



ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

FALL 2007

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from the
DIRECTOR

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Cover by **Damion Kintz**: Chugach National Forest shoreline on a wet day of sailing in Prince William Sound.



FREE YOUR THINKING

As anyone who's ridden a bus in Anchorage well knows, it isn't free. But it should be.

Sound silly? Look at it this way: Imagine if the city tried to put a farebox into every car. Each time drivers took a trip, they would have to dig into their pockets to find \$1.75 -- in exact change.

That sounds silly. And yet, we force those without cars to live this way, even as we enjoy tax-funded roadways with complete freedom from tolls and onerous schedules. By some estimates, the government subsidy to each private vehicle owner is about \$3,700, while a common cost for providing a single trip by transit is about \$5. Yet most transit systems are scraping by, and Anchorage's People Mover is constantly squeezed by a lack of city investment.

A growing body of research is showing that our transit systems often suffer from their reliance on the fare box. For starters, the costs of collecting fares eats up a significant chunk of the revenue. One analysis by the Transportation Research Board found that for larger systems, fare collection costs can be as high as 22 percent of the revenue collected.

To add insult to injury, it's been demonstrated that every increase in bus fares leads to a reduction in bus ridership. The Simpson-Curtain rule says that ridership drops 3.8 percent for every 10 percent increase in fares. Which means fare increases either haven't gained much new revenue, or worse, have started a downward spiral.

And what could we gain from freeing Anchorage of the farebox? A look at the communities that have already implemented free buses tells an encouraging story-increased ridership and a more efficient system, which translates into better mobility for the community and fewer cars on the road for drivers to contend with during rush hour. In Amherst, Massachusetts, some ascribed the resurgence of an area neighborhood to the implementation of free transit.

Transportation officials rightly warn of scrapping the farebox too hastily. A drastic increase in riders, without a well-planned increase in service and bus management, could choke the system. Implemented well, however, the benefits of free transit can outweigh the costs. It's time to stop thinking small about our transit system- let's get serious about People Mover, and everybody will benefit.

TRANSPORTATION IN ALASKA: WHAT'S YOUR PRIORITY?



Despite the futuristic promises of the computer age, transportation mobility is still a critical part of community planning, livability, and economic vitality. And the statistics underscore how important transportation is to our daily lives. According to the federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics, transportation expenditures in the U.S. account for nearly one-fifth of our nation's Gross Domestic Product, and transportation accounted for 66% of US petroleum consumption in 2006. Here in Alaska, it's been estimated that as much as 25% of Anchorage's developed land is dedicated to roads.

When mobility is restricted (traffic congestion, lack of transit service, etc), we pay the price in lost time, lost productivity, environmental impacts, and just plain unhappiness. Nobody likes to sit in traffic or wait for a bus- yet we do just that, because day in and day out, people have places to go - and we've still got a ways to go to achieve an efficient multi-modal system. Transportation is a big deal - and the efficiency of a system makes a big difference in our quality of life and our impact on the environment we depend on.

In Alaska, of course, transportation planning takes on a different meaning for each community. As Anchorage and Mat-Su struggle with road congestion and inadequate public transit, coastal communities need improved ferry service and remote villages depend on riverways and air travel.

It's all about priorities

Yet these communities all face a similar challenge, which looks to get worse before it gets better: not enough dollars to go around. The Alaska Department of Transportation lists the state's cost of needed infrastructure over the next twenty year at \$10 to \$12 billion. Thanks in part to the national political debacle surrounding Congressman Young's earmark-fest

in the national transportation bill he stewarded, combined with skyrocketing costs for materials and less Highway Trust Fund money to go around, everyone is forecasting a significant

gap between needs and resources in the foreseeable future.

With a smaller pie to divvy, and Alaska's transportation needs so great, the urgency for meaningful prioritization is as important as ever.

The recent bridge collapse in Minnesota provides a tragic emphasis to this point- if we don't make the right investments in infrastructure now, the consequences can be much worse than gridlock.

And yet, in Alaska today, we are still officially moving forward with three mega-projects of dubious benefit - the Gravina bridge, the Knik Arm bridge, and the Juneau road - that could total \$2 billion dollars in combined cost without a meaningful strategy for actually serving the mobility needs of Alaska's population centers. "It's like buying three sports cars when the minivan is wheezing and the roof is leaking", says Lois Epstein, Engineer and Director of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project. "It just doesn't make sense."

How did we get here?

Many commentators, from both sides of the political aisle, have pointed to a broken transportation funding system in the wake of the I-35 bridge collapse. Politicians cannot



resist the temptation to fund shiny new projects that bring attention and prestige, at the expense of maintenance and repair. Congressman Young's 2005 federal transportation bill was a \$375 billion bonanza that he bragged to have "stuffed like a turkey". The bill had an astounding 6,300 earmarks, including controversial Alaska projects: \$223 million for a bridge to Gravina Island (population: 50), and \$229 million for the Knik Arm Bridge. Yet, neither project was fully funded even with those earmarks - leaving the question of where the rest of the money would come from unanswered. (The earmarks were later removed, but the money was sent to Alaska without restrictions, and Governor Murkowski and the state Department of Transportation promptly recommitted a significant portion of the money to the bridges.)

The unique personalities of our Congressman and former Governor play a significant role in this situation, but fundamentally these projects are outside of any community-based prioritization process, and have been tacked on by political fiat.

A new page turning?

When the watchword is priorities, these mega-projects need to be weighed carefully against other projects - and more and more people are reaching this conclusion. A recent up-down poll conducted by Hayes Research in March of this year showed that less than half of Anchorage residents support the Knik Arm Bridge project, and the Gravina and Juneau projects, which have never enjoyed broad public support, continue to be lightning rods for statewide and national criticism.

Upon taking office, one of the earliest actions Governor Palin took was to cancel an \$11 million materials



contract for the Juneau Road and pledged to review the costs and benefits of the project, and none of the three projects received any attention, let alone funding, in the last legislative session. Meanwhile, the state Department of Transportation has embarked on a long range transportation plan revision dubbed "Let's Get Moving: 2030", which is at least holding public hearings to ask the question, 'where should the priorities be?'

What else is possible?

Just in Anchorage, the list of needs is long - the "Connect Anchorage" project list developed by the city and state envisions nearly a billion dollars

worth of projects to add strategic road connections and improvements to keep us moving, including a Glenn-Seward highway-to-highway connection.

We also need regional projects that, unlike the Knik Arm Bridge, would actually serve existing communities, like Glenn Highway congestion relief, commuter rail between Anchorage and the Valley, and real investment in public transportation and pedestrian and bike-friendly systems for our most populated areas - starting with Anchorage.

The first step out of this mess is to let the state know that your community has more urgent needs than these three mega-projects. The threat they pose to a sensible infrastructure plan is so great, they must be stopped if we are going to have a meaningful investment in everything else. You can comment to the Department of Transportation through their website, and call your elected representatives, including the Governor. It's time to set some new priorities for Alaska's transportation needs.

What can you do?

You can comment to the Department of Transportation through their website, and call your elected representatives, including the Governor.

Contact the Governor's office:

Phone: (907) 465-3500
www.gov.state.ak.us/govoffices/index.php

Send in your comments:

www.aktransportation.org
www.dot.state.ak.us

It's time to set some new priorities for Alaska's transportation needs!

CLIMATE & ENERGY

GLOBAL WARMING AND THE NATION

By Clare Stockert

Record temperatures in Atlanta. Triple digit temperatures in the midwest. The melting arctic ice cap. With more people confronting global warming on a daily basis, the issue is quickly becoming a top national concern. More and more federal lawmakers are signing on to global warming and renewable energy legislation, presidential candidates are formulating their stand on global warming and the issue is being addressed in debates, alongside issues like the war in Iraq and health care. Yet, with all of this talk, it can still be difficult to separate the action from the lip service. A lot of lawmakers say that global warming is a problem, but where will the chips fall when an actual vote takes place? And when will an actual vote take place?

Federal Legislation

Some experts predict that businesses will push for national legislation in 2008. Knowing that

legislation on greenhouse emissions is probably inevitable, they might take their chances and push for something now- but with the presidential races in full force more than a year before the election and congressional races starting to heat up, the window for passing significant legislation this year is closing.

While the timing of the vote is anyone's guess, the options on the table are becoming clearer. Few environmental organizations have endorsed any specific legislation, but many groups, such as Step It Up, the Natural Resources Defense Council and National Environmental Trust are supporting an overall 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. The different pieces of legislation deal with capping greenhouse emissions, fuel efficiency in vehicles, renewable electricity standards and standards for future coal plants. Most of the bills

are similar in the areas to regulate, but differ on the percentage of overall greenhouse gas reductions and the target date for achieving reductions. Visit www.akcenter.org/programs/global_warming/policy.html#federal see how the current bills compare.

2008 Presidential Elections

If national legislation is not passed in 2008, the future of the issue will be largely influenced by the next U.S. President. So what are the candidates saying about global warming? Candidates such as Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, who have already been working on this issue in Congress, have the most defined platforms. However, most of the candidates have taken a stance on global warming and have been addressing the issue in debates and in the press. Learn more about the presidential candidates' stances at www.theheatison.org.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AROUND THE WORLD

Thanks to Alaska Conservation Solutions for the following examples of what local, federal and international governments are doing to address climate change. For more detailed information, or to receive monthly alerts, go to: www.alaskaconservationsolutions.com

- In Alaska, 60 teachers developed lesson plans concerning global warming in the Science Teacher Education Program at the University of Alaska's Geophysical Institute and

will make the plans available at: www.gi.alaska.edu/STEP.

- In Florida, Republican governor Charlie Crist signed three substantial executive orders regarding emission reductions, including calling for reductions in greenhouse gas emission to 2000 levels by 2017, to 1990 levels by 2025, and by 80% of 1990 levels by 2050. He also called for electric companies to produce 20% of their power from renewable resources by 2020; sought adoption

of California's new motor vehicle emission standard to reduce emissions by 25% by model year 2009; called for drafting a "climate change action plan;" sought energy efficient building standards; and signed cooperation agreements with Germany and Britain.

- The Energy Policy Act of 2005 mandated the Bureau of Land Management to go from a sealed bidding process to a competitive one for geothermal development

leases and the change seems to be spurring growth. BLM opened sales this summer and August sales in California and Nevada netted \$20 million and sales in June in Idaho and Utah brought in \$9.4 million. Time will tell if the initial speculation will lead to on-the-ground projects.

- The National Forest Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service have teamed up to offer carbon offsets on Forest Service land. According to the Forest Service, the country's 155 national forests already offset about 10% of the emissions in the US. Forest Service scientists believe that



by planting more trees and taking other actions to help restore public lands, this percentage can be increased to as much as 25%.

- Recognizing the need for plants and animals to move in response to global warming, Australia is creating a 1,740 mile climate "spine" on the country's east coast.

- Germany's Chancellor Merkel has called the battle against global warming, the "greatest challenge of the 21st century" and is standing firm in her ambitious plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

BIG COAL: JEFF GOODELL'S BOOK TOUR VISITS ALASKA

With Alaska containing half the country's coal reserves and two major coal projects currently under consideration in Southcentral, investigative journalist and author Jeff Goodell's visit to Alaska was especially timely and has Alaskans asking some serious questions about the current coal related projects popping up around Alaska.

Goodell's latest book "Big Coal; The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future" discusses the relationship between the coal industry, the community, the government, the negative impacts of coal, and the continuing misperception of energy produced by coal.

Currently in Alaska, PacRim Coal, a Delaware company, is in the process of applying for permits in the Chuitna

River Watershed to create a massive coal-strip mine and enormous port facilities on Cook Inlet. Plans call for mountains of coal being stored directly



Jeff Goodell talks about his book, 'Big Coal,' to a group in Palmer. Photo by Dennis Gann.

on top of set-net leases and mine operations that would disrupt the quiet way of life for the residents of Tyonek and Beluga. Meanwhile in Palmer,

By Eric Uhde and Mikayla Saito

Matanuska Electric Association has proposed a controversial 100-megawatt coal-fired power plant near Palmer. Goodell's tour helped to shed some light on these current projects and the possible implications that they may have on the Alaskan way of life.

Goodell revealed some disturbing figures for the coal industry: thousands of people die each year from a coal related death; mercury is becoming a common component in many coal communities' water sources; 50% of America's energy is produced by coal; and on average each American "consumes" about 20 pounds of coal every day. Goodell's objective in his book and tour around Alaska was to educate the public on his coal research so that communities can try to prevent such problems from plaguing their towns and villages.

Stop by ACE and get a free 'Know Coal' bumper sticker!

PANEL REVIEWS ML&P - CEA UTILITY MERGER

By Damion Kintz

Leaders of the Municipality of Anchorage, Chugach Electric Association (CEA), and Municipal Light & Power (ML&P) are exploring the benefits of merging CEA with ML&P so that all electricity ratepayers in the Anchorage Bowl will be served by a single utility. With common interest in pursuing a merger, there will likely be significant benefits for utility owners as well as for Anchorage ratepayers and taxpayers. Anticipated benefits include: elimination of duplicated services, stability for current and future ratepayers, and maximized asset value for owners of both companies.

In short, by eliminating duplicated functions, a merger is likely to mean lower electric rates for consumers- and fits well with the commonly discussed need for greater coordination between railbelt utilities.

An agreement was signed by Mayor Mark Begich and Chugach Board Chair Elizabeth Vasquez to come to a decision on the merger by Fall 2007, and a panel of experts met on Friday, July 20th, to discuss the possibility of joint operations. Panel members include Robert Ballow, a certified public accountant and real estate investor; Mike Barry,

former chair of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority and the Alaska Energy Authority board; Assemblyman Chris Birch, a former board member of CEA; Don May, an utility regulation consultant who served on the Alaska Public Utilities Commission; and Stephen Pratt, a consultant who is a member of the ML&P Advisory board; this team was co-chaired by Begich and Vasquez. The panel agreed that a feasibility report would be completed by October with public comment to follow. For updates, visit <http://www.muni.org/mayor/mlpcea.cfm>.

DRAFT EIS FOR TESHEKPUK LAKE RELEASED

By Alan Baldvieso

The Bureau of Land Management has released a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for its plan to sell oil and gas leases in critical wildlife habitat surrounding Teshekpuk Lake in the North Slope's NPRA. Nine months earlier, the US District Court of Alaska struck down BLM's plans, which failed to consider the cumulative ecological impacts of oil and gas drilling, as required by federal law. While the new impact statement addresses some of the deficiencies in analysis, the alternatives presented are nearly identical to the previous plan and include opening 100% of the land that has been unavailable for leasing.

The area in question – some 400,000 acres north of Teshekpuk Lake – has been placed off-limits to the oil and gas industry by the previous four administrations due to its importance to migratory birds and the Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd. The SEIS even acknowledges the recommendation of the Fish and Wildlife Service that at least 296,000 acres north and northeast of the lake be closed to leasing.

Teshekpuk Lake is one of the most critical wildlife habitats in the

Arctic. It offers high-quality forage and refuge from predators for geese during their vulnerable annual molt. In the summer as many as 60,000 geese gather north of Teshekpuk Lake to molt, including 30% of all Brant



in the Pacific Flyway and 6% of the mid-continental population of Greater White-fronted Geese.

Millions of waterbirds, shorebirds, and songbirds nest in the area, including rare Yellow billed Loons, King Eiders, Spectacled Eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, and Dunlin. This area also serves as a refuge for 45,000 caribou, on which several Alaskan Native communities depend for subsistence.

Among the groups concerned by the prospect of lease sales around Teshekpuk Lake are: the North Slope Borough, the community of Nuiqsut, numerous environmental and waterfowl groups, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Audubon Alaska contributed to this article.

What can you do?

There will be a 60-day comment period for the public to weigh in on the SEIS, ending October 23. Comments will be accepted during a series of public meetings or by using online using a webform at the following website:

www.blm.gov/ak/nprane/comment.php

WILDLANDS & RIVERS

THE FIGHT TO SAVE SUSITNA FORESTS FROM 'STRIP, CHIP AND SHIP'

By Eric Uhde and Mikayla Saito

The state of Alaska is continuing its effort to prop up a large scale pulp operation in the Susitna Basin, and ACE continues to work with affected communities to prevent this strip, chip, and ship operation from clearing thousands of acres of the Mat Su.

The Division of Forestry recently completed a bid process for the controversial Copper Timber Sale, near Willow, with a minimum bid of \$29,000, or about \$24 an acre. That's roughly half the per unit price that we've seen on several different sales in the region, including a state land sale, a Borough sale, and a Mental Health Trust sale. The timber price was not set by valid scientific evaluation, but rather to accommodate a bid by NPI, the company seeking to log the acreage, chip the trees, and export the chips to Asian pulp mills.

There's a better way. Small-scale operators can generate more jobs creating value-added products that Alaskans actually need without the loss of forests and 24-hour drone of logging trucks operating on community roads.

Unlike the industrial loggers, these local businesses provide local jobs, locally used high value wood products,

and contribute to the economic growth of the Mat-Su Valley. Also, a recent economic report commissioned by the Mat-Su Borough indicated that the Susitna timber supply was not likely to support both models of forest use; if



we choose the large-scale pulp model, we may squeeze out the local, value added operators.

And even though \$29,000 barely covers the state's administrative costs for the sale, the sale documents also anticipate road and bridge upgrades to be done by the state in order to accommodate logging trucks, adding much higher costs to the state. With support from Willow and Talkeetna residents, ACE moved to block the sale in court to defend local communities and protect Mat Su habitat.

Unfortunately, these industry

subsidies don't seem to be going away anytime soon. The Division of Forestry's five year timber schedule calls for more of the same: continued clear cutting, more conflicts with the surrounding communities, and more State financing of the chipping industry.

Meanwhile, Port MacKenzie has had its first and possibly last ship in port this season: a Panamanian ship was loaded with 30,000 tons of birch wood chips extracted from Valley forests. As for NPI, the company continues to have strained relations with the Mat-Su Borough (currently under a logging moratorium), and its contractor, Nana

management Services, who earlier this summer cancelled a 30-year contract with NPI.

What can you do?

If you'd like to support our effort to establish a better forest utilization model in the Susitna, you can:

- Contribute to ACE's "Copper Timber Sale Legal Fund"
- Sign up for wildlands action alerts at <https://akcenter.foraker.com/contact.php>.

For more information, contact Eric Uhde at 274-3639 or eric@akcenter.org

ALASKANS LIKE THE CHUGACH WILD...

By Valerie Connor

As part of the July centennial celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the Chugach National Forest, ACE held a sold-out wild salmon dinner at Snow City Café. The event brought together local farmers, fishermen, businesses, Forest Service employees, and many ACE supporters to celebrate the beauty and the bounty of the Chugach National Forest. We feasted on Copper River sockeye salmon, locally grown produce and a specially brewed beer in honor of the Chugach Centennial.

Media coverage for the Chugach Centennial was far-ranging, including a cover story in Alaska magazine, a full page editorial in the Anchorage Daily News, a feature in the Press, as well as TV and radio coverage.

The Forest Service gave recognition to the Chugach Centennial with a summer-long series of events that embraced the arts, music, recreation, restoration and tradition. For example, the 'Wild at Heart' celebration focused on children and family with hundreds of kids showing up to participate in outdoor activities. There were ribbon cuttings to celebrate new and upgraded facilities, banners flown across Anchorage conveying the message of the wild Chugach, and the Forest Service worked in partnership with the Alaska Natural History Association to publish a book about the Chugach titled, 'Chugach National Forest - A

Legacy of Land, Sea and Sky.'

Let's Keep it that Way!

The Forest Service's latest "schedule of proposed actions" for the Chugach lists 96 proposals that include permits for big game guiding, minerals and gravel mining, structures, aircraft landings on glaciers, herbicide spraying, and more. ACE staff are tracking these proposals and will alert you when and if there is a proposal inconsistent with conservation management. We're awaiting the final draft of the Kenai Winter Access Management Plan, which will determine areas designated for motorized and non-motorized use on the Kenai. And finally, the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Sterling Highway bypass (near Cooper Landing) is scheduled to be released to the public this fall, but has recently dropped off the state's transportation improvement plan. The Cooper Landing bypass remains on the state's horizon, but even with current funding levels it would only be sixth on the list of priorities for the department's Southcentral region.

Currently, the Forest is guided by the 2001 Management Plan, which failed to assign lasting protections for most of the biologically-important areas of the Chugach- including key watersheds on the Kenai, the big islands in Prince William Sound, and the Eastern Copper River Delta.

Without adequate protections, these critical habitat and recreation areas could lose the characteristics that make them so valuable. If you're interested in working with us to build a proposal for lasting protections of key areas of the Chugach, you can join our Chugach Action list online at <https://akcenter.foraker.com/contact.php>.

Wild Watersheds for Wild Salmon Chugach Centennial Essay Contest



As a way to show appreciation for the Chugach, Alaska Citizens for the Chugach and ACE are soliciting essays from folks like you who visit, live, or work in the forest and its Wild Watersheds. Tell us in 950 words or less what the Chugach National Forest means to you.

The winner of the contest will receive: a quilt made by ACC member Debbie Carlson, a complimentary holiday ACE membership for a year, a 'Wild Salmon Watersheds' t-shirt with logo by Kathy Sarns, and the essay published in ACE's winter newsletter. Submit your essay by 5 pm, November 15, 2007. For information contact Deb at carlsons@arctic.net or Valerie at valerie@akcenter.org.

Support Chugach Conservation!

Buy a 'Wild Salmon Watersheds' Chugach centennial shirt today!

100% Organic Cotton!

Youth tees \$12.00
Crew Neck tees \$15.00
Women's tees \$15.00
Women's long sleeve \$18.00



T-shirts available for purchase at the ACE office (807 G Street, Anchorage) or call 907-274-3662. All proceeds go to ACE's forest conservation program to protect wild places, promote recreational opportunities, and foster sustainable communities within the Chugach.

Special centennial thanks to Snow City Café, Moose's Tooth Brewery, Copper River/ Prince William Sound Marketing Association, The Municipality of Anchorage, The Rempel Family Farm, The A.D. Farm, Kathy Sarns, John Herr, and Kahiltna Birchworks. A special thanks to the Forest Service staff, and especially to Joe Meade, Forest Supervisor. Thanks for loving the Chugach!

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY CELEBRATES A BREAKTHROUGH SUMMER

By Eric Stuart, Sarah Bryner, and Geo McCann

Camper 1, Camper 2, Trailside Discovery reached more than a few!

All summer long, Trailside Discovery Campers have been spotted identifying macroinvertebrates in the creek, singing about the salmon life cycle, and suiting up for adventures in the backcountry. Camper Sophie testified to the strength of Trailside, informing her instructor that “this is the funnest summer camp in the world!” Campers love Trailside because it allows them to explore while surrounded by the sounds of aspen trees and Campbell Creek rather than car horns or television sets, but parents love Trailside because their children leave in the afternoon brimming with new facts about the natural world around us.

A few examples of our campers’ adventures illustrate just how incredible this summer of Trailside was for over 2,000 kids.

- Our pre-schoolers regularly dirtied their knees while pulling weeds and watering trees as volunteers for the Campbell Creek Science Center, an experience which not only entertained the children, but also taught them the value of environmental stewardship.

- In the 6/7 year old Woodland Wizards program, the kids trekked to the Alaska Botanical Gardens, exploring the native flora with scavenger hunts.

- Our 8/9 year old Energy Sleuths

gasped with delight as they felt their hair stand on end while learning about energy with our new Van de Graff generator.

These experiences are just a few examples, so moving on...

**Trailside’s programs are
the most comprehensive
low-impact adventure
trips offered to Alaska’s
youth today.**



Camper 3, Camper 4... Let’s meet and greet, explore and tour

Special visitors arrived throughout the summer, allowing Trailside campers to come face-to-face with our feathered friends and get an insider’s look into the geological processes of the Earth. Thanks to our ongoing relationship with Bird TLC and the Alaska Zoo, spotting rehabilitated birds and animal evidence became a weekly event for Trailside campers.

In addition to meeting the visitors at Trailside, campers loaded up our fleet of vans for new local adventures. Arctic Adaptations and Woodland Wizards visited Hilltop to learn about their connection to the forest as part of the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Chugach National Forest. Visits to the Anchorage Museum topped off the week for our artistic campers, teaching them about nature and its uses in art.

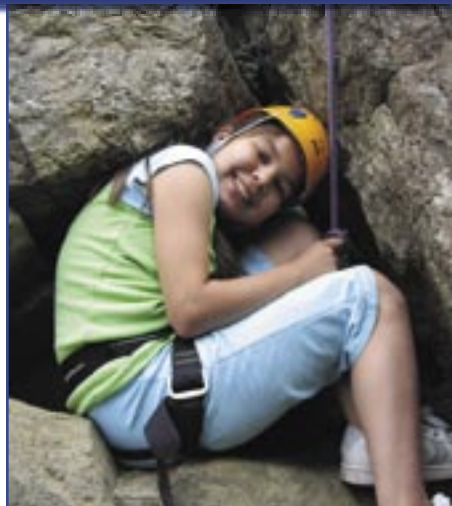
The 10-13 year-old programs were always on the move, visiting the massive Kincaid Sand Dune, smelling the Anchorage landfill and water treatment plant, participating in a mock oil spill response with BP, learning about explosive situations at the Alaska Volcano Observatory, and getting behind the scenes in the KTVA meteorology department. This is all just what our day programs did, and our trips’ campers ventured even farther from home...

Camper 5, Camper 6... Trips thrive with no gimmicks

Trailside's trip programs are the most comprehensive low impact adventure trips offered to Alaska's youth today. At a fraction of the price of more nationally known outfitters, our veteran guides bring kids 8-16 years old everywhere from car camping in Eklutna state campground to an eight day kayak expedition in Kachemak Bay.

We offer a wide variety of adventure trips including backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, and rock climbing so each camper can explore his or her passion as well as test their limitations and push their social constraints. Trip programs for many campers are much more than a fun camp out. It is a time in their life they have a chance to turn their cant's into can's. Will they make it to

Will they make it to the top of the climb? Can they pass a kayak tip test? Trailside presents these challenges to Alaska's youth to encourage personal growth and responsible outdoor recreation...



the top of the climb? Can they pass a kayak tip test? Trailside presents these challenges to Alaska's youth to encourage personal growth and responsible outdoor recreation, and we are doing it for more kids than anyone else.

This year our trips explored all over Alaska with no major incidents, thanks to our exceptional guides. All of our lead guides this year have worked for Trailside for several years and have three plus years guiding a variety of clients all over the world. With degrees in Outdoor Studies and Outdoor Recreation, they bring a wide array of both outdoor skills and experiences to the Trailside team. Their dedication for inspiring responsible outdoor recreation left just over 400 kids with cutting edge outdoor skills, a sense of stewardship for Alaska's backcountry, and fantastic memories that will last a lifetime.



Trailside Discovery would like to thank the following generous sponsors:

Alaska Conservation Foundation
Alaska Geological Society
Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking
Alaska Pacific University
Alaska Railroad Corporation

Campbell Creek Science Center
Cellular One
Cook Inlet Region Inc.
Conoco Phillips
First National Bank Alaska

Mountain Hardwear
Recreational Equipment Inc.
Skinny Raven
Spring Creek Farm
Kaladi Brothers Coffee

OCEANS & MARINE LIFE

OIL DRILLING PLANS PUSHED FORWARD FOR ALASKA'S COASTLINES

By Whit Sheard, Alaska Program Director, Pacific Environment

The U.S. Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service is pushing forward with aggressive oil drilling plans for Alaska's coastlines and sensitive marine environments. While nearly all of the U.S. east and west coasts continue to be protected from oil drilling under a 25 year old bipartisan congressional moratorium, the newly approved "Five Year Plan for Outer Continental Shelf Development 2007-2012" opens approximately 83 million acres of Alaskan waters, including over 72 million acres of our Arctic seas. The remaining 10 million acres is split between Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay, which are both home to important commercial and subsistence fisheries.

This risky development has met staunch opposition from both conservationists and Alaska native communities, who are concerned that the plan puts Alaska's marine environment at undue risk. Of central concern are the impacts from seismic testing, exploratory drilling, and oil spills on endangered species such as Bristol Bay's northern right whales, which are the most imperiled whale population on the planet. Other species likely to be heavily impacted by drilling activities include endangered bowhead whales, which are critical to Inupiat subsistence traditions, polar bears, which are facing an extinction risk due to the impacts of global warming on sea ice habitat, endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales, which are already impacted by marine pollution, and the world's largest run of sockeye salmon, which is a mainstay in the commercial and subsistence fisheries of Bristol Bay. In addition to these site specific impacts from exploration and drilling, the controversial plan is also one of the federal government's largest commitments to emitting greenhouse gases over the next five years.

The significance of these impacts, coupled with the ongoing changes in the Arctic environment due to global warming, led subsistence whalers and commercial fishermen from Pt. Hope and Naknek to join forces with the



conservation community and travel to the halls of Congress to fight the proposed drilling plan. The presence of elders from Arctic communities did not go unnoticed in D.C. and we were able to convince Congress to hold an oversight hearing on the Five Year Plan. This hearing, along with an increasing alliance of congressmen who oppose offshore drilling, is helping to set the stage for a national debate on the future of the Arctic and the need to revisit national energy policy.

In the meantime, however, oil companies are moving rapidly to

acquire leases and develop their offshore prospects. Most recently, Shell Oil, who has a history of environmental and fiscal mismanagement of their offshore projects on the Russian side of the North Pacific, has been attempting to move drilling rigs and a small armada of support vessels into a prospect located near the shores of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Largely because of the severe impacts associated with this development, conservation and native groups have been able to prevent this development by challenging the drilling plans, environmental review documents, and air permits. At present, Shell will not be allowed to drill this summer.

Since the federal government has signed off on this offshore drilling plan, the next step for ACE is to work with Alaskan communities and our partners to educate the public and lawmakers about the need to protect the rapidly changing Arctic marine environment, Alaska's commercial and subsistence economies that depend upon healthy oceans, and a host of endangered species such as beluga whales and polar bears.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

PROPOSITION 1: MAT-SU'S MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR MISTAKE

By Sue Ely, Mat-Su Valley Organizer

On October 2, Mat-Su Borough voters will be asked to consider Proposition 1, a poorly-worded and costly ballot initiative that was imported from Oregon where it has already resulted in over 7,500 lawsuits and billions of dollars in potential costs to taxpayers.

By setting up an ill-defined system for individuals and companies to file monetary claims over land use zoning disputes, Proposition 1 would create a “pay or waive” system, forcing local communities to decide whether to waive laws or force taxpayers to pay claimants for following the rules that apply to the rest of us. In many cases in Oregon, such waivers have even led to counter-claims from neighbors who choose to follow the rules, creating a run-away effect that is choking that state’s local government offices and courts and pitting neighbor against neighbor.

Proposition 1 is likely to cost Mat Su taxpayers millions of dollars in administrative fees alone. Additionally, if the Borough or local communities decide to not waive laws, they would be forced to turn to taxpayers to pay millions, and likely billions, of dollars in claims. Because Proposition 1 does not provide a funding source for these costs, taxes are the only source-meaning tax increases or drastic cuts in services.

Proposition 1 will also take away a neighborhood’s right and ability to protect themselves and their property values from incompatible development. Under Prop 1, an interest can file for an exemption from the law without notifying their neighbors and without a public hearing. Finally, because Proposition 1 is so poorly written it is likely to result in many lawsuits just to figure out what the initiative actually means; in fact, even the sponsors of

Prop 1 have admitted that the language is unclear, and they recently asked the Borough if it was possible to fix some of the mistakes in the initiative. However, Alaska state law requires that initiatives remain unchanged for two years after enactment.

The sponsors of Prop 1 meant well- but the proposal before voters simply goes too far and costs too much.

What can you do?

Mat-Su Taxpayers Against Proposition 1 formed to protect Mat-Su residents from the cost, confusion and lawsuits that will result if Prop 1 passes. The group is looking for volunteers to:

- Host House Parties
- Contact voters
- Write letters to the editor
- Donate to the organization

Visit www.matsutaxpayers.org or call (907) 765-1283 to get involved.

MEA BURNING MEMBER-OWNER MONEY TO POWER COAL AGENDA

Usibelli Coal Mine adds to PR offensive

“Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” We all recognize that famous line from The Wizard of Oz, which is a good reminder that when someone is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to convince you of something, it’s wise to be skeptical.

Recently, the Matanuska Electric

Association has been on a spending spree (with member money) to ‘sell’ the concept for their controversial coal-fired power plant proposal. TV, radio, and newspaper ads, along with glossy mailers to MEA members, have run the co-op nearly a half-million dollars, all designed to convince people that their coal plans are good for us. And yet, many of the pieces don’t tell the whole story - like the so-called member ballot that sought input on their plans

by giving members a false choice between “local” power and “imported” power without ever mentioning coal, or that MEA currently enjoys some of the lowest rates in the state with that “imported” power.

Usibelli coal mine, near Healy, which hopes to be the source for MEA’s coal plant, has gotten into the act with print ads touting “clean” burning coal. Not surprisingly, those ads also conveniently leave out half the

story. Sure, coal combustion is cleaner now than it was in 1900 (despite the industry's constant opposition to the very laws that have improved its emissions), but the fact is, current coal combustion technology still emits significant volumes of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, greenhouse gases, and fly ash. The final emissions from the

stack proposed by MEA are similar to the emissions from a conventional pulverized coal boiler. Coal power generation is not only worse for the air than alternatives like natural gas, it also has wastewater discharge issues and solid waste disposal problems.

The good news is, most people don't seem to be falling for it. The

Mat-Su Borough Assembly recently enacted an ordinance setting standards for any new power plants, and a scientific survey of Borough residents showed that a majority prefers cleaner options, including natural gas and renewable energy.

MEA'S VISION FOR THE MAT-SU VALLEY:

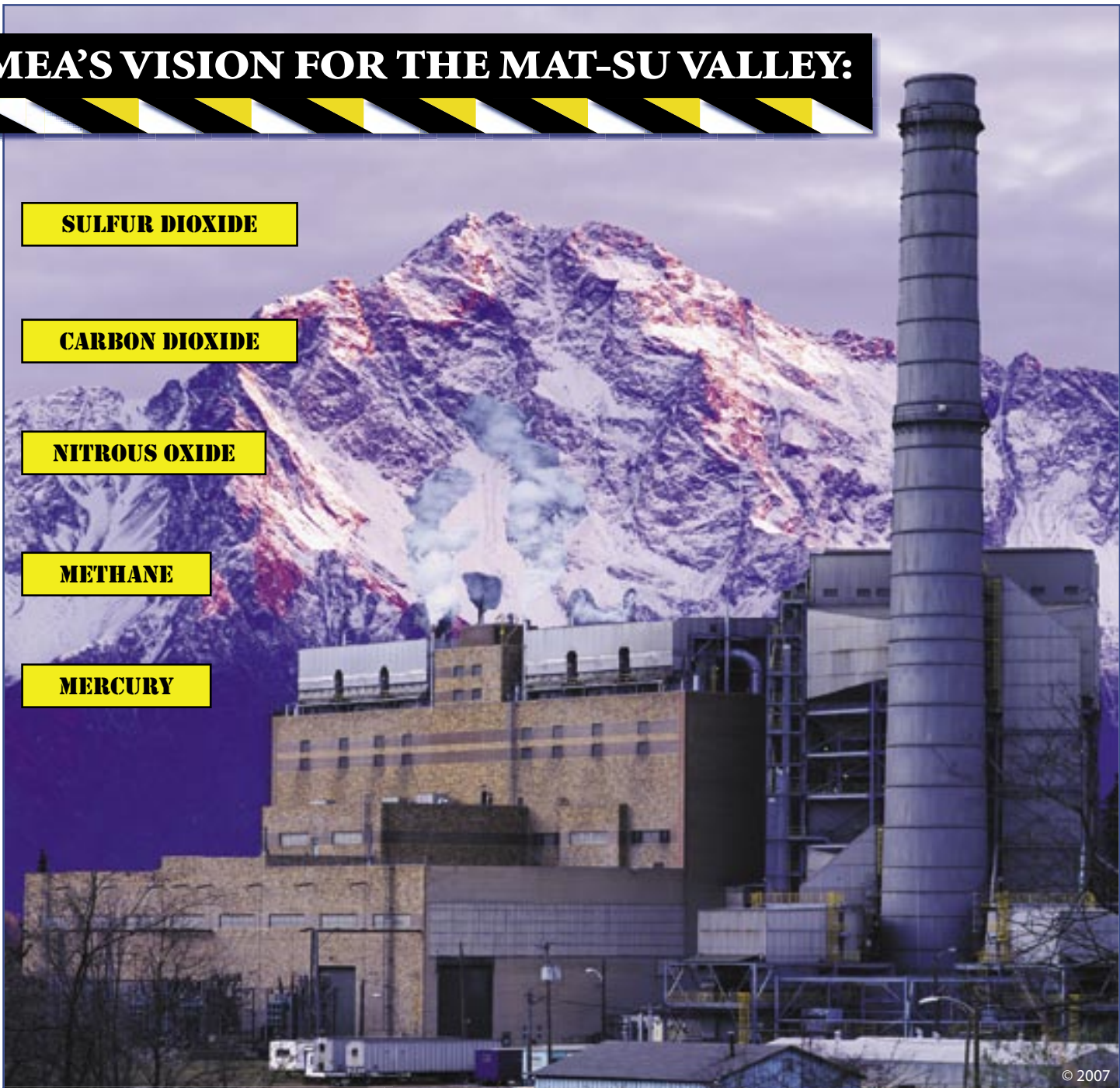
SULFUR DIOXIDE

CARBON DIOXIDE

NITROUS OXIDE

METHANE

MERCURY



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There is a petition circulating to recall three MEA board members who are pushing the coal plant. Contact Sue at sue@akcenter.org to sign the petition. You can also contact MEA if you are a member, write a letter to your paper, and write the Governor ...Remember, noxious emissions don't stop at Borough boundaries.

Final chapters of “Title 21” to be considered by Planning Commission and Assembly

The Anchorage Planning Department, nearing the final phase of a multi-year project to overhaul the city’s development standards and zoning definitions, recently released public hearing drafts of Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 12 of the code, and these chapters have been scheduled for public hearings with the Planning and Zoning Commission public hearings—the first step for approval into law. Finally, chapters 3, 7, and 14 were released this month and should head to the Planning Commission late this year. The Assembly is expected to hear all these chapters after the new year.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 12 cover

zoning districts, use regulations, standards and measurements, and nonconformities, respectively.

Chapters 3, 7, and 14 cover review and approval, development and design standards, and definitions, respectively.

Many of the key issues that ACE has worked to influence are found in Chapter 7, including standards for landscaping, building design, and pedestrian facilities. Chapters 4 and 5 also contain many notable provisions, including the zoning district map and use regulations, which defines what is and is not allowed in each zoning category.

For the most part, existing residential zoning districts haven’t changed much, but changes have been made to improve multi-family

districts, and a new district, R4-A, has been added, which allows a combination of multi-family and commercial development near our commercial centers such as Midtown and Downtown.

What can you do?

Attend the following public hearings:

Chapters 4, 5, and 6:

Monday, October 1, 6:30 p.m.
Assembly Chambers, Loussac Library

Wednesday, October 3, 6:30 p.m.
Sydney Laurence Theatre
Alaska Center for the Performing Arts

Thursday, October 4, 6:30 p.m.
Spenard Recreation Center

Chapters 3, 7, and 14:

Monday, November 5, 6:30 p.m.
Assembly Chambers, Loussac Library

Wednesday, November 7, 6:30 p.m.
Wilda Marston Theatre

Thursday, November 8, 6:30 p.m.
Wilda Marston Theatre

Visit www.muni.org/planning/prj_Title21.cfm for more information.

Member Application/Renewal Form

- Individual \$35-\$99
 - Family \$60-\$99
 - Advocate \$240-\$499
 - Champion \$750-\$999
 - Student/Senior \$15
 - Supporter \$100-\$239
 - Leader \$500-\$749
 - ACE Visionary \$1000+
- Amount \$ _____

Alaska Center for the Environment is Alaska’s largest home-grown citizen’s group working for the sensible stewardship of Alaska’s natural environment. With 7,000 dues-paying members from around the state, Alaska Center for the Environment is your voice for public lands conservation, clean air, clean water, and livable places. The way we win is with our members (that’s you). The more members we have, the louder our voice is to promote conservation in Alaska.

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



HELP PROTECT THE ALASKA YOU LOVE.
JOIN THE ACE BOARD.

Alaska Center for the Environment is currently accepting applications from energetic members to serve on the board of directors. This is a great way to give back to the community and play a vital role in shaping the future of the organization. Responsibilities include attending monthly meetings and an annual 2-day retreat, fundraising, strategic planning, and organizing the annual spring auction. Terms are for 3 years. Applications can be found at www.akcenter.org and are due by October 24th.

Stay Tuned for ACE's **FALL FUNDRAISER** - Dates TBA at **WWW.AKCENTER.ORG**



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