

# NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POLLY CARR

September is my favorite month of the year. It's when we get to decompress from the craze of summer—the all-night hikes, the intense dip-netting hauls, the extended family visits—and take a moment to reflect. I've had so many days recently where I've looked out my window, or been on the trail, or on the water, and thought, *I am so lucky to live here*. And then I think, *I am lucky to have a job where I get to connect with Alaskans about the things that make our home special*.

This total awe of Alaska, and love of the natural world is what we work to inspire in thousands of young people each year. On August 15th, ACE bid goodbye to the 3,500 children that attended Trailside Discovery Camp this summer. We had another banner year, and expanded our services through new, innovative partnerships, including the hiring of 15 Cook Inlet Tribal Council teens as Assistant Environmental Education Instructors through their Career Ready program. We also learned more about our Trailside parents' conservation interests—and now have 30 new volunteers to plug into upcoming opportunities!

Speaking of volunteers, this summer marked our first-ever *Organizer Academy*, where we trained 15 new volunteer advocates to play leadership roles on important campaigns to protect our salmon. These volunteers assisted a variety of outreach efforts, culminating with a push to galvanize Alaskans to comment on the EPA's final decision to use the Clean Water Act to protect Bristol Bay. At hearings held in Anchorage and throughout Bristol Bay testimony was 3:1 in support of the EPA's decision!

One week before the EPA hearings, an unfortunate disaster occurred in neighboring British Columbia. The tailings dam breach of the Mt. Polley gold and copper mine sparked renewed concern over Pebble in Alaska. The damage to the waterways and the threat to salmon proved in real time the impact of large scale mines. Southeast Alaska tribes and fishermen are up in arms about Mt. Polley, and the array of additional mining projects in B.C., as we all should be: the impacts from these mines could devastate yet another prized fishery that employs, and sustains, thousands of Alaskans.

The EPA's final assessment of the Bristol Bay watershed has already found that even without a disaster, dredging the Pebble deposit will destroy up to 90 miles of salmon streams and up to 5,000 acres of wetland salmon habitat. We need to set a new precedent that considers the economic, cultural, and community value of our salmon fisheries over short-sighted mega projects that don't stand to benefit Alaskans. **Please take action by September 19th to ensure the debate over Pebble Mine is finally put to rest.** Comment online at [bit.ly/acepebblecomment](http://bit.ly/acepebblecomment).

One of the most important things you can do for conservation this fall is VOTE. If you are not registered to vote, you can do so by October 5th ([bit.ly/akvoterreg](http://bit.ly/akvoterreg)). On Tuesday, November 4th you will have the chance to weigh in on critical state and federal races, in addition to three ballot initiatives and one referendum ([bit.ly/akelections](http://bit.ly/akelections)). And, on October 7th, many of you will have the opportunity to vote in important municipal elections, check with your local city or borough for more information.

Get informed, and exercise your right to vote on the issues that matter to you. Thank you for all of your actions to ensure a better Alaska.

Best,



Polly Carr  
Executive Director



ALASKA CENTER  
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
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# 850

ACE MEMBERS HAVE TAKEN ACTION TO SUPPORT THE EPA TO SAVE BRISTOL BAY AND STOP PEBBLE MINE

# 1,000

LET'S GROW THAT NUMBER EVEN MORE BY THE SEPTEMBER 19TH EPA COMMENT DEADLINE

SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS BY SEPTEMBER 19TH ONLINE AT:

[BIT.LY/ACEPEBBLECOMMENT](http://BIT.LY/ACEPEBBLECOMMENT)

ONE MINUTE IS ALL IT WILL TAKE TO BE PART OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROTECT BRISTOL BAY THAT WE'VE EVER SEEN!

# ACE INTRODUCES THE ORGANIZER ACADEMY

With the critically important environmental issues we work on, it takes a heavy lift to make change. ACE relies on volunteers to make the difference, and we are lucky to have talented organizers stepping up to the plate. To provide training and support, and recognize the hard work of our emerging leaders, we implemented our first ever Organizer Academy in June. This six week program is built on taking volunteer engagement to the next level. The diverse group of participants met once a week for hands-on training to learn the skills needed to lead a campaign, and then took their new skills into the field to advocate for wild salmon.



**Back:** Andrew Steinkruger, Guthrie Worthington, Brittany Hales, Kat Ousley, Mike Cox; **Front:** Kelsi Swenson (coordinator), Matt McGimsey, Maia Wen, Enetta Walker, Paula Saylor; **Not Pictured:** Gretchyn O'Donnell

Each participant was required to complete 12 volunteer hours throughout the session—and many had doubled the amount of required time by the end of the program—for a combined 280+ hours of volunteer and training time over six weeks! For the end of academy culminating project, participants planned and coordinated a private DamNation film screening for friends and families. At the event they shared their work and collected Susitna Salmon Pledges and Pebble Postcards.

The program wrapped up in late July with 10 graduates! These new ACE-certified organizers are already putting their new skills to use. Several are working with ACE to drive comments to the EPA in support of protecting Bristol Bay, and others are bringing their new tools back to their organizations. The success of this pilot program and the valuable feedback from the participants will help us shape the next session. Stay tuned for more information on the 2015 Organizer Academy.

## MEET OUR CONSERVATION INTERN, KELSI SWENSON

Each summer, the Alaska Conservation Foundation Ted Smith Conservation Internship Program sends college interns to nonprofit conservation, environmental justice, and Alaska Native organizations; government agencies; and other interested organizations that meet the program criteria throughout Alaska. ACE coordinates recruitment and training for this program, and also hosts an intern to work on salmon issues.

Meet Kelsi Swenson, our 2014 summer intern, super-volunteer, and the person behind our first-ever ACE Organizer Academy!

*“After making strong relationships with volunteers this summer and providing them with a set of sound organizing skills, I now have the confidence to be a leader in Alaska conservation work.” – Kelsi Swenson*

Like many of our young conservation leaders, Kelsi's start came with recycling. She was an active member of her high school's recycling club in her hometown of Spokane, WA and continued her work at Montana State University, where she implemented a recycling program on each floor of her dorm.

After taking a few years to travel and spend time with family, she returned to college at the University of Alaska Anchorage, where she is the President of the UAA Sustainability Club.

Kelsi started as a volunteer with ACE this past spring, fighting the Silencing Alaskans Act, House Bill 77, and quickly became a superstar volunteer turned Conservation Intern! She's extremely interested in the influences and dynamics of change within human societies and their environments and believes that the conservation and preservation of salmon habitat in Alaska is a crucial step in mitigating fossil fuel emissions and the effects of climate change. She spent her summer working with our Statewide Organizer, Kylee Singh, on salmon issues and helped pilot the ACE Organizer Academy with our Youth Engagement Director, Megan McBride. And, lucky for us, she's continuing with ACE part time through the fall—and will graduate from UAA this spring with a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology and a focus in Human Ecology.



*Kelsi and Organizer Academy graduate Enetta Walker at the Fairview Block Party*