



ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

WINTER 2004

# Center News

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### BEYOND ELECTION SEASON

Like most Alaskans, I'm relieved that the 2004 election season is finally over. After months of TV ads, an avalanche of mail, and the steady stream of automated phone calls, voters were faced with important choices- and the campaigns deservedly received a lion's share of everyone's attention in the closing weeks.

With the next statewide election two years away (only two years?), it's time to turn our attention back to the year-round task of protecting Alaska's wild places and enhancing our urban areas. Because, no matter who's in office, our work is critical to Alaska's future.

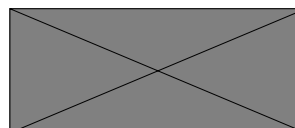
Elections will come and go, but the issues that affect us will always require our attention. Regardless of political party, ACE works to educate elected officials, mobilize our members on issues that matter to them, and to articulate a positive vision for Alaska. **We're a non-partisan group, and we'll work with anyone who's willing to strive for common ground.** We were very successful in 2004, and we have every intention of continuing that success in 2005.

It won't be easy- nothing worth doing ever is- but we've been at it for 32 years now, and we know how to translate public support into policy success, even against tremendous odds.

Of course, we can't do it without you. You are our most potent resource- every phone call, letter to the editor, email, and financial contribution you make really counts, and really adds up. Our strategy is strength in numbers, and you've helped us make impressive strides this year: We were able to pressure the legislature into adopting tougher standards for coal bed methane development, move forward on improved recycling services in Anchorage, and protect key areas of our national forests- just to name a few examples.

Moving forward, we've set even more ambitious goals for ourselves. We're adding two new programs, GIS mapping and Alaska ocean advocacy, and we're aiming to expand our popular Trailside Discovery program to the Mat-Su Valley next summer. We're also working, of course, to hold the line for Alaska's environment in the upcoming legislative session, to defend Alaska's most special places (including Denali State Park, the Kenai Peninsula, and Prince William Sound), and to support the measures in Anchorage that are crucial to our future prosperity- including a strong parks plan, progressive urban design standards for development, and adequate public transportation.

We're up to the challenge. And with your continued support, we'll continue to grow stronger every year.



# A NEW GOLD RUSH STRIKES ALASKA'S SPECIAL PLACES



by Scott Brennan, *Alaskans for Responsible Mining*

Legend has it that a mysterious monster lurks in southwest Alaska's Lake Iliamna.

Witnesses have described the elusive creature as a 10-foot long black fish, a 25-foot long serpent, and a beast with an appetite for red-bottomed fishing boats. Skeptics take note — according to Alaska Department of Fish & Game Information Officer Lisa Olson, the agency has opened a file on the "Lake Iliamna Monster."

While the existence of Alaska's very own Loch Ness Monster is far from proven, residents of the Lake Iliamna region are swapping stories about a much more probable monster — a monster of a mine that could be North America's largest open pit gold operation, spawning a massive open-pit 'district' and scouring Southwest Alaska for copper and other metals as well.

Northern Dynasty Mines Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Canadian exploration company Northern Dynasty Minerals, Ltd., is attempting to develop the Pebble Mine project on state land in the Nushagak-Big

River Hills, 17 miles northwest of the Village of Iliamna and about 235 miles southwest of Anchorage. If the Pebble Project and necessary roads, power and infrastructure are developed, the Iliamna Region could become Alaska's newest mining district.

Today the Iliamna Region is home to Alaska's only designated Trophy Rainbow Trout area, the world's largest runs of sockeye and Chinook salmon, and the headwaters of Bristol Bay, the world's most productive salmon fishery. Lake Iliamna is Alaska's largest lake and home to many thriving fishing and hunting lodges, other small businesses, and vibrant native cultures and communities. For obvious reasons, a proposal to develop North America's largest open pit gold mine here is raising significant concerns.

Brian Kraft, a former oil rig roughneck and professional hockey player, is now the owner of the Alaska Sportsman's Lodge on the Kvichak River. He is one of many local business owners and residents who question whether the Iliamna Region is the best place for a new mining district.

"Bristol Bay-Lake Iliamna is a special place," Kraft said. "An enormous open pit mine could pollute our water, threaten our communities and ruin our world-class sport and commercial fishery."

Kraft also argues for proceeding carefully and ensuring that Alaskans, not foreign mining companies, decide the future of our state.

"The Pebble Mine is not a done deal and we want to have a voice in what happens in our backyard," Kraft said.

## THE NEW GOLD RUSH

Northern Dynasty's efforts are part of a new mining boom that is reshaping state, private and—to a lesser extent—federal lands throughout Alaska. Although there are only a few operating mines in the state, there are 6,000 to 15,000 mining claims filed on state lands every year, and 1.2 million acres of state lands are already under active claims.

Business is booming. The dollar is down, demand from Asia, especially China, is increasing rapidly and precious metal prices are sharply up. In recent issue of "North of 60 Mining News," mining expert Curt Freeman described the boom of 2004.

"As anyone can tell you who has tried recently to locate geologists, drill rigs and helicopters, Alaska is not the place to search for any of these commodities," Freeman wrote. "Exploration and development projects are spread from Nome to Ketchikan, the Brooks Range to Iliamna."

Unfortunately, all of this excitement has led many to rush headlong, rather than carefully examining the trade-offs that mining presents. For example, the state legislature's recent votes on mining issues have favored industry by a margin of 278-2.



**OPEN-PIT MINING OPERATION** in Chino Mine, New Mexico. (photo courtesy of Earthworks)

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# WILD CHUGACH



by Bobbie Jo Skibo, Wild Forest Program Coordinator



**ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SIERRA CLUB VOLUNTEERS** show support for Wild Forests during a press conference at the Anchorage Forest Service Office.

## ROADLESS COMMENTS

6,542 comments from Alaskan businesses and individuals were hand delivered to the Forest Service's Anchorage office in support of protecting roadless areas of the Chugach and Tongass National Forests. Within the past few months, more than a million comments have been collected nationwide, including over 6,000 from Alaska community members and businesses supporting the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which prevents road-building in one third of the nation's national forest lands. The comments are in response to a Bush Administration proposal to roll back these protections.



**JENNIFER GIBBINS** explains plans for the Bering River Coal Fields to the Alaska Citizens Coalition on a site visit outside of Cordova.

## ALASKA CITIZENS FOR THE CHUGACH

Alaska Citizens for the Chugach (ACC) is working to develop long-term solutions to natural resource issues in the region, while fostering sustainable economies and preserving quality of life. ACC is comprised of residents of the Chugach region, including Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Anchorage, Girdwood, Hope, Sunrise, Cooper Landing, Seward, Jack Bay, Indian, and Moose Pass. Members of this group include commercial and sport fishermen, biologists, an emergency physician, a lawyer, an ex-logger, tour operators, and subsistence users who call the Chugach home.

This October, the group met in Cordova to hold their bi-annual meeting and to see first hand some of the projects which could negatively affect the overall integrity of the Copper River Delta.

ACC is currently looking for members from Moose Pass, Hope-Sunrise, Valdez, and Whittier. If you live in one of these communities and would like to get involved, contact Bobbie Jo Skibo at 907-240-0539.

# REVIVING COOPER CREEK IN THE KENAI RIVER WATERSHED

## DOWN BUT NOT OUT — COOPER CREEK

Cooper Creek, a tributary of the Kenai River, once boasted strong runs of chinook, sockeye, coho and pink salmon, rainbow trout and Dolly Varden char.

Today, Cooper Creek is not half the stream it used to be, due to the construction of Cooper Lake Dam in 1957. The dam completely blocked the natural flow from the lake into the creek. While some water seeps into upper Cooper Creek, virtually all the flow in Cooper Creek now comes from Stetson Creek, which enters Cooper Creek about a mile and a half below the dam. Water from Stetson is too cold for rainbow trout, coho, and chinook, and Cooper Creek is now devoid of these species.

## REVIVING COOPER CREEK —THE OPPORTUNITY OF RE-LICENSING

Cooper Lake Dam is currently undergoing a re-licensing process as part of the federal guidelines for hydroelectric projects. The re-licensing decision is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and this process is the public's opportunity to get involved in reviving Cooper Creek fish runs.

According to Chugach Electric Association, bringing back chinook and rainbows depends upon increasing Cooper Creek water temperature, which means resurrecting the flow of warmer Cooper Lake water into the Cooper Creek drainage.

The Kenai River Watershed provides a world-class salmon fishery, which underpins a major economic engine for the region. Of course, Alaskans

who rely on these runs, and the other natural values of the watershed, also rely on electrical power delivered by Chugach Electric Association. However, some of that cheap power has come at a cost to the fish and wildlife of Chugach National Forest and the re-licensing process is the opportunity to restore a balance between healthy fish runs and the need for electricity.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Chugach Electric's license to operate the Cooper Lake dam project expires in 2007. After processing comments from the public and federal and state agencies this fall,

Chugach will revise its application accordingly and plans to submit its license application to FERC sometime in April 2005. At that point, ACE will be participating in the public comment period and members will have a chance to weigh-in on this project. Stay tuned for more information in the spring of 2005.

Through the re-licensing process, FERC and the affected federal agencies will decide if and how to address the various impacts associated with continued operation of the hydroelectric project. Public



CLEMENTS "NICK" LEAN AND LOWEL "SWEDE" GRESHAM show the fish that they caught in Cooper Creek in the spring of 1938.

participation in the re-licensing process can be very influential in the way in which and the degree to which FERC addresses the environmental impacts of the project. FERC can even decide to deny the license altogether, if circumstances warrant.

You can obtain a copy of the Draft License Application from Chugach Electric Association (contact Ms. May Clark, [may\\_clark@chugachelectric.com](mailto:may_clark@chugachelectric.com); 907-762-4547).

# HUTS AND CONSERVATION



By John Wolfe Jr.

*ACE Member John Wolfe is executive director and founder of Alaska Huts, environmental planner for HDR Alaska, and co-author of 55 Ways to the Wilderness in Southcentral Alaska. In 1985-'86, John worked for Trailside Discovery Camp and led TDC's first teen backpack trip. He has been discussing backcountry huts and conservation with ACE, and we asked him to reflect on these issues for ACE members to consider.*

I believe the history of huts is the history of conservation. Thinkers and popular culture for centuries feared wild lands. In the 1700s, as thinkers followed on the heels of world explorers, they began to explain geologic time, the evolution of species, and wonders seen in other lands. Poets celebrated beauty in the natural world. Common people sought the sublime and beautiful in the mountains. As the sport of mountaineering was born, huts developed in the Alps to house the summiteers but also the middle class of the mountains—these people who wanted to see but not to summit. It is these people who are the key to conservation.

A spectacular camaraderie is the common outcome of putting people together in a hut after a day on the trail. In the U.S., Adirondack Great Camps, Appalachian Mountain Club huts, and Sierra Club huts have resulted in a conservation following. Those who experienced the tradition of rustic camps, lodges, and huts in the U.S.—like Theodore Roosevelt—formed the world's first national parks in the 1800s, and the parks developed their own rustic lodges. The Appalachian Mountain Club and Sierra Club have brought up generations in huts and lodges, and fed their memberships and causes. Once established, the middle class of the mountains supported giant steps in conservation thinking with passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

There is no question that rustic lodges, huts, and trails have an impact. They reduce the quality of true wilderness. Yet they also infuse generation after generation with the joy and inspiration of a wild outdoor experience. This positive impact leads from the camaraderie of the trail to a desire to learn about rural, wooded, mountain, and water environments, and to protect true wilderness.

## HUTS IN ALASKA

Alaska owns a variation on the global story, with trails, Iditarod roadhouses, and ANILCA and state park wilderness protection. The non-

profit Alaska Huts has proposed modest huts suited to our state. The proposal came about because the tradition of mountain huts has proved so valuable in instilling a wilderness ethic across the globe. If Alaska is to balance resource extraction with conservation, it needs to provide backcountry experiences for more than just summiteers. Huts are not appropriate in every valley in Southcentral Alaska. Yet their negative impact is low, and their positive impact is valuable. Hut users will become ACE members. They will vote for the environment. They will be stewards of water, land, and air. The opportunity to bring people together, to interpret and educate, to allow grandparents and



**HIKERS ON THE JOHNSON PASS/IDITAROD TRAIL** looking north. Center Creek is the valley to the right in the background. This is the proposed area for the Alaska Hut System.

grandchildren to undertake a multi-day trek together—these are what huts are all about, and the opportunity is largely missing here.

What is proposed? The Mills Creek-Iditarod Trail Hut to Hut System would place four huts on a route that links the Lower Summit Lake area to the Johnson Pass Trail and then to the Alaska Railroad at Placer River. There would be two Seward Highway trailheads and one railroad trailhead. The huts would be 5-8 miles apart in forest and alpine country.

Average hut use in the height of summer or spring skiing is anticipated to be two or three parties totaling six to seven people per night. Hut keepers would be on site during these times. Education groups (up to 20) could also be accommodated. Food would be available in summer. Late

reservations for people carrying their own food would be available also. For some seven months, the huts would be open for self-serve use without hut keepers. Year round, there would be educational elements to the journey, from books and cutaways of super-insulated walls, to formal courses on everything from the philosophy of wilderness to avalanche awareness.

Why here? Alaska Huts proposed the Paradise Valley area near to Seward for a hut route in 1998, but also investigated other areas for several years. In 2001, conservation groups including ACE proposed Wilderness status for the Paradise area as part of a congressional bill. The formal hut proposal for this area in 2002 brought out these issues, and also brought out local skiers, snowmachiners, and hunters in Moose Pass and Seward

who voiced opposition to that location, saying “good idea; wrong location.”

Alaska Huts listened, and worked to find a location farther from communities and outside of the area proposed for Wilderness that presented suitable terrain and grand scenery. The Mills Creek-Iditarod route also largely is closed to snowmobiles, reducing the potential for conflict.

## YOUR THOUGHTS

How can conservation groups capitalize on huts and their education focus? Can huts generate new interest in the work of conservation groups? I invite you to check out [www.alaskahuts.org](http://www.alaskahuts.org) and keep in touch. Through collaboration, we hope to create huts that foster conservation in Alaska.

# WE ARE ALL BIONEERS

by Andie Martinez

*On October 15-17, 288 Alaskans gathered at the University of Alaska Anchorage for “Bioneers in Alaska: Creating Sustainable Communities.” This event served as a satellite of the 15th annual central conference in San Rafael, California. 15 satellite Bioneers conferences were held all over the U. S. and Canada, including Durham, New Hampshire; Traverse City, Michigan; Houston, Texas; and of course Anchorage, Alaska, just to name a few. In addition to watching sessions from the main conference, via satellite feed, the Alaskan Bioneers held their own workshops and forums.*

Kenny Ausubel and Nina Simons co-founded Bioneers in 1990, created with the intention “to conduct educational and economic development programs in the conservation of biological and cultural diversity, traditional farming practices, and environmental restoration.” In conjunction with the organization, Simons and Ausubel began the annual Bioneers conference to gather scientific and social innovators who have demonstrated visionary and practical models for restoring the Earth and communities. Bioneers are biological pioneers who, as Ausubel and Simons explain, are working with nature to heal nature and ourselves.

The Bioneers in Alaska conference aimed to inspire the attendees while also creating connections among participants who would continue to work together for change in Alaska. The organizers of this year’s conference were Sharon Ferguson, Mark Masteller, Terri Pauls, Kim Sollien, and Scott Waterman. While the conference in California spoke more generally to

the movement, the workshops in Anchorage dealt more specifically with creating sustainable communities in Alaska.

There is a lot of work being done to create sustainability within Alaska that you may not be aware of. Innovators in Alaska include a homesteader who makes his own bio-fuel, individuals who use composting toilets, and a woman who runs an organic foods co-op. Others are designing green buildings, coordinating renewable energy projects, and creating a solar aquatic sewage treatment system in Haines! Participants came not just from southcentral Alaska, but also from Kotzebue, Nome, Eagle, Koyukuk, Cordova, Juneau, Haines, Valdez, Fairbanks, Denali Park, and Homer.

The over-arching message of the conference was one of hope. Too often the battle cry is one of desperation, and it often leads to fatigue. Hope, on the other hand, has the opposite effect. Alaskans left the conference with a sense of joy from being a part of an omnipotent force that is changing our world for the better.

To learn more about Bioneers, you can visit [www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org). For Bioneers in Alaska, visit [www.sustainak.org](http://www.sustainak.org).



# EARTH SAVING ACTIVITIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

## CREATE YOUR VERY OWN PUFFIN ORNAMENT.

After coloring the puffins, cut out the images, and staple or glue them together. Tie a ribbon through a cut-out hole and viola- a puffin ornament!



## MAKE YOUR OWN POTPOURRI

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon aniseed
- 1 tablespoon allspice
- 6 nutmegs
- 6 cinnamon sticks, coarsely broken
- 1 teaspoon powdered ginger
- 1/4 cup whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1-2 vanilla beans, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 cup coarse salt such as kosher salt

1. Crush aniseed and allspice in a mortar and pestle.
2. Use a hammer to crack the nutmeg and cinnamon sticks.
3. Mix all of the ingredients together and fill a lidded container of your choice.
4. Open to freshen the air.

## QUIZ

Answer the questions correctly and you could win an ACE Nalgene bottle!

1. How many Alaskans turned in comments in support of protecting roadless areas of the Chugach and Tongass National Forests?
2. Which Anchorage landmark is the proposed site of a wind power project?
3. Which region in Alaska is home to the state's only designated Trophy Rainbow Trout area?

Please be sure to include your contact information with your answers. Send your answers to Andie at [andie@akcenter.org](mailto:andie@akcenter.org) or 807 G Street, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501

# EARTH SAVING TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Winter means more than pulling out the skis and sleds. It also means warming up your residence. Energy waste is not only a big expense, but it also contributes to many environmental problems. We can all help to offset such problems by doing our part this winter. Here are some useful hints on how to protect the environment and your expense account.

## PROTECT THE PLANET AND YOUR POCKETBOOK TOO

Insulating and sealing your house while using energy efficiently will save you money and help reduce gases that contribute to global climate change and other environmental problems.

### Here are some things you can do:

Have your heating system inspected. Have a professional inspect and clean your furnace and ducts. Replace filters as necessary.

Inspect your windows and doors for proper weather seals. Minimizing air gaps keeps heat bills down.

Check your insulation. You can increase the comfort of your home while reducing your heating and cooling needs by up to 30% simply by investing a few hundred dollars in insulation.

## LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE WITH ENERGY SAVINGS

Lighting accounts for 20-25% of all electricity consumed in the U.S. Here are some tips at reducing your energy costs:

Use compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs. A standard 18-watt CFL can replace a 75-watt bulb without losing light. CFLs use 75% less energy than a standard bulb and last 10 times longer.

Install dimmers. Dimmers reduce the wattage and output of light bulbs. They also significantly increase the life of incandescent bulbs.

Clean fixtures and lamps annually by wiping off dust. Light levels decrease over time because of aging lamps and dirt on fixtures, lamps, and room surfaces.

## 11 ECO-FRIENDLY HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

1. Make homemade bread and deliver it to your loved ones
2. Houseplants
3. ACE merchandise: Nalgene, t-shirts, or sweatshirts
4. Memberships: fitness clubs, museums
5. Passes: public transit, movies
6. Compost bins
7. Offer your babysitting services
8. Tickets to the theater or a concert
9. Frequent flyer miles
10. Weekend tickets to a ski area
11. An ACE membership!

## THE DIRT ABOUT FIREPLACES

A fireplace is one of the least efficient heat sources because most of the heat is lost going up the chimney.

### Here are a few ways to limit the loss of heat:

Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going.

When using the fireplace, reduce heat loss in the fireplace by opening dampers in the bottom of the firebox or opening the nearest window slightly (approx. 1") and close doors leading into the room.

Lower the thermostat to between 50 and 55 degrees Fahrenheit.



# TAKE PRIDE IN ANCHORAGE



by Andre Camara, Anchorage Issues Coordinator

## GET INVOLVED: ANCHORAGE PARKS

*The existing Anchorage Parks Plan was adopted in 1985, and the Municipality is currently updating the Plan to reflect current and future recreation, economic, demographic and land use trends. ACE is involved in the planning process as a member of the Municipality-organized 'Citizens Advisory Group', and we will continue to keep you updated with ways you can help shape the future of our park system.*

### THE VALUE OF PARKS IN ANCHORAGE

Parks are necessities, not amenities. They provide recreation, inspiration, and essential respite from the city's blare and bustle. They meet the needs of city residents who don't have the time or the means for frequent trips into the wilds, and they can remind us of our ties to the larger world. Successful parks pay dividends for cities — building civic pride, increasing tourism and economic investment, and contributing to health and quality of life. Protecting our parks and trails goes hand in hand with Anchorage's long-term economic well-being.

Most people assume that the city's publicly owned natural open spaces are protected. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. A number of these lands are managed by the Heritage Land Bank and, unless protected, could become tomorrow's subdivisions. Furthermore, even designated parks are vulnerable. While it takes a vote of the citizens to dispose of a park, it takes only a majority vote by the Assembly to convert it to another municipal use.

Park systems do not just "happen". Wild areas don't automatically protect

themselves from development. It can be easy to take our best-loved amenities—like the Coastal Trail, or Far North Bicentennial Park, for granted. But those places were the result of significant effort on the part of many people who had a vision for Anchorage. Looking ahead, it's time to build on the park system we already have and make it even better.

### HOW ANCHORAGE PARKS STACK UP

Consultants from Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands have been working for more than a year to update the parks plan, in partnership with Anchorage-based Land Design North. The consultants compared budgets, acreage, playing fields, swimming

and boating areas, recreation centers, gardens, picnic areas, play structures, and skateboard and dog parks between similar cities.

Anchorage stacked up well by many measures in comparison with the other cities. It tied Boise for trail miles per capita. It was second to Portland for total park acreage, and number one for the amount of natural park area, with 8,000 acres. It was also top among the seven cities for picnic shelters, campgrounds, swimming beaches and indoor swimming pools per capita. Anchorage has more baseball fields per capita than the average, but a below average number of soccer and softball fields.

However, in two areas—maintenance and financial support of the system — Anchorage drops to the bottom of

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**TONY KNOWLES COASTAL TRAIL** at Fish Creek - One of Anchorage's many green spaces.

# FIRE ISLAND PRESENTS EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY



by Chris Rose

*Chris Rose is an ACE member and Director of the Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP), a coalition of utility companies, conservation groups, consumer interests, businesses, and tribal interests with the goal of increasing the production of renewable energy in Alaska. He can be reached at [crose@alaska.net](mailto:crose@alaska.net)*

Commercial scale renewable energy could soon be available to Alaskan consumers for the first time if utility companies move forward on a proposal to construct a wind farm on Fire Island off the coast of Anchorage.

Chugach Electric Association (CEA) has been investigating the possibility of wind power for several years, and has identified Fire Island as the best location for a large development. Fire Island is far enough away that the tall turbines would not be a visual problem, and so far biologists don't have great concerns about potential bird fatalities.

The Fire Island wind development could eventually generate 100 megawatts of power. To put that in perspective, the total peak electricity load in the Anchorage area is currently about 400 megawatts.

Europe is already generating major amounts of electricity from wind, and is committed to getting 20% of its power from renewable energy by 2020. In the U.S., wind energy is the fastest growing segment of the energy market, swelling at an average annual rate of 28% over the last five years. The highly efficient wind turbines that are being installed around the United States today can produce electricity for about the same cost as coal and natural gas fired plants. Because power produced at Fire Island would be competitive with the current cost of generating power from Cook Inlet natural gas, Chugach does not expect to charge utility customers any premium to purchase the power.

Producing power from wind at Fire Island would have several advantages for Alaskan consumers. The first is the hedge that wind provides against increasing natural gas prices. One of the most attractive things about wind power is that the fuel is free. That means it's relatively easy for a utility to predict exactly how much it's going to cost to produce power for the 20 year life of the wind turbine. Having wind as part of a utility's energy portfolio thus helps it plan well into the future. Second, if the price

of natural gas continues to increase rapidly, wind power could soon be cheaper than gas fired electricity. Third, wind power offers clean electricity produced without the burning of fossil fuels associated with global warming.

A Fire Island wind development could provide other opportunities. For example, Anchorage could join a handful of cities in the world that use fuel cell vehicles. Wind-generated electricity could be used to electrolyze water into oxygen and hydrogen. The hydrogen could then be used in fuel cells that produce electricity to run motors for cars and buses. Unlike internal combustion engines that emit various pollutants, the only by-product of a fuel cell reaction is potable water. Fire Island could bring Anchorage to the forefront of exciting changes in energy and transportation that are currently re-shaping the world as we know it.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of producing wind electricity so close to Anchorage is that it will fuel people's interest in renewable energy. Fire Island would allow Alaska to leap towards becoming the national leader in renewable power that it should be. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, Alaska has most of the best wind resources in the country. Kotzebue is already taking advantage of its wind with a 600 kilowatt wind farm that allows its utility to burn 100,000 fewer gallons of diesel every year. Fire Island would allow Anchorage to burn less natural gas to generate its electricity.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Consumers can help make Fire Island a reality by urging the Chugach Electric board of directors to move forward with the project. Those directors need to know that their customers are behind them in what will be a large capital investment in Alaska's energy future. Chugach Electric contact info can be found at [www.akcenter.org](http://www.akcenter.org)



## ANCHORAGE PARKS

*continued from page 10*

the list. We have a great system, but we aren't making it a priority- and we're not maximizing the system's potential.

### THE FUTURE OF ANCHORAGE PARKS

While Anchorage boasts natural areas unrivaled among most U.S. cities, the future of its parks system is threatened. Here is a very important opportunity for public involvement in how Anchorage parks are managed and what they can become over the next 20 years. Great parks and recreation facilities do not happen without residents getting actively involved and participating in the planning, development, and maintenance of the city's parks, natural resources and recreation programs.

The easiest way to keep up-to-date on the opportunities to speak up for our park system is to join ACE's "Take Pride in Anchorage" list serve. Contact Andre Camara at [andre@akcenter.org](mailto:andre@akcenter.org) or 274-3668 to be added to the email list.

### GETTING INVOLVED

The Parks Plan is scheduled for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) at their January 10th regular meeting. The plan will be available approximately 6 weeks prior to that meeting. Once P&Z comments on the plan it will go before the Anchorage Assembly for final approval and another opportunity for public testimony. ACE encourages you to attend and let them know that Anchorage should have a park system that:

- Protects certain existing land that people use as parks.
- Has better maintenance of trails and other facilities.
- Creates connections between greenbelts and trails.
- Adds more parks staffers to properly manage the system and communicates better with the public.
- Gets more public use of school grounds and creates more effective partnerships with private organizations to develop the parks.
- Finds a balance between types of parks -- from large natural areas to neighborhood tot parks.

Contact Andre Camara at 274-3668 to get a copy of the plan and to get more involved.

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## NEW GOLD RUSH

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While mine supporters, including Canadian corporate executives, emphasize the jobs mining generates, there are tradeoffs involved. For example, if a mining company with a valid claim does strike the mother lode, much of the money typically leaves Alaska, due to archaic federal and state mining laws. While oil companies pay royalties to the state, mining companies have never contributed to the Permanent Fund because the current mining royalty structure is flawed.

State and federal laws regulating mining are weak and were written at a time when Alaskan miners were lone prospectors with gold pans and picks, rather than the multinational corporations of today. Weak regulations coupled with enormous mines could be a recipe for disaster.

### IMPACTS CAN BE SEVERE

Mining activity can pollute air, groundwater, lakes and streams. It can also degrade soils, contaminate vegetation, harm wildlife and threaten human health and the negative impacts last long after

the mine is closed or abandoned. One need only to look to the American West to find hundreds of abandoned mines contaminating streams and groundwater with acid mine drainage, heavy metals and other contaminants. In many cases, taxpayers and local residents have been left holding the bag.

A number of mining law reforms are needed to better protect Alaska's natural resources and communities. A few key components might include: 1. Requiring full assessment of impacts to and protection of community health and other important land values such as fisheries, wildlife, cultural sites, subsistence areas and water supplies before resource development decisions are made; 2. Ensuring that we not develop mines that pose long term, post closure threats to the environment, such as projects that would require long term water treatment, and; 3. Enacting a meaningful royalty on metal mines so that Alaskans receive a fair financial return on the minerals removed from state lands.

In recent years, large gold mines have caused enormous ecological, human health and financial problems in

North America and around the world. In January of 2000 a Romanian mine's waste storage lagoon failed, releasing toxic mine waste into the Tisza River and disrupting the drinking water supplies of 2.5 million people. A Colorado Gold Mine exterminated all aquatic life in a 17 mile stretch of the Alamosa River after a toxic waste spill, with cleanup costs at the mine expected to exceed \$170 million. Toxic releases from a mine in New Mexico essentially sterilized an eight-mile stretch of the Red River, once a blue ribbon trout stream.

Not to put too fine a point on it, mines pollute the water, kill fish and compromise community health.

The EPA reports that mining has contaminated 40% of the headwaters of watersheds in the western U.S. outside of Alaska, and that in 2001 the mining industry released 2.8 billion pounds of toxic chemicals into the environment in the U.S. Existing mines and others slated for development have the potential to threaten Alaska's communities, wildlands, and unique

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national treasures.

## ALASKA'S MINING LEGACY

We all know that Alaska is home to the largest national parks and wilderness areas in the U.S., and world-class sport and commercial fishing as well. What you might not know is that Alaska also boasts the single largest source of toxic releases in the nation. According to the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory for 2002 (the most recent year for which data are available), the Red Dog Mine in the northwest Arctic released 481.6 million pounds of toxic pollution in 2002. The current Pebble proposal describes a mine with 20 times the ore output of Red Dog. That same year the Greens Creek mine near Juneau—the largest operating silver mine in the U.S.—was responsible for 37.1 million pounds of toxic releases.

During 2002 the mining industry was the largest source of toxic releases and the 545.5 million pounds of toxics it released in Alaska helped our state win the dubious distinction of having more toxic releases than any other state. Despite the huge oil and gas industry presence in Alaska, the Cook Inlet Keeper recently reported that three out of the four largest illegal industrial spills in Alaska in 2003, including the largest

spill of all, were caused by the mining industry.

Contamination is only one potential problem that residents of the Iliamna region have recognized. The boom in road construction, traffic and a flood of outside workers could compromise the integrity of the area's sport fishing and subsistence resources. Karen Stickman, a native of Nondalton in the Iliamna Region, has described the proposed Pebble Mine site as central to Native culture and as essential salmon and caribou habitat.

Stickman explained the importance of the region to Alaska Natives during a recent meeting.

"This area is the foundation of local native people," Stickman said. "People have lived and survived there without a mine for centuries. This mine could bring, maybe, 50 years of jobs for a number of people but the jobs for local people will be labor jobs."

Stickman does not deny the jobs that could be created if the mine is developed but instead expresses longer-term concerns.

"It's a boom and then it's gone," she said. For a while we'll have jobs and maybe more opportunities but what will we have left if we have no fish and no wildlife. The disruption the mine will cause to our way of life and 50 years later

it's gone, what is left then? No jobs, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, social devastation. If this mine happens, my grandchildren won't see the way of life that I have seen or that my children have seen."

Environmental and social impacts are not the only source of tradeoffs when it comes to mine development. Mines also "privatize" public lands by denying public access during the life of the mine. And while the law requires a mining company to reclaim a mine site after closure, this doesn't mean the landscape isn't permanently altered.

Strip mining results in large open pits (some of the largest can be well over a mile wide), waste rock dumps covering thousands of acres, and sacrificed stream drainages used as permanent storage for contaminated tailings and mine waste. The Pebble Project could produce a waste storage lagoon 3.5 miles wide and 5 miles long, according to Northern Dynasty officials.

## CAN WE DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME?

All monsters and legends aside, we at Alaskans for Responsible Mining are not opposed to resource development but we do believe that Alaskans should have a say in their future.

We also believe that the Bristol Bay-Lake Iliamna region is one of Alaska's special places and that it is emblematic of other places around the state that could be affected by Alaska's second gold rush.

*As a partner with Alaskans for Responsible Mining, Alaska Center for the Environment is working with groups and individuals around the state to make mining in Alaska publicly accountable and fiscally, socially, and environmentally responsible. To learn more about mining and what you can do to be involved, please contact Scott Brennan, Campaign Director of Alaskans for Responsible Mining (ARM) at 907-277-0005 or [scott@reformakmines.org](mailto:scott@reformakmines.org)*



**VIEW OF SIX-MILE LAKE**, in between Lake Clark and Lake Iliamna. The town of Nondalton is on this lake and it is near the proposed Pebble Mine.



# Trailside Discovery

A program of Alaska Center for the Environment

## Winter Wilderness Camp!

December 20, 21, 22, 23 & December 27, 28, 29, 30

Trailside Discovery is offering a Winter Wilderness Camp from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. each day at the Campbell Creek Science Center. Programs will emphasize hands-on outdoor activities and educational nature games such as winter survival, snow-shoeing, snow shelters, orienteering, winter birds, group initiatives, field trips, and much more!

Trailside Discovery is an American Camping Association accredited camp and Alaska's leading non-profit outdoor environmental education opportunity for kids. Please join us for a positive outdoor experience!

**Day Programs** 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. (Ages 6-12)  
**Cost:** \$34/day – \$265/ per eight days  
Pre/After Care Available for \$4.00/session/day

**Enroll Now ~ Limited Space Available**

**Call 274- KIDS to register**

# GIS

The Conservation GIS Center, formerly a project of Portland-based Ecotrust, has found a new home at ACE, and we've hired GIS analyst Alan Baldvieso to run the new program.

GIS, or Geographic Information Systems, uses computer software to dynamically display and analyze layers of spatial data and produce tailored maps. This analysis and mapping, in turn, create effective tools for understanding resource issues and communicating with the public. ACE's GIS program will contribute not only to ongoing ACE projects, but also work with members of Alaska's conservation community on projects that require custom mapping and geographic analysis.

North Slope mapping is a major focus of the GIS Program. Working in collaboration with other conservation groups, the program maintains a database of North Slope oil and gas leases and wells, and is working to update road and pipeline data. This data is used to demonstrate the cumulative development in the Arctic, which enables us to target the key areas for conservation.



**ACE CONSERVATION GIS ANALYST, Alan Baldvieso.**

# HELP SEND A KID TO CAMP!

## DONATE TO TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY CAMP'S SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

As Alaska's largest, most successful outdoor education program, Trailside Discovery Camp has helped thousands of children in Alaska learn about the natural world they will inherit. People like Rebecca Michaelson, who grew up going to Trailside Discovery Camp every summer, and then went on to become a Trailside counselor during high school and college...

"Some of my fondest childhood memories are from the summers I spent at Trailside. Making friends and learning about nature; I know that those experiences shaped me into who I am today. I'm grateful that my parents were able to send me each year, and I only wish that more children had this opportunity."

Because we believe that all children deserve a chance to go to camp, to explore the natural world and experience its magic, Trailside Discovery Camp works very hard to provide scholarships to children who would otherwise not be able to have these experiences. In 2003, we were able to provide tuition for 65 students, and in 2004 we sent 75. In 2005 we plan to send 100 kids to camp on scholarships.

Please join the growing number of ACE members who have helped send a kid to Trailside Discovery Camp. A gift of \$35 will cover the cost of one day at camp for a



TRAILSIDE DISCOVERY CAMPERS enjoy an outing to a glacier.

child, \$70-two days, \$170-a week, and \$340 will send 2 children to camp for a week!

You can send a child to camp by filling out the membership form below and writing the amount of your gift and "TDC scholarship fund" at the bottom. Return the slip to the ACE office at 807 G St #100, Anchorage AK 99501.

## Member Application/Renewal Form

Now you can donate online at [www.akcenter.org](http://www.akcenter.org).

- Individual \$35-\$239       Family \$60-\$239       Advocate \$240-\$499       Benefactor \$500-\$799  
 Patron \$750-\$999       Visionary \$1000+

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

# CELEBRATE THE WINTER "ALASKA STYLE" WITH ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



**For more information contact Andie at  
[andie@akcenter.org](mailto:andie@akcenter.org) or 274-3650.**

## **Wild Land Winter Fest**

Service High Cafeteria  
Sunday, December 12th  
12 p.m.- 5 p.m. Festival

Gear swap drop-off: 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Gear Swap: 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Winter recreation raffle: 2 p.m.

(Grand Prize: Anchorage Weekend Getaway package  
for two)

The Wild Land Winter Fest is a celebration of all that wild Alaska has to offer during the winter months. As all Alaskans know, winter in Alaska and recreating in Alaska are two very unique experiences. In order to continue enjoying these privileges, it is our responsibility to be good stewards of Alaska.

At ACE's Wildland Winter Fest you can learn about protecting Alaska's wild places, participate in outdoor recreation events, support businesses and organizations that promote environmental stewardship, and play with new gear from the gear swap and retail booths.



### **Donate Now**

Help support the Alaska  
Center for the Environment

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](http://www.akcenter.org) and look for the "Donate Now" button.



### **Alaska Center for the Environment**

807 G Street, Suite 100  
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[www.akcenter.org](http://www.akcenter.org)  
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