

This past August was an unusually busy one—instead of heading off for a final vacation before the start of school and the fall hunting season, many Alaskans were busily preparing for the unprecedented visit by President Barack Obama. The trip was framed as a key step in elevating the President’s climate change agenda, en route to the international negotiations in Paris this December.



AYEA Youth Organizers meet with Secretary Kerry

One exciting element of this visit was the launch of the Arctic Youth Ambassadors program at the international Global Leadership in the Arctic (GLACIER) conference, in which three of ACE’s Alaska Youth for Environmental Action program teens became part of an initial cohort who will participate in international events as part of the US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Having our young people engaged in the dialogue around climate is critical, as they are the generation that has the most to gain, or lose, depending upon the actions of current leaders.

In the lead-up to the President’s visit, ACE and our partners worked to highlight the need for state and local leadership on climate action—because, after the media attention has waned—we Alaskans are still here, left with the real-time impacts that climate change poses to our fisheries, communities, and cultures. We have a \$3.5 billion deficit on a \$5 billion state budget, with no real plan to move us toward a stable economic path that invests in the very resources that will sustain our communities in the long-term—like our clean water, children’s education, clean energy, and healthy salmon.

Over the last several months, thousands of our members like you spoke out loud and clear on an issue that impacts both clean water and healthy salmon—the battle for water in the Middle Creek of the Chuitna River. On October 7th, the Department of Natural Resources delivered a middle-of-the-road decision and awarded the Chuitna Citizen’s Coalition only one instream flow reservation to protect this water for salmon habitat. While one instream flow reservation is a small victory, it by no means guarantees protection of the river from future coal mining by Pac Rim, or any other potential developers.

We need strong leadership at every level to address issues like the proposed Chuitna coal mine. That is why it’s so exciting to see the round of newly elected leaders throughout Alaska! In October, we elected an energy efficiency role model for Fairbanks Borough Mayor, a salmon champion for Mat-Su Borough Mayor, and a seafood marketing and fisheries advocate for Juneau Mayor. Together, with the newly elected Anchorage Mayor, these local leaders can make changes that will elevate the need for action across the state.

And we need these changes. While Alaska is temporarily “off the hook” in creating a Clean Power Plan, ACE is moving the conversation forward to get our state leaders thinking about renewable energy and energy efficiency strategies to save money and reduce emissions; and our youth leaders will continue to advocate for policy that gets us there. **Join us for our “Alaska’s Clean Energy Future” forum on December 3rd at 5:30 PM at the Alaska Experience Theatre to learn more.**

Thanks for your previous support, together I know we can move Alaska forward.

Polly Carr
Executive Director

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Amy O'Connor (left) with Organizer Academy Participants

November marks the one year anniversary of our Mat-Su Valley office! Longtime Valley resident and former National Park Service employee Amy O'Connor joined us last fall as our Mat-Su Organizer. As a farmer and a mom, Amy is focused on keeping the Mat-Su healthy and sustainable for generations to come.

This fall, Amy is putting on our first-ever Mat-Su Organizer Academy in Palmer, with 10 participants from across the Valley— from Talkeetna to the Butte! For five weeks (October 29 - November 19), they'll hone their skills in community organizing, relationship building, effective communication, and teamwork through training sessions and action opportunities in the Mat-Su. Academy participants will be utilizing the skills they learned to coordinate community clean-ups next spring,

engage on conservation threats along the Knik River, and plan activities to get disabled veterans and homeless youth in the Mat-Su to experience the boundless recreation the Valley has to offer.

They'll also learn more about ACE's priority issues—salmon, clean energy, and sustainable communities—and host the Telluride Mountainfilm Festival in Palmer! The festival, which takes place on November 6th at 6:30 PM at the Glenn Massey Theater, will give the participants an opportunity to test out their new skills and learn what it takes to execute a community event.

The Mountainfilm Festival showcases stories that educate and inspire audiences worldwide, and the Palmer screening includes a special showing of "Xboundary." This local film, directed by Ryan Peterson, explores the large-scale open-pit mining boom currently underway in northwest British Columbia. While residents of Southeast have been battling these mines for years, the Transboundary issue is one that many Alaskans know little about, and this film aims to change that.

In addition to the Organizer Academy and Mountainfilm Festival, Amy has been busy talking to Valley residents about the conservation issues most important to them and how statewide issues impact the Mat-Su. If you live in the Mat-Su, take a moment to fill out her survey at bit.ly/acematsu. Amy's looking forward to connection with more of our supporters in the Valley—feel free to contact her at amy@akcenter.org or (907) 793-8640, or stop by our Valley office in the Annex at 247 S. Alaska Street #3, she'd be happy to talk about conservation issues over a cup of coffee!



Amy hiking Fairangel with daughters Aspen and Sage

CONSERVATION WINS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

Borough Elections were held October 6, 2015, and the results tell an exciting story for conservation across the state! ACE's partner organization, Alaska Conservation Voters (ACV), supported candidates in the Mat-Su, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Kenai Peninsula Boroughs:

- **Fairbanks**—Karl Kassel defeated Tammie Wilson by over 2,500 votes to become the next Borough Mayor. As a Borough Assembly member, Karl advocated for public education, and he's ready to solve the high price of energy in Fairbanks!
- **Mat-Su Valley**—Vern Halter defeated incumbent Larry DeVilbiss by 451 votes. During his tenure on the Borough Assembly, Vern supported the creation of the Blue Ribbon Fish Commission and is a staunch advocate for local agriculture and salmon habitat.
- **Juneau**—Greg Fisk defeated incumbent Merrill Sanford by 1,000 votes. Greg is a solution-focused leader with years of strong public service. Greg is focused on growing Juneau's economy by strengthening the commercial fishing industry and fully funding schools.
- **Kenai Peninsula**—ACV helped elect Willy Dunne, a fisheries biologist, for District 9 (South Peninsula); but unfortunately candidate David Wartinbee lost in District 1 (Kalifornsky) by a mere 4 votes—demonstrating just how much every vote counts in local elections.

These leaders, along with the newly elected Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, can chart local solutions to many of the issues impacting our communities and create a stronger statewide voice for sustainable economic development. We're excited to work with them.



ALASKA'S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

Alaska sits at the epicenter of our nation's climate conversation. No place on the planet is the evidence for our rapidly changing climate more apparent than it is here in The Last Frontier. In the last year alone, we've experienced record low snowfall, extreme temperatures, rampant forest fires, and ocean acidification—all of this on top of coastal communities like Kivalina being relocated due to eroding coastline.

Despite these obvious indications that climate change is negatively impacting Alaska's communities, natural resources, and economy, the State of Alaska has failed to create a comprehensive plan for reducing carbon pollution. **We're working to change that.**

Last year ACE's teen organizing program, Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA), launched a major campaign focused on reinvigorating the conversation about climate change solutions in Alaska. Their advocacy work brought the issue directly to the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature—forcing our state leaders to view the current impacts of our changing climate and how it will affect future generations.

Now these Youth Organizers are taking their campaign to the next level. Twenty-four teens hailing from communities statewide—from Venetie to Dutch Harbor—came together and reaffirmed their commitment to addressing climate change. We won't spoil their campaign announcement here, but needless to say when you have that many energetic and creative teenagers in one place they come up with some pretty cool ideas. By the time they are done with their climate change campaign, Alaskans will be looking at our climate challenge in a whole new light.



ACE's Alaska Youth for Environmental Action program Youth Organizers take on climate change!

In addition to this youth campaign, ACE will continue working with newly elected local mayors and our state leaders alike to secure serious pledges and implement action plans that will begin to reduce carbon pollution immediately. We have countless clean energy options to reduce our high energy bills, create jobs, and help us transition to a more sustainable and stable economic future. Our leaders simply can't afford to ignore the opportunity any longer.

But what can we do today to create this future? This is the conversation Alaskans across the state are having right now—and we want to continue to explore it. We hope that you'll join us on **December 3rd** for an event we're calling **Alaska's Clean Energy Future**. We'll have elected officials and energy experts exploring the question of "What can Alaska do today become a clean energy leader?"

Advocates for the status quo often point out that we face unique challenges that our friends in the Lower 48 don't have to deal with, and the "one-size-fits-all" standards aren't right for Alaska. With remote communities, more than 200 small utilities, and an out of date Railbelt power grid—combined with our extreme weather—there's no question that this will be a huge challenge. But Alaska has proven time and again our determination and perseverance in the face of tough challenges.



You're Invited:
ALASKA'S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE
5:30 - 6:30 PM Clean Power Happy Hour
6:30 - 8:00 PM Alaska's Clean Energy Future
Thursday, December 3rd
Alaska Experience Theatre
333 W 4th Avenue, Anchorage

You'll hear more from our Youth Organizers about their campaign in the coming months, and we'll keep you posted on how you can continue to advocate for a clean energy future for Alaska. In the meantime, we hope to see you on Thursday, December 3rd for the Alaska's Clean Energy Future event. Contact us at info@akcenter.org or 274-3621 for more information.

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE! Check out @alaskacenter on Instagram to see more of what we do every day, or follow Alaska Center for the Environment, Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, and Trailside Discovery Camp on Facebook.





ALASKA CENTER
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ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT UPCOMING EVENTS

NOV
6

Telluride Mountainfilm Festival
Friday, November 6th, 6:30 PM
Glenn Massey Theater, Palmer
Get your ticket online at glennmasseytheatre.com

NOV
18

Expanding Voter Access through the PFD Voter Ballot Initiative
Wednesday, November 18th, 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM
ACE/ACV Offices, 921 W 6th Avenue, Anchorage
RSVP to Jen Howk at jen@akcenter.org

NOV
14

AK Common Ground Climate Change Forum
Saturday, November 14th, 9 AM to 4 PM
UAA Student Union, Anchorage
More info at akcommonground.org

DEC
3

Alaska's Clean Energy Future
Thursday, December 3rd, 5:30 PM
Alaska Experience Theatre, 333 W 4th Avenue
RSVP to info@akcenter.org

Trailside Winter Camp registration open now—visit akcenter.org/trailside-discovery for more information.