

# NorthernLine

"Behind is a great forest that goes to the Arctic...and here we must draw our line."

~ Gary Snyder, *Front Lines*



Northern  
Alaska Environmental  
Center

Spring 2017 Vol. XXXIX No. 1

## Fight for the Land, but Enjoy it Too

by Debbie S. Miller



Photo credit, Richard Nelson, at Prince William Sound.

It was a blustery day on the airstrip at Kaktovik. The sudden gusts made you stiffen, turn your back from the sprawling sea of ice, and reach deep into your pockets for warmth. There stood the famed renegade, Edward Abbey, in a frozen stance, waiting for the morning plane.

He had just floated the Kongakut River and we shared stories about the wilderness and the abundance of life in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Perhaps what surprised him most was an American robin that perched near his tent, singing its joyful song in an arctic gale. For a bird that Abbey might have seen in Arizona, it was an impressive story of migration that he witnessed firsthand.

Edward Abbey has been an inspiration to many of us, from his classic books like *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, to his love of nature and his work as an outspoken crusader for the planet. He crafted words that not only poetically described his observations of the natural world, but in his unique way, he made us care about wild places, take action, defend Mother Earth, and stand up for what we believe to be true.

At the same time, Abbey had the spirit and love of adventure. He bannered a good message for all of us on the importance of leading a balanced life. Get outdoors, explore and discover, seek adventure, wander with your friends, celebrate victories, and breathe in the deep quiet and sweet air. That's the stuff that nourishes and empowers us—mind, body and soul.

Abbey's message is perhaps more timely today than

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## The Northern Line

Environmental News of Arctic and Interior Alaska

The Northern Line is published by the Northern Alaska Environmental Center (NAEC, 830 College Rd., Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. EMAIL: info@northern.org WEB: www.northern.org Copyright © 2015 by NAEC. All rights reserved. Subscription rate is \$40 annually and includes membership. We encourage submission of letters and articles for publications. We reserve the right to edit all submissions. The Northern Alaska Environmental Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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**Fight for the Land, but Enjoy it too** *continued from cover page*

ever. We are faced with enormous environmental challenges in Alaska and worldwide: addressing climate change, preserving precious places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Great Barrier Reef, keeping our air and water clean, and protecting countless endangered species. There is a lot of serious work to do.

Whoever said the job to protect the magnificent state of Alaska would be easy? The number of issues facing all of us is overwhelming, daunting. Yet, we can sign the endless stream of petitions, join the marchers on Earth Day, attend hearings and speak out, write emails, letters and commentaries, and lobby in D.C. We can also educate ourselves to create sensible arguments that convince our neighbors, our friends, our adversaries, and our leaders that Alaska's wild places and its creatures must be safeguarded—that we will continue to stand up for what we love and cherish.

That is why the Northern Center and the collective weight of the conservation community is so important right now. We can join together—our voices, our spirit, our love of wild places, our resistance—and speak up for earth and all of its inhabitants. It's our duty, our responsibility, as citizens of the earth and as Alaskans who care deeply about the future of our beautiful state.

And let's not forget the people all over the world who care about Alaska too. Take the Australian woman who we recently met on a country road in Queensland. She had visited Alaska once and climbed Denali to its breathtaking summit. When she heard we were Alaskans, she lit up and exclaimed, "You live in the most spectacular place in the world!"

Yes, we certainly do, and with that honor comes responsibility to protect it. With summer approaching, we should remember Edward Abbey's message to get outdoors and enjoy our time in the wilderness: float a river, hike a new trail, pick an extra pail of blueberries for a friend, climb that mountain you've always wanted to, volunteer to clean up a favorite place, catch a king salmon and savor it.

And be grateful for all that is Alaska, ready to defend it with your whole heart. ♣

*Debbie S. Miller is 42-year Alaskan who loves the wilderness. She is collaborating with Fairbanks photographer and naturalist, Hugh Rose, on a forthcoming adult photo essay book about the wilderness that surrounds Prince William Sound. "A Wild Promise: Prince William Sound," will be released in April, 2018, by Braided River.*

## The Northern Line Has Gone Green

Here at the Northern Center, we are dedicated to demonstrating our commitment to conservation through the reduction of our footprint and efficient use of your donation dollars. Equally important is our responsibility to keep our members informed about the successes, struggles, and emerging issues of the environmental movement in Northern Alaska. In light of this, all editions of the Northern Line will be available in digital format on our website (www.northern.org), in color! Once per year we will still mail out a paper edition to current members.



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## Onward

by Jessica Girard

In the winter of 2004 I was stationed in Baghdad, Iraq. This is both the reason I began my environmental work and the reason I have to take a step back from it now. During this deployment, I was diagnosed with a minor infection and acknowledged my first face-to-face environmental injustice, as I learned to call it. Both incidents have greatly influenced and affected my life in both problematic and meaningful ways. These two corresponding events have changed me in ways I do not yet fully understand.

While traveling during this deployment I witnessed a man shoveling military waste into a massive incinerator; the military complex burned everything from tanks to toes. The man had no mask, shoes, or gloves. These experiences started a journey of academic education, learning from grassroots leaders, and a continued personal awakening. This time, however, was not a time which I prioritized my health. In the same six years, I have had six surgeries and more hospitalizations than I care to take the time to count. As I wrap up my time with the Northern Center and focus on long-lasting health, I fully commit to disrupting injustice as much as I can for as long as I can, but will do this in tandem with an equal commitment to self-care, as we all should.

I first want to say how grateful I am to the staff, the board, the membership, my coalition colleagues and especially the community for teaching me. I was given extraordinary support in how I did this work by the board of directors and staff, allowing me to listen to the community and act based on these initial and ongoing conversations. Without your engagement, we could not have temporarily halted offshore drilling in the Arctic Ocean. Without your energy, we would not have been able to start the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, or add protections to the management structure of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I

would not know how important this work was if Fran Mauer had not taken me to lunch and shared his stories about the Arctic Refuge. I would not know how important this work was if Princess Johnson did not share her peoples' connection to the land with me or invite me to visit. I would not know how important this work was if Christina-Alexa Liakos didn't make the connection between our Arctic Ocean struggle and that of the Gulf of Mexico. If so many of you did not take the time to connect me deeply to this place, this work, and with your knowledge I would not have been as deeply impassioned or driven in this work, which is now my life. You have awoken me and I can never say thank you enough.

As a veteran who had never worked in the non-profit sector before, the Northern Center is where I refined skills I had learned about in graduate school or doing field work. Nevertheless, there is so much more to it; this job is where I did my first press release, molded by Elisabeth, a process I like to call 'Elisabething'. This is where I first did a work plan, refined by my Alaska peers. I first created a yearly budget, refined by Anna, who will tell you that I 'have a loose relationship with detail'. The women of the Northern Center pushed me and I pushed them as we rethought ideas, worked through plans, or organized events. We have grown together, and I am happy to see the Northern Center continue its journey deeper into the work this local advocacy group has done since its inception. My hope, as I begin this transition, is that the Northern Center will continue to incorporate justice into the work of conservation; to do the work of amplifying voices, peoples' own voices, in the shared struggles we face. Simultaneously, recognizing the systems we function in (ANSCA for example) perpetuate colonization and environmental injustices; therefore, we must use our position as an

organization to make fundamental and lasting change.

Doing this work I have found my inner power and have helped build that power in others throughout our community. It has been the best part of this work to realize that we have the power as individuals and small organizations to make change. We have only let others think, over time, that power lies in the hands of others. When we decide to take that power back, deepen our democracy, ground ourselves in our truth, only then can we make the changes we seek. Wangari Maathai eloquently captures this notion of power and conservation when she proclaims, "you cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them." I am proud of the Northern Center for doing the work of being a growthful organization constantly learning better ways to promote conservation and sustainable resource stewardship.

Finally, I leave you with enormous gratitude and hope in my heart. "Lovers of freedom, lovers of social justice, disarmers, peacekeepers, civil disobeyers, democrats, civil-rights activists, and defenders of the environment are legions in a single multiform cause, and they will gain strength by knowing it, taking encouragement from it, and when appropriate and opportune, pooling their efforts," says Jonathan Schell. We must recognize it is time to pool our efforts without ego or ownership because; after all, we are one movement.

Onward,  
 Jessica Girard  
 program director 2014-2017



# Taking the Fight to Protect the Arctic Refuge to Juneau

by Jessica Girard



Activists fighting to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge rally on the steps of the Alaska State Capitol Building in Juneau.

For years the Northern Center, like many organizations in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coalition, spent all its legislative energy on federal leadership in DC. In recent years, however, our focus has evolved, and by the time Donald Trump and a Democratic-led House in Juneau were elected, our shift towards the local was well underway. Through conversations with other Fairbanks groups about developing a strategy under this new federal administrative era, we decided we must redouble our efforts to bring a Fairbanks delegation to Juneau. When Rep. Westlake (D-Kiana), introduced House Joint Resolution 5, we agreed the time was upon us to plan a trip south. A diverse delegation comprised of volunteer members of the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Inter-Faith community members, Native Movement and the Northern Alaska Environmental Center made the trip to Juneau to speak directly to protection of the Arctic Refuge.

HJR5 is an annual resolution which the Alaska State Legislature passes through committees with few public testimonies and little attention. Prior to our trip to Juneau, three public hearings led up to the impending vote

on the house floor, in which a growing grassroots movement of Alaskans concerned about climate change, Alaska's economy, and protecting Alaska's Indigenous Peoples' ways of life prompted an outpouring of voices opposed to oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In fact, the hearings were delayed in order to make time for all those who wanted to testify in opposition to the resolution. We took the energy of these testimonies to Juneau as we aimed to complete these three goals:

- Directly oppose House Joint Resolution 5
- Introduce the concepts and the immediate need for a just transition
- Connect with our allies in Southeast

## Alternative Truths

Over the course of our four-day trip, our team of fourteen met with over 20 legislative offices, attended related hearings (including clean energy & senate finance), testified at the resource committee hearing for HJR5, and participated in four media interviews. We met with potential political allies, as this was a learning trip for many of our delegation, as well as a new position for several of our

representatives and their staff. These meetings, we reframed the historically embedded narrative depicting the Arctic Refuge as an insignificant place where development would have no impacts or be met by Alaskan resistance. Most leaders believed resistance to development came primarily from Outside environmental non-profits. We educated many of the legislators and their staff about our message of transition from fossil fuels, the need to defend the sacred, and the statewide voice (through petition) that showcased the growing local voice of opposition to oil and gas lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Additionally, we highlighted the Gwich'in people's continued relationship to the Porcupine Caribou herd, paralleling the connection to other sustainable natural resources that Indigenous communities depend on throughout Alaska: when the herd is threatened, so are the Gwich'in. Each of our delegation testified at the resource committee hearing on HJR5, in tandem with callers from throughout the state who waited late into the night to give testimony. Twenty-four people testified for the protection of the Refuge in the Resource Committee hearing alone. Only ten people testified in favor of the resolution to open leases, most of whom worked for the oil and gas industry.

A testimony highlight was presented by our youngest delegate, Nanieezh Peter, a 12-year old with ancestral ties to the Refuge. She said, "Not all Alaskans are for oil drilling in the Refuge... This is my future and we need you to act in protecting it now." Malinda Chase, tribal member of Anvik and member of the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, reminded the committee that we are the only Arctic state in the U.S., and our commitments to the United Nations Paris Agreement demand a just transition off fossil fuels. Odin Miller, a graduate student and reindeer anthropologist at the

University of Alaska Fairbanks, told the legislative committee that we cannot trust the new Administration's Department of Interior to conduct a responsible Environmental Impact Statement on the calving grounds.

It is important to note that Rep. Josephson (D-Anchorage), the co-chair of the House Resource Committee, voted yes for the resolution but stated while closing the committee vote that he "appreciates greatly the testimony that we heard in the House Resources committee from opponents of this resolution. I found them to be amongst the greatest Alaskans that we have, they are not outliers, they are not even wrong. I'm not sure always who is right and who is wrong on this issue... I do appreciate their sensitivity to this issue. I think they take the long view. I think we all need the long view. That is looking beyond our own individual lifespans and saying what about 100 years from now and 200 years from now. I think that's an important thing to do. I think it's a critical thing to do." In the end, Rep. Andy Josephson said, "I am worried about my planet, but my state needs revenue."

Others, though, heard our testimonies loud and clear. Rep. Tarr (D-Anchorage), the co-chair of the House Resource Committee, initiated a roll call vote, ensuring each committee member verbally shared their vote. In a historic move, Rep. Tarr voted against the resolution. Rep. Parrish (D-Juneau) changed his "yes" vote in the Resource Committee to a "no" when the resolution went to the House floor. He said, "I rise today in opposition. I feel it's premature; it's our constitutional responsibility to secure the maximum benefit for the state's resources for the people of our state and until we've addressed the systemic problems which we have, over the years, built up, I could not in good conscience [vote for this], when we would be getting potentially zero production tax for the peak years of productions." Rep. Guttenberg (D-Fairbanks) referenced, in his statement to the floor, the group of Alaskans that came down to Juneau. "They walked the halls last week; the Gwich'in were down here... they have

clearly stated philosophy and values and when we talk about this resolution we are ignoring them. So on behalf of them I will be voting no." In the end there were four no votes and four abstentions in the House and two no votes in the Senate. Without a doubt, this was the most "no" votes in the history of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge resolution.

## Building Bridges

While planning the trip to Juneau we reached out to our networks in Southeast and asked how we could best connect. Through many conversations it was decided that the best way to build relationships across the state was to share a moment that captured the attention of the entire world, unified Indigenous Peoples throughout the world, and gathered allies across issues: Standing Rock. Several people from Southeast had traveled to Oceti Sakowin Camp, as well as many women in our delegation from Fairbanks.

During our day meetings we encouraged legislators and their staff to join us in a community event highlighting the Standing Rocks of Alaska, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and transboundary mining issues. The loss of subsistence resources and culturally fundamental habitat is the commonality between the struggles we share from North Dakota and through the South of Alaska to the North. The inspiration and call to action that poured out of the sacred fires drives us to share our struggles by acknowledging their commonality and their importance to collective shared vision of a future with intact ecosystems, clean water and clean air. We spent the evening sharing stories and creating community. Representative Parrish came to the event and agreed, after some pressing from his constituents, the shortsightedness in politics was no excuse to inaction.

This event was organized with sister groups Woch.Een at University of Alaska, SE and Renewable Juneau, a newly developed not-for-profit organization. Our delegation shared

what is working for us in Fairbanks to build coalition, and the lessons we have learned on the journey. The next morning, together with allies from the community, we gathered for a second time in 24 hours to hold a friendly rally.

For this action we built a fact sheet for legislators and allies and refined our message and demands for a just transition and diversified economy. We stressed the need to keep all remaining intact ecosystems, highlighting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Additionally, we garnered media attention, shared song, and planted the seed for change. Overall, this trip was a smashing success. With the support of our communities from Fairbanks to Juneau, we were able to fund and support allies in meaningfully engaging in our democratic process. This would not have been possible without the generous support of Northern Center members who shared miles or the funders who were willing to be flexible in order to amplify the Alaska voice in Juneau, or the community members who took time off work and school to lobby for change.

In the end, the resolution was passed and sent to federal leadership, but in countless ways we won. Often the change we need seems far too slow, but we must keep remembering all those who have been seeking these changes for generations, and be thankful for the path they have laid. We remain hopeful for those who will come long after we are gone. ♣



Rep. Parrish (D-Juneau) talking with members of the delegation that traveled to Juneau from Fairbanks.



# Keep It In The Ground

by Vivian Underhill and Jessica Girard

Over the course of May 2016, protests loosely linked by the #BreakFree and Keep It In The Ground movements rocked six continents, mobilizing over 30,000 people in direct action toward a more just and sustainable energy future. Protestors called to stop mining of all remaining fossil fuel reserves and shift to a 100% renewable energy economy.<sup>1</sup> They argued for an end to oil and gas leases on public lands, in order to begin the transition away from fossil-based fuels and lay the groundwork for sustainable and socially just economies.

In Newcastle, Australia, 2,000 people in kayaks and on land shut down the world’s largest coal port for a day. In Lakewood, Colorado, hundreds of people disrupted an auction selling off thousands of acres of public land for oil and gas drilling, and in Wales, activists shut down the UK’s largest open-cast coal mine for over 12 hours.

Despite the active denial of climate change from officials like Scott Pruitt, now the director of the EPA, the international scientific community has reached consensus that any chance of avoiding the worst effects of climate change depends on leaving the vast majority of known fossil-fuel reserves, let alone undiscovered future resources, undeveloped.

In December of 2015, the historic Paris Agreement<sup>2</sup> committed to limiting global temperature increases to within 2 degrees Celsius – a number that quickly became a rallying cry for climate change activists worldwide. Only a few months later, a paper published in the scientific journal *Nature* reported that a third of unused global oil reserves,

half of gas reserves, and over 80% of coal reserves would have to remain in the ground in order to meet that goal. Further, it reported, any Arctic drilling or unconventional oil production (e.g., fracking) was incompatible with meeting those goals. The study concluded that a commitment to meeting the 2 °C limit would “render unnecessary continued substantial expenditure on fossil-fuel exploration, because any new discoveries could not lead to increased aggregate production.”<sup>3</sup>

This is a stark reality, and nowhere is the urgency of its message felt more intensely than the Arctic. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Fifth Assessment Report<sup>4</sup>, the Arctic is warming, on average, more than twice as fast as the rest of the globe, and the average winter temperature has risen 6.3 degrees F over the past 50 years.<sup>5</sup> That warming trend is evident in a 2015 study by scientists at the University of Fairbanks and other institutions found that Alaska’s glaciers had lost 75 billion metric tons of ice per year.<sup>6</sup>

Communities across Alaska are already viscerally experiencing the effects of sea ice melt, coastal erosion, and permafrost thaw. The coastal villages of Shishmaref, Kivalina, Koyukuk, and Newtok face relocation due to rapid coastal erosion. In December 2003, the Government Accountability Office reported that most of Alaska’s more than 200 Native villages were already affected by flooding and erosion, and four were in “imminent danger.” By 2009, that number had increased to 31.<sup>7</sup>

An increasing number of energy experts have also questioned the wisdom of Arctic drilling, including

former BP chief executive John Browne and Fatih Birol, executive director at the International Energy Agency.<sup>8</sup> Yet, large-scale industrial exploration and extraction of fossil fuels in the Arctic continues, from Shell’s exploratory offshore drilling in 2015 to ConocoPhillips’ current plans to extend the Alpine oil field into federally owned and managed land in the Western Arctic. Beyond the potentially devastating risks to local land, ecosystems, and communities, these projects would also mean the release billions of tons of greenhouse gasses, and the certainty of warming past the Paris Agreement’s 2°C goal.

This stalemate between increasingly dire climate effects—such as the first waves of climate refugees and the Alaskan communities facing relocation—and the inertia of business-as-usual fossil fuel policies brings us back to the increasingly urgent work of the Keep It In The Ground Movement. Even as old-school policies prevent renewable energies from taking hold, the Keep It In The Ground movement has galvanized alliances between a range of disparate organizations across the world, from environmental groups to movements for racial and economic justice.

Even as it gains ground, the movement has been criticized for being out of touch with reality: Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell dismissed it as “naïve” in May 2016. In July 2016, Obama’s chief science advisor, John Holdren, echoed her sentiment, calling it “unrealistic.”<sup>9</sup> This sense of impracticality is particularly strong in Alaska, where oil and gas industries dominate state and

local economies, and an immediate end to oil and gas extraction would likely be practically and economically unfeasible. But opportunities for renewable energy are particularly important here, given the high costs of diesel and other fossil fuels in remote parts of the state.

More broadly, the summary dismissal of climate activism as “unrealistic” or “naïve” is a textbook example of the way power works: by controlling the terms of the debate. Casting climate activists as outside the realm of reality serves to police the boundaries of what is considered possible by declaring certain outcomes as off the table from the start. This move reinforces the status quo as the only practical solution, making it seem inevitable and obscuring an analysis of how extractive capitalism itself works.

Most importantly, it forecloses the potential for the radical changes in energy use and production that a meaningful response to climate change necessitates. In fact, as activists have repeatedly argued, the far more unrealistic and naïve assumption is that undeveloped oil reserves (or Alaska’s, if we’re thinking about the state economy specifically) can reliably sustain worldwide energy demand long-term in the face of global climate crises; or, more fundamentally, that the release of those gigatons of carbon won’t impact the conditions of livability on the planet.

Anthropologists Brigit Dale and Berit Kristoffersen, who write about government structures and fossil fuel-based economies, wrote a 2016 article in *Cultural Anthropology* in which they consider the social, political, and cultural effects of extractive industries on a time scale that far exceeds the extraction period. “We can’t imagine petroleum as simply being something that’s there, and then gone; rather, petroleum economies now deeply affect what kinds of post-petroleum futures we may—or may not—have,” they write. They continue: “Sustained petroleum development might limit the many ways that post-carbon futures can be initiated and

established.”<sup>10</sup> In continuing to develop new fossil fuel sources, we not only waste much-needed time to transition and adapt, but also further constrain our possible futures.

We simply can’t afford not to begin an immediate transition.

Alaska’s economy is manifesting many, if not all, of the converging economic crises consistent with the eventual decline of a resource-dependent economy, including resource depletion, public fiscal stress, and increasing marginal extraction costs. Even if we disregard the scientific consensus on climate change, the fact remains that Alaska must begin to diversify its income streams and job opportunities for purely economic reasons. Borrowing John Holdren’s language of “realism,” the realistic plan is to start transitioning away from fossil fuels immediately. It is an enormous project, and will require all our ingenuity and talent to do it.

Alaskans have been organizing and working towards that goal. The Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition (FCAC) formed in November 2015 to take action on climate and build momentum for a just transition to a new way of living with each other and our environment. It aims to transition away from old paradigms of pollution, extraction, colonialism, and inequality toward values of community, resilience, justice, and democracy.

In 2016, in partnership with Greenpeace USA and the Center for a Sustainable Economy, the Northern Center convened a group of Alaska Native leaders, sustainable development practitioners, and organized labor allies to share ideas about what that transition towards a more sustainable and diverse portfolio of jobs and income streams might look like in Alaska.

The results of those workshops have been summarized in a draft report titled *Beyond Fossil Fuels: Planning a Just Transition for Alaska’s Economy*. Due to be finalized and released in the summer of 2017, the report highlights sustainable development practices that work to

support disenfranchised communities, protect and restore natural capital and ecosystem services, reverse environmental injustices against Alaska Natives, and foster local self-reliance. The next steps in this process revolve around laying the groundwork for mutual trust and relationship building with stakeholders across Alaska.

The Trump White House has already shown itself to be deeply resistant to climate justice work with the confirmations of Scott Pruitt, Rex Tillerson, its response to the Standing Rock water protectors, and its increasingly hostile actions toward federal climate scientists specifically the Executive Order entitled Presidential Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth. However, Keep It In the Ground activism has had a string of successes in recent years, including but not limited to political actions. In 2015, climate activists achieved a major success when President Obama rejected plans for the Keystone XL pipeline. Obama cited climate change and the need for greater energy diversity as two of his major reasons for his decision. “...Ultimately,” he wrote, “if we’re going to prevent large parts of this Earth from becoming not only inhospitable but uninhabitable in our lifetimes, we’re going to have to keep some fossil fuels in the ground rather than burn them and release more dangerous pollution into the sky,” directly echoing the rhetoric of the Keep It In The Ground Movement.<sup>11</sup>

Within Alaska, the recent sHellNo campaign, which protested Royal Dutch Shell’s exploratory drilling program in the Chukchi Sea, successfully used Keep It In The Ground messaging. In 2015, Shell pulled out of the Arctic; some news sources, including *The Guardian*, suggested that their withdrawal was a response to widespread popular opposition to their plans<sup>12</sup>, although Shell officially cited disappointing levels of oil. The groundswell of popular support undergirding these decisions hasn’t evaporated. In fact, it has been

1 See <https://stories.breakfree2016.org/>

2 UN World Climate Summit: <http://www.cop21.paris.org/>

3 Christopher McGlade and Paul Ekins. “The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2 degrees C.” (2016) *Nature*. <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v517/n7533/full/nature14016.html>

4 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: 5th Assessment Report. <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>

5 The Atlantic: “The Village That Will Be Swept Away.” August 30th, 2015 <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/08/alaska-village-climate-change/402604/>

6 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/06/17/alaskas-glaciers-are-now-losing-75-billion-tons-of-ice-every-year/?utm\\_term=.8b436fe6018c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/06/17/alaskas-glaciers-are-now-losing-75-billion-tons-of-ice-every-year/?utm_term=.8b436fe6018c)

7 June 2009 GAO Report to Congressional Requesters. *Alaska Native Villages: Limited Progress has been made on relocating villages threatened by flooding and erosion.* <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09551.pdf>.

8 The Guardian. “Shell Abandons Arctic Drilling.” September 28, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/sep/28/shell-ceases-alaska-arctic-drilling-exploratory-well-oil-gas-disappoints>

9 Time Magazine. “Does President Obama Want to Keep Fossil Fuels in the Ground?” July 20, 2016. <http://time.com/4413405/climate-change-obama-fossil-fuels/>

10 Brigit Dale and Berit Kristoffersen. “Imagining a Postpetroleum Arctic.” *Hot Spots, Cultural Anthropology website*. July 29, 2016. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/943-imagining-a-postpetroleum-arctic>

11 White house press release November 6th, 2015: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/06/statement-president-keystone-xl-pipeline>

12 The Guardian. “Shell Abandons Arctic Drilling.” September 28, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/sep/28/shell-ceases-alaska-arctic-drilling-exploratory-well-oil-gas-disappoints>



further galvanized by opposition within the executive branch, as seen in the massive turnout for the Women’s March, the March for Science on Earth Day, and the current fight over budget allocations to the EPA and other environmental science organizations.

Keep It In The Ground activism’s success stems in part from the fact that it highlights the growing intersections between climate justice and other movements for justice across the country: for racial justice, economic justice, and environmental justice. Though all people will be affected by climate change, some communities will be affected more than others, and like many environmental issues, those effects fall along lines of race, ethnicity, and class.

It also productively highlights the connections between the issues faced in our struggle against offshore drilling, for example, and those across the world, from the Gulf of Mexico and the Nigerian Delta to the Peruvian Amazon. Many have pointed out that Shell’s decision to withdraw was probably also due to low energy prices, driven, in large part, by the

fracking boom in the Lower 48. Lower-cost natural gas offered something of an alternative to oil.

Keep It In The Ground messaging helps us be accountable to the worldwide networks of cost and benefit that structure each individual case against further extraction.

It reminds us that though our struggles are always rooted in place—the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, for example—our real struggle is against extractive industry and petro-capitalism in a larger sense. In this current context, environmental work cannot go on without attending to climate change, and that requires that we no longer deal with it place by place, but rather holistically. As a global phenomenon, climate justice requires us to work on the root causes of economic dependence on resource extraction.

Now, the ongoing struggle centers around ConocoPhillips’ plans to expand its current Alpine oil field operations, along with other massive finds, into federally owned land of the Western Arctic. In 2015, they received a permit to build their first drill site, Greater Moose’s Tooth (GMT) 1, and BLM is

currently considering a second permit for GMT-2. The Western Arctic is one of the last remote stretches of land, and provides irreplaceable habitat for the caribou, birds, and fish necessary for its residents’ traditional hunting and fishing ways of life. It is also a particular site of struggle within these broader movements. Whereas economic prosperity and national security were once used to justify the large-scale extraction of oil from the North Slope, the specter of ecological catastrophe now requires us to imagine other, differently productive futures.

In the current fossil-fuel context, the protection of individual landscapes will never be complete if they sit on top of fossil fuel resources, unless we find a way to move beyond our reliance on them. We must work not only to save the places we love, but to address the systemic inequality and structural violence that perpetuates exploitation of those places, both through extraction of the fuels and the results of burning them.

Morally and environmentally, this is the right thing to do; practically and economically, it is the *only* thing to do. ♣

## Roles of a Movement

by Jessica Girard

Fairbanks has been a flourish of grassroots activity since the election. The energy is palpable. I cannot count the number of people asking, “what can I do?” There is an incredibly rooted energy that runs deep within Fairbanks between groups and individuals that have been sharing their energy and emotional capital for years, in some cases decades or generations.

I was with a good friend and longtime community organizer during the election. In my absolute shock she hugged me and asked why I was so surprised and said simply, “Our government was established on white supremacy.” It was so obvious to her that these results were more than a possibility. She had stepped out of her white optimism and was acutely aware of what was new to so many of us.

This moment was one in a series of many that has framed the world around me over the last 2.5 years. It has therefore framed how I approach my work as a community organizer. The question I pose to you is: how do you, and the community you work with, frame how you do your work?

On March 24, 1989, the tanker Exxon Valdez grounded on Bligh Reef in Alaska’s Prince William Sound, rupturing its hull and spilling nearly 11 million gallons of Prudhoe Bay crude oil into a remote, scenic, and biologically productive body of water. What would you do?

Would you travel to Puget Sound and clean off animals to provide immediate support? Would you work with policy makers to create a system in which to avoid further oil spills in the future? Would you organize community members to develop new structures and address the broader context of the spill? Would you organize friends to create targeted messaging and stand on a busy street corner to let people know the issue or blockade the street?

According to many social movement experts there are four roles to a movement. The helper, the advocate, the organizer, and the activist, (though they are labeled many different things and implement a variety of tactics). If it was hard for you choose only one role it is because you value other roles. This is because each of these roles is vital to

an effective movement and our roles are not static throughout our lives or organizational history. The Northern Center, for example, lives in the organizer and advocate space, while Earthjustice lives squarely in the advocate space, and Rising Tide lives primarily in the activist space. The brilliant part of this is that we all work together, directly and indirectly, to push our shared goals forward.

While of course there are limitations and strengths to each role, when you work in coalition valuing each role is imperative to understand the right time to highlight certain roles. Each of these roles, in the world we currently live, need a dose of activism tied into their work. Business as usual tactics are not going to move us off fossil fuels just as business as usual movement tactics are not going to create the change we seek. I urge each of you to uplift other approaches and push a little in the role you normally play. ♣

## Clean Water and Mining Updates

by Julia Mickley



The Samarco mine disaster in Brazil, Christophe Simon | AFP

2014’s Toxic Release Inventory reported Alaska as having 4 times the toxic waste of any other state in the nation, totaling 1/3 of the nation’s total toxic release. Much of this toxic waste is in the form of mine tailings from Red Dog Mine in our Northwest corner. Rather than “released” as the study implies, this waste is contained until treated. The issue is that it requires water treatment in perpetuity. Systems fail, and financial assurance for eternity... is complex. Globally, we average one tailings dam failure a year. If a tailings dam fails, toxic waste can be released into the environment. Recent highly publicized failures were Mt. Polley in BC, and Samarco in Brazil.

### Do all mines produce toxic waste?

No. It depends on the composition of the rock. Not all material generates acid when ground and exposed to water and oxygen. Materials generate varied degrees of toxicity.

### What new mines in interior Alaska is the Northern Center concerned about?

Donlin Gold north of Crooked Creek on the Kuskokwim

River is in the midst of discerning environmental impacts. The current plan anticipates producing 6 trillion lb/s of waste per year. That is about 5,000 times what Alaska (Red Dog) currently produces.

Trilogy Metals Arctic Deposit in the Ambler Mining District will be releasing their measured resources this month. They anticipate producing a prefeasibility study in Q1, 2018. Trilogy’s Arctic deposit is a volcanic sulfide deposit. Historically volcanic sulfide deposits are high acid rock drainage offenders.

### Will treated water affect fish?

It may. Treated water is frequently higher in metals and salts than natural stream water. Also if a “mixing zone” is allowed, that area will likely affect fish.

### If there is a failure of the system, what will happen?

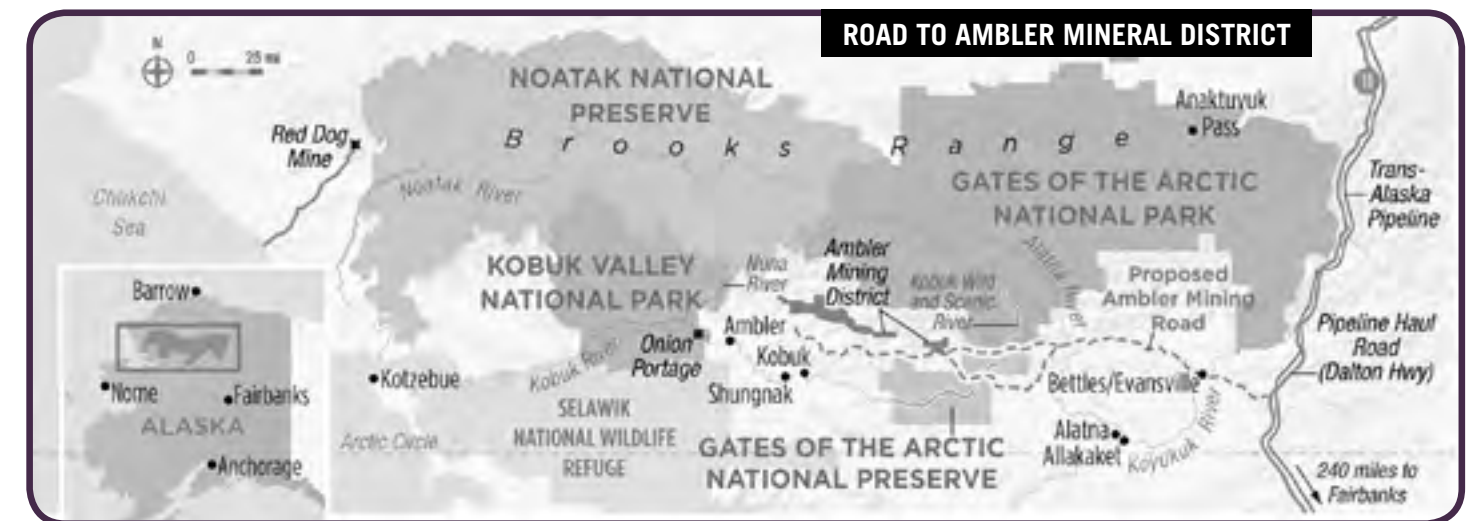
If no one treats the water, water storage locations will overflow, carrying potentially toxic water into streams. Problems during water treatment may allow elevated metals or salts to enter streams until the problem is fixed.

### What can the public do?

Understand this is an issue. Hold industry accountable for best practice procedure and financial responsibility. Make and stand by decisions to oppose options when the cost, or risk, is too great.

Share your concerns with agencies during public comment periods. Support HB199, which bans in perpetuity water treatment if discharge is to anadromous waters, and/or comment on the process of nominating and listing Outstanding National Resource Waters, which would ban degradation of specific water bodies.

The scoping process for the proposed Ambler Road is in session. The proposed Ambler road is approximately 220 miles long, branching off the haul road below Coldfoot and





**A BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING PUBLIC COMMENTS**

I am writing to comment on:

I am particularly concerned about the following impacts:

I am concerned about these issues because:

If these issues are not addressed I am worried that:

**Writing public comments holds agencies accountable to consider multiple perspectives. Comments can emphasize areas agencies might otherwise have overlooked or not considered, and can affect outcome and decisions. If unaddressed, they are a basis for which to pursue legal action. If agencies do not hear from the public, it is difficult for them to represent their voice. What kind of power does your voice have, and how can you be most effective?**



traversing. The state is using general funds to pursue this private mining road. Construction funds will be from state-backed bonds. The state hopes to gain return on these bonds through tolls.

Major concerns include effect on subsistence resources, particularly the Western Arctic Caribou, which migrate across the proposed route, and the spawning ground for sheefish and salmon as the road intersects rivers and streams flowing off the Brooks Range. The road is nestled amongst Wildlife Refuges, National Parks and Preserves, and Wilderness areas. Resolutions of opposition include: Native Villages of Allakaket, Rampart, and Alatna, the Kobuk Traditional Council, Evansville Inc., Bettles, the Brooks Range Council, Tanana Chief's Conference, and the Northern Center. ↕

**COMMENTS on relevant issues that will influence the scope of the EIS for the proposed Ambler Road project may be submitted in writing until January 31, 2018.**

**All comments must be received prior to the close of the 90-day scoping period or 15 days after the last public scoping meeting, whichever is later.**

**The dates for completion of the Draft EIS and Final EIS are extended to March 29, 2019, and December 30, 2019, respectively.**

**EMAIL: [BLM\\_AK\\_AKSO\\_AmblerRoad\\_Comments@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_AK_AKSO_AmblerRoad_Comments@blm.gov).**

**FAX: (907) 271-5479.**

**MAIL: Ambler Road Scoping Comments  
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513.**

**NEW COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR; ERICA WATSON**



I've spent most of my adult life living in and around Denali National Park, though that wasn't my intention when I first came to Alaska from Arizona in college. I grew up mostly in the Southwest, and though the desert is still close to my heart, I kept returning to Alaska until, eventually, I stayed. Over the past thirteen years, I've become deeply rooted here, and I love exploring on foot, skis, canoe, and, as of this past winter, a fat tire bike. I earned my MFA in nonfiction writing at UAA in 2014, and have written extensively about community and place. Though I'll be working mostly from my home in McKinley Village, I look forward to getting to know new people and places through the Northern Center.

**NEW BOARD MEMBER; KRISTEN HENDRICKS**



Kristen recently relocated from Brooklyn, New York. With a background in visual arts and scientific illustration, she most recently worked as the Northern Center's Communications Coordinator and prior to that in marketing at a Brooklyn-based manufacturing company. She made the move to Fairbanks to spend more time with her parents and two sisters, work on her paintings, and spend time exploring all Alaska has to offer. We are excited to welcome Kristen to the Board of Directors and know her love for Alaska and conservation will be invaluable to the Northern Center.

# Unsatisfied Mining Industry Wants More from the Taxpayer

by John D. Leshy & Roger Flynn

(republished here with permission from Morning Consult | originally published March 23, 2017)

In his March 3 Morning Consult op-ed, Hal Quinn, CEO of the National Mining Association, calls on Congress to “streamline” the permitting process for hardrock mines on the nation’s public lands, arguing that the U.S. is hostile to mining, disadvantaging our domestic mining industry.

What he neglects to mention is that the U.S. does something that no other government in the world does — it gives the industry publicly-owned minerals for free. Thanks to the generous terms of the federal mining law first enacted in 1866, the hardrock mining industry, which is dominated by a handful of multinational companies, pays the taxpayers nothing for all the gold, silver, copper and other minerals worth billions of dollars it has extracted from the nation’s public lands. That’s right — zero, nada, zilch.

It is no surprise, then, that industry analysts consistently rank the U.S. among the world’s best places for mining investment. According to one leading survey, the U.S. in 2015 was ranked third, behind only Canada and Australia. Another survey of mining company executives last year ranked Nevada and Arizona, which lead the nation in gold and copper production, among the world’s “top ten most attractive jurisdictions for mining investment.”

Despite this, Quinn argues that the proposed legislation he touts (the National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act) is needed to encourage more domestic production of important strategic commodities. Interestingly, that proposal defines “strategic and critical minerals” so broadly as to include ordinary minerals like sand, gravel and building stone, and also gold, even though most of it is used to make jewelry. His argument that mineral imports threaten our security is vastly overstated. Most imports of strategic minerals are from friendly countries and many have never been found in commercial quantities in the U.S., despite the industry’s free rein to explore on hundreds of millions of acres of public land for the last century and a half.

Quinn says we can streamline the permitting process “without weakening environmental safeguards.” But he proposes to fix something that’s not broken. A 2016 report from the Government Accountability Office found that over the past several years, the average processing time for approving mining plans on public lands was about 24 months, not the 7-10 years that Quinn says it “can take.” GAO also found that a leading cause of delays was “incomplete or vague” proposals submitted by the mining companies.

Careful review and public scrutiny are imperative, because modern hardrock mining is one of the most environmentally hazardous of all industrial activities. The Environmental Protection Agency’s annual “Toxic Release Inventory” shows that every year the metal mining industry produces more than one billion pounds of toxic pollution — especially lead,

zinc and arsenic compounds — more than any other industry, and one-third of the entire nation’s total.

Modern mining involves moving vast amounts of earth and rock — gold mines move literally hundreds of tons of rock to extract a single ounce of gold — leaving enormous waste piles and tailings ponds. If not engineered correctly, they can fail and when they do, they cause enormous environmental harm and take human lives downstream, as shown by catastrophic failures at hardrock mines in British Columbia, Brazil, Romania and Spain in recent years. Toxic pollution from hardrock mine sites can, the EPA has noted, “take years to develop, and pose a long-term risk of hazardous releases.” Indeed, many hardrock mines will require perpetual water treatment.

The U.S. has more than a century of unhappy experience dealing the poisons that are often the legacy of hardrock mining on public lands. Many of the nation’s so-called Superfund sites, the most toxic sources of pollution, are at abandoned mines and processing facilities. Thousands of abandoned mines on public lands are contaminating groundwater and thousands of miles of rivers and streams, threatening the health and quality of life for residents of many western communities.

The industry is not so much concerned about streamlining as it is trying to escape responsibility for the pollution it creates. It took years of litigation to force the U.S. EPA finally to propose, in January, regulations to require adequate financial assurance from companies proposing to conduct mining operations in order to prevent owners or operators, as EPA put it, “from shifting the burden of cleanup to other parties, including the taxpayer.” The industry is now working to stop EPA from finishing this job.

We agree with Mr. Quinn that “the time is now to refocus on our hardcore mining policies.” Hardrock miners should be required to pay fair market value for the minerals they extract. Mines should also be required to meet commonsense environmental safeguards, and the industry should pay into a fund so that taxpayers don’t have to continue to underwrite the cost of cleaning up the industry’s past sins and any future cleanups. ↕

*John D. Leshy is emeritus professor at University of California, Hastings College of the Law, a former solicitor of the Interior Department (1993-2001), and the author of a book on the history of U.S. mining law. Roger Flynn is adjunct professor at the University of Colorado School of Law and the founding director of the Western Mining Action Project, a public interest law center working to hold hardrock mines to proper environmental standards since 1993.*



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**Celebrate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with our 21st Annual Run for the Refuge trail race, a 10k run and a 5k walk/run. This year's race will take place on SUNDAY, JULY 16TH AT 1PM. Race begins at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Ski Hut. Support the conservation of Alaska's refuge by participating in this fun, family-friendly event!**

*The 5K is stroller-friendly, and is an enjoyable walk for those who are not competitive runners. Entry fee for either race includes post-race snacks, t-shirt for those who register in advance,*

*and prizes for top finishers in each class (men, women, and children under 12). There will be door prizes and spectators are always welcome!*

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION:** *Online registration (\$25) will be open until midnight on Friday, July 14th. An early registration (\$25) and bib pickup event will be held at Hot Licks Homemade Ice Cream from 3-7pm on Friday, July 14th at the College Road Hot Licks location. Race-day registration (\$30) will begin at Noon on Sunday, July 16th in the UAF ski hut near the*

*Akasofu Building on the West Ridge of the UAF Campus.*

**BIB PICKUP INFORMATION:** *Bibs and t-shirts can be picked up at the registration and bib pickup event at Hot Licks on Friday, July 14th from 3-7pm at the College Road Hot Licks location. Bibs and t-shirts can also be picked up beginning at Noon on Sunday, July 16th in the UAF ski hut near the Akasofu Building on the West Ridge of the UAF Campus.*

**For more information call: (907) 452-5021**