



the Northern Line

WINTER 2022

HONORING JIM KOWALSKY

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

GARY SNYDER, FRONT LINES



^{the}**Northern Line**

Environmental News of Arctic and Interior Alaska

Thank you to our current team of staff and board members at the Northern Center.
We could not do this work without each of you.

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Letter from the Editor

This year, at Night for the North, we honor the first Executive Director of the Northern Center, Jim Kowalsky. Jim passed away earlier this year, and while he is sorely missed, his presence will forever be felt in the Northern Center's community and work.

To celebrate his legacy, we put together a special edition of The Northern Line featuring Jim's writings, spanning from the early days through a particularly poignant 2015 contribution. Through these pieces, we hope you'll see the ways in which we have upheld Jim's earliest visions of what the Northern Center could be while also growing and learning along the way. We include Jim's original writing here, and acknowledge that some of these articles include outdated language to refer to Indigenous peoples. We currently use the term "Indigenous peoples of Alaska" when referring broadly to many different peoples. Alaska Native groups are not a monolith, and whenever possible we try to use specific tribe name and not over-generalize.

In line with Jim's long term commitment to youth and education, the Northern Center has established the Jim Kowalsky Youth Engagement Fund. This fund will provide scholarships for youth attending Camp Habitat at Creamer's Field, help fund the Alaska Fellows Program, and fund an intern from the New School. This fund will be used exclusively to support youth education.

Our program staff have had a busy season, meeting virtually and in person with other advocates around the future of clean water, mining, and Arctic conservation in Alaska. A few updates from our program staff are included in the pages ahead, and you can receive the most current information by subscribing to our biweekly e-newsletter.

We hope you enjoy the retrospective below, and that you will donate to the Northern Center to support our ongoing essential work. As we look to our future, we recommit ourselves to the values the Northern Center has held for over fifty years.

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Looking Ahead from Behind: Reflections from the Beginning

WRITTEN BY JIM KOWALSKY FOR THE NORTHERN LINE, APRIL 1990



Three founders: Gordon Wright, Jim Hunter, Jim Kowalsky (2013)

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On September 1, 1971, we opened the door of what was then the Fairbanks Environmental Center (FEC) upstairs in the Rampart Building on Fifth Avenue in downtown Fairbanks. Longtime Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra conductor Gordon Wright raised the funds to open the center, though it was a pretty small amount by today's standards. Jim A. Hunter, a Fairbanks businessman who wanted Fairbanks to have "an environmental chamber of commerce," served as first FEC president; G. Ray Bane, then a school teacher in Hughes on the Koyukuk River and now Superintendent of Katmai National Park, was one of our first board members from bush Alaska. Soon thereafter the Alaska Conservation Society kicked in financial support to help us out of our first of many cash flow crises. Lots of people and some other organizations helped. Those were heady days. We thought we could "save" Alaska!

As local environmentalists opened their first store front in downtown Fairbanks (Anchorage followed suit a few months later that year), a radically new era of grassroots, homegrown

Alaskan environmentalism was born. Fueling this new movement were the momentous and monumental events of the late '60s-early-'70—namely oil development and its precursor, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which paved the way not only for settlement of aboriginal claims to lands, but also spelled out the process for Congress to set aside over 100 million acres of wilderness parklands and wildlife refuges across the state.

As we opened shop in 1971, the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline was stalled in court. FEC—and I—were frequently a convenient target for the anger and frustrations of local businessmen who had gone in pretty heavily, investing scarce dollars in anticipation of an early startup of pipeline construction which was delayed by a suit filed by The Wilderness Society and Friends of the Earth. There was little willingness then (and to this day) to acknowledge the real cause for delay in pipeline approval—the unsettled aboriginal claims to lands occupied and used for centuries by Alaska Natives. Another court suit by Alaska Legal Services for Stevens Village, prompted by early pipeline route surveys across local

traplines, framed the significance of unsettled land claims in the pipeline struggle. It's not that the environmentalists' lawsuit was not significant. It was.

As I consider the great tragedy of the oil spill in Prince William Sound, I am reminded of the early seventies when a chorus of too few of us was joined by the Cordova District Fisheries Union in pleading that a marine oil tanker system was just plain nuts and fraught with very great dangers that could never be fully mitigated. Congressmen Morris Udall and John Anderson agreed and sponsored legislation to mandate an all overland, trans-Alaska/trans-Canada oil pipeline that would deliver the oil to the midcontinent. In the feverish pitch to authorize and build a pipeline to tidewater at Valdez, the trans-Canada alternative—imperfect though it may have been—never received the consideration it deserved. Our delegation of Stevens, Young, and Gravel, with plenty of help from the Egan Administration, the industry, and many others who should hang their heads in shame, smothered the Udall-Anderson initiative. The results were predictable. Who could ever effectively deal with any catastrophic spill off Alaska's coast in the middle of raging winter weather in a dark December for example?

Many now urge that we quit beating on the past and get on with the present and future. On the contrary, the dialogue following the oil spill never went back far enough to examine how the decision to build the marine tanker system instead of an all overland route came to be in the first place. It is a textbook example of how public policy in Alaska should never have been made. If any worthwhile lessons are to be learned from this tragedy, then an examination of this phase of public policy-making—and the necessary perspective Alaska needs to gain from such an examination—is a must. I have yet to see this examination and hear the discussion that must follow. ■

What is the Fairbanks Environmental Center?

EXCERPT FROM THE ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT, THE FIRST NEWSLETTER FROM THE CENTER, PUBLISHED JUNE 1972

No, Friends of the Earth and the Center aren't formally connected, just good friends. FEC, affiliated with the John Muir Institute for Environmental Studies, is governed by a board of directors made up of residents of the local community and several from northern "bush" communities (listed elsewhere). The Center's incorporation is in the process. [. . .]

We are an environmental information clearinghouse. We have a large conservation information file and library. You may use these materials to do research. Hours are weekdays 9 to 5.

We publish, broadcast weekly over KUAC FM (Fri. 12:15 PM and Sun. 6:55 AM), furnish speakers, write articles, answer questions, argue, help prepare hearing data and statements and put people to work. We are a local contact for several national organizations and work closely with state groups such as the Alaska Conservation Society and the Alaska Center for the Environment. We want especially to work with downtown people, businessmen, housewives, professional and non-professional members of our community, students, Natives and residents of the bush:

"Dedicated to protection of the quality of the Alaskan environment through education and action."

The Center's Executive Director is Jim Kowalsky who wears two hats. Friends of the Earth retains him as their Arctic Regional Conservation Representative. [. . .] Your support for the Center and/or FOE is urgently sought. Please sit down right now and join. Alaska someday will thank you for it. ■

Executive Director Kowalsky at work in FEC's first office in the Rampart Building downtown Fairbanks in September, 1971.



Gas Pipeline

WRITTEN BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JIM KOWALSKY FOR ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES, NOVEMBER 1973

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Interest in Washington in National Interest Lands is only moderate to date, with energy and other issues dominating the scene. I did have an opportunity to speak at length with Curtis Bohlen, Deputy Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Secretary Reed's office. We discussed the gas pipeline routing situation and learned that the Interior Department seems to be unable to prevent the two competing gas line consortia from making a premature commitment to a particular route for the line from Prudhoe Bay to the lower 48 without first making the required detailed survey of other feasible routes. Mr. Bohlen said he'd told Arctic Gas, the Canadian consortium, that they must explore five routes. He also said that the Federal Power Commission would grant a line permit, but that it was not clear who would write an environmental impact statement required under Section 102(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act. He said he saw years of conflict over this route question, even though the competing consortia, El Paso Natural Gas, and Arctic Gas, plan to make application to the Federal Power Commission as early as December 1973 for different routes, and then make its decision on which route to seek. AS of now there appears to be no mechanism by which this can be accomplished.

I told Mr. Bohlen that under this arrangement, it appears that the same situation as existed in the great oil pipeline debate may develop all over again, with the industry identifying the one or two routes which will benefit its stockholders the most, and then gearing up full steam ahead without even looking at other routes as required under the Act. At this point, Arctic Gas appears ready to file for route through the northern foothills of the eastern Brooks Range and the Arctic National Wildlife Range. Washington observers agree that, should this invasion of the refuge occur, a parallel oil line would surely follow.

The US Navy also approached the Secretary for pipeline routes south from Pet. 4, one to cross the Noatak drainage, the other to go through the John River Valley in the Anaktuvuk Pass area. ■

Jim remained a passionate and committed advocate for the people, wildlife, and lands of northern Alaska until the end. We are so honored to know we stand on the shoulders of a giant. The work he did to establish the Northern Alaska Environmental Center (then known as the Fairbanks Environmental Center) has had an impact for the last five decades. He created a path and showed us how to walk in it, and for that and so much more, we're grateful. We will keep up the work in his honor, and in honor of all of the people, organizations, and wildlife he worked his entire life to uplift, protect, and defend.

—Scott Fogarty, Portland, Oregon &
Elisabeth Balster Dabney, Fairbanks, Alaska

Update: Protect the Arctic

Our Arctic Program continues to advocate for permanent protections for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by gaining Wilderness designation for the entire Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as the prevention of continued extraction in Alaska's Western Arctic, the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The continued fight for the Arctic Refuge aims to reverse the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which officially opened the refuge's coastal plain to potential oil extraction. A flopped lease sale in January 2021 only saw three bidders, with a majority of bids by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). Upon entering office, The Biden Administration put a temporary halt on leasing, and all oil companies with inholdings have since backed out of their leases. However, AIDEA still holds seven leases and has filed a lawsuit against the Biden administration's decision to pause them. The Northern Center, alongside our partners and ally organizations, leads efforts within Alaska to pressure AIDEA to drop their Arctic Refuge leases. To prevent future lease sales, seismic testing, and extraction on the coastal plain, permanent legislative protections for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remain a national priority. The Wilderness Society's Imago Initiative, is working on long-term efforts to shape how conservation in the Arctic could be re-imagined through an Indigenous worldview, and with Indigenous rights-holders at the helm. The Northern Center is honored to collaborate closely with The Wilderness Society's Alaska office in this work.

In the Western Arctic, ConocoPhillips' Willow project remains a looming threat for nearby communities and imperative wildlife habitat. It is a recipe for climate disaster, with the potential to release more than 250 million metric tons of carbon dioxide as more than 500 million barrels of oil are extracted from the Arctic ecosystem. Beyond being a ticking time bomb for climate, the Willow project would completely surround the Native Village of Nuiqsut with oil infrastructure, including 386 miles of pipelines and ice roads. The project poses a massive threat to life in the Arctic, both for people and wildlife. The Northern Center and allied organizations continue to pressure the Biden administration, both through public comment opportunities and high-level meetings, to prevent permitting for the Willow project in the Western Arctic.

Newsletter published for rural village distribution regarding proposed road development

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE RURAL ALASKA VILLAGE REPORT EDITED BY JIM KOWALSKY IN 1976

BLM PLANS HIGHWAYS AND PIPELINE CORRIDORS IN YOUR AREA

The BLM has a brand new plan to put highway, pipeline, railroad and electric utility corridors into and across many Native Village and regional lands. These corridors will cross lands to be granted under the Native Claims Settlement Act.

BLM says the reason for these corridors is to transport oil, natural gas, minerals and electricity south so they can be shipped to the lower 48 states. Highways cannot be used economically to ship oil, gas or minerals. But BLM has over 20 new highway proposals.

They do not explain why their plan calls for highways. In this report we will bring you some information about the BLM plan to help you decide how it will affect you. There are about eleven thousand miles of new corridors in the BLM plan. Please turn to page for a map of the BLM new corridor plan.

HERE ARE SOME FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE BLM CORRIDOR PLAN

The plan was made without consulting Natives and other rural people. BLM must make a report on the need for these corridors to the Interior Secretary

this spring. They only need to report but do not have to propose actual corridors. The Interior Secretary is then supposed to report to Congress on whether or not corridors are needed.

The highways in the plan would be public highways. Your country would be opened up to anyone who wanted to drive a car from the city to your village area to hunt, take fish, and just come to see who is in your village. Representatives from many villages have told us in the past year that they depend upon game and fish to help them support their families, and that there is not enough to share with large numbers of people who would come in from outside the village to hunt game.

They told us they would prefer to see transportation improvement by having better air and river barge service for freight and passengers. Some said they would rather see the millions of dollars spent on new highways to be spent instead on better air and barge service. Highways in particular would not allow them much control of how many people come into their village areas. ■

Update: No Ambler Road

Our Clean Water & Mining Program Coordinator, Katie McClellan, provides an update here on the work we are now engaged in that echoes Jim's words above.

While nearly 50 years have passed, the Northern Center finds itself working in a similar capacity to what Jim Kowalsky described in 1976. This fall, staff from Northern and partners in the No Ambler Road coalition traveled to the upper Kobuk River villages of Ambler, Shungnak, & Kobuk, and the native village of Kotzebue to talk about the impacts of the proposed Ambler Road. This 211-mile industrial corridor would lead to the Ambler Mining District, where four mineral deposits have been explored, with the intent to develop them into large-scale open pit mines with severe consequences for the surrounding landscape & communities. Notably, the people who would be most directly impacted are not in favor of this proposal. At the time of writing this, eleven of the nearest thirteen communities formally oppose Ambler Road.

Although the road is slated to provide private, industrial access only, with no connections or transportation benefits to the surrounding villages, no plans have been developed to prevent trespass or prevent access from unauthorized users. This is a cause for concern among villages, who fear further intrusion of western culture and the social and cultural issues that arise from outside influence, including higher rates of substance abuse and physical and sexual violence. Furthermore, if the Dalton Highway provides any indication of the future of the Ambler Road should it be built, when public funds are used to finance private roads, those roads do not stay private for very long. Public access to an ecosystem already under stress from climate change would only further pressure the landscape, wildlife, and people who depend on it.



Kowalsky Honored at Annual Meeting

EXCERPT FROM THE NORTHERN LINE, MAY 1980

The FEC's 1980 Annual Meeting and Earth Day activities were highlighted by an award given to Jim Kowalsky for Conservationist of the Decade. Jim was honored with a short presentation by Celia Hunter, and several tokens of appreciation from the Center. Jim was one of the founders of the Center in 1971, and worked as its Director for most of the 70's. He was also the Alaska Representative for Friends of the Earth from 1971-1978.

[...]

The FEC would like to thank and extend our congratulations to Jim Kowalsky, Molly McCammon and Glynn Hoener for all the work they have put into keeping Alaska alive and well. ■



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I had the pleasure of working with Jim over the past decade on Alaska wildlife conservation issues, and grew to love him as a friend, and a ferocious defender of Alaska's wildlife and wild places. To the conservation community, Jim was our Admiral Farragut: "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead"—always pushing forward against the many forces allied against the wild Alaska. Jim was perfectly worthy of the salute Ed Abbey had for an old desert tortoise in the southwest: "Like all desert turtles, he knows his home, loves it, stays there, guards it"—and this is exactly what Jim Kowalsky did for wild Alaska. Jim will be missed, and the best way to honor him will be to step up our efforts to protect wild Alaska, so let's get back to work!

—Rick Steiner, Anchorage, Alaska

Jim was a true champion of the more-than-human world. He was a creative and tireless advocate for Alaska's wildlife, especially our much-maligned wolves and bears. What I most appreciate about his efforts are how creative he was—using old-school sixties-type modes of resistance; gathering friends to band together in protests, often with beloved dogs alongside them; and sending fiery letters to government officials and the media. All his work was no-holds-barred. And that's what we need more of, not less. So his passing leaves a crater-sized hole in Alaska, one we all must band together to fill.

—Marybeth Holleman, Anchorage, Alaska

In 1972, the Northern Center charged an annual membership fee of \$10. That's the equivalent of \$71 in 2022! The first newsletter from the Northern Center (then the Fairbanks Environmental Center) stated, "We operate modestly, spending little. We're poor. We need money. Send any amount and deduct it for income tax purposes." To this day, we operate without accepting any federal or state funding which may restrict our work. Please consider making a donation to support Northern Center programs.



Caribou Treaty Remains High on Native Priority List

Photo of Porcupine caribou herd by Emily Sullivan, 2022

WRITTEN BY JIM KOWALSKY FOR THE NORTHERN LINE, FEBRUARY 1981

Despite opposition by the State of Alaska, interest in and momentum for negotiation of an international treaty to protect the Porcupine Caribou herd remains high among Native villages of northeast Alaska and northwest Canada.

At a general meeting of the Gwitchin Caribou Committee in the Arctic Village in November 1980, principles necessary to protect the habitat and subsistence use of the Porcupine herd were agreed to by the committee and by representatives of the tribal government of the Venetie Indian Reservation.

The committee is made up of representatives of villages who directly utilize this herd for subsistence. Jonathan Solomon, a dynamic Indian leader who is president of the Gwitcha-Gwitchea-Ginkye Corporation (often referred to as the "Three G's"), chairs the committee.

The Three G's Corporation was formed by Solomon over two decades ago to fight the proposed Rampart Dam which would have put the Yukon Flats under water. The corporation name translates to the English: "People of the Yukon Flats Speak".

The Gwitcha Caribou Committee included representatives from Chalkyitsik, Venetie, Ft. Yukon, Beaver, Arctic Village and the Inupiat village of Kaktovik.

At the two-day meeting, this committee approved principles including subsistence preference, habitat protection, makeup of an international caribou commission and research and advisory committees.

Representatives from Kaktovik, missing for the November meeting, later unanimously ratified the Arctic Village resolution at a Village Council meeting.

The Arctic Village resolution actually was fashioned from an earlier

(June, 1980) joint resolution of the Kaktovik Village Council and Fish & Game Advisory Committee.

Chief Paul Williams produced an eloquent statement of the Arctic Village meeting concerning the need to protect a way of life centered around the subsistence harvest of caribou by direct participation in management and protection of the Porcupine herd and its habitat on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border.

Under present conditions, Alaska has no control over the fate of this herd when it ranges into Canada, as it seasonally does, no control over unlimited hunting and no control over development of habitat.

No memorandums of agreement could achieve this control. Such agreements are strictly voluntary, do not have the force of law as would a treaty, and are thus subject to the whims and fancies of changing administrations.

STATE STONEWALLS TREATY

A position statement drafted by Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game Commissioner Ron Skoog and signed by Governor Hammond was read and discussed at the Arctic Village meeting.

Essentially, the Commissioner writes categorically that the State "... should not concede that there is any present need for international control of the caribou resource. We should continue to advocate that a treaty is not necessary." (Memo to Governor Hammond from Commissioner Skoog, Sept. 5, 1980.)

The State's opposition to three years of effort by Northeast Alaskan Natives to gain a treaty, was soundly condemned by participants of the Arctic Village meeting.

"We have worked hard for years to get this treaty to help get needed international management," says Solomon. "This is a responsible action by responsible Native people—they want good management on both sides of the border, but the State just opposes us—they never have helped us to get a good treaty, the kind that is needed," he said.

THREE YEARS OF WORK

In March 1978, Natives of those communities began efforts to develop information and build support for a

caribou treaty. Meetings have been held in Old Crow and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory; in Fairbanks, Arctic Village, and Kaktovik.

The U.S. Depts of State and Interior have held hearings and attended those meetings. Former Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus drafted a decision document, containing recommendations for treaty principles. Both secretaries (State and Interior) indicated they would not deal directly with the treaty until Alaska lands legislation was passed.

But after President Carter's defeat in the November elections, Andrus and Secretary of State Muskie apparently gave up on the treaty.

NATIVES WILL CONTINUE

Incoming President Reagan's energy advisors have targeted the Porcupine herd calving grounds within the Arctic Wildlife Range as top priority for potential oil leasing.

Additionally, the Alaska lands legislation mandates seismic tests there beginning in December 1982. Observers expect attempts in 1981 to legislate an earlier opening of the Range to oil exploration.

The conflicts over oil development and wildlife are dramatized by these present and future events. Although a treaty would not prevent oil or other

development sought by either nation, the proposed treaty would:

- Set limits on that development to minimize damage to caribou;
- Give the State of Alaska and residents of user villages direct input into conditions for management of caribou on both sides of the border; and
- Give both interests direct input into how and when any needed development within the caribou range takes place on both sides of the border.

SKOOG STANDS STAUNCH

While Native people of Canada and Alaska seek responsible action needed to truly protect this herd, Fish & Game Commissioner Ron Skoog maintains that no international agreement is needed now.

Skoog told a recent meeting of representatives of the "Three G's" and Tanana Chiefs Conference that:

- He won't seek international agreements to protect habitat or to limit Canadian hunting because these are not needed now.
- The Porcupine herd is highly mobile and when development preempts use of any part of this range, the animals will merely move elsewhere.



Photo of Porcupine caribou
by Emily Sullivan, 2022

- When it becomes obvious that international agreement is needed, those who desire it can go to Canadian Parliament to get appropriate laws passed to achieve it. He added that Canada is responsible and it should be trusted to maintain its portion of the herd's range without a treaty, and that memorandum of agreements are all that are needed to accomplish cooperative management of this herd.

Skoog insisted that the State would lose some management authority in such a treaty, but refused to acknowledge that his department would also thereby gain control over the Canadian part of the caribou picture since they currently have no authority in Canada.

Skoog maintains a staunch "States' rights" posture, and a "we don't-want-a-treaty-no-matter-what" position. The Native community points to this as the usual "crisis management" of caribou for which the ADF&G has

become known through its earlier mismanagement of the Western Arctic caribou herd.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Since any treaty must receive the blessing of the President, and since the U.S. Senate must ratify any treaty by a two-thirds majority, it is obvious that the intransigent, anti-treaty position of the Hammond administration must be reversed.

Readers can be assured that subsistence interests who asked for it in the first place will continue to press for an international treaty.

A treaty is a proven tool for effective protection and management of a truly international resource, such as the Porcupine caribou herd.

Even ADF&G agrees on the importance of maintenance of habitat in its Ecosystem management statement, recently adopted by the Board of Game: "Maintaining wildlife habitat . . . is the single most important goal for ensuring the perpetuation of Alaska's wildlife".

Natives and other interests have long realized the importance of this goal and have acted responsibly to secure the treaty.

Additionally the Department's Wildlife Management Goals also adopted by the Board of Game states: "The foremost consideration in protecting and maintaining indigenous wildlife populations is providing habitat in the amount, kind and quality necessary to meet the requirements of wildlife species."

"Wildlife populations cannot survive without adequate habitat, and efforts to protect animals directly without also protecting their habitat or correcting habitat deficiencies often prove to be ineffectual." (emphasis added).

Both statements could well apply to the Porcupine caribou herd.

The State of Alaska must now be forcefully challenged to demonstrate how it can ensure adequate protection for habitat and adequate management of this herd on both sides of the border, before it is too late. ■

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Update: Caribou in Alaska

Caribou, an essential resource for Indigenous peoples in Northern Alaska, face substantial threats today by proposed development in the Arctic. Below, Katie McClellan of our Clean Water & Mining Program, as well as Emily Sullivan on behalf of the Arctic Program, have provided updates on the caribou in the respective areas of their work.

KATIE:

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH), once one of the world's largest herds numbering more than 500,000 caribou, has declined to approximately 188,000 as of the 2021 herd census, most likely due to pressures from climate change. During our trip to the upper Kobuk communities, many people shared stories of changing migration patterns, increasing unreliability of caribou passing through previously dependable hunting grounds, and greater distances being traveled in order to hunt.

The Ambler Road would cut through the heart of the Brooks Range and the WACH's migratory path, further disrupting an already stressed population. In the Koyukon Athabaskan communities at the eastern end of the proposed road corridor, the Central Caribou herd was once their primary source of food, but upon completion of the Dalton Highway and development of oil drilling complexes on the North Slope, these communities found fewer and fewer caribou moving through their traditional migratory path, creating challenges to hunting and increasing food insecurity. By creating access to an otherwise remote area of the Arctic, non-regional hunters could potentially gain access to the herd (legally or not), increasing the

number of animals taken each year, and driving competition with subsistence users who depend on the herd as their primary food source. We cannot allow history to repeat itself.

The proposed ConocoPhillips Willow project in the Western Arctic poses an additional massive threat to both the Western Arctic and the Teshekpuk Caribou Herd, whose habitat overlap in the Western Arctic. As evidenced by the shifted habitat of the Central Arctic Herd in the 1980s and 1990s, increased oil extraction activity and expanded infrastructure on the North Slope, especially in sensitive habitat surrounding Teshekpuk Lake, poses great risk to both the WACH and the Teshekpuk herds.

EMILY:

While the Porcupine Caribou Herd remains one of the largest herds in North America, with 218,000 head at last count, the ongoing climate crisis poses a major threat to the amount of viable habitat for the herd. A 2021 study conducted by Alaskan and Canadian scientists found that the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge will only become more necessary to the Porcupine caribou as the climate warms. According to the study, by the 2050s, the amount of habitat suitable for calving in Canada's Yukon Territory is expected to decrease by 31 percent. Meanwhile, the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is projected to become even more ideal calving grounds for the Porcupine caribou, with scientists predicting that calving distribution will shift further north and west to include more of the coastal plain by the 2050s. This study underscores the importance of preserving this sacred habitat and calving grounds for generations to come.

Interview with NAEC Founder

For the winter 2003 issue of The Northern Line, Ann Swift, NAEC member/volunteer, interviewed Jim. We include the complete interview here because it provides an interesting background on how Jim first began his work.

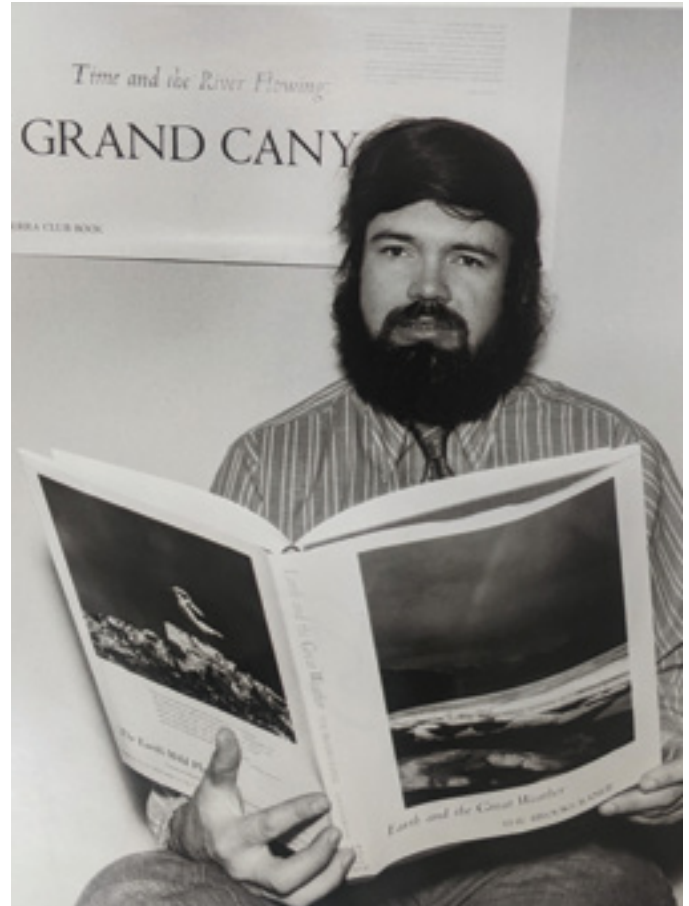
Jim Kowalsky, co-founder and first director of the Environmental Center, can look back on a time when activism may have been more strident, but many of the issues seem familiar to those today. In September 1971 what was then called the Fairbanks Environmental Center opened its doors as a real “center,” a meeting place for environmentalists involved in several organizations.

The Alaska Conservation Society had been started a decade before, and Gordon Wright, the other co-founder of the Center, had been working to get a chapter of the Sierra Club started in Fairbanks. In addition Jim was also a representative of Friends of the Earth, another national organization that had started just two years before. It was the pre-pipeline time, when the Fairbanks business community had geared up for that development. The legal delays that held up its construction eventually led to a much safer pipeline, but all the developers could see was that the environmentalists were blocking progress. No wonder an article in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner commented that Jim had been sent “into the eye of Alaska’s conservation storm.”

Jim and Gordon had met in Madison, Wisconsin, where Jim was [a] music teacher in the schools, and Gordon ran a bookshop specializing in music and books about music. The two became friends and while bicycling together around Madison, observed the minuses as well as the plusses of development. In 1969 Gordon moved to Fairbanks to become conductor of the Fairbanks Symphony. Jim helped him move, one of several helpers because Gordon was moving much of the contents of his bookshop up here with him. It was Jim’s first look at Alaska, but not his first foray into environmental issues. While teaching at Union College in Barboursville Kentucky, Jim had been among a group of what he calls “rabble rousers,” who successfully blocked the construction of a dam across the Red River Gorge. It was there that he met David Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth.

Jim drove to Alaska in a 1954 truck and was hired to start the Center for \$100 a month. According to the News-Miner 1971 article, he felt that a major emphasis of conservation organizations should be comprehensive land use planning. Still, there was that pesky pipeline to deal with. When developers circulated anti-environmental bumper stickers proclaiming, “Let the Bastards Freeze in the Dark,” Jim created a counter sticker, “Freezing in the Dark Builds Character.”

Jim left the Center in 1976 to concentrate on an issue that had become dear to his heart, the d-2 section of ANILCA. He had come to realize that “real people live” in the areas that were under dispute, something he felt was being ignored by people outside the state. His focus on people in rural Alaska



Jim Kowalsky on September 4, 1971. Photo Credit Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, staff photographer Sue Anderson.

has continued to this day. He has worked for the Tanana Chiefs, helping with habitat comments on management plans, essentially aiding people in these communities to become advocates for subsistence issues. For the last 18 years he has been director of RAHI, the Rural Alaska Honors Institute, which brings rural high school students to the UAF campus every summer. ■

When the Northern Center first opened, Liberty Cycle Shop in Fairbanks donated a new ten-speed lightweight bicycle to the office for staff use. Today, we have two bikes available for staff use, and we are glad to carry this tradition forward.

Florence Collins Award: Jim Kowalsky

EXCERPT FROM THE NORTHERN LINE, SUMMER 2015

For his tireless activism to protect the wildlife of Alaska – we are forever indebted! We commend him for his years of service to protect the creatures and habitats of Alaska. Wildlife is Wilderness is Wildlife forever.

Wildlife is Wilderness

WRITTEN BY JIM KOWALSKY FOR THE NORTHERN LINE, SUMMER 2015

There is a great deal of advocacy going around in Alaska and nationally to protect Alaska's precious wildlands, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge most prominently among the campaigns. But where is the advocacy for that other half of the wilderness realm, Alaskan wildlife?

Author Bob Hayes for example—retired Yukon wolf biologist—argues in his “Wolves of the Yukon,” that wolves are the embodiment, the very essence of wilderness. Complete wilderness is replete with predators and prey, without which we have only a lot of scenery, he writes.

What brings this to a sharp point in Alaska for wilderness campaigns is a real lack of aggressive highly visible organized wildlife advocacy. The result in Alaska is what one observer calls a “predator holocaust,” all set into motion by decades of wildlife management decisions made by an exclusive, entrenched, squalid wildlife apparatus headed by the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) carried out with way too much

enthusiasm by an entrenched Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). This [is] all mostly ignored by organized wilderness advocacy.

The BOG make up continues entirely of consumptive users. Attempts to place persons who can appropriately represent the Alaska population who do not hunt or trap have failed thus far. The tragedy for wilderness, virtually ignored by most wilderness advocates over the years, has been a heavy slaughter of bears and wolves, chasing to exhaustion and shooting from fixed wing and helicopter. This is predator control pitches as “intensive management” or more appropriately, intensive manipulation. Hayes would call it farming, not managing. The ongoing BOG-mandated slaughter of predators regardless of how labeled is a wilderness abomination.

If wilderness advocacy continues to ignore the cardinal principle that complete wilderness is only replete with predator and prey, thus allowing what may be a greater

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Courtesy Fran Mauer





Courtesy Fran Mauer

public interest to remain unexamined and excluded, what can happen is extremist BOG policy unchallenged already underway.

The BOG has a new standard for killing predators initiated for Kenai moose. There the objective for killing predators is to “reallocate” moose to hunters that otherwise might be taken by predators, that is, bears and wolves. In other words the rationale to kill predators is not to increase moose numbers. It is to “reallocate.”

Wilderness advocates who ignore what’s going on may find without fundamental change in Alaska’s game management every prey population anywhere in Alaska—moose and caribou—could be “reallocated.” Predator control could be continuous, never ending. No place for bears and wolves except in national parks.

Given the BOG history of extreme decisions, the potential for broad application of reallocation is very real. Now wilderness advocates are capable of fierce fights seeking status for landscapes. But to ignore this as an example already underway, they will be blamed for non-action.



Congratulations to our 2015 awardees! L to R: Vicky Biondi, Lou Brown (CCA), Rich Seifert (Co-op), Danae Bernunzio, Stan Justice, Jim Kowalsky, Fran Mauer, Jimmy Fox (CCA), Patrice Lee (CCA)

Predators, the embodiment of true wilderness keeping wild populations in check, holding the natural ecosystems of dynamic balance, could be a thing of the past under BOG reallocation. The present realm which tends to game farming rather than to manage wildlife could leave vast landscapes, not true wilderness.

Fundamental Alaska wilderness questions remain: What are the real interests of wildlife itself and who speaks for these? Absolutely not the BOG nor the ADF&G nor private pilots pursuing and shooting predators from aircraft, not the hunter nor trapper, not management professor nor wildlife graduate student, not most Alaska environmental organizations, not the agency biologist, nor legislator. Most being must-haves speak to their own self-fulfilling needs and extremist BOG policy, to self interests, wants, politics, unending human mandates and fantasies, but seldom or never to what could be actual wildlife needs.

Who indeed will step up to the plate to speak to and advocate for actual wildlife and thus for real wilderness? ■

Our work continues today . . .

Your contributions to the Northern Center have made it possible for us to continue the work that Jim and other founders envisioned over 50 years ago.

This year, the Clean Water and Mining Program has advocated against dangerous projects including the proposed Donlin Gold mine and the proposed road to Ambler. Our Arctic Program has followed the lead of Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic by calling for comments opposing the Willow Project. We have worked in broad coalitions to amplify these issues to a national level, and are strengthening our relationships and partnerships in every issue area.

Meanwhile, we have expanded our staff and welcomed new members to our Board, which has greatly increased our capacity. We are back to hosting in person events and meetings, while still taking COVID precautions, and are grateful for the chance to see our community in person again.

We hope to see you all again soon, and encourage you to get in touch with us about your concerns and ideas as we head into 2023! ■



2021 Selfie with Scott Fogarty, senior advisor

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I live in Anchorage, I play the trumpet (but unlike Jim Kowalsky, purely as an amateur), and I have long been involved in Alaskan conservation and environmental issues. So it was perhaps inevitable that I should eventually cross paths with Jim. I first received an email from Jim in 2015, about the trapping of fur-bearers. Jim knew that I played trumpet and collected brass instruments (perhaps from his former student Linn Weeda in Anchorage), but most of our early chats were about Alaskan wildlife subjects. Until the Covid-19 pandemic hit, I had exchanged a few phone calls a year with Jim, usually on conservation issues. But with the Covid-19 lockdown, it became apparent that Jim was listening to a lot of classical music clips on the internet, and sharing them with his friends and fellow brass enthusiasts. I was amazed at the music sources and performances that he uncovered and shared by his emailed links. While he had some perceptive reviews about some of the available performances, he enjoyed them all, and he reveled in the wealth of brass playing that was suddenly happening on the internet due to the pandemic. In going back over my email in-box, I have found that so many new performance discoveries had arrived from Jim, that I was not able to click on all of them at the time. I will now have the pleasure of going back and watching and hearing these “new” clips, as well as the many from Jim that I did play when they arrived. I’ll remember Jim and the friendly, spontaneous and uplifting chats that we had by phone and email on basically two subjects: classical brass music, and Alaska conservation. Rest in peace, Jim!

—Tom Meacham, Anchorage, Alaska

I remember my first summer in Fairbanks. It was 1971. Wilbur Mills and I were heading to the Central Brooks Range to spend the summer exploring. Wilbur had been partly funded by Marty Murie, The Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club to explore the Central Brooks Range and report back to them about its potential for National Park designation. I was along for the adventure. We met with big, tall Jim Kowalsky who had been sent up to Alaska, to help establish a local environmental group. Of course this group became the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, and Jim was its first executive director. For many years after we camped out in the backyard of the Northern Center, which was located downtown close to the old Safeway building, which now is the downtown Post Office. I remember being regaled about stories of mad miners barging into the Center demanding to see “that damned” Jim Kowalsky. When Jim stood up from behind his desk, (all six plus ??? foot of him), the miners were so taken aback by Jim’s physical stature that they usually calmed down considerably. The funny thing is, Jim was a gentle giant. Although the miners may not have felt much different when they left, they had at least lost the fighting urge! There were so many good times at the Center over the years. I am looking forward to when we can all start to meet again.

—Ron Yarnell, Fairbanks, Alaska



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**Thank you for your
ongoing support of the
Northern Center.**

