

Northern Alaska Environmental Center



Conservation's Northern Voice

Annual Report 2007



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Board of Directors

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center's Board of Directors' mission is to maintain the organization's financial security and to offer guidance to our Executive Director, David van den Berg. In addition to these responsibilities, 2007 board members took the lead on issue development, education, and facilities maintenance.

The board's two main fundraising efforts, the major donor campaign and the auction, were both successful and raised over \$90,000 combined. After several lean years where capital projects forced us to budget for deficits, David and the Board Budget Committee forecasted a surplus in 2008. We are proud that the NAEC continues to stand out amongst grassroots groups for our consistent fiscal stability.

The board achieved another long-pursued goal in 2007, the creation of an Advisory Board. This group is composed of past board and staff members who are tasked with developing an endowment. This effort, spearheaded by longtime board member Dan Adams, is well under way and is already raising significant permanently restricted funds for the NAEC's future.

The Board Education Committee continued to educate and entertain Fairbanks with the Northern Voices Speaker Series, a monthly presentation by northern writers, artists and scholars. Members and non-members alike pack the Noel Wien Public Library Auditorium each month to soak up these popular lectures.

In 2007 board members also dedicated a tremendous amount of time to maintaining the Center's home on College Road, working on issues research, volunteering at NAEC events, and supporting staff. The board continues into 2008 as a diverse and proud group dedicated to the Center's mission.

Arctic

"The Arctic is screaming" noted a prominent sea ice researcher as record losses of the polar ice cap were reported. The global warming dimension of Arctic issues became an integral part of all our campaigns, as we advocated in coalition with affected Alaskan communities for protection of the National Wildlife Refuge system, sensitive habitats at Teshekpuk Lake and the western Arctic, and America's Arctic Ocean.

The House Wilderness bill for the Arctic Refuge gained 148 sponsors, and 26 Senators introduced the companion bill. While there were skirmishes in Congress over proposals to drill the Arctic Refuge, none came to a vote. We involved Alaskans in two Wilderness Week activist trainings in Washington, D.C.

We teamed with a diverse coalition of Gwich'in communities and conservation groups to protect the 100 million acres of parks and refuges created by the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. At stake was the integrity of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, threatened by a land exchange that would trade lands from the Yukon Flats Refuge into private hands to allow oil and gas drilling. Our coalition managed to win a longer public comment period for the draft environmental impact statement.

Our grassroots campaign to protect Teshekpuk Lake succeeded in maintaining protections for goose molting and caribou habitats. We provided technical review of the Bureau of Land Management's supplemental environmental impact statement required by our successful lawsuit last year. We activated our members and others to testify at public hearings and to provide written comments.

Far north, in the Arctic Ocean's Beaufort and Chukchi seas, we focused public attention on the new habitat threats to polar bears caused by the Interior Department's aggressive push to drill for oil

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.





and gas. We partnered with the Alaska Center for the Environment GIS program to create educational maps showing polar bear habitats where oil leasing and drilling are proposed, emphasizing critical polar bear denning habitat in the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

Our Arctic Program Coordinator, Pamela A. Miller, was quoted in a *New York Times* story, "New Coast Guard Task in Arctic's Warming Seas," after news that the Russians staked a flag on the Arctic Ocean's floor intensified a rush for territorial claims and access to oil and gas and shipping routes. We successfully appealed Clean Air Act permits for Shell Oil's Beaufort Sea oil drilling plans off the coast of the Arctic Refuge. We involved the public to provide comments on the Interior Department's 70 million-acre Arctic Ocean leasing plans over the next five years.

Finally, Caitlin Caulfield, *Arctic Intern*, made sure our costumed polar bear was on hand to showcase these issues at events such as the Golden Days Parade in July, the Tanana Valley Fair and our 11th annual Run for the Refuge in August, and the Arctic Refuge's 38th Birthday celebration and the Polar Bear Plunge in December.

Denali Watch

Complex and compelling issues kept Denali Citizens Council (DCC) busy in 2007. In 1974, our founding year, only a handful of visitors arrived at Denali solely by rail. In contrast in 2007, approximately 400,000 guests showed up by road and rail. This tremendous spike in tourism, fueled largely by cruise ship visitation, has not had an entirely benign effect upon the Denali area.

To plan the future of the Denali transportation system, the ongoing Road Capacity Study (in its third year in 2007) was tracked, since pressure from tourism has profoundly affected the number and allocation of buses on Denali's famous road. Additionally, DCC opposed a plan to continue commercial retail book sales at Toklat Rest Stop,

since it would violate well-documented National Park Service (NPS) planning intent and the vision for a wilderness road.

As reported in articles in the *DCC News* and *The Northern Line*, the Denali Borough recommended State Recreation Area designation for the Stampede townships west of Healy. DCC advocated that the boundaries incorporate areas in most need of management and that enabling language recognize the habitat values of the Stampede area, which is enclosed on three sides by the National Park.

Mandated by the Backcountry Management Plan for Denali, the Denali Overflights Advisory Council was established in 2007 to advise the NPS "on matters relating to mitigation of impacts from overflights of Denali National Park and Preserve." Three DCC Board members were appointed to sit on the council. President Nancy Bale was selected to represent local environmentalists for a two-year term.

In 2007 there remained the possibility of shallow gas development on over 200,000 acres near Healy. A Preliminary Best Interest Finding, published in 2005, had not been finalized. Meanwhile, a Denali Borough ordinance proposed to limit gas development in some areas around Healy. Late in 2007 the State of Alaska urged the borough to "fix" this ordinance before it would publish a Final Finding. DCC continues to monitor this process.

DCC Community Organizer, Julia Potter, continues to manage the office, attend meetings and edit our newsletter. DCC is the only local advocacy organization at the gateway to Denali National Park.

Local & Legislative

The Local Issues Program bid farewell to long-time Coordinator Nancy Fresco and welcomed Lori Hanemann. We re-focused the program to address community energy issues, specifically adapting to and mitigating for Climate Change. We knit together a variety of community collaborations including local organizations, the borough, state legislators, schools, and NAEC members to inspire reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The NAEC participated in the Golden Days Parade, the Renewable Energy Fair at Chena Hot Springs, and the Tanana Valley State Fair to get the word out and encourage local and individual action on Climate Change and energy conservation. We also created a global warming list-serve and web page.

One notable victory was forming a local Global Warming Working Group that successfully ushered Resolution 2007-40 through the Borough Assembly,

Our Vision

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



which committed the borough to develop a path toward sustainability.

We made sure Fairbanks was on the map for *Live Earth* in July and *The National Conversation on Climate* in October, where Fairbanks' Republican Mayor Jim Whitaker proclaimed, "It's okay to be green!" We organized the community around the nationwide *Step it Up: A National Day of Climate Action* in November 2007, and we even made international news with *The Polar Bear Plunge* in December!

Finally, Becky Baird, *Legislative Intern*, monitored the Spring 2007 Alaska legislative session in Juneau which centered on HB152, the Renewable Energy Fund. Working in coalition with the Alaska Conservation Alliance, Alaska's conservation groups managed to advance HB152 through the State house by a vote of 35-0, which set the bill up nicely for passage in 2008. In late 2007 Governor Palin proposed to endow the Renewable Energy Fund with \$250 million.



Membership & Communications

The total membership averaged 1,286 for the year. Gift memberships doubled compared to 2006.

We produced and mailed four issues of our quarterly news journal, *The Northern Line*. Membership renewal letters were sent each quarter and an additional end-of-year renewal letter was mailed to lapsed members from 2005 and 2006 and yielded nearly a 20% return rate. Special issue fund appeals were sent quarterly. The format for the winter 2007 renewals and appeals was changed to incorporate "action cards" on pertinent issues or legislation that members could sign and send back for us to deliver to key legislators.

Technology upgrades included the purchase of a new Toshiba laptop, a new Dell computer, and a Dell PowerEdge 1900 Small Business Server. Beginning in September 2007 we contracted with a local firm for our Information Technology needs.

Website traffic averaged 1,358 unique visitors per month and an average of 5,378 hits per day throughout the year.

Nicole Braem, our *Membership and Communications Coordinator*, left in August. Laenne Thompson, former NAEC *Youth Education Director*, stepped in as the *Communications and Development Director*. Membership Program tasks were headed up by Sara Elzey, our *Controller* who was also named *Assistant Director* in 2007.



Mining

Mining Program Coordinator Shauna Mikelich spent the year getting up to speed on our priority areas of northwestern Alaska—the Red Dog Mine, the DeLong Mountain Terminal (DMT) port—and updating educational materials on Alaska's many northern mines.

Fact sheets were completed on the following mines: Red Dog, Nixon Fork, Pogo, Illinois Creek, Donlin Creek, Fort Knox/True North, and Rock Creek that served to update the NAEC's mining web pages. Relationships continued with several work groups including Alaskans for Responsible Mining, the Alaska Coal Working Group, and the Red Dog Working Group.

Because mining – and mine expansion – and the port facility at the DMT will influence the course of northwestern Alaska, developments there were followed closely. We commissioned and submitted the Center for Sustainable Economy's 2007 updated independent critique of the Army Corps of Engineer's DMT Port Expansion EIS. We engaged Kivalina residents concerning the DMT and Red Dog Mine issues during Wilderness Week in Washington DC. Shauna also worked with Luke Cole from the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment and Vicki Clark of Trustees for Alaska on the settlement of the Red Dog NPDES permit and State 401 certification appeal, a settlement favorable to clean water.

In the closing days of 2007, we hired Fairbanksan Zak Richter, a former glacier heli-mushing operations manager and employee of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, as the new Mining Program Coordinator.

Youth Education Programs

Camp Habitat Summer Camps

In our 17th season we offered five week-long day camps for 168 youth ages 4–11. Camp was 91% full and enrollment was up 7.5% over 2006. Scholarships were awarded to 6.5% of all campers. Over half the participants took advantage of online registration.

We retained Jenny Day, the Summer Camps Director from 2006, which helped the continuity and growth from groundwork previously laid. The staff training format was revised and new modules were developed to better model activities that incorporate locations within Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge into the lessons. A huge improvement and success was to re-locate the overnight campouts to Creamer's Refuge. Most notable in 2007 was a concerted effort to improve the curriculum; staff documented successful lesson plans and their weekly routines.

2007 Financial Report

The Camp Habitat Advisory Board planned and executed two fundraisers, Earth Day and Tex-Mex Dinner. Sub-committees were created to offer better support to the Summer Camps Director; the sub-committees are Administration, Curriculum and Fundraising.

Camp Habitat After School Programs

The Camp Habitat After School Program finished the 2006-07 school year very strong at three middle and two elementary Title I schools, serving over 200 youth. Due to staffing changes, we scaled back on this program for the 2007-08 school year to two elementary schools. The Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District generously donated staff time to deliver programs at one site.

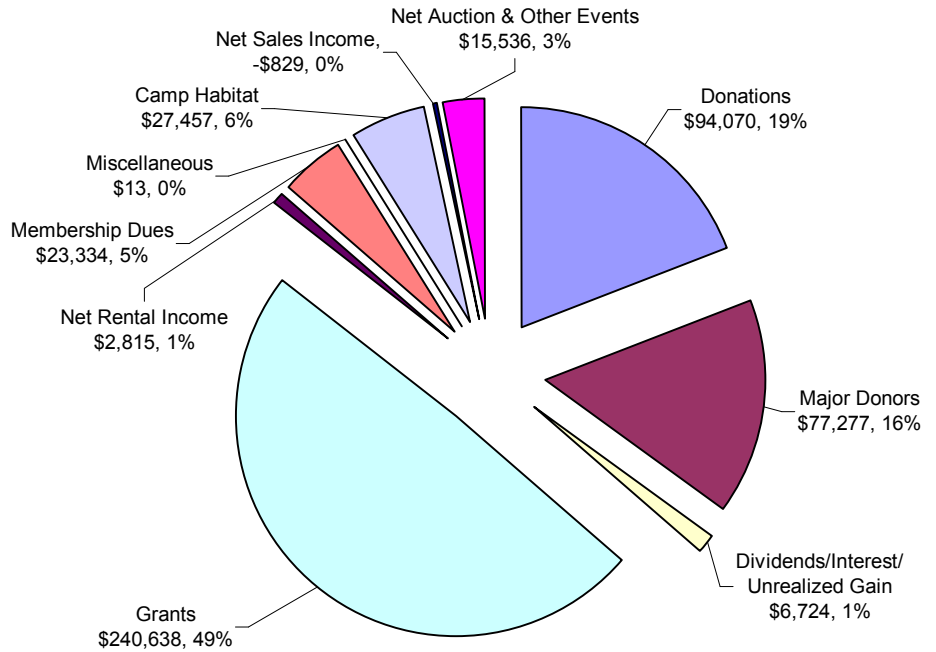
Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, Fairbanks Chapter

Laenne Thompson, Youth Education Director, served as the chapter's mentor throughout the year. She co-developed sessions and acted as a co-trainer at the Civics & Conservation Summit in Juneau in March 2007 where she also supported Fairbanks youth participation. The chapter created and gave presentations on Global Warming to over 500 students at three local middle and high schools. In August 2007 youth participated in Summer Institute with other statewide AYEA members. Five youths volunteered at the Electronics Recycling event which the Northern Center co-sponsors. In November, three youths and their mentor attended the Chapter Leaders' Retreat in Eagle River to lay plans for the 2007-08 school year.

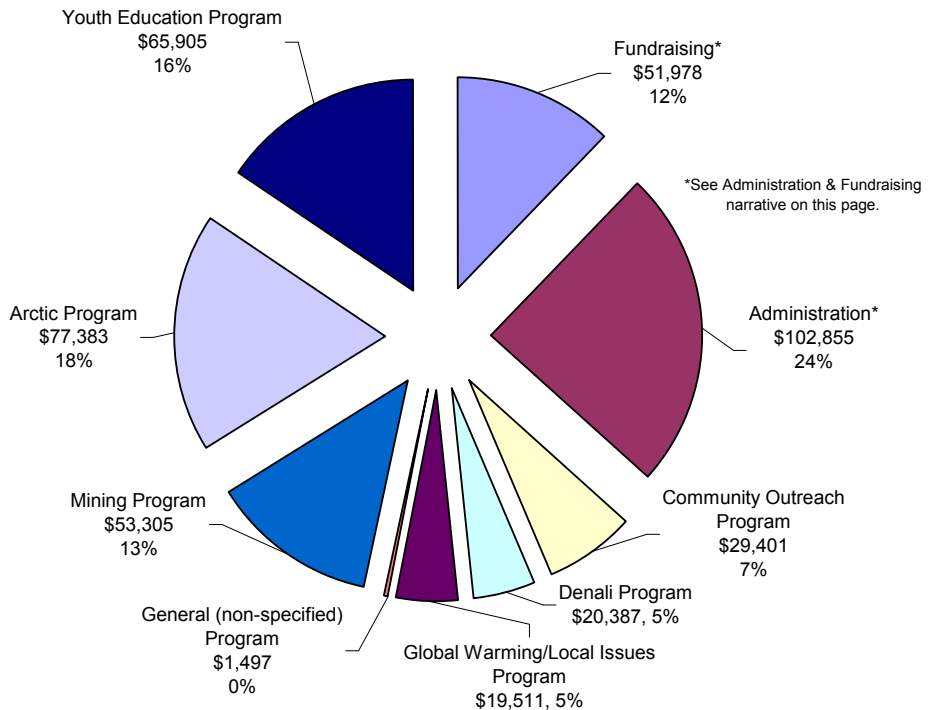
Administration & Fundraising

With generous support from the Wilburforce Foundation, we brought to a close an 18-month Organizational Assessment with Training Resources for the Environmental Community. We devoted significant staff time to identifying changes in operations we needed to make, and additional time to implement those changes. Chief among them was a staff reorganization and reorganization of duties to improve our communications, donor relations, and fundraising capacity. These 'core' organizational functions are essential to sustaining our effectiveness protecting northern Alaska.

2007 Total Income



2007 Total Expenses



Footnotes:

- \$71,179 Mortgage balance as of January 1st
- \$51,859 Mortgage balance as of December 31st
- \$13,424 Total mortgage principal payments
- \$5,896 HELP Loan amounts forgiven

The Northern Center thanks the following organizations and individuals for their support in 2007!

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The Binky Foundation
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