



ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

SPRING 2005

Center News

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Center News

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ALASKA CENTER
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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Cover photograph: Humpback
whale breaching.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Alaska has a colorful history of failed boondoggle projects- the Rampart and Susitna Dams, Project Chariot, and the Anchorage seafood processing plant to name a few. The Susitna River dam alone cost taxpayers \$130 million, just to learn that the project simply didn't pencil out.

State government, emboldened by oil wealth and federal funding, has a bad habit of buying into the notion that any project is a good one- and we often fail to assess the total impacts, and long-term costs, of these projects. Government does have a role in encouraging economic activity, and some subsidies are appropriate. The challenge is to distinguish the sound investments from the pie in the sky- and that's where Alaskans' natural skepticism comes in handy.

Consider the current proposal for a bridge spanning Knik Arm North of Anchorage. Current cost estimates peg construction at \$400-600 million. That doesn't include planning, engineering, environmental studies, or the inevitable cost overruns. It's a safe bet that this thing would total over a billion dollars- and I've seen even higher estimates than that in print.

Where is that money going to come from? Congressman Don Young is working to fund it out of the federal budget, as chair of the House Transportation Committee. I certainly appreciate Chairman Young's efforts on Anchorage's behalf, but we have to ask- if Mr. Young can really bring home a billion dollars to improve transportation from Anchorage to the Valley, is this bridge the best use of that money?

I'm not the most creative person in town, but I could think of a lot of ways to spend a billion dollars: fixing Lake Otis and Tudor, funding the transit system, adding commuter rail to the Valley...and you'd still have money left over.

Not to mention the potential impacts the bridge poses for the Arm itself- and the salmon and Beluga Whales that depend on it. Furthermore, the bridge could harm Anchorage itself- according to a study by UAA's Institute for Social and Economic Research, the bridge would encourage urban sprawl at Point McKenzie, draining Anchorage's tax base and siphoning investment from our community.

That's why the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce expressed concerns last spring, and asked that any analysis of the project take into account the economic impact to Anchorage. Before we spend any more good money chasing bad, it's time to ask the hard questions - and to put Anchorage in charge of prioritizing federal transportation funding for our community. I suspect we'd present a more creative, and more productive, package for Chairman Young to deliver.

ALASKA'S OCEANS



by Butch Allen, Oceans Organizer

With over 33,000 miles of coastline, Alaska has a rich history of interdependence with the ocean. ACE added an Oceans program in January in an effort to protect this increasingly fragile relationship. Funded by the Alaska Conservation Fund, ACE will work closely with the Alaska Oceans Program to coordinate ocean education efforts. ACE has hired Butch Allen to co-coordinate the 3rd annual Alaska Oceans Festival, initiate an inaugural Oceans Film Festival, and keep members informed regarding breaking maritime issues. Butch brings years of education, business and promotion experience to a position where getting the word out is paramount. Issues of immediate interest are the depletion of Cook Inlet Belugas, the safe shipping movement in the Aleutians, and protecting the precious cold water corals highlighted below.

As the Alaskan winter sun hides itself all too frequently behind the Chugach, we often find ourselves daydreaming of the beach, warm water, and that ever fleeting feel of sun on skin. Perhaps you envision floating effortlessly above a multihued coral reef teeming with sea life. Most of us associate coral reefs with tropical locations and brightly-colored fish, but scientists have recently discovered amazing corals and sponges right here in Alaska- in the deep, cold waters off the Aleutian Chain.

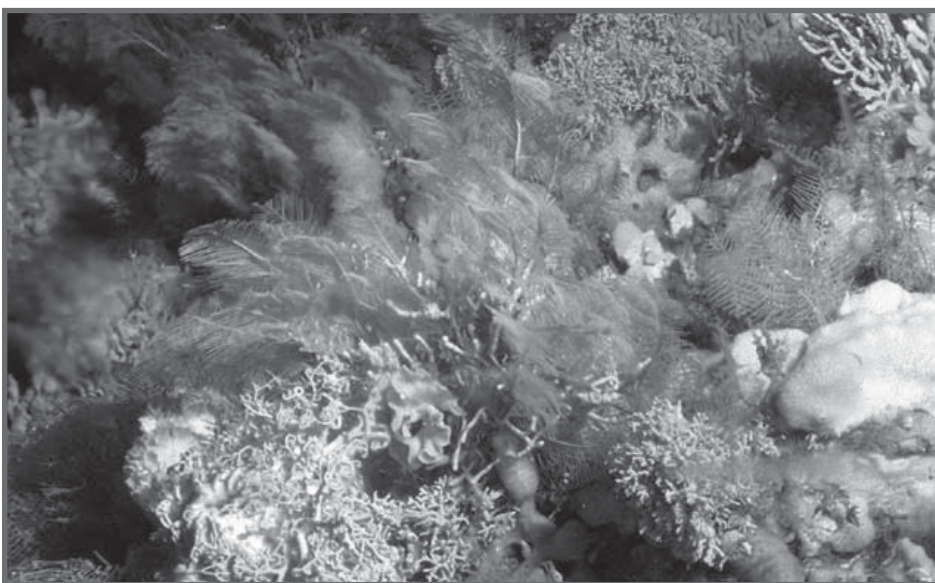
What's cooler than the water temperature is the coral itself. The Aleutian Island corals, first explored with a manned submersible in July of 2002, distinguish themselves from their

shallow (or warm water) cousins in a myriad of ways. Growing initially as tiny polyps, the invertebrates immediately join forces to grow into large colonies by sharing marine nutrients with one another. Although their collaboration occurs quickly, their growth does not. Coldwater corals grow upward into more nutrient rich currents at a mere half-inch per year. The larger colonies, ranging up to 9 feet in height, are thus hundreds, perhaps a thousand years old. In terms of ecological longevity, Pacific coldwater corals are to the ocean what giant Redwoods are to the land.

And just as the giant Redwoods are dated by the number of rings on their trunks, corals are dated in a similar way. Current science allows for measuring

the age of corals via rings found within their skeletons, and coloration or distance between rings indicates speed of growth during past growth periods. Large gorgonian corals may provide temperature data from the last thousand years. An interesting result of this research is that scientists can actually help delineate global warming trends by studying the growth patterns of these corals.

These fragile corals are also providing us clues to our pharmaceutical future. The deep water corals in the Aleutian Islands grow at depths of 300-5,000 feet, well out of the range of visible light. While tropical coral varieties depend on light to drive their growth systems, deep sea coral species thrive by entirely different processes. In the deep cold waters of the Bering Sea and North Pacific, corals exist without Zooxanthellae, the algae that provide the food source for shallow water corals. Researchers are still uncertain how these intricate deep water processes work, however. Within the answer to this puzzle lie possibilities of novel enzymes with exciting pharmaceutical implications. The Aleutian coral gardens provide marine life with integral breeding, feeding, and rearing grounds. According to Bob Stone of NOAA's Auke Bay research lab, "deep water corals provide habitat for 87% of the commercially managed fish and crab species viewed during submersible dives in the Aleutians



CORAL GARDEN OFF ADAK ISLAND containing sea fans, sponges, and a basket star. (photo by Alberto Linder, National Marine Fisheries Service)

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WILD ALASKA



by Eric Uhde

Alaska Center for the Environment welcomes Eric Uhde to the position of public lands advocate. Eric has years of experience as a backcountry guide in Denali National Park and the Kenai Peninsula. Eric will be responsible for ACE's work in conserving the public lands of Alaska, with a focus on state and borough owned lands around the southcentral region. He will also follow the management of motorized and non-motorized recreation on our public lands. Eric is replacing the legendary environmental advocate, Cliff Eames, who retired from ACE last spring.

BAD IDEAS NEVER DIE: LANDS LIQUIDATION PROPOSAL IN THE LEGISLATURE

Once again, a land privatization proposal is being considered by the legislature under the guise of funding for the university system. House Bill 130 and Senate Bill 96, sponsored by Governor Murkowski, would liquidate 260,000 acres of state-owned public land for development by the University. Much of the proposed land package is slated for oil and gas and other industrial development, including parcels near McCarthy, on Kodiak Island, and near many small towns in Southeast Alaska. Once these lands are given to the University they become private, and are then managed for maximum financial return, with minimal public input. In the past, the University has angered communities with short-sighted land management decisions, including the clear cutting on the Lost Coast and exporting the timber in the raw.

Of course, the University of Alaska is a critical part of Alaska's future and adequate funding should be a top priority in Juneau. However, over the next twenty years this bill is projected to generate only \$5 million a mere 1% of this year's University budget. This is clearly not an effective way to fund higher education.

The University of Alaska deserves a funding mechanism for the 21st century, not an outdated system that fails Alaskan communities. ACE has successfully fought these bills in the past, and will continue to explore solutions for meaningful University funding without sacrificing valuable public lands.



DENALI NATIONAL PARK, (photo courtesy of Alaska Division of Tourism.)

You can contact your state legislator and share your concerns regarding HB 130/ SB 96. Legislative contact information is available at www.akcenter.org, under the "Take Action" tab. You can also view a summary of the proposed bill and complete maps of parcels at the Department of Natural Resources website: www.dnr.state.ak.us

THE UNOFFICIAL SUSITNA STATE FOREST: MAT-SU LOGGING

Large scale clear cutting is moving into the Susitna Valley and it is moving at an alarming rate. NPI, a company known for creating the gigantic wood-chip pile on the Homer Spit, is currently cutting and chipping a large portion of our Susitna Valley boreal forests for shipment to Asia. These chips are then processed into paper products. The state

estimates that there are 491,000 acres of potential forest land in the Mat-Su Valley, and proposes cutting nearly 2,250 acres a year which is almost three times the standard for an annual allowable cut.

Areas currently slated for logging include, the Petersville area, Montana and Fish Creeks, Kashwitna and Houston areas.

Once again, Alaska's natural resources are being liquidated, with no value added in-state, and shipped out in its lowest value form - in this case, wood chips.

You can find out more, and voice your concerns, here:

www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry
Rick Jandreau 907-262-4124
Richard_Jandreau@dnr.state.ak.us

You can contact Eric Uhde at 274-3639 or eric@akcenter.org

TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY

SUMMER MIGRATION BEGINS



by Thomas Burek

NEW TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY CAMP PROGRAMS OFFERED THIS SUMMER

Trailside Discovery Camp had been offering quality environmental and outdoor educational experiences for Alaska's children since 1982. This summer's sessions will be bigger and better than ever, as the TDC staff feverishly plan a wide variety of fun and informative new programs for the 2005 summer season. TDC programs teach natural history,



CLIMBING ADVENTURES



HAVING FUN AT CAMP

science, nature crafts, group building and develop social growth. All Programs begin at 9:00 am and end at 4:00pm, and are available from June 13 through August 26.

A new addition to the Pre-School Program is Habitat Hunters. We will encourage youngsters to use all of their senses while having fun in the outdoors. Children will explore Campbell Creek, hike through woods, investigate hills, and slog through wetlands.

For ages 6-7 we will be offering a new and exciting group of programs: Birds of a Feather, Whale & Salmon Tales, Power Planet, and Alaskan Wildlife Safari.

For ages 8-9 we also will be offering an extended list of new classes including Alpine Adventures, Earth Diggers, Ocean Tides, and Wild Country Explorers.

Campers who are 10-13 years old have two new opportunities for fun this summer: Ocean Investigation, and Reach High (Climbing skills). We will also have a strong returning lineup of classes such as Tidelands to Tundra, Outdoor Odyssey, Venture Bound, Earth & Sky, Rocks, Ice, Volcanoes, Quakes, and Earth & Sky.

A full contingent of our Alaskan Quest overnight camping trips will be offered.

Ages 8-9: Alaskan Quest II (Eklutna campout).

For ages 10-11 Alaskan Quest III: Alpine Trekkers, Canoe Voyager, Fat Tire Bike, Kayak Scout, & Marine Encounter.

Ages 12-13, Alaskan Quest IV, Fat Tire Bike, Kenai Backpack/River run, Seward Kayak Trip, Swanson Lake Canoe, & Hatcher Pass Backpack.

Ages 14-16, Alaskan Quest V: Denali State Park, Hatcher Pass Backpack/Climb, Kayak Kachemak Bay, Talkeetna Backpack, & Homer Marine Encounter.

For 14-17 years old we will be offering Trip Guide Leadership Training to help teens who want to develop their guiding potential. High school students receive training in leave-no-trace camping, leadership, group building, and may be asked to assist on an extended trip.

We will be offering a Parent/Child overnight camping program this summer, as we head out to Nancy Lakes for a canoe Extravanza from Friday to Sunday in June. Join us for this adventure.

LOWER PRE AND AFTER CARE FEES!!!!

Precare - \$20/wk - Aftercare - \$20/wk or both for \$30/wk

TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE - from various elementary schools - \$40/wk

LOOK FOR OUR 2005 BROCHURE APRIL 1

CURBSIDE RECYCLING GOES CITY-WIDE



by Andre Camara, Anchorage Issues Coordinator, and Sara Peebles

Sara Peebles is an ACE member and a third grade teacher at Russian Jack Elementary. As Co-Founder of the Turnagain Curbside Recycling Program, she was instrumental in getting curbside recycling off the ground in her community. In 2003 Waste Management received a grant from the Municipality of Anchorage to begin a pilot curbside program for collecting mixed-paper. Although the program was highly popular with users, it was dropped earlier this year as Waste Management prepares for a buyout by Alaska Waste Transfer. Sara is working with ACE on resurrecting curbside in Turnagain.

In January of this year, I opened the letter from Waste Management informing me that their West Anchorage curbside recycling service would no longer be available. The program, which operated for 18 months, allowed my family to put all paper products, (including newspapers, paperboard, and cardboard) at the curb for collection every other week. Suddenly, our recycling dream was trashed, and we

were left with more questions than answers.

I remember the celebration when Waste Management, the biggest trash haulers in the country, announced that they would start a pilot program in West Anchorage. Our odyssey, which began twelve years ago with our own community-driven volunteer effort, was realized and now, it appeared to be gone again.

So, we did what came naturally- we took it to the streets, going door-to-door in our neighborhood to build support for re-establishing the curbside pickup service.

Fortunately, there is a lot of support for curbside recycling in Anchorage. The response we received was strong, and when curbside recycling was put on the agenda for the next Turnagain Community council meeting, it was standing room only. Packed with citizens sporting stickers that proclaimed, "I Support Recycling," the audience included the Municipality's Recycling Coordinator and two private trash hauling companies- Alaska Waste Transfer (a subsidiary of Alaska Pacific Environmental) and Great Alaska Sanitation. The companies both talked positively about the future of recycling and not just in West Anchorage, where Waste Management ran their curbside program, but city-wide. Currently, only Great Alaska Sanitation is in a position to sign up new city-wide curbside recycling customers while Alaska Waste Transfer is unable to make any commitments pending the sale of Waste Management. The sale is scheduled to happen in late March.

Great Alaska Sanitation's curbside service depends on reaching 1000 customers. Once they reach that goal, they will receive the financing for a new truck and bins to begin the curbside program. Once up and running, they



SARA PEEBLES AND FAMILY - mourning the loss of curbside recycling in their neighborhood.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS VOICE CONCERN over the loss of curbside services at the Turnagain Community Council Meeting.

plan to expand it to include Eagle River later in the year, and add aluminum to the curbside program. In order for Great Alaska Sanitation to accomplish these lofty goals, they will need the support of the public.

More information about Great Alaska Sanitation and its curbside program is available on their website at www.gas-alaska.com/

Of course, the Municipality has a role to play as well as to encourage recycling services in town. Currently, the city is considering an offer from Waste Management to take over all trash collection in the form of a "franchise agreement". The consideration of a franchise agreement gives the city a unique opportunity to provide real leadership, by requiring recycling to be a real component of any agreements or franchise arrangements.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1 The best thing we can do now to support recycling is to help the new curbside service that's proposed by Great Alaska Sanitation to succeed. You can sign up at www.gas-alaska.com/

2 Take a minute to thank the mayor for hiring the city's first recycling coordinator, Teri Crawley-Norton. You can email the mayor at mayor@muni.org.

3 Let the new recycling coordinator know that:
 You support a comprehensive recycling program for Anchorage
 The city should require a variable rate structure for trash along with a curbside pickup program, and be offered by any company that may enter into a "franchise" arrangement.

You can email Teri at Crawley-NortonTL@ci.anchorage.ak.us

URBAN DESIGN STANDARDS (TITLE 21)

Title 21 refers to the section of municipal code that sets the standards for how we build our community- from subdivision design, to big box stores, to landscaping requirements, and more. If you've been disgusted by site condos in your area, or frustrated by rows of identical 'snout houses' that only show a garage door to the street, or disappointed with Anchorage's landscaping standards, this is the process for addressing those issues.

Mark your calendars for the next steps in the Title 21 rewrite.

Late May –
release of public DRAFT # 1

Late November –
release of public DRAFT # 2

Each release will be followed by a public comment period.

To stay informed on this issue, join the "Take Pride in Anchorage" email list by contacting Andre andre@akcenter.org. Updates will be posted at www.akcenter.org



NEW ANCHORAGE CIVIC AND CONVENTION CENTER?

The Anchorage Civic and Convention Center will be before voters at the April 2005 Anchorage Municipal Elections, and while this is not a typical conservation issue, the Convention Center does impact the quality of life of our community. So we've asked Convention Center proponents to provide answers to some of the most frequently asked questions for our members to consider.

What is the need for the project?

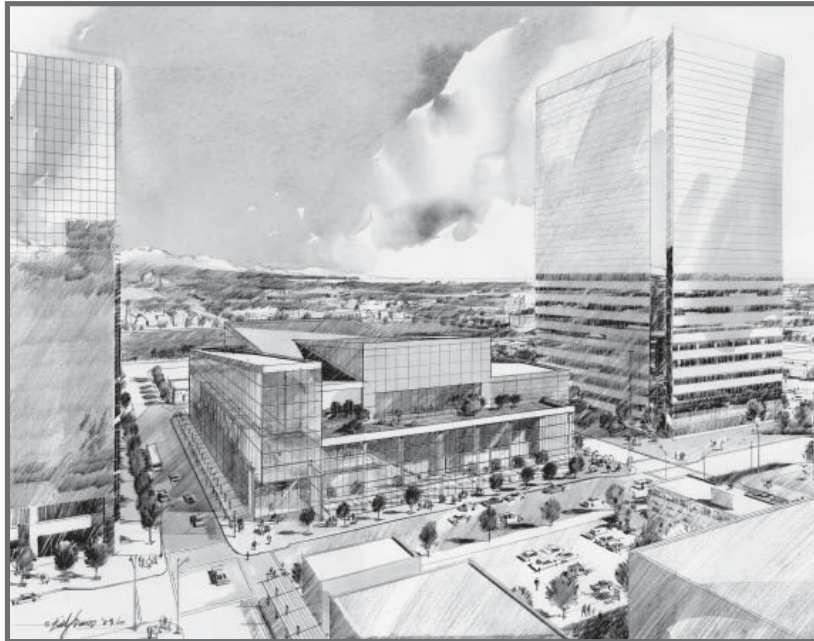
Anchorage is losing millions of dollars in business each year because the Egan Civic & Convention Center is operating at or near capacity most of the year. The Egan Center can only accommodate groups of 1,500 or less. ACVB has identified more than 450 groups of between 2,500 and 5,000 delegates whom we could bring to Anchorage, if we had the facilities to accommodate them.

What will it cost?

The new center will cost \$93 million.

How will we pay for it?

It will cost Anchorage property taxpayers absolutely nothing. The new center will be funded through an increase in the hotel, motel, and B&B room tax. Voters are being asked to increase the hotel tax from 8 percent to 12 percent, which will pay back construction bonds and be used for operations and maintenance of the center.



PROPOSED ANCHORAGE CIVIC AND CONVENTION CENTER, between the Atwood and Conoco Phillips Buildings.

What about the Egan Center?

The Egan and the new Center will be operated by the same entity and will both be utilized for events. The project plan even includes renovation of the Egan Center and covered walkways between the new facilities and the Egan.

And what do we stand to gain?

In 2003, conventions generated an estimated \$117 million in economic

impact to Anchorage. According to an economic analysis by Northern Economics, this number would more than double in five years if we build the proposed Convention Center.



Join us in celebrating 25 years of Protecting Alaska's wild lands!

ANILCA 25th Anniversary Celebration

July 6 and 7, 2005

Hilton Anchorage Hotel

Featuring Former President Jimmy Carter

For more information and registration, visit Alaska Conservation Foundation's website at www.akcf.org/ANILCA.html • Or call (907) 646-9000

GREEN-UP YOUR SPRING CLEANING

When planning your spring cleaning this year, remember to consider the environment. Many household products contain toxics that contaminate our soil, water, and air. Here are some tips that can help you and the environment, from Earth Share, a nonprofit organization that focuses on environmental education.

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE USING BEFORE YOU SPRAY

Avoid cleaners containing phosphates. They biodegrade totally and quickly, and when they get into rivers and lakes, they cause algae blooms, which rob the water of oxygen, block sunlight, and ultimately kill marine life.

Minimize use of bleaches. The most common bleach is chlorine, which in wastewater can create toxic compounds. Non-chlorine bleaches are gentler to clothes and the environment, though they are less effective in colder-water temperatures, requiring more energy-intensive hot water.

Buy concentrates whenever possible. Ask manufacturers to produce refillable versions that allow you to refill a spray bottle by adding water to a packaged concentrate.

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING IN ANCHORAGE

Don't throw away old computers, monitors, TVs, copiers, stereos, or other electronics.

On April 29th and 30th, Green Star will be collecting electronics for recycling. To learn more check out www.greenstarinc.org/electronicinfo.php



ANCHORAGE CREEK CLEANUP

Since 1984, the citizens of Anchorage have been keeping our waterways clean with this annual event. Up to 13 tons of trash are collected each year. Anchorage Waterways Council sponsors the event and ACE always puts together a big team to help out. The event takes place on May 21st this year. Check out www.akcenter.org to get updates on the ACE team or go to www.anchoragecreeks.org to learn how to form your own team.

CLEANING WITH A CONSCIENCE

This spring, make your own cleaning agents with these recipes from Earth Share and Earth Ways. The recipes are friendly for the environment and your bank account.

Countertops, cupboards, and walls

Dip a cloth in warm water, then add dish soap and baking soda (the baking soda serves as a soft abrasive to remove tough spots and light scratches).



Carpet freshener

Sprinkle dry cornstarch or baking soda on the carpet and vacuum.

Rug stains

Rub borax into dampened area, let dry, then vacuum or repeatedly blot stain with a mixture of vinegar and soapy water.

Glass cleaner

Mix 2 tablespoons borax or washing soda with three cups of water for sparkling windows and mirrors.

Mildew build-up

Make a paste of vinegar and salt, and apply to built-up area.

Furniture polish

Combine 1/2 cup lemon juice to 1 cup vegetable oil, olive oil, or mayonnaise. Apply to rag.



WILD CHUGACH



by Bobbie Jo Skibo, Wild Forest Program Coordinator

FLOATING FUEL STATION IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND?

Water World, LLC is seeking authorization from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to place and maintain a commercial fuel barge with a docking platform and floating lodge near Knight Island in Prince William Sound. Knight Island is a proposed Wilderness area in the heart of the Sound, which is still recovering from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Boat owners, kayakers, scientists, and other Alaskans throughout the region have voiced opposition to this risky proposition.

Inevitable small gasoline and diesel spills that accompany commercial fuel operations threaten fish and wildlife, as well as the risk of larger spills made



PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND (the proposed site of the floating fuel lodge).

continued on page 11

4TH ANNUAL CHUGACH DAYS

Celebrating 98 Wild Years of the Chugach National Forest

Festivities include:

Wild Salmon Week- August 1st-7th at participating locations

Festival of the Forest- August 5th -7th in Cooper Landing

Chugach Challenge Triathlon- August 6th in Cooper Landing

Needed:
Volunteers, Vendors,
Musicians

For more information call Bobbie Jo at 274-3662 or email Bobbiejo@akcenter.org



CELEBRATING 98 WILD YEARS OF CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST - (artwork by Kathy Sarns)

FLOATING FUEL STATION

continued from page 10

possible by the storage of 10,000 gallons of gasoline and diesel on site.

Recent public testimony was dominated by opposition to the proposed Water World facility- in fact, only the permit applicant spoke in favor of the project. The opposition to the proposal includes university scientists, charter captains, kayakers, commercial fishermen, and pleasure boaters. It is also worth noting that biologists and agency professionals from the Forest Service, Alaska Fish and Game, University of Alaska School of Fisheries and Ocean Science, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and whaler researchers have all expressed concern or outright opposition to the proposal.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Despite this near-universal opposition, the state Department of Natural Resources has not yet denied the permit. You can contact the state representatives for the Prince William Sound region and write a letter to your local paper. Contact information and other action resources are at www.akcenter.org.

QUIET RECREATION ON THE KENAI?

Are you a skier, hiker, birder, or other people-powered recreationist who would like to see a balanced allocation of motorized and non-motorized areas on the Chugach National Forest?

Currently, over 80% of the Chugach National Forest on the Kenai Peninsula is open to motorized recreation. Due to conflicts resulting from this lack of balance in allocation, the Chugach National Forest will undertake a community-based planning effort to determine the appropriate long-term management direction for winter recreation access on the Kenai Peninsula.

If you would like to get more involved please email Bobbiejo@akcenter.org

Join the Chugach Defender List by emailing Bobbiejo@akcenter.org and write "Add me to the Chugach Defender List" in the subject line.

FEATURED BUSINESS

MOOSE'S TOOTH

Location: 3300 Old Seward Hwy
Anchorage, AK 99503

Phone: (907) 258-ALES

Web site: www.moosestooth.net



ACE would like to thank the Moose's Tooth for graciously supporting ACE and all of our events throughout the years, and salute them for striving to conduct an environmentally-sensitive business with high standards for community support and employee benefits.

HISTORY

Moose's Tooth Founders Matt Jones and Rod Hancock met at the University of Washington. Upon leaving Seattle, the two went their separate ways, but met again in Portland. Matt was finishing up a law degree, while Rod battled his way through a software engineering major. Many days were concluded at the local pubs and eateries in Portland. On one of these occasions, they decided that it would be more fun to brew beer and make pizza than to work for Corporate America.

With a small budget they shipped up used dairy tanks for the brewery and took over a failed restaurant for the pub. Through the years, as business has grown, they've expanded the brewery (no more dairy tanks!), built a theatre-pub, and remodeled the Moose's Tooth.

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

What is the Moose's Tooth's take on environmental stewardship?

We believe, now more than ever, that taking care of the environment is crucial for the long term viability of this planet.

What are the green components to your business?

We recycle mixed paper, glass, and newspaper.

Besides ACE, what other organizations and causes do you support?

We support many groups and causes, mainly through donations of product. We do almost no advertising and try to spend our advertising budget on donations instead. We give a lot to schools, sports, and community groups.

How is the Moose's Tooth different from other businesses?

We use what I call the "Lower 48 standard-of-business," by asking if our product, pricing, and service are competitive with the standards of the Lower 48, where competition and quality standards are often higher.

We also believe strongly in our employees and offer health-care benefits and profit sharing, even to part-time staff. We try to offer high quality, professional jobs for management that is on par with other professional fields. This is a people business so it makes sense to take care of them.

JUNEAU WATCHDOG



by Abby Koszarek, Juneau Watchdog

CONSERVATION UPDATE ON THE 24TH ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

We are over halfway through the 24th Alaska State Legislative session, and our elected lawmakers are busy in Juneau, battling over both new legislation and recycled bills from previous sessions.

The session convened with a budget surplus, an anomaly that has exempted legislators from many of the dire fiscal fights familiar to committee and floor debates in recent years.

This does not mean that the session will be easy, though, as every legislator has a personal agenda and desire to promote individual legislation. The governor also has his own plans, and has introduced many of his own bills this session.

Of the myriad bills on record thus far, we're tracking over a dozen bills that impact Alaska's natural resources - and we're sure to see more as the session nears a close in May.

THE GOOD

HB 19 imposes a fee to chemical manufacturers for registration of pesticides and broadcast chemicals in Alaska. It also requires posted public notice of pesticide application in most public areas, providing the public with information essential to personal and environmental health. This bill is a simplified version of one that appeared during the previous legislative session. That bill was not heard in committee until late in the session and ended up dying on the vine.

The November election appears to have triggered several bills aimed at modifying the election process. SB 39 requires the lieutenant governor to appoint a committee to prepare ballot titles and propositions, after Lt. Governor Leman's office was rebuked several times last year by the courts for misrepresenting initiatives to the voters. HB 21 prohibits politicians from spreading false statements in state elections, and HB 52 forbids automated political advertisements from being sent to numbers on the no-telephone solicitation list.

The cruise ship industry has also begun an assault on Alaska's voting structure, specifically the initiative process. They recently filed a lawsuit against the State regarding the validity of signatures collected for a ballot initiative that, among other things, would tax cruise passengers and require the industry to follow state waste

discharge regulations. This spurred the sponsorship of two bills in the House, HB 2 and HB 24, both of which would impose a tax on cruise ship passengers, payable to visited ports.

THE BAD

Once again, plenty of bills are on the move that threaten Alaska's public lands and natural heritage. Lead among them is a University Lands Bill, which seeks to privatize roughly 260,000 acres of state lands under the guise of University funding. Of course, we support the needs of the University system four-square, but the University's own analysis of a similar bill introduced in the 2000 legislative session found that the increased endowment resulting from land revenue would generate \$5 million per year after twenty years of intensive land development. The University received a general funds appropriation of over \$200 million in 2005, making the revenue from land sales a mere fraction of annual need. The concept of appropriating land to sufficiently fund universities is not a reality in today's economy, and the university should not be forced to assume responsibility for the development, and subsequent privatization, of Alaska's land.

Governor Murkowski recently introduced SB 86/HB



ANCHORAGE ACTIVISTS gather at ACE to sharpen their grassroots skills.

117, both of which would remove protection for public interest litigants, or citizens and groups who sue the state in the public's interest. Currently, under Supreme Court rules, public interest litigants who win a court battle against the state can seek full compensation for their legal fees. SB 86/HB 117 would limit the award to only 20-30% of legal fees. Public interest litigants are frequently representatives suing over environmental or rural subsistence issues, and the current statute insures that these representatives will not face financial ruin for acting to benefit fellow Alaskans. Passage of this bill would dissuade and potentially penalize an individual and group representing public interests.

YOU CAN HELP

ACE and other conservation organizations have been following this legislative session closely, sniffing out opportunities to provide input on bills important to our land, water, air, and lifestyle. We need your help, though. As always, public input can be the most influential means to make an impact.

Fortunately, there are many means for you to participate. A phone call just takes a minute or two from your day, making it perhaps the easiest way to voice your opinion. Call the Capitol Switchboard at (907) 465-2111 to be connected with your Senator or Representative. Archaic to some, a hand-written or typed letter sent in the mail provides a concrete, tangible testament of your thoughts, and is considered the most influential by many public officials. Email and POMS (public

opinion messages) are also effective means of communication. Links to addresses and other contact information can be found on our website at www.akcenter.org/legislature.

Finally, to really get a feel for the legislative process, and to have face to face interactions with your legislators, consider a trip to Juneau. Alaska Conservation Voters (ACV) and Alaska Conservation Alliance (ACA) are sponsoring a Legislative Fly-In on April 10-12. This is a great opportunity to interact with the Alaska Legislature as an activist and to network with fellow advocates. The application deadline is March 11, so act quickly to reserve a spot. Visit www.akvoice.org for more information.

If you do not have the time to join the Fly-In to Juneau, ACE will be offering a day-long session in Anchorage on how to effectively communicate with elected officials and make a positive change in your community. The Find Your Voice training will be offered from 10 to 4pm on April 2nd, with a repeat session on April 16th. A free lunch is included with the session. Topics include: Civics 101: How a Bill becomes a Law; Public Speaking and Testifying; Letter Writing; Media Communication; and Meeting with an Elected Official.

We will be holding an advanced Find Your Voice training dedicated to teaching participants how to create their own citizen campaigns.

For more information on Find Your Voice or to sign up, please contact Andie at andie@akcenter.org.

To learn more about any legislative issues or process, or to receive periodic email updates from the Juneau Watchdog, contact abby@akcenter.org.

SAVE THE DATE:

Please join us for these fun events. For more information on how to volunteer or attend an event, please check www.akcenter.org or call 274-3626

MARCH

March 10: First Annual Alaska Ocean's Film Festival at the Bear Tooth Theater - 8pm.

APRIL

April 2: Find Your Voice activist training for volunteers who want to get more involved. Contact Andie at 274-3650 for more information. 10-4pm

April 16: Repeat of April 2 Find Your Voice training

April 22: Spring Champagne Auction. 6-8pm. Volunteers needed.

April 29 and 30: 3rd Annual Green Star Electronics Recycling Event. Check out: www.greenstarinc.org for more information.

MAY

May, July, and September: ACE Adopt-a-Highway and Bike Path Clean-Ups. Dates TBA.

May 14: Citizen's Campaign Training. Learn how to organize your own campaign around the issues that are important to you and your community. Contact Andie at 274-3650 for more information.

May 21: Anchorage Waterways Creeks Clean-up. ACE has a reputation for bringing the largest team to the clean-up. Help us keep up the tradition with this fun annual clean-up.

JULY

July: ACE Adopt-a-Highway and Bike Path Clean-Ups. Dates TBA.

July 6: 25 Years of ANILCA Conference and Celebration. As part of the festivities, ACE will be hosting a festival at Town Square Park the evening before the concert at the PAC. Contact Clare at 274-3626 or clare@akcenter.org to help out.

July 16: Oceans Festival. This is the 3rd year of the highly successful event on the Park Strip. Help needed in planning and carrying out the event. Contact Butch at 274-3647 or butch@akcenter.org to help out.

AUGUST

August 6: Chugach Day. The celebration takes place on the Kenai Peninsula and includes a triathlon. Help needed in planning and carrying out the event.

August 25 - September 5: Alaska State Fair. ACE has a booth at the fair each year to educate Fair-goers on an environmental issue. Help needed designing the booth and volunteering at the booth.

SEPTEMBER

September: ACE Adopt-a-Highway and Bike Path Clean-Ups. Dates TBA.

ALASKA'S OCEANS

continued from page 3

. . . fourteen percent were actually touching corals, 20% were hovering within them, 41% were resting on the seafloor within a body length of corals and 12% were hovering above or swimming close by. Moreover, virtually 100% of juvenile rockfish were observed in close association with corals." The longevity of the region's fish – its economic driving force – is thus found interwoven within the life of the coral.

Unfortunately, the coral's surprising abundance is threatened by bottom trawling. Industry vessels drag enormous cables and nets, scraping the sea floor, hoping to fill their nets with cod, rockfish, and mackerel. As a side effect, coral gardens get scraped up en masse, leaving the ocean barren of the coral habitat. It's clearly in everybody's interest to protect the Aleutian Islands coral and sponge gardens, and we need to do it while meeting the fish harvesting demand.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act, reauthorized by Congress in 1996, requires protection of essential fish habitats from damage caused by industrial fishing practices. However, managers have interpreted the law so that one has to prove the damage causes a depletion of the commercially important fish before any protective steps are taken. Making a scientifically substantial case for causation is much harder than realizing the obvious logical correlation. "If you cut down a forest, there is not going to be any place for woodpeckers, but it would be hard to prove that the forest is absolutely essential to woodpeckers," stated Ken Sulak, biologist at the U.S. Geological Survey.

The protection of these precious corals hangs in the balance of a North



NORTHERN ROCKFISH WITH CORALS (photo: Alberto Linder, National Marine Fisheries Service)

Pacific Fisheries Management Council vote this February. Managers will decide whether or not to protect marine habitats by zoning areas in the Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands as off-limits to dragging.

More than just marine life can be found hovering within the depths of the Aleutian Islands coral. A closer look reveals answers to pertinent questions about global climate shifts, medical treatments, and deep sea invertebrate species development. We need to protect this unique, and centuries-old, coral habitat – so we don't lose it before we even know what we have.

You can join us in asking the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to protect these habitats by visiting www.akcenter.org and "taking action to save Aleutian corals."

FEDERAL FISHERY REGULATORS MOVE TO PROTECT CORAL

As this article went to press, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council recommended closing 380,000 square miles of Alaskan waters to bottom trawling. Most of the areas protected are in the Aleutians where the above-mentioned deep water corals find their home. The plan fuses proposals from conservationists and the fishing industry marking a historic effort to protect fishery habitats before they are rendered unhealthy.

ACE applauds the efforts of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to preserve our ocean resources.



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