



Northern Alaska
Environmental Center
Conservation's Northern Voice

ANNUAL REPORT 2006



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Shauna Mikelich, Mining Coordinator
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Board of Directors

As the Board of Directors looks back on 2006, particularly the small but significant victories in the fall elections, we find ourselves in a proactive position on the issues Northern Center members value including permanent protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, responsible mining policies, Global Warming solutions, and environmental education opportunities for youth.

As always, securing the financial future of the Center was the Board of Directors' main focus. Together, the Auction and the Major Donor Campaign brought in well over \$100,000, an increase of \$20,000 from the previous year. The balance on the building mortgage is down to \$71,000. Although we retained a two-month operating reserve throughout the year, we ran a deficit for 2006. Expenses for youth programming exceeded budget allocations, as did major building renovations (which are now completed). However, with countless volunteer hours spearheaded by board members Stan Justice and Bill Holman, the remodel costs were kept within reach. Furthermore, with the guidance of some key, long-time members of the Center, we are beginning work on a legacy giving program, our own version of the Permanent Fund (more on this soon).

Following the lead of our Executive Director, David van den Berg, we advanced our mission to protect the wilderness qualities of northern Alaska, a region of roughly 180 million acres that includes 18 national parks and wildlife refuges created in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA). We have further committed to comprehensive youth education programs for Interior Alaska. We also furthered our service and visibility within the Fairbanks community, building local support and supporting national efforts for conservation.

Arctic

With Pamela A. Miller heading up our Arctic Program, we turned a corner this year in our long-term campaign for Wilderness protection for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We also encouraged a nation-wide paradigm shift on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to address Global Warming.

Through wave after wave of attempts to drill the Refuge, NAEC volunteers made nearly 2,000 calls to members and activists to generate a greater effort urging Congress to protect the Arctic Refuge. After the elections, we ended 2006 on course with plans to permanently protect the coastal plain and the Western Arctic and to advocate for curbing America's oil consumption.

Through media like *USA Today*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, we helped

national audiences understand the laxity and carelessness among oil companies and regulators that allowed a record-breaking crude oil spill on Alaska's North Slope. When Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne visited Fairbanks for his very first "Listening Session on Cooperative Conservation," Alaska Native leaders, the Bishop of the Episcopal Church for Alaska, and Fairbanksans set a tone so forceful about protecting the Arctic Refuge, Teshekpuk Lake and sensitive areas in the Western Arctic that industry representatives opted not to testify.

In an effort to restore a balance between development and wildlife protection in Alaska's Western Arctic, NAEC and other groups mounted a media, grassroots and legal campaign to protect Teshekpuk Lake and other critical habitat in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. We remained vigilant in the Western Arctic and advocated for basic protections for the region's wilderness and wildlife qualities.

As Global Warming topped the charts for household words this year, we encouraged understanding of the issues and new policy solutions through the media, comments to agencies and the Climate Impact Assessment Commission, and educational lectures to foster community, state, and national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Fairbanks North Star Borough passed a resolution that urged state and federal leaders to "...move forward on programs to cap or reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Closer to home, we beat a small but terrible bill in Juneau that would have done more than its share to change the Arctic. Alaska State Senate Bill 85 would have opened the 450-mile long Dalton Highway to All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). We beat this bad bill in the waning days of the session by a committee vote of 3-2.

Finally, we assumed the Arctic Gems website at the invitation of the groups who created it.

Youth Education Programs

The steady growth of our now year-round youth education programs is promising, because as we reach more young people, we also reach their families and share with them through their children the value of Interior Alaska's wild lands and natural history.

We brought stability and a greater capacity to support youth education, like *Camp Habitat* and *Camp Habitat After School*. In January, we cooperated with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District to successfully launch the Camp Habitat After School Program at two elementary and two middle schools in Fairbanks. The program was so well received that we were invited back to do the program at six schools for the 2006-07 school year. We increased the staff from three to four instructors, retaining two from the pilot semester.



Our Mission

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center promotes conservation of the environment and sustainable resource stewardship in Interior and Arctic Alaska through advocacy and education.



In March Laenne Thompson came aboard to fill the new Youth Education Director position designed to achieve continuity from year-to-year with the summer camps, direct the after-school program, and secure funding for all youth programs. Katherine Helmuth, our VISTA volunteer, oriented Laenne and then departed in April after her year-long commitment came to an end.

Jenny Day was hired to direct Camp Habitat Summer Camps, including five week-long day camp sessions and two week-long backpacking trips, for 167 youth ages 4-18. She hired four day camp instructors, four junior counselors, and three backpacking instructors. Jenny will be back in 2007 as the Camp Habitat Summer Camps Director, and we are delighted to have this continuity for the first time in several years.

Susan Grace stepped down from the Camp Habitat Advisory Board in May after being the chairperson who devoted countless hours to support the popular summer programs she founded in 1991. Northern Center Board Member, Ritchie Musick, stepped in as chair to lead the Advisory Board as it continues to look after the integrity, curriculum, and financial sustainability of all Camp Habitat Programs. A big thanks to all Camp's devoted supporters!

Another highlight for the year was a new collaboration with Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, in which we support a Fairbanks chapter of local teens who work on educational and action campaigns related to global warming and recycling.

Mining

Throughout the state, high mineral prices drove a flood of hard rock mining exploration, much of it in Interior and Northern Alaska. At the Northern Center, we changed staff in our Mining Program when Shauna Mikelich replaced Meg Schlesinger in September.

The Northern Center supported mining reform legislation in Juneau and commented on numerous permits for existing northern mines to ensure the highest level of environmental protection. In coalition with Alaskans for Responsible Mining (ARM), we submitted comments on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit renewal at the Red Dog lead/zinc mine. We participated in the Red Dog Mine Closure and Reclamation meetings. We submitted comments on several permits for Nova Gold's Rock Creek Mine, currently under construction near Nome. With our allies from the Center for Science in Public Participation, we reviewed Nixon Fork reclamation plans and tendered comments on the proposed Fort Knox Walter Creek cyanide heap leach expansion.

The Northern Center commented on numerous

permits for possible locations of future mines in northern Alaska. Exploration projects Donlin Creek and the Tangle Lakes were foremost among the properties we reviewed. We now host the Save Tangle Lakes website.

The Donlin Creek mine underwent a feasibility study for power and infrastructure development, and we participated with Earthworks in an EPA review of mine mercury emission regulations. The Northern Center and UAF Natural Resources Department co-sponsored a Mining Panel that successfully showcased all sides of an exploration project prior to permitting and mine development. We tracked the BLM's plan for the Southern National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska and wrote critical reviews of feasibility studies on mining in the remote region.

Mining needs roads, so the Mining Program got up to speed on a large road and port-site pork barrel infrastructure project in the northwest Arctic called the Delong Mountain Terminal System expansion. We prepared comments for the Army Corps of Engineers on the expansion's Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Local and Forestry

Nancy Fresco, our Forestry and Local Issues Coordinator, continued to improve our efforts in the Interior through advocacy, education, and participation in community activities. We focused on fostering sustainable multiple use of Interior Alaska forests; planning for Borough-wide comprehensive recycling; moving our own organization and others towards green energy sources in order to prevent climate change; and encouraging broader local participation in conservation issues. In particular, we strengthened our organization's role in the community by reaching out to our cadre of talented and willing volunteers.

We reached out to the community through a range of local events. Once again, we hosted a successful booth at the Tanana Valley State Fair, assisted with Earth Day festivities, and led sessions at UAF's Sustainable Living Conference. We also hosted a viewing of the Bill Moyer's film "Kids and Chemicals," gave school presentations on forest conservation, and partnered with Interior Alaska Green Star to hold the first local electronics recycling event.

As part of the Borough Recycling Task Force, we assessed the options available for creating a more comprehensive recycling program in the Fairbanks area. The advice of this group was presented to the Mayor in September and is now being incorporated into a larger plan that may include waste-to-energy generation.

With local logging taking place only at a small-scale level to support Alaskan markets, fire management and biomass energy are among the biggest forest is-



Our Vision

We envision a naturally thriving, biologically and culturally diverse, wildlands-rich, sustainable, inspiring and thoughtfully protected northern Alaska, forever.



sues in Interior Alaska. We are eager to wean our local economy – including our own building – off fossil fuels and are interested in the potential of using waste wood as a carbon-neutral fuel. Thus, we are forging ahead with a plan to replace our oil heating system with a wood pellet boiler.

Denali and Statewide

For three years, the Alaska Conservation Foundation has funded the Defend Alaska Now! legislative internship to increase the capacity of Alaska's three homegrown regional organizations to better engage in the state legislative session. The DAN! intern informed Northern Center members of legislative happenings and sought member action when citizen participation was in order.

We had a good year at the state level advancing the good and stopping the bad legislation despite an unfavorable legislature backstopped by Governor Murkowski. Working in concert with many Alaskan organizations, we helped to pass legislation creating the Climate Impact Assessment Commission whose job it is to catalog the impacts of global warming and recommend steps Alaska can take to adapt to the phenomenon. We helped to defeat a senselessly bad bill pushed by a powerful state senator that would have opened the 450-mile-long Dalton Highway to All Terrain Vehicles. The Northern Center served as fiscal sponsor of the Denali Citizens Council and worked with them to score a remarkable feat of removing \$8 million from the capital budget for construction of the Stampede Road. (In January 2007, the incoming Palin administration withdrew all funding for the project.)

Late in the year, we convened with many Alaska conservation organizations to select three legislative priorities for the coming session. (For the ongoing 2007 session, our statewide legislative priorities are: funding up to \$100 million for renewable energy, affix a reasonable and equitable tax on coal, and disallow discharges into salmon spawning areas.)

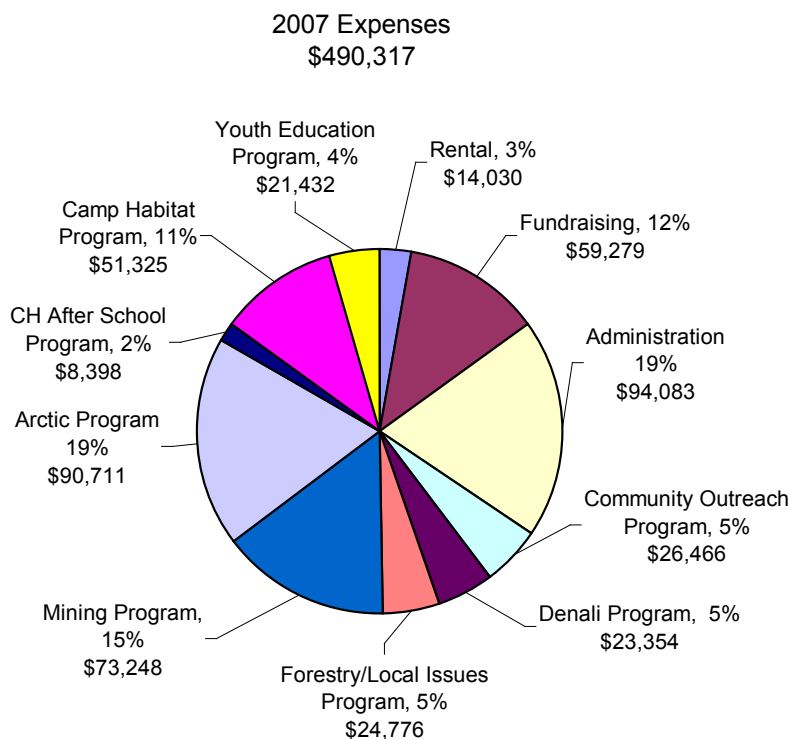
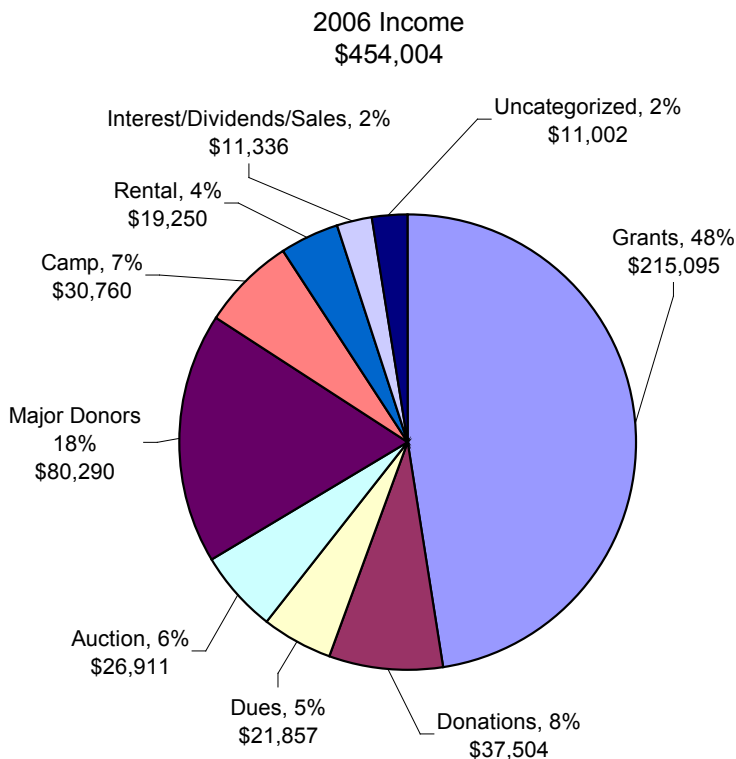
Annual report design and layout by Mary Zalar.

Cover photo of caribou crossing Angun River on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain is by Ken Whitten; inside photos of Golden Plover, wolverine, and wolf are by Ken Whitten; inside photos of Camp Habitat are by Laenne Thompson.

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2006 Financial Report



Footnotes:

- \$85,425 Mortgage balance as of January 1st
- \$71,179 Mortgage balance as of December 31st
- \$14,246 Total mortgage principal payments
- \$27,562 Total remodel costs (included in expenses above)