camping programs combined backcountry skills, and 'leave no trace' camping techniques, for a week of extreme adventure in Alaska's wild areas. Our kayakers paddled around Resurrection Bay in Seward, and learned about intertidal communities. The two week Backpack/Kayak trip took in a week of viewing Mt. McKinley and a week of paddling in Kachemak Bay. All of the campers enjoyed the trips, especially the students who have been participating in Alaskan Quest trips for many years. For those students, the Quest trips are a great opportunity to put to use the practical skills they have gained from previous Trailside programs.

We raised over \$12,000 for the scholarship program (compared to \$10,000 last year). These funds made it possible to serve 75+ children who otherwise would not have been able to attend.

Thank you to the following agencies that helped to generate the funds and resources to provide scholarship opportunities. Alaska

Geological Society, Alaska Railroad, Alyeska Pipeline, Alaska Conservation Foundation, REI, Phillips 66, National Bank of Alaska, Moose's Tooth, AT&T Wireless, Kaladi Bothers Coffee, Skagg Foundation, BLM/Campbell Creek

Science Center, Partners in Homeless Education, and the Trailside Advisory Board.

Thank You to Tom & Sharon Hunt-Smith, Jane Wiggins, and Ray Commisa, for providing housing for the Trailside staff this summer.



A CALM DAY IN THE BAY. Trailside students paddle in Kachemak Bay.



TRAILSIDE STUDENTS give their impression of camp

CHUGACH DAYS



by Bobbie Jo Skibo, Wild Forest Program Coordinator

CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST

This summer marked the 97th Birthday of the Chugach National Forest. Encompassing 5.6 million acres, the Chugach remains today as our country's wildest, and second largest, national forest.

Established by President Teddy Roosevelt on July 23rd, 1907 for the conservation of fish and wildlife resources, the Chugach is a treasure valued not only by Alaskans, but by people around the country and around the world.

Encompassing Prince William Sound, the Copper River Delta, and the Kenai Peninsula, the Chugach is a crown jewel of the National Forest System. The Chugach affords Alaskans and visitors world-class sightseeing, camping, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, fishing, boating, rafting, skiing, and canoeing experiences, as well as offering cultural, natural, and historical resources.

The Chugach supports a rich human culture and the modern economic activity of the region, and is home to brown and black bears, eagles, hundreds of bird species, moose, wolves, mountain goats, deer, whales, sea otters, fox, and our priceless "Wild" Alaskan salmon.

Sadly, the Chugach is also home to the country's worst oil spill in history, and Prince William Sound is still struggling to recover from the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster, while conservation safeguards are continually being weakened.

Today, only 7 of 26 injured species and resources monitored by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council have recovered from the oil spill. Crude oil still exists in surprising quantities on some Prince William Sound beaches, and exposure to this lingering oil has been correlated with lack of recovery in sea otters and harlequin ducks.

At 700,000 acres, the Copper River Delta has been designated a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Site due to the fact that biologists describe the Delta as one of the most important shorebird habitats in the Western Hemisphere.

Supporting over 16 million migratory shorebirds and other waterfowl on their northern migration, the Copper River Delta is the only place in the world where the endangered Dusky Canada Goose breeds and it has the largest nesting population of Trumpeter Swans anywhere in the world.

The Delta also sustains the prized Copper River "Wild" salmon run, which supports the subsistence, sport, and commercial fishing needs of Alaskans and the Eyak Native people of the area.

The Kenai Peninsula, covered with glacier-fed lakes, breathtaking waterfalls, public-use cabins and world-renowned hiking and biking trails, also supports world-class Chinook and Sockeye salmon fisheries.

The Kenai is also home to the Kenai brown bear population which has been listed in 1998 by the Department of Fish and Game as a "species of special concern".

The threat of expansion and development within roadless watersheds on the Kenai and across the entire forest continues to place critical wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism opportunities, and conservation of public lands for future generations, at risk of compromise.

Teddy Roosevelt, a conservation visionary, prioritized wilderness in the Chugach over short-term gains and exploitation of our natural resources. Protecting this wild place should remain a priority for all of us who call it home-or call it a vacation- because the economic and recreational well-being of Southcentral Alaska depends on it.

The Chugach National Forest, special to all of us for many different reasons, represents who we are, where we live, where we play, and what we want to hold onto for future generations to enjoy. Always take time to enjoy the wilderness in your backyard by picking berries in your favorite place, hiking one of the many historical trails, landing a "Wild" Kenai Red, or simply just knowing that it is there to enjoy.

CHUGACH DAYS CELEBRATION

In celebration of 97 wild years, Alaska Center for the Environment was pleased to sponsor the "Week of Wild Proportions", including Wild Salmon Week, the 3rd Annual Festival of the Forest, and the 1st Annual Chugach

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**CELEBRATING
97 WILD YEARS OF
THE CHUGACH
NATIONAL FOREST**



CHUGACH DAYS

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Challenge Triathlon in Cooper Landing on August 14th.

With over 90 local businesses, individuals, agencies, native tribes, and conservation groups, this year's Festival of the Forest was a complete success.

The festival was attended by dozens of race participants, hundreds of festival-goers, and a strong turn-out from area businesses and community leaders.

Highlights included the **1st Annual Chugach Challenge Triathlon**, which included approx. 20 miles biking, 5 miles running, and 6 miles boating with in the Cooper Landing Valley. Congratulations to our winners.

1st place- It's All Wood... Ed and Lisa Hartman and Craig Barnard 2:12:16

2nd place- Chuggin' for the Chugach... Alex Winston, Sean Cahoon, and Eric Van Dogen 2:16:15

3rd place- Cooper Landing Crew Mike Smith, Eric and Tyler Romig 2:23

We were also entertained by Bunny Swan Geese, Loose Gravel, Sticky Wickets, The Mighty Trufflehunters, Good Dog, Deb and Nile, Kenny Blackwell and Good Company, and the Qutekcak drummers and dancers. The Bald Eagle presentation by Bird TLC, the fly fishing and tying demo by Alaska Fly Fishers, and the dog-mushing demonstration by Jeanne Carlson-Seale were all huge hits and enjoyed by people of all ages.

We were also very pleased with the KID's TREEHOUSE, which featured tie dying, sapling planting, dream catchers, painted rock magnets, face painting

and tattoos, bear beads, wood carving, Kenaitze storyteller, and a puppet theater for the children of the Chugach! Thanks Lea!

Special thanks to Kathy Sarns who designed this year's wild salmon and bear logo which captured the true wild character of the Chugach on our posters and t-shirts. We would also like to thank Moose's Tooth Brewery who brewed the Wild Chugach Ale for 1st Tap in support of the 97th Birthday of the Forest.

The Week of Wild Proportions also included "Wild Chugach for Wild Alaska Salmon Week," sponsored by the Sierra Club, where over 50 businesses around Anchorage and the Chugach National Forest participated in the celebration by offering discounts and specials on our world-renowned Alaskan Wild Salmon.



CHUGACH CHALLENGE 1st place winners:
It's All Wood.



CHUGACH CHALLENGE 2nd place winners:
Chuggin' for the Chugach.



CHUGACH CHALLENGE 3rd place winners:
Cooper Landing Crew.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING CHUGACH DAYS!

Alaska Center for the Environment Staff and Board • Kenai Fish and Wildlife Field Office • Sierra Club • The Wilderness Society • Cook Inlet Keeper • AK Youth for Environmental Action • Kenai Lake Sea Kayak Adventures • Chugach Outdoor Center • AK River Adventures • AK Mountain and Wilderness Hut Association • USDA Forest Service, Seward Ranger District • Kathy Sarns Art Gallery • 2nd Nature • Teela Photography • Trailside Discovery Camp • Flowers of Denali Touchstone • Foiled Again Stained Glass • Larkin's Work Bench • Patchwork Clothing by Katie • Bear Beaver Chiselers • Alaska Artifacts • The Right Spot Massage Therapy • Green Star • AK Horsemen Trail Adventures • Aloha Alaska • Kenai Lake BBQ Café • Mighty Trufflehunters • Deb Wessler and Nile Hamaker • Bunny Swan Geese • Kenny Blackwell and Good Company • Raelle • Richard Poor Child • Loose Gravel • Hot Licks Ice Cream • Skinny Raven Sports • The Sport Shop • REI • The Bicycle Shop • The Alaska Club West • Across the Bay Getaway Tent and Breakfast Adventures • Patagonia • AMH • Pat's Bikes • Girdwood Ski & Cyclery • Chugach Outdoor Center • Peter Glenn • Kenai Lake Sea Kayak Adventures • Gwins Lodge • Zman's Guide Services • Carrs • Powerade • Ridge Top Construction • Serendipity Log Homes • Bird Treatment and Learning Center • Wilderness Society • Alaska Fly Fishers • Bob Fairchild • Jeanne Carlson • Blaines Art Supply • Kenai Lake Sea Kayak Adventures* • Kenaitze Tribe Story Teller • Good Dog Band • Qutekcak Native Tribe of Seward • Sticky Wickets • Moose's Tooth Restaurant • Moose's Tooth Brewing Company • Bear Tooth Theatre • Snow Goose Restaurant & Brewery • Café Savannah • Side Street Espresso • Snow City Café • Organic Oasis Health Food • Dark Horse Coffee Company • Kaladi Brothers • REI • One People • Girdwood Ski & Cyclery • Great Alaskan Tourist Trap • Resurrect Art Coffee House Gallery • Alaska Wildland Adventures • Glacier Brew House • Orso Ristorante • Humpy's Great Alaskan Alehouse • Middleway Café • AMH • Paramount Cycles* • Great Outdoor Clothing Co • Great Harvest Bread Co • Sack's Café & Restaurant • Title Wave Used Books • The Bake Shop • Sacketts Grill • Kenai Lake Lodge • Gwins Lodge • Sunrise Inn • Shrews Nest • George and Bob Siter • Salmon Run Lodge • Friends, Family and all of the Volunteers • Leah and Mike Smith • Debbie Carlson • George and Patti Heim • The Run Wild Tribe • The Chugach Chics • Betsy Goll • Barbara Bennett • Dave Rhode • The Cooper Landing Chamber of Commerce • Mary Louise • Gretchen Kime • Nueva Frontera • Kinkos • Dooley's • Jill and the Anchorage Press Staff • John Schoen • Brook Kintz • Margie and Brad • Clark at Moose's Tooth Brewery • Shelly Johnson and Jeremiah Millen • Jason Hill • Landing Latte and Bruce • Ken Flowers • Cory Matulich • Heidi and Tom • The community of Cooper Landing and all who participated in this great event.



DON'T FORGET TO REDUCE AND REUSE

by recycling intern Kim Wetzel

AN UPDATE ON ANCHORAGE RECYCLING

Kim was awarded the Edna Bailey Sussman Fund Environmental Internship grant to work for ACE and Green Star this summer to assess the state of recycling in Anchorage, and to research the feasibility of a curbside recycling program. She is a lifelong resident of Anchorage, and is currently a graduate student at the University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources & Environment.

VICTORY ON RECYCLING IN ANCHORAGE- MUNICIPALITY HIRES FIRST-EVER RECYCLING COORDINATOR

As you may recall, ACE has been advocating for several years for an Anchorage Recycling Coordinator through the municipality. I am pleased to report that thanks to the vigilance of ACE members and the foresight of Mayor Begich, Anchorage just hired its first-ever Recycling Coordinator. Teri Crawley-Norton, the former executive director of Alaskans for Litter Prevention, will be the point of contact for recycling, waste reduction, and recycling economic development within the municipality.

WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT WITH CITY-GATEWAY TO CURBSIDE PROGRAM OR GOVERNMENT-APPROVED MONOPOLY?

Anchorage currently has drop-off recycling and curbside trash service provided to the city core by Solid Waste Services (mandatory service) and to the Anchorage bowl by Waste Management (voluntary fee-for-service). In the fall of 2003, Waste Management submitted a proposal to the Municipality to assume pick-up for the entire city, which includes mandatory, variable-rate trash collection (the bigger the barrel, the more you pay) and fee-for-service curbside paper recycling collection. The catch? Waste Management seeks a 10-year contract.

While on the surface, this sounds like a great opportunity to establish

a curbside program, there are some concerns with the nature of the contract. There is considerable uncertainty in locking into one provider for 10 years, and Waste Management's proposal only addresses paper recycling, while the public demand is for a comprehensive curbside program. ACE staff have reviewed the proposal carefully, and we will represent these concerns to Waste Management and the city as the discussion moves forward.

HOW DOES ANCHORAGE RECYCLE? RECYCLING SURVEY WILL REVEAL OUR HABITS

It became clear that in order for ACE to advocate for a sensible trash & recycling program, we need to answer these basic questions: Who is recycling right now? What type of system are

residents willing to live with? What is the best way for the city to handle contracts with private haulers?

Numbers can be a powerful tool. In order to get a better idea of where Anchorage residents stand on this issue, Ivan Moore Research has agreed to conduct a pro-bono phone survey of 500 households.

The results of this poll will be used by ACE, Green Star, and the Municipality of Anchorage to help determine the direction of recycling in our area.

If you have any questions or comments about ACE's ongoing efforts to establish a curbside recycling program, please contact my wonderful summer advisors: Andre Camara, our Anchorage Issues Coordinator andre@akcenter.org or Jeanne Carlson of Green Star Jeanne@greenstarinc.org



THE ACE RECYCLING TEAM spent an afternoon collecting and sorting recyclables at the Alaska State Fair as part of the program sponsored by Green Star, Valley Community for Recycling Solutions, and the Alaska State Fair.

TAKE PRIDE IN ANCHORAGE



by Andre Camara, Anchorage Issues Coordinator

ACE members have made the "Take Pride in Anchorage" campaign a success! Over the past two summers ACE has continually worked to keep its members up to date on the conservation and quality of life issues that face our city. Whether you've helped spread the message, joined us for a phone bank, written a letter, made a phone call, or given public testimony, ACE would like to say "thanks" for getting involved- we could not have done it without you!

NEW PESTICIDE ORDINANCE FOR ANCHORAGE

Victory for public health! On June 22, The Anchorage Assembly voted 8 to 1 in favor of expanded right-to-know provisions for pesticide use in town.

For the past year, ACE has worked with a coalition of conservation groups to improve the municipal regulations for pesticides, which hadn't been revised since 1986. The new ordinance enhances notification about pesticide use in public areas, and requires 'good neighbor' notification 48 hours prior to applications in neighborhoods. According to recent findings, at least seven pesticides used by the municipality or contractors are "high acute toxicity" chemicals, as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency- making public notification all the more important to empower people to limit their exposure.

Thank you to everyone who testified and participated in long meetings and work sessions to get this accomplished! We have made a significant step toward becoming a community where no one is unknowingly exposed to toxic pesticides in our neighborhoods, parks, and other public places.

Assembly members voting in support of the improvements to the ordinance included: Anna Fairclough, Pamela Jennings, Debbie Ossiander, Janice Shamberg, Ken Stout, Allan Tesche, Dick Tremaine, and Brian

Whittle. Dan Coffey and Dan Sullivan were not present for the vote, although Mr. Coffey had voiced his support. Assembly Chair Dick Traini cast the sole vote in opposition.

DEFENDING THE COASTAL TRAIL! (AGAIN)

Former Governor Bill Sheffield has withdrawn his request to shrink the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail easement

across his lot, ending a months-long debate over the issue.

Back in December, an alert ACE member noticed that the city had granted Governor Sheffield a request to shrink the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail easement across his lot. We felt the city made a shortsighted decision contrary to the public interest (and ignored overwhelming testimony opposing the reduction of the trail easement), and we promptly filed an appeal to defend the trail.



PACKED-IN "SITE CONDOS" like these could become widespread in Anchorage if we don't speak up. See opposite page to find out how..

For residents and visitors, the Coastal Trail is one of Anchorage's most popular amenities. In fact, it's practically a necessity for many of the city's residents. It's one of the reasons our quality of life is so high in Anchorage, and it is a great source of pride. The requested trail easement vacation would have provided no public benefit, would have left the city with coastal-side easement that's subject to erosion, and would have reduced the trail's buffer from residential development.

Of course, this proposal could resurface, and new threats to Anchorage's trails require constant vigilance.

VICTORY FOR ANCHORAGE – ACCESS POINT TO CHUGACH STATE PARK PROTECTED

In early August, the city Planning Board voted unanimously to preserve a public right-of-way in a newly proposed subdivision at Near Point, in Stuckagain Heights. The original plan for the subdivision would have blocked public access to the park via the Dome and Near Point trails, two popular access points. As many of us know, public access points to Chugach State Park are overcrowded already, making it all the more important that we defend all current and potential future access points - before they're lost forever to poor planning. Thank you to everyone who testified at the hearing!

ANCHORAGE PLANNING -- MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Are you tired of the lack of planning for development in Anchorage? Now is your chance to make your voice heard.

The Municipality is currently rewriting land use regulations (Title

21), using citizen input from the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The 'Comp Plan' was created by Anchorage citizens, and adopted by the Assembly in 2001.

The plan includes: providing neighborhood parks within walking distance of homes; subdivisions where front doors and windows face the street, not just garage doors, and more attractive northern building design, especially for infill and multifamily housing.

Unfortunately, local developers are trying to sway the regulations in their favor by attacking the provisions of the 'Comp Plan.' These attacks have come despite the fact that the proposed changes to development standards are common in other cities, and have worked well in the past.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

It's important that Assembly members hear from you and not just the developers! Call and let your Assembly representative(s) know that you support better development standards, such as, (1) a variety of housing types and densities in safe, attractive neighborhoods that are appropriate for northern conditions and in harmony with our natural setting; (2) a balanced supply of land uses which is compatible with adjacent land uses; (3) and a built environment based on design standards that sustain long-term economic viability and growth and that promote affordable residential, commercial, and industrial development.

The Anchorage Citizens Coalition has organized a citizen participation program, which provides a forum for information and discussion. Contact Andre Camara at andre@akcenter.org or 274-3668 to find out how to participate.

The deadline for public comments on the third phase of the plan has been extended to **December 17th, 2004**. Comments can be submitted at title21@ci.anchorage.ak.us.

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WILD ALASKA

COAL BED METHANE UPDATE

PIONEER GIVES UP MAT-SU LEASES

In a victory for Mat-Su citizens, Pioneer Resources has recently released 235,000 acres of leases in the Valley in response to the intense controversy the leases had generated. Pioneer recently acquired the leases when it bought Evergreen Resources, the Colorado based company that has stirred up a hornet's nest of resistance from Valley landowners unhappy with the prospect of gas operations on their land.

Pioneer retains 48,000 acres in the Valley near Big Lake, and another 98,000 acres of leases pending that includes a swath from Big Lake to Point McKenzie. Additionally, the Homer-area leases, owned by other interests, are still in play. Needless to say, the coal bed methane controversy is far from over.

GROUPS FILE LEGAL CHALLENGE TO CONTROVERSIAL LEASES

This summer, two citizens groups from the areas impacted by coal bed methane leasing filed suit in state court, challenging the legality of the leasing process. Several hundred thousand acres were leased last year by Evergreen Resources under a new set of rules that had just been created by the legislature-with Evergreen's help.

Despite the fact that the leasing of underground gas can happen on most lands in Alaska regardless of surface ownership, the state saw fit to allow the leasing without any public notice- they didn't even bother to send a postcard to landowners to let them know that their land was being offered for leasing.

As you can imagine, this didn't sit well with landowners and homeowners in the Mat-Su and Homer regions, who were suddenly faced with drilling on their land whether they wanted it or not. So-called remedy legislation was

passed during the 2004 legislative session in an attempt to address many of these concerns, but the legislation only applies to new leases- not the controversial acreage already leased under the flawed program.

Needless to say, this didn't satisfy the folks sitting on leased acreage, whose land and homes are threatened by CBM development. Hence the lawsuit, filed by Friends of Mat-Su and the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, which challenges the constitutionality of the original leasing program.

MAT-SU BOROUGH PUSHES FORWARD WITH COAL BED METHANE REGULATIONS

Despite the refusal of the state, or Evergreen Resources, to submit CBM development to local control, the Mat-Su Borough is pushing ahead with its own set of standards for the development on Borough lands.

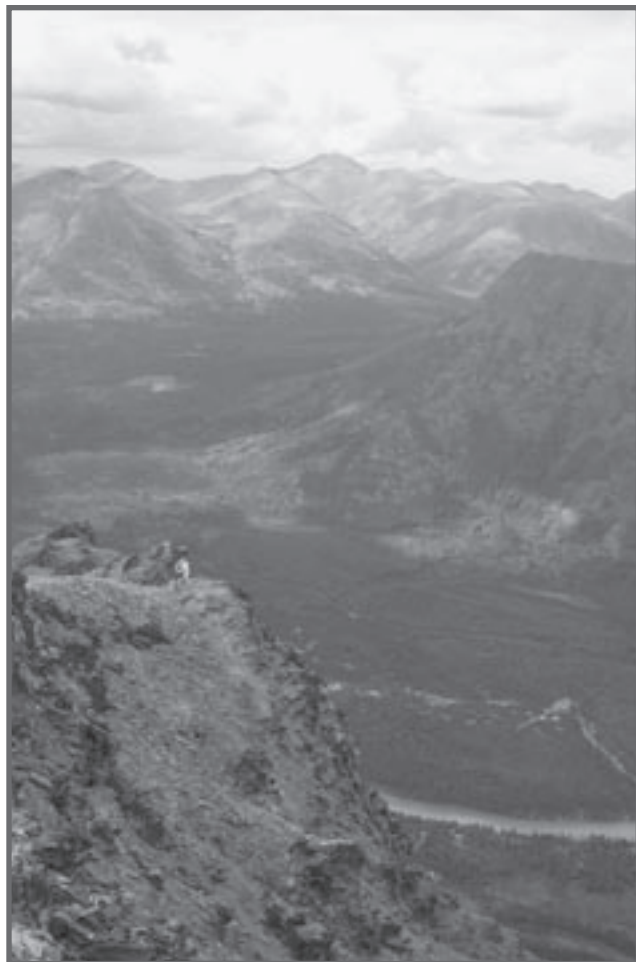
The rules seek to allow for limits to where the development can occur, and also sets standards for water quality and other pollution controls. You can learn about the proposal and find out about meeting times and comment opportunities at: www.gasdrillingmatsu.org

DENALI DEFENSE

As has been pointed out in these pages many times before, a state park designation is reserved for the most splendid and ecologically significant

natural areas, and they are intended to be strictly managed for their natural values. Yet, we find a continual need for vigilance to protect Alaska's parks from poorly managed motorized recreation, pressure for new roads, and proposals for major backcountry tourist destinations. This summer has been no exception for Denali State Park, one of Alaska's best-loved and highly-enjoyed parks.

The state Division of Parks has proposed a regulation change to allow for potentially unlimited helicopter landings in Denali State Park. There are currently five designated helicopter landing sites and fixed-wing landing sites in some areas. However, in response to pressure from the visitor industry, the Director of States Parks determined last winter to allow for additional landing



WILD ALASKA: Russian River Valley, near Cooper Landing.

during summer 2004. ACE successfully appealed this determination, pointing out that the decision was clearly inconsistent with legally-adopted management plans and regulations.

However, the state has simply decided to change the rules to suit the interests they would like to serve, by proposing regulation changes over the summer to accommodate industry. Most alarmingly, the proposal would allow for helicopter landings anywhere in the Park, subject to approval of the Parks Director - a political appointee who serves at the will of the Governor. This means that decisions could sway back and forth with the political winds, rather than being grounded in carefully-crafted planning documents produced with public involvement.

Helicopter and fixed-wing flightseeing are a well-established means for exploring Alaska's backcountry, and we certainly do not oppose these activities outright. However, the activity must be regulated and kept within reasonable limits. The current regulations already allow for landings, in a well-managed way that protects the Wilderness Zone from such high-impact activity.

The State Park, especially, is important to Alaskans for hiking and camping, away from the throngs of visitors who crowd the National Park all summer. In a sense, the State Park is our Park, and it's all the more important that we preserve places like Curry and Kesugi Ridges for Alaskans to enjoy.

NATIONAL FOREST ROADLESS AREAS THREATENED

To no one's surprise, the federal government has proposed sweeping rollbacks of the National Forest Roadless Policy- the most widely-supported federal rule-making in U.S. history. (The majority of comment from Alaska supported the Policy, including a majority of testimony at every public hearing- from Anchorage to Sitka.

As you may recall, the Roadless Policy was adopted in 2001, after several years of public comment and hearings around the country, to prevent new road-building in national forest roadless



WILD ALASKA: Tongass National Forest.

areas of 5,000 acres or more. Roads into unroaded forestland have been identified by scientists as the single-biggest threat to these publicly-owned treasures, bringing invasive weeds, clear-cut crews, and 4-wheelers into pristine areas. The Policy, of course, did allow for public use of these lands by other means, and even provided for logging by helicopter where necessary.

The Bush Administration has been working to undermine, abandon, and roll back the Roadless Policy since taking office, but has run into the roadblock of public opinion time and again. Quite simply, Americans recognize that with more than one-half of our national forests already open to logging, mining, and drilling, the Policy was needed to preserve the last third of undeveloped forests as a home for wildlife, a haven for recreation, and a heritage for future generations.

Here in Alaska, we enjoy 22 million acres of National Forest land, encompassed by the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska and the Chugach National Forest in Southcentral. The Roadless Policy protected a little over half of this acreage, leaving a significant acreage of roaded areas to support a small-scale timber industry in Southeast- and went a long ways to keeping the Chugach the way it is- a forest that supports strong salmon runs,

hunting, and recreation second-to-none for Alaskans.

Unfortunately, the federal government has targeted Alaska's forests in particular, proposing to exempt them from the Roadless policy altogether- and has re-worked the Policy in the lower 48 to allow for a state-by-state rollback of the protections that a majority of Americans have supported, time and time again.

Of course, the fight isn't over yet. The Forest Service is accepting comment until November 14th, and the make-up of the Administration and Congress next year is likely to have a major impact on the direction of the Roadless Policy.

TAKE ACTION:

Visit www.akcenter.org to send a comment to the Forest Service by November 14th.

You can also write them a letter addressed to:
Chief Dale Bosworth

c/o Content Analysis Team
ATTN: Roadless State Petitions
USDA Forest Service
PO BOX 221090
Salt Lake City, UT 84122

NEW FACES AT ACE



ACE MEMBERSHIP TEAM: Andie Martinez, Margaret Hazeltine, Clare Stockert, Lena McGinnis-Kilic.



CHUGACH PROTECTORS: (Left to right) Wild Forest Organizer, Bobbie Jo Skibo, with Chugach Interns, Erin Steinkruger, Mara Burstein, Andie Martinez and Jessica Lazar

WELCOME NEW STAFF!

Thank you to outgoing Membership Director Theo Saner for many years of service and dedication to ACE. We wish him luck in all of his future pursuits.

Former Membership Associate and Volunteer Coordinator, Clare Stockert, now serves as the Membership Director. Clare will be joined in her work by Outreach and Campaign Coordinator, Lena McGinnis-Kilic, Membership and Volunteer Coordinator, Andie Martinez, and Membership Assistant, Margaret Hazeltine.

ACE ADDS CONSERVATION GIS CENTER

Geographic Information System (GIS) is the term for the ability to use computer plotted geographic, ecological, biological, and human use data to generate maps. These maps can then be used to bolster our advocacy work, both by helping our staff develop priorities and as communication tools with decision-makers and the public. The GIS Center is the only non-profit GIS operation in the state, and we will be able to offer our services to other conservation groups and campaigns in Alaska as well.

THANK YOU ACE SUMMER INTERNS!

ACE was very fortunate to have 5 very bright and talented interns working at the office this summer. Kim Wetzel divided her time between ACE and Green Star to work on assessing the state of recycling in Anchorage (see article on page 8). Mara Burstein, Jessica Lazar, Andie Martinez, and Erin Steinkruger worked on the Chugach Forest program. They helped put together the Chugach Festival of the Forest and researched issues such as the Sterling Highway bypass project, the state of the Kenai brown bear population, spruce bark beetles, and forest fires.

ACE would like to thank these wonderful interns for their hard work this summer and for helping us expand our conservation work in Alaska!

"Thank you so much ACE, especially Bobbie Jo, for the opportunity to love, play, and fight for the Chugach National Forest. This sunny summer has been packed full of lessons on grassroots organizing- I educated the public regarding concern for Kenai Brown Bears, examined Sterling Hwy alternatives, researched proposed projects in the Chugach, and planned the Festival of the Forest 2004. In these two months, I learned about Alaska's environmental politics and policies, and it is clear to me that ACE is a major part of the foundation for change."

- Mara Burstein

"Interning at Alaska Center for the Environment was the most rewarding experience of my life. Not only did I work with intelligent and dedicated individuals, gaining great experience, but I also felt as if I made a difference in ACE's conservationist efforts. Alaska is now in my blood and working towards keeping it the Last Frontier is my passion."

- Andie Martinez

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Thank you to all of the ACE members who supported ACE through our door-to-door membership drive this summer.

With one of our most successful summer campaigns on record, the ACE summer membership drive has come to a close. We would like to thank our dedicated community organizers, who knocked on thousands of doors over the past four months to organize the community on important conservation issues. But of course, the campaign would not have been successful if it weren't for the supportive people behind the door, who got involved. Over 2,000 people chose to take action and start, or continue their support of ACE, which allowed us to move forward on many important issues. So, think fondly of us over the winter and we'll see you next spring when the snow melts!



TAKING IT TO THE STREETS - The ACE summer field organizers prepare to hit the streets

Member Application/Renewal Form

Now you can donate online at www.akcenter.org.

Crane \$15 Mountain Goat \$35 Beluga \$50 Musk Ox \$75 Brown Bear \$150 Bald Eagle \$500

ACE is Alaska's oldest and largest homegrown conservation group. We have grown from a few volunteers in 1971 to thousands of dues paying members all over Alaska and in the Lower 48. We want to ensure that your voice is heard, whether it's promoting neighborhood recycling or protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ACE is your springboard for citizen action. The way we win is through membership (that's you). The more members we have, the louder our voice is to promote conservation in Alaska.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Credit Card# _____ Exp. Date _____

Give monthly or quarterly gifts by joining the Puffin Club

Monthly \$ _____ OR Quarterly \$ _____

I have enclosed a check for my first gift or have provided my credit card number above. Please transfer future scheduled gifts in the above amount directly from my checking account/credit card. I understand that future tax deductible gifts will be transferred directly from this account each month or quarterly as indicated above, and that a record of my contributions will appear on my monthly bank/credit card statements. If at any time you wish to increase, decrease, or suspend your giving, simply call ACE at (907)274-3639 and we will gladly accommodate your request.

REQUIRED FOR PUFFIN CLUB: Signature _____ Date _____

Return to: Alaska Center for the Environment • 807 G Street, Suite 100 • Anchorage, AK 99501

CONSERVATION PIONEERS INDUCTED INTO THE CONSERVATION HALL OF FAME

ACE members (and one of ACE's founding members) Peg Tileston, Lowell Thomas Jr. and Jim and Mary Lou King were honored last month for their important contributions to protecting Alaska's environment through Alaska Conservation Foundation's "Lifetime Achievement Awards."

We sometimes take for granted the wild places in Alaska that we love and cherish, but last month we were reminded that we owe a huge thanks to some of the people who worked so hard to get those special places protected.

ACE would like to extend a hearty congratulations, and of course, a huge thank you to the award winners for their work in making Alaska a better place for us all. They have proven that we can indeed make positive change and have inspired the current generation at ACE to keep up the good work!



CONGRATULATION TO CONSERVATION HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES Peg Tileston, Lowell Thomas Jr., Mary Lou King, and Jim King at Alaska Conservation Foundation's award ceremony.



Donate Now

Help support the Alaska
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Making a donation to ACE is easier than ever. If you support ACE's mission and enjoy getting updates on the issues you care about, you can help by making a secure online donation today! Go to our website: www.akcenter.org and look for the "Donate Now" button.



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