

ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

WINTER 2007

Center News

BECAUSE YOU LOVE ALASKA



RECYCLING IN ALASKA: BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

SEA OF PLASTIC p.7

KENAI WINTER ACCESS p.10

CONGRESS TAKES ON CLIMATE CHANGE p.12



from the

DIRECTOR

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Cover by **Damion Kintz**: Newspaper recycling at the Anchorage Recycling Center.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Water. The essence of life. We play in it, bathe in it, depend on it. And there's nothing better to quench your thirst. Best of all, clean, purified water flows from the taps in our homes, offices, and public places – it's practically free.

Yet, beverage companies are reaping billions – yes, billions – by selling us over-priced municipal tap water in plastic bottles. Bottled water costs 3 to 4 times as much as gasoline per gallon – yet Americans happily spent over 15 billion dollars for bottled water last year. In fact, if the water we use at home cost as much as the cheapest bottled water, our monthly water bills could run as high as \$9,000.

So why do we do it? Many say that bottled water simply tastes better, or that tap water doesn't seem as safe. While some brands of bottled water do originate from unique "mineral" sources, the fact is that 40% of bottled water on the US market is simply repackaged municipal tap water, including two of the largest brands of bottled water, Aquafina (PepsiCo) and Dasani (Coca-Cola). In blind taste tests, with waters at equal temperatures, presented in identical glasses, ordinary people can rarely distinguish between tap water, springwater, and luxury waters.

To add insult to injury, federal drinking water standards are actually higher for tap water than for bottled water. That's because municipal water is regulated by the EPA, while bottled water is regulated by much looser standards from the FDA. And the FDA doesn't regulate bottled water that is packaged and sold within the same state- exempting more than 60% of the bottled water sold.

And then there's the bottle. Last year, at least four billion pounds of plastic bottles ended up in city waste streams, which can cost cities more than \$70 million in dumping and incineration fees alone – and bottles in landfills (or worse, the ocean) don't biodegrade over time. Furthermore, making the bottles required the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil last year and generated more than 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions – not to mention the environmental cost of trucking all that heavy water to the consumer.

If you have access to municipal water supplies, there's simply no good reason to substitute bottled water at home. If you like it chilled, or filtered, you can use a pitcher in your fridge. And make it a habit of keeping reusable water bottles in the car. Because, as we talk about recycling, remember: the best package you recycle is the one you never use in the first place.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

FROM CHEVAK TO ANCHORAGE, ALASKA RECYCLES

By SaraEllen Hutchison

ANCHORAGE PUSHES FOR CURBSIDE RECYCLING

Anchorage is the largest city in the nation without curbside recycling, but this may finally change. After years of hoping and wishing, the city's comprehensive waste management plan will soon debut before the Assembly, and it includes curbside recycling for the 20% of Anchorage residents currently served by Solid Waste Services.

The Assembly will be presented with three service options, starting with the "basic" level. This option would divert 59,093 tons from the landfill yearly and includes residential curbside service of papers, plastic, and includes aluminum, bans on e-waste in the landfill, pay-as-you-throw garbage rates, and a \$7 per ton increase in the landfill tipping fee. The curbside cost to residents would be between \$4 and \$6 per month. Highlights of the "enhanced" level include a school recycling program, a ban on tires in the landfill, provisions to divert construction waste, and design requirements for recycling in newly constructed buildings. While the "enhanced" level could raise landfill tipping fees by \$17 to \$20 per ton, almost twice the amount (106,308 tons) would be diverted from the landfill annually, extending the landfill's life by 10.5 years as opposed to only 5.8 years under the "basic" service. Finally, the "high" level of service would include military participation



and fluorescent bulb recycling.

The pilot program is expected to roll out in Spring 2008. Initially all materials will go through Smurfit-Stone, but eventually will have to go through a city-run or privately-run facility.

THE RECYCLING CENTER

Even without curbside, recycling in Anchorage is common. Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling (ALPAR) estimates that about 15 percent of waste is recycled in the city through the Anchorage Recycling Center at 6161 Rosewood. The plant,



1972-2007: ACE PUSHES ANCHORAGE RECYCLING FORWARD

1972: ACE provides first drop-off locations for newspaper, aluminum.

1977: Thermo-Kool, Inc. begins manufacturing cellulose insulation from locally recycled newspaper.

1979: ACE, with the help of volunteers, starts the Anchorage Recycling Center (ARCtr) in a warehouse in Spenard.

1985: Anchorage Recycling Center is sold to Anchorage Refuse, which later sells to Waste Management (WM).

1997: ARCtr stops taking recycling; ACE helps organize Recycling Summit. Citizens for Recycling Solutions organizes one-stop drop off events.

1999: Smurfit-Stone purchases the Anchorage Recycling Center. The Recycling Task force convenes.

2000: Recycling plan passed by the Assembly (still not fully implemented). One dollar per ton fees at the landfill fund the Recycling Challenge Grant for events such as Christmas tree and electronics recycling days.

2003: Recycling drop-off site opens at the Anchorage Landfill. Does not take plastic. WM offers limited curbside service in west Anchorage with 1000 customers paying \$5 per month.

2004: Mayor Begich hires the city's first recycling coordinator.

2005: Curbside ends in January because it isn't financially feasible. ACE helps Great Alaska Sanitation start curbside, later bought out by Alaska Waste. Mayor Begich hires Kevin Harun as Renewable Resource Manager.

2006: Alaska Waste begins offering curbside service to west Anchorage.

2007: A lot has happened this year. After a brief hiatus, glass is again being recycled in Anchorage.

2008: Curbside recycling?

run by the Smurfit-Stone corporation, accepts newspaper, aluminum and steel (“tin”) cans, scrap metal, office paper, magazines, cardboard, plastic bags, tire rims, glass bottles, phone books, and #1 and #2 plastic.

PLASTIC

The Recycling Center only accepts #1 and #2 (bottles with necks only, no tubs) plastics and does not accept other types such as bottle lids and caps, yogurt and butter tubs, take-out containers, DVD’s, or coffee drink lids because they do not have the capacity or volume to process these items.

In the business world, recyclable items are considered “commodities.”

Plastics: What can you do?

Recycle it Right: If the number on the bottom of your item is not a #1 or a #2, it cannot be recycled in Anchorage. Remove caps and rinse out plastics; don’t drop off any hazardous containers.

Only Bottles with Necks:

Think about the type of packaging that comes into your household. Purchase boxed cream cheese and butter, not the kind in plastic tubs. Even if a plastic tub says #2, only #2 containers with a bottle neck are acceptable. Why? Because #2 bottles are blow-molded (and show a seam on the bottom), but #2 tubs are injection-molded. They really are different – so check for the number, the neck, and the seam!



Commodities like soda bottles are profitable because they can be melted down and made into new soda bottles and fleece; milk jugs turn into a variety of other plastic goods; newspapers are made into insulation and hydroseeding mulch locally by Thermo-kool; and metals can be resold. These profits allow the Anchorage Recycling Center to continue safe and smooth operation, and to afford taking plastic bags, which do not turn a profit and cost the center money to ship out.

Recycling in Alaska is challenging. The plant here is relatively small compared to other cities, and materials must be baled before they are damaged by rain or snow. While newspaper and steel can be processed here, most everything else is shipped and barged to the Smurfit-Stone plants in Portland and Seattle. Any contaminants, including the wrong type of plastic, must be sorted out and sent to the landfill in Portland, where the tipping fees are about twice as much as Anchorage. Every year, the Anchorage Recycling Center sends about 22,000 tons of material to Seattle.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Total Reclaim, Inc. is a for-profit business specializing in safe recycling of compact florescent light bulbs, refrigerant, computers and other technological and hazardous waste, which you can drop off for a reasonable fee. For more information about recycling at Total Reclaim, visit www.totalreclaim.com.

GLASS IS BACK!

After closing down for the summer for maintenance, EK Industries now has the glass recycling facility up and running at Point Woronzof. Currently, the facility crushes glass to create sand for sandblasting and for use as traction sand on railroad tracks. They

are also examining the possibility of higher-end applications such as glass countertops and terrazzo flooring. The plant operators stress the importance of clean glass – no caps or lids! – to keep the processing equipment running smoothly. Glass can be recycled at the Anchorage Recycling Center, Brown Jug Warehouses, and the Northway Mall.

NEWSPAPER

All of the recycled newspaper in Anchorage stays in Anchorage because Thermo-kool turns all 20 tons per day into cellulose insulation and hydroseed mulch that covers homes and lawns in Alaska.

The cost-cutting, energy-saving, and health advantages of cellulose insulation are a big selling point. Experiments done at the Cold Climate Research Center in Fairbanks show that cellulose outperforms fiberglass by 35%.

For 30 years, Thermo-kool has been quietly blazing leading the way using recycling to make a clean product that stays in Alaska, employ Alaskans, and reduce our need for energy to heat our homes. Thermo-kool is sold as Northern Fiber, Arctic Fiber, and Mono-therm at Home Depot, Lowe’s, and Spenard Builder’s Supply.

BUSINESSES

Local non-manufacturing businesses can also recycle and Green Star can help. Green Star is an Anchorage-based nonprofit organization that helps businesses and organizations set up recycling systems, reduce waste disposal costs, protect the environment and work toward the Green Star award.

For more information on Green Star, visit www.greenstarinc.org or for Fairbanks visit www.iagreenstar.org.

RECYCLING AROUND THE STATE

The Anchorage Recycling Center may be conveniently located in Midtown, but it also receives materials from as far away as Talkeetna, Fairbanks, Homer, Kenai, and the North Slope.

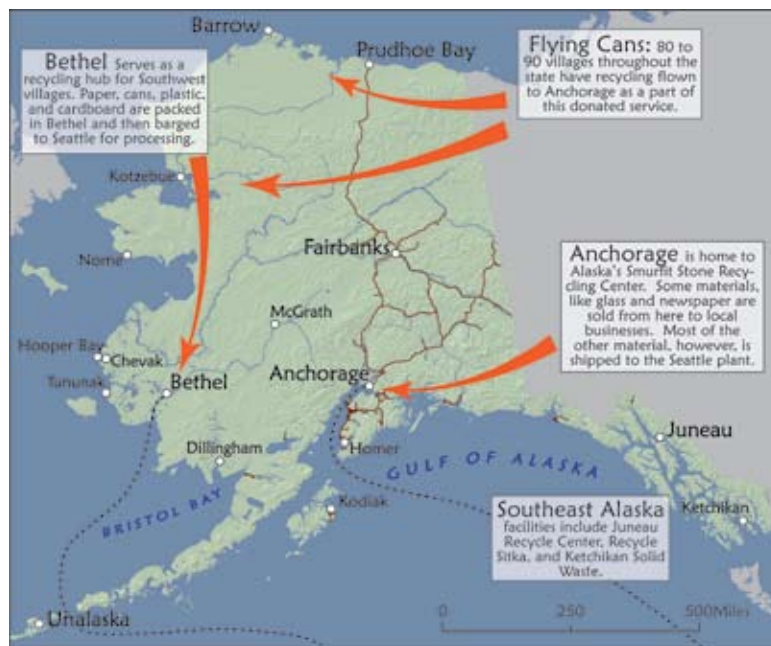
The Fairbanks News-Miner sends used newspaper, Homer sends various materials in large cardboard boxes, and the Borough of Kenai bales materials before sending them to Smurfit-Stone in Anchorage. BP and other oil companies regularly drop off items (except metals) from the Slope. In Dillingham, the town dump was “mined” of its copper, steel, aluminum, radiators, and marine grade aluminum with the help of a motivated resident ‘scrapper’ and coordination by Bob Tenge of Anchorage’s Smurfit-Stone, all of which was then shipped to Seattle.

In villages such as Chevak, Tununak and Hooper Bay, ALPAR coordinates the Flying Cans program. Participating airlines, such as Northern Air Cargo, haul bags of cans out of villages, donating the backhaul and handling. Between 80 and 90 villages participate, of which 20 to 30 villages are frequent users.

In 2006, Flying Cans collected approximately 20,000 pounds of cans. The Flying Cans programs in Chevak, Tununak, and Hooper Bay have been so successful that they will be featured in a History Channel broadcast set to air in spring '08.

Recycling in rural Alaska can be very difficult due to the remoteness and

limited resources of these communities. Chevak, population 1000, is 137 miles from Bethel and is accessible only by plane. Cynthia Paniyak, Chevak Council’s Environmental Director, coordinates the village’s efforts to recycle cans, plastic bags and batteries. Once collected, however, the big challenge is getting materials out. Items that go to Bethel, such as batteries, must first travel by sled to get to the plane. Bigger items sit, waiting for a removal option. Chevak owns a van filled with used oil that they don’t know how to dispose of and there are plenty of junked snowmachines and freezers that need to be removed.



The city of Bethel (population approximately 6000) serves as the hub for 56 villages in Southwest Alaska. Bethel’s waste management challenges are a combination of the remoteness of village living and the pressures of a larger population.

The drop-off Recycle Center in Bethel accepts paper, aluminum cans, and #1 and #2 plastic; 80 percent of the material received is cardboard,

sometimes 500 pounds per day for just one large store.

“Getting stuff out is terribly expensive,” says Dave Stnovner, who manages the city-run Bethel Recycle Center. The Bethel center crushes and bales materials into 1200-1500lb. units, which travel by barge in 20-foot containers to Smurfit-Stone’s Seattle processing plant. Bethel receives six free containers per year for backhauling, but the city must pay for six more containers at \$1400 each.

That cost is incurred to slow the filling of the Bethel landfill, which has roughly ten years of remaining capacity. A new landfill site is hard to find because of the tundra. “It’s a real problem,” says Stnovner. He cannot accept e-waste, so Stnovner is encouraging the Native corporations and school districts to pay for their own e-waste shipping.

In the Mat-Su Valley, the Valley Community for Recycling Solutions (VCRS), located at the corner of 49th State Street and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, accepts newspaper, #1 and #2 bottles, cardboard, mixed paper, plastic bags, steel and aluminum cans, and

assorted other materials. Newspaper has a 24-hour bin; other materials must be dropped off Thursday - Friday from 12 to 6pm and Saturday from 11am to 3pm. VCRS celebrates its 10th anniversary this year and has secured about half of the funding necessary to build a new recycling and education center conveniently located next to the landfill. You can even watch VCRS in action on You Tube – just follow the link from www.valleyrecycling.org.

BUSINESS RECYCLING SPOTLIGHT: THE SALVATION ARMY



“God puts everything that comes through this center for us to be good stewards [and] sell or recycle responsibly.”

- David McDaniels, head of operations, Anchorage/Mat-Su area

When David McDaniels arrived a year ago, the Salvation Army was overwhelmed with unusable donations and garbage dropped at its doorstep every day. People dumped pool tables with three legs, used diapers, obsolete

save money and get rid of the trash responsibly.

In June 2006, McDaniels, working with Salvation Army Major Catherine Reed, started to recycle unusable donations. Now, trucks bring in used items from the stores and homes to the midtown rehabilitation center. Here, employees and a handful of men in recovery sort items through a multi-stage, standardized process. Items are first disseminated into bins and

support to get the trash out responsibly and cheaply. For example, the book vendor takes the e-waste at no cost, saving the division approximately \$36,000 per year.

Conservation is not unique to the Alaska Salvation Army or to McDaniels, who keeps a fishing pole in his office. “It is agency-wide,” says McDaniels. “We feel committed here to keep as much as possible out



David McDaniels



Thirty percent of ‘donations’ is trash.



Sorting donations for the sales floor.

computers, and a thawed-out freezer full of rotting fish. The Salvation Army was making two or three trips to the landfill daily. In 2005, the Salvation Army shouldered \$78,833 in fees to dump what it could not sell in its stores. Money that should have gone to support their 60-bed drug and alcohol rehabilitation center was going to pay for Anchorage trash collection. They had to come up with a way to

piles for local and Lower 48 recyclers and resellers; unusable clothing is compacted into one-ton bricks which are resold for rag material; metal goes to the local Smurfit recycling center; even wood, refrigerators, “e-waste” including televisions and computers, clothing, books, and cardboard are diverted from the dump. The Salvation Army also relies on a bit of extra

of the trash.” McDaniels sees even more potential for recycling, such as partnering with an organization that refurbishes computers for needy children or selling rare books on Amazon. Until then, McDaniels hopes that the public will share his conservation ethic. “We want to be able to contribute to more recovery. We can’t handle everything.”

Welcome SaraEllen Hutchison!

ACE welcomes SaraEllen Hutchison as the new Sustainable Communities program manager. SaraEllen has a diverse background in practicing law and performing arts. When she’s not working for recycling and sustainable growth, she enjoys dancing, running, and skiing. Welcome to the ACE team!



OCEANS & MARINE LIFE

THE STORY BEHIND “NON-BIODEGRADABLE”

By Butch Allen

Imagine a kayak trip across Prince William Sound (PWS) from Whittier to Cordova. The journey is punctuated at every turn with seabirds and marine mammals. Each paddle stroke, however, stirs up something altogether different . . . plastic. As you draw your paddle out of the water, tiny particles of what was once a bottle or bag cling like so many barnacles to the blade, only to be replaced with new particles on the next rotation. Looking closely at the seemingly pristine waters you realize that the depths are filled densely with these crumbs of chemical creation.

rotating clockwise ocean current, stretching $\frac{3}{4}$ the width of the Pacific from Japan to California. Winds are negligible at best. For this reason, sailors have historically avoided the area. Humans may stay away, but their trash gets collected in the area as currents pull floating material or flotsam into the low energy central area of the gyre.

In the past, storm swept ship decks and distant shore refuse were slowly drawn into this “trash vortex.” Year after year, ocean forces would biodegrade each piece of detritus

circling the inner reaches of the Pacific is certainly troubling, but it turns out that the aesthetics of the garbage patch are the least of our worries.

Fish and other marine life are unable to discern the “plastic pebbles” from their primary food source, zooplankton. Research from the Algalita Marine Research Foundation (AMRF) revealed that “broken, degraded plastic pieces outweigh surface zooplankton in the central North Pacific by a factor of 6-1. That means six pounds of plastic for every single pound of zooplankton.” Regional seabirds get



Source: Algalita Marine Research Foundation

While this is only a bad dream in the PWS, this plastic ocean does exist in an infinitely larger proportion further south in the Pacific Ocean. In fact, researchers put conservative size estimates of the plastic conglomeration known as the “eastern garbage patch” at 266,807 square miles or the size of Texas. Translated into Alaskan terms, that equates to over 75 Prince William Sounds or roughly 50,000 Eklutna Lakes filled to the brim with plastics particles. The story of how this floating dump came to be and how each of us unintentionally contributes daily to its growth is astounding.

The North Pacific gyre is a slowly

until they literally became one with the sea.

Enter plastics. For the past 50 years, their durability has added immeasurable convenience to everyday life. The substance’s resilience is also what has Pacific gyre researchers alarmed. Rather than biodegrading as their flotsam predecessors did, plastics’ molecular make up only allows for photo degradation. In essence, the sun’s rays combine with the sea’s wave action to gradually shrink large pieces like bags, bottles, or buoys into tiny pebble sized pieces. Envisioning a Texas-sized swath of floating junk

a double dose – not only do they feed on a host of plastic ingesting fish, but also regularly mistake larger items like bottle caps or lighters for food. The result is documented each year in the scores of avian corpses that are found on the few tiny islands located within the gyre. These animals are literally choked with human litter.

Compounding the food chain issue is the “super-accumulator” affect. Environmental geochemist Hideshige Takada (Tokyo University) has discovered that floating plastics amass non-water-soluble-toxic chemicals.

continued on page 13, PLASTIC SEA

WILDLANDS & RIVERS

KATMAI BROWN BEARS

By Eric Uhde

Katmai National Preserve, as part of the larger McNeil/Katmai region, has historically hosted very large concentrations of brown bears. In recent years, changes to the hunting patterns and hunting regulations in the area have doubled the number of bears taken from Katmai Preserve, while at the same time the number of bears observed by local bear viewing guides has dropped significantly.

This fall ACE joined the National

Parks Conservation Association and other Alaskan wildlife enthusiasts in requesting that the National Park Service take a more aggressive approach to managing bears in Katmai National Preserve. We have asked the Park Service to take immediate action to reduce the number of brown bears hunted in Katmai National Preserve in order to maintain a healthy brown bear population for the park.

While there is a healthy population

of brown bear on the Alaska Peninsula, ACE is concerned about a localized problem impacting a number of brown bears that are regularly viewed by visitors to Katmai National Park. We simply ask the Park Service to take a closer look at the area's brown bear population and manage the Park and Preserve lands to protect this unique bear population, and continue to provide a high quality visitor experience.

ALASKA AND COAL: CHUITNA UPDATE

Even as a growing body of research shows that coal combustion in Asia negatively affects Alaska in the form of higher temperatures and mercury concentrations, a massive coal mine is being envisioned on the Western shores of Cook Inlet, known as the Chuitna project.

The development of this mine would not only devastate thousands of acres of prime fish, moose, and bear habitat, but it would also result in the emission of huge quantities of greenhouse gases and toxics including mercury.

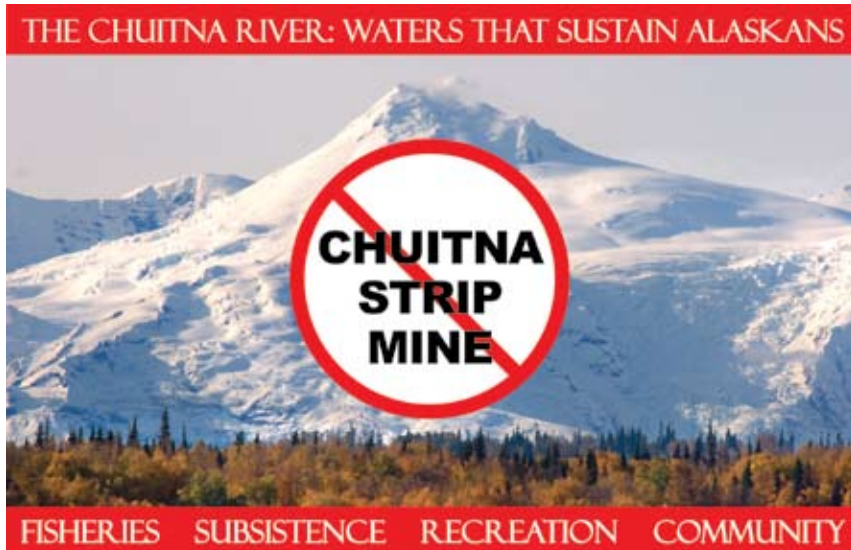
PacRim Coal, the Texas-based company pushing for the coal mine, is moving forward with its plans, and has submitted permit requests

to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. ACE, Cook Inletkeeper, and local citizens submitted a petition in June requesting that lands within the fish-rich Chuitna watershed be deemed "unsuitable" for coal strip mining, but the petition was denied by the state.

to slow the project and extend the timeline have been successful and the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is now expected to be released sometime in the summer of 2008.

Recently, at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in Fairbanks, the Federation voted to support a Tyonek resolution opposing the Chuitna Coal Mine's port and storage facilities in Cook Inlet at Ladd Landing. The Tyonek people are concerned that the proposed port and coal stockpile facilities would harm the nearby coastal area that may contain some of the largest pre-contact

Athabascan archeological sites in Alaska.



While the State of Alaska continues to push this project forward, efforts

MERCURY FOUND IN ALASKAN FISH

The State of Alaska used to say that Alaskans could eat all of the fish they want without the risk of overexposure to mercury, but not anymore.

In October of this year, Alaska Department of Health & Social Services released a report detailing the amount of mercury in Alaskan fish. The report shows that certain fish in Alaskan waters contain mercury

levels that meet or exceed limits for unlimited consumption. The major pathway for human exposure to methyl mercury, the toxic form of mercury that accumulates in the food chain, is from the consumption of contaminated fish.

Overall most Alaska seafood is safe to eat, however the report cautions that pregnant women and children should limit their consumption of

large and very large halibut, shark, lingcod, spiny dogfish, and yelloweye rockfish.

Thankfully, Alaska salmon are some of the safest fish for your dinner plate. All species of Alaskan Salmon are safe from mercury contamination, and Alaskans can eat as much wild salmon as they want. Let's keep it that way.

MAT SU LOGGING: SUSITNA WOOD-CHIPPER THROWS IN THE TOWEL

The clear-cutting of Susitna forests may be coming to an end: Oklahoma-based NPI says they are now out of the chipping business. The company will stop their Mat-Su clear-cutting operations and instead move to scrap metal transportation to Asian markets.

A Mat-Su Borough moratorium on logging borough forest lands, NPI's mismanagement of private parcel logging, and ACE's legal challenges to clear cutting on state-owned lands all contributed to NPI's woes in the Susitna Basin.

Meanwhile, our concerns for the state's long-term timber plans in the region remain, and the withdrawal of one operator does not necessarily mean that future state timber sales will cease.

A report commissioned by the Mat-Su Borough concluded that industrial chipping operations would soon be competing with small local mills for trees and also competing with tourism and outdoor recreation. The H.P. Cole and Associates report also pointed out that the non-consumptive value of intact forest outweighs profits

from clear cutting 20 to 1.

ACE continues to track Mat-Su Valley logging operations. With thousands of acres of forest planned for clear-cutting ACE continues to work towards well planned and thoroughly reviewed operations on our State lands. A sustainable, locally-supported timber economy can take root as long as small mills have access to the timber supply and provide local jobs thereby directly supporting the Mat-Su economy.

KNIK RIVER PLANNING: A NEW ERA FOR RECREATION ON THE KNIK?

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources is thankfully taking a long, hard look at how to manage the newly designated Knik River Public Use Area. Almost everyone has heard the horror stories from this de facto "Mad Max" zone, and it appears as though this reputation may be coming to an end.

Motorized and quiet recreationists all agree that it is time for DNR to step up and take control of the Knik. Regulation language has been drafted by the team at DNR and ACE is working on making recommendations and comments for increased habitat and wildlife protection in the regulations.

The wetland habitat of the watershed is the most sensitive area of the 260,000 acres. At less than 5%

of the public use area, protection of this ecologically valuable zone should be prioritized. In the past, motorized



Damage on the Rippy Trail, Knik River PUA

vehicles have paid no regard to the ongoing damage to these wetlands, and salmon streams such as Jim Creek

have suffered bank erosion problems due to ATV crossings.

The first step is to create the regulations; next DNR will produce a draft planning document that will spell out the details of Knik River management. ACE will continue to work with local residents who have been fighting for meaningful protection of the Knik area's natural resources and lawful visitors.

We hope that DNR will have an enforceable plan in place before next summer's riding season. The sooner new rules and regulations can be enforced the better – and the state's ability to enforce a management plan depends on public support to focus the resources and will needed for effective protection of this popular public area.

CHUGACH CONSERVATION

KENAI WINTER ACCESS

By Valerie Connor

The snow line is creeping down the flanks of the Chugach Mountains, inspiring me to excavate into the back corners of the shed where my Europa 99's are stored. The last leaves just fell off of the lilacs in the yard, and the reality of winter is setting in. The long summer days and lush vegetation are still recent memories, replaced by mud and soggy leaves, creating the perfect time to start planning your winter trips. If you are one of the thousands of people who like to recreate in the Chugach National Forest, you'll find a new winter management plan on the

access. However the plan still largely favors motorized uses and does not approach a balanced "50-50" regime that ACE advocates.

The Plan includes some seasonal and year-on, year-off units, so before you head out to ski make sure to check the current access map at www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/news_releases/kenai_workshop/current_accs_srd.pdf.

Highlights of the plan:

- The Resurrection units will now be managed according to a "Season A/Season B" scenario

Mt. Alice unit is a new non-motorized area.

- Lost Lake, Carter/Crescent, Hope, Johnson, Ptarmigan/Grant units are all motorized, with a proposed non-motorized corridor in a small section of the Lost Lake and Crescent/Carter units. Tern Lake is motorized except for the area west of the Seward Highway and the power line from Devil's Creek Trail including the Summit Creek drainage.

- Heli-skiing will not be permitted in the Snow River



Tel-skiing in the Chugach. Photo by Leif Mjos

Kenai in effect this year.

The new plan, titled Kenai Winter Access, designates motorized and non-motorized areas for winter recreation to help skiers and snowmachiners share the terrain. Thanks to the hard work of ACE members and other conservation groups, the new plan does include more terrain managed for non-motorized

whereby the use will alternate on a yearly basis. The 2007-2008 winter season will be designated motorized, and the following year will be non-motorized.

- The Summit, Russian, and Snow River units are largely non-motorized, though there are proposed motorized corridors in the Snow and Summit units. The Tiehack/

exploratory unit, but has been cleared for the Ptarmigan/Grant exploratory unit. Heli-skiing is allowed in parts of all the designated motorized units except for the Carter/Crescent, Tern Lake and Summit units.

For more information, go to www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/news_releases/kenai_workshop/kenai_index.html.

STERLING HIGHWAY UPDATE: COOPER LANDING

The controversial and long-awaited Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60 (Cooper Landing Bypass) project has been delayed once again due to budgetary woes at the state Department of Transportation. The project, for which the state is completing a draft SEIS for agency review by February 2008, has dropped off the state's transportation improvement plan for lack of funding.

State officials say that this doesn't

mean the project is disappearing, but it looks to be on the back burner for a long time. Alaska has allocated much of its federal highway funds to study the Gravina and Knik bridges; (aka the Bridges to Nowhere), leading many to conclude that these dubious megaprojects are in fact diverting attention from community needs. (The Sterling Highway project has been estimated to cost at least \$140 million). Nationally, due to the overtaxing of federal highway funds, all states are

expecting highway funding reductions in the near future, further exacerbating Alaska's transportation woes.

Even though the project is unlikely to be built in the near future, the state is moving ahead to finalize planning documents that will determine the eventual route of the bypass, so we will continue to watchdog the EIS process for a route that doesn't minimize any impacts on critical brown bear habitat and other forest resources.

PERMITS ALLOW HELICOPTERS IN CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST

The Forest Service is currently reviewing proposals from Alaska Backcountry Access (ABA) and Chugach Powder Guides (CPG) regarding helicopter access into the forest. ABA has requested an amendment to their current permit asking for 800 year round temporary use service days at Eagle Glacier, and 400 days at Punch Bowl Glacier, with access by helicopter.

CPG is requesting a ten year extension to their five year permit, which expires on 4/20/09. With CPG's

current permit of 2,400 user days, in combination with ABA's proposal of 1,200 user days, the total number of helicopter user days will have more than quadrupled in the last five years. While ACE is generally supportive of outfitters and guides in the National Forest, we have significant concerns with the ABA permit amendment as proposed. In limited areas and at appropriate times, helicopter skiing is one legitimate use of our National Forest lands.

However, it should not be allowed

to expand so much that it dominates large areas of land, displaces other recreation users, disrupts communities, threatens wildlife, and degrades our quality of life. We continue to assert that the Forest Service has failed to undertake a cumulative effects analysis regarding wildlife, recreational user conflicts, and motorized use-related noise and other impacts of helicopter skiing; it is irresponsible to allow this level of expansion until appropriate ecological and social analyses have been conducted.

POLLUTANT LEVEL DROPS IN KENAI RIVER

In January of 2007, State regulators asked the Environmental Protection Agency to list the Kenai River as an impaired waterbody under the federal Clean Water Act. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation proposed listing the river after water samples revealed hydrocarbon levels that exceeded state standards of 10 parts per billion in the month of July every year since 2000, when testing began.

The latest water quality data from last summer shows an improvement in the hydrocarbon levels in the Kenai River, perhaps due to fewer two-stroke motors. Robert Ruffner, executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum, said hydrocarbon levels above the Warren Ames Bridge still exceeded state water quality standards, but they were slightly lower this year than in previous years.

Recognizing the impacts of two-

stroke engines on the water quality of the river, the Kenaitze Indian tribe is offering incentives to upgrade to cleaner burning four-stroke engines through an exchange program. The tribe has purchased nearly 180 motors from anglers this summer in exchange for \$500 toward a new four-stroke motor. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe will continue its exchange program until the end of December.

EXXON MOBIL: PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

Eighteen years have passed since the Exxon-Valdez wandered off course to plow into Bligh Reef, spilling 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound, and lingering effects and unfinished business from this disaster still remain. The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustees Council

currently recognizes 30 resources and services as "injured;" six of these have shown little or no improvement since the spill injuries occurred.

In a final effort to forestall payments to Alaskans affected by the spill, Exxon Mobil has appealed to the United States Supreme Court,

seeking to reduce or eliminate the \$2.5 billion punitive damages award owed to Alaskan communities impacted by the spill. (The award was originally set at \$5 billion in 1994, and Exxon has successfully stalled any payment for the last 13 years). A decision is expected next year.



ICEBERG BREAKS FREE FROM THE GLACIER KNOWN AS CONGRESS

By Clare Stockert

After several months without any major news from Congress on global warming, there is a sudden flurry of bills and proposals that are garnering attention. There is even talk about the newly proposed Lieberman-Warner bill passing within a year.

The Lieberman-Warner bill was released in mid-October with much fanfare, and is believed to be the strongest climate change bill that has a chance of passing. Since it seems to find the middle ground between “not too aggressive” and “not too conservative,” it is likely to appeal to a broad range of Congressional members.

The bill proposes to reduce carbon emissions to 70% of current levels by 2050. But when the majority of American scientists say that we need to reduce emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by mid century in order to avoid the most devastating effects of global warming, this legislation may not be the answer we need.

Is it better to pass a moderate bill in this Congress to get started on capping carbon emissions sooner, or wait until 2009 when a stronger bill has a better chance of passing? Many climate leaders are reaching different

conclusions to this question, and some – including Senator Boxer, The Nature Conservancy, and The National Wildlife Federation – argue that it is possible to fix the loopholes in this bill and get a good result now.

However, climate activist Bill McKibben says it is better for the current Congress to pass nothing than to approve a weak bill. In an October 4th article in *The Nation*, McKibben



says, “Since Bush is going to veto it anyway, there is no reason to make [a bill] less ambitious than what science requires. Climate change isn’t like other issues. It doesn’t do any good to split the difference to reach a deal everyone can live with. Climate change is about the laws of physics and chemistry, and they don’t give.”

As of this printing, the bill has passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee with some revisions to close loopholes.

Time will tell how much this bill can be strengthened and if Congress has the political will to send a tough bill to President Bush.

Step It Up Congress!

Congress might be lukewarm on strong climate change legislation, but the American people are not. The nation’s largest climate change rally occurred with events in all 50 states on November 3rd, exactly one

year before the 2008 elections. Step It Up is calling on Congress to pass legislation that will create green jobs, put a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants and cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050.

In Alaska, events took place in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Homer and Sitka. The Anchorage event drew over 200 participants and included talks from DEC

Commissioner Larry Hartig, UAA Chancellor Fran Ulmer, and Anchorage Renewable Resources Manager Kevin Harun (reading a proclamation from Mayor Begich).

To learn more about Step It Up, check out www.stepitup2007.org. Get involved by attending the Anchorage Step It Up meeting at Kaladi Brothers in the REI mall on December 12th from 7-8pm. Contact Clare at 274-3626 or clare@akcenter.org to learn

more about statewide citizens against climate change groups.

Renewable Energy Fund

Locally, you can take action on climate change by advocating for the state's renewable energy fund. HB152, under consideration next January in the state senate, would create a renewable energy fund to distribute

grants and loans to projects around the state. This fund will really help small village electricity co-ops that would financially benefit from renewable energy in the long-run, but don't have adequate start-up funding.

The bill passed the state house last year and is currently in the Senate Finance Committee. One impediment

for the bill is funding. If the bill is not funded with seed money when it passes, it won't do much good. You can call your state senator to let him or her know that you support the passage of the bill with adequate funding. If your Senator sits on the Finance Committee, your call is especially important because they have the power to fund the bill.

What can you do? Call Your Senator and Ask Them to Pass and Adequately Fund HB 152

Senate Finance Committee:

Senator Lyman Hoffman: Co-Chair, District S, Bethel, 465-4453

Senator Bert Stedman: Co-Chair, District A, Sitka, 465-3873

Senator Charlie Huggins: Vice Chair, District H, Wasilla, 465-3878

Senator Kim Elton: District B, Juneau, 465-4947

Senator Donny Olson: District T, Nome, 465-3707

Senator Joe Thomas: District D, Fairbanks, 465-2327

Senator Fred Dyson: District I, Eagle River, 465-2199



Questions? Contact Clare at 274-3626 or clare@akcenter.org.

from page 7, PLASTIC SEA

Our plastics pebbles, it turns out, are sponges for DDT, PCBs, and other oily pollutants. AMRF researcher, Charles Moore, points out that as “products degrade, break into fragments, and disperse, the pieces may also become concentrators and transporters of toxic chemicals in the marine environment. Thus an astronomical number of vectors for some of the most toxic pollutants known are being released into an ecosystem dominated by the most efficient natural vacuum cleaners nature ever invented: the jellies and salps living in the ocean. After those organisms ingest the toxins, they are eaten in turn by fish, and so the poisons pass into the food web that leads, in some cases, to human beings.”

Studies indicate less than 5% of plastic ever gets recycled, while each American is said to contribute some 65 lbs. of plastic into landfills each year. Of the 100 million tons of plastic produced each year, roughly 10 percent ends up in the sea. Approximately 20

percent of this originates from ocean going vessels and drilling platforms. The remaining 20,000 tons of plastic flotsam come from our everyday careless handling of “convenient products.” Plastic bags and bottles are blown from yards, streets, moving vehicles, or landfills and eventually washed down into drains, creeks, and rivers and out to sea.

References:

Moore, C.J. et al “A Comparison of Plastic and Plankton in the North Pacific Central Gyre.” *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 42.12 (2001): 1297-1300.

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Greenpeace. “Ocean plastic pollution and how you can help.” <http://www.oceans.greenpeace.org/en/this-expedition/news/trashing-our-oceans>
Tanabe, Shinsuke “POPs---Need for

Target Research on High Risk Stage.” *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 48 (2004): 609-610. Editorial.

What can you do?

Avoid Plastic Packaging: Many products are unnecessarily wrapped in plastic. In most cases there is an alternative product packaged more responsibly.

Use Shopping Bags: By reusing bags constructed of cloth or other “re-usables” consumers can save millions of tons of plastic waste yearly.

Buy in bulk: Purchasing one larger container of staple goods rather than multiple smaller containers can go a long way to reduce your inventory of plastics.

Dispose of your waste responsibly: Be careful to contain all outdoor trash bags and bins. Secure any loads headed to the landfill to avoid flying refuse.

Re-use or recycle household plastics: “Disposable” does not mean you have to trash an item after one use. Keep the plastics that you do have and replace them with non-toxic, long lasting materials as they wear out.

Questions? Contact Butch at 274-3647 or butch@akcenter.org.

ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2007 IN REVIEW

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that Alaska continues to be a special place through your support of Alaska Center for the Environment. We are already well on our way to creating a brighter future for Alaska, and you've been critical to the effort. By supporting ACE as a member and taking action on the issues, you have helped us attain some impressive accomplishments this year:

- **Put the brakes on coal:** In coalition with local groups and community leaders, ACE has drawn attention to the harmful effects of coal and is working to keep it out of the state altogether. This year, the Matanuska Electric Association shelved a controversial coal plant proposal and leaseholders withdrew plans for coal mining in Chickaloon under pressure from ACE and our allies.

- **Pressured state leaders to address global warming:** As a result, Governor Palin created a sub-cabinet on climate change, Senators Murkowski and Stevens have signed onto carbon cap and trade bills, and towns across Alaska are developing their own plans to become more energy efficient- much of which seemed impossible just a year ago.

- **Worked for a balance between motorized and non-motorized recreation on our public lands:** On the Kenai, a new Winter Access Plan has been finalized that increases opportunities for non-motorized recreation. We also successfully reached a legal settlement halting illegal off-road vehicle use in Wrangell St. Elias National Park.

- **Defeated Proposition 1 in the Mat-Su Borough:** This short-sighted

proposition would have thrown out all zoning rules, lowered property values and created an expensive, bureaucratic mess in the state's fastest-growing region.



- **Promoted opportunities for quiet recreation:** ACE worked with local residents, the state, and user groups to establish a management plan for the 260,000-acre Knik River Public Use Area.

- **Safeguarded Alaska's Oceans:** As part of the Shipping Safety Partnership, ACE is holding the line on environmental and safety standards for international shipping in Alaska's waters. This August, owners of the Selendang Ayu settled for \$10 million and plead guilty to criminal charges for the ship's 2004 grounding near Unalaska. Settlement money will

go into shipping safety research on the Aleutian Chain and beyond.

- **Celebrated 25 years of Trailside Discovery Camp:** This year, Trailside launched the Nanuq Winter Adventures outreach program to over 25 schools in the Anchorage School District, served a record 2,100 children in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley this summer, and kicked off its new Teamwork & Teamplay program to over 750 children this fall.

- **Led the fight against urban sprawl in Anchorage:** By debunking the myths of the proposed Knik Arm Bridge and promoting infill and redevelopment in Anchorage through a land code re-write, ACE worked towards a vision for a vibrant Anchorage core rather than endless urban sprawl.

- **I love the Chugach!** ACE was instrumental in celebrating the Chugach Centennial and using this milestone to elevate the awareness of the Chugach through special events, media, and materials.

- **Protected Alaska's boreal forests:** ACE is working to prevent the 'strip, chip and ship' industry from taking hold in the Susitna Basin, where we are currently challenging the legality of the controversial Copper

timber sale on popular recreational lands near Willow.

• **Joined forces with developers in a successful campaign supporting parks and transit bonds in Anchorage:**

For the first time in a decade, Anchorage voters approved transit and parks bonds this past April in response to our media and grassroots campaign.

• **Made our voice heard in Juneau:**

Thanks to ACE members, the Climate Change Commission heard from Alaskans across the state, the renewable energy fund bill passed the

house, and funding for Murkowski's 'roads to nowhere' were removed from the capital budget.

• **Inspired viewers statewide with the Alaska Ocean Film Festival:**

Our traveling "edu-tainment" event added Barrow, Cordova, Kenai, Ketchikan, Seldovia, Sitka, Skagway, Valdez, Whitehorse, and Yakutat to a long list of venues. Over 2,500 festival goers enjoyed more than 20 ocean films from Alaska and around the world.

• **Kept Alaska Wild:** ACE worked to defend the Chugach and

other wild places by monitoring proposed activities, educating our members, and submitting comments whenever appropriate.

• **Reached out to Alaskans statewide:**

Going door to door, our outreach team visited Anchorage, Mat-Su, Eagle River, Seward, Kodiak and Valdez. Hundreds of new members signed up, even more renewed.

• **Got our hands dirty:**

ACE staff, board and volunteers picked up over 1,000 pounds of trash along adopted road, trail and waterways.



Member Application/Renewal Form

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

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.

Name _____

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REQUIRED FOR PUFFIN CLUB: Signature _____ Date _____

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

ALASKA OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL 2008



ALASKA OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL: 2007-2008 SCHEDULE

Oct 12 & 13	Barrow
Oct 19	Copper Center
Oct 20	Valdez
Nov 17	Cordova
Nov 30	Nome
Dec 1	Kotzebue
Jan 19	Dillingham
Jan 26	Talkeetna
Feb 7	Homer
Feb 8	Seward
Feb 9	Kenai
Feb 20 & 21	Anchorage
Feb 22	Fairbanks
March 16	Juneau
March 18	Skagway
March 19	Haines
March 20	Sitka
March 21	Ketchikan
April 20	Kodiak
TBA	Yakutat

CELEBRATING OUR WATER PLANET

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