

THE NORTHERN LINE

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Joe Enzweiler © 1998.

Moving Right Along

By Arthur Hussey

We've moved since the last *Northern Line*. We now work out of 830 College Road, a much larger premises near Creamer's Field; meanwhile 218 Driveway awaits

a new owner, following 20+ years of *Northern Alaska Environmental Center* occupancy and innumerable great moments. But 218, as it turns out, had one last symbolic lesson. Fact of the matter, we can't sell 218 because we don't own it. Rather, our predecessor the *Fairbanks Environmental Center* owns it. We changed names back in the 80's but for some reason did not amend our title deed accordingly, so 218 stays with our predecessor.

We'll sort out the details, no doubt, so that in the final days of our 20+ year occupancy, the Northern Center owns 218. My point here, however, is not to rehash history, but rather to point out that the fact that the Fairbanks Environmental Center still owns 218 reaffirms our linkage with the Fairbanks community. We sometimes lose sight of this as we focus on larger issues.

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center is revered here in Fairbanks by many or, by a few others, less fondly thought of. Whatever the case, ask opinion-leaders about Fairbanks' broad-spectrum environmental agency and the Northern Center's name comes up. We have a number of other extremely competent partners, but for generalist agencies, we tend to be the focus. This makes it incumbent upon the Northern Center to respond as best we can to the perceived environmental needs of Fairbanks, even if we haven't necessarily done so in the past.

To this end, I am pleased that we have formalized a

contact person for local issues, namely our Boreal Forest Coordinator, Nancy Fresco. Nancy brings a true compassion for Fairbanks and is known to many members for her work on the Northern Intertie. Over the coming months, she and others will be developing a program to respond to Fairbanks-specific environmental issues, actual and potential. Part of this exercise will include assessing the needs of our Fairbanks constituents; I welcome your suggestions on directions for this program.

Nonetheless, much of our work will continue to involve issues--and stakeholders--distant from Fairbanks: mines throughout Alaska, oil on the North Slope, and Denali National Park, for starters. We'll continue to work on these issues as our name (*Northern Alaska...*) connotes. Currently, the issue involving the greatest number of members is possible oil exploration and extraction in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Here, response and involvement has been nothing short of spectacular, with great dedication and commitment showed by members from all areas of the country. Keep it up!

So we have two sorts of issues, each with different needs. But, and this is important, each depends upon membership and the commitment of our supporters. To this end, we are undertaking a comprehensive membership strengthening exercise, led by our new and energetic Membership Director, Paul Ollig. The goal of this is to both serve our existing members better, as well as to reach out to potential members. As with the local issues initiative, your inputs on how best to achieve these twin membership objectives are appreciated.

All the best for a pleasant Fall and early Winter.

THE NORTHERN LINE

Environmental News of Arctic and Interior Alaska

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The Northern Center is a not-for-profit, environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to preserving and protecting wilderness, natural habitats, and the quality of life in Interior and Arctic Alaska. The Northern Center has 1,150 members.

STAFF

Arthur Hussey, Executive Director
Mara Bacsujlaky, Assistant Director/Mining Coordinator
Nancy Fresco, Boreal Forest Campaign Coordinator
Deb Moore, Wilderness Campaign Coordinator
Amy Turner, Camp Habitat Director
Vera Sampson, Office Manager & Financial Assistant
Paul Ollig, Membership & Communications Director
Molly Davies, Intern

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The *Northern Line* is produced by Paul Ollig.

The cover photo of the East Fork of the Chandalar River was taken in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. NAEC file photo.

The back page photo by Amy Turner was taken near Tangle Lakes along the Denali Highway.



Camp Habitat 2001: A Child's Odyssey

By Amy Turner

If you ventured out to Creamer's Field this summer chances are that you encountered Camp Habitat campers. We had an exciting summer full of fun activities and lots of sunshine.

Camp Habitat offered five different programs this year with good success. We had 148 children attend camp this year, offering \$1,950 in scholarships. Campers enjoyed a variety of activities and guest speakers from the Fairbanks Community. The campers also participated in the planting of the Creamer's Field Garden and did a fantastic job.

Thanks to many generous donations we were also able to purchase new three new tents for Camp Habitat this year. All the staff and campers thank you for our new dry and mosquito-free tents. In addition, thanks to the Alaska Conservation Foundation for our fabulous intern and Assistant Director, Molly Davies. Molly has been a big help and brought comic relief to the children and the staff. We hope to see everyone next year!



Nature Sprouts enjoy an afternoon in the dandelions

Thank you to the following businesses/organizations for their support:

ABR, Inc., Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Anne's Greenhouse, Arctic Audubon Society, Biodynamic Farming & Gardening Association, Doyon Foundation, Emblem Club, Mike Emers (Rosie Creek Flower Farm), Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District, Friends of Creamer's Field, Gretchen Kerndt (Basilically Basil), Karen Max, GCI, Northern

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Arctic Refuge	11
Boreal Shorts	9
Camp Habitat	3
Conservation Abstracts	16
Denali Park Access	10
Denali Watch	12
Director's Column	2
Forest Facts	4
From the Woodpile	12
Introduction to Solar Energy	8
Meet Paul Ollig	13
Mine Dredgings	7
Roads and Resources	6
Roadless Rule Revisited	14
Teck Cominco Workers Exposed	5
Thanks to our Volunteers	15
Welcome to our New Members	14

Meet Molly Davies

Camp Habitat and Run for the Refuge Intern

I grew up in a small farming community in western Illinois. When it came time to leave home, I had two goals for my future; be a country music singer, or get a degree in something that held my interest. Either way, I wanted to travel. Since you have never been to one of my concerts, I obviously opted for the second goal. That was how I ended up at the University of Missouri majoring in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Many encouraged me to get a degree in math, but I knew I wouldn't be happy unless I studied what I loved.

During my years at the university, I was fortunate to spend a couple summers studying abroad. My summer of 1999 was

spent in the Czech Republic learning about agriculture and rural sociology. That experience had such an impression on me that I decided to study overseas again. Last summer, I got on a flight for Thailand. I studied shrimp farming, agriculture economics, and ecotourism. The culture, environment, and overall essence of Southern Thailand made me recognize my niche in this world. I need to help people in this world learn how to interact with their environments in a responsible manner. When arriving back in Missouri,

I spent my last two semesters of college finishing up my (cont.. page 4)

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Forest Facts - Soils

By Nancy Fresco

While most northern Alaskans know that they'd rather build a house among birch trees than on land that grows only black spruce, many would be hard-pressed to explain the complex interrelationship between tree species, climate, and forest soils. It is easy to observe that while black spruce grows where it is boggy, or cold, or both, birch grows in sunny, drier spots. But why is there so much variation over quite small areas? How do moisture and sunlight, permafrost and decay rates factor into the equation? And what makes some spots "productive forest" while others are labeled "unproductive"?

Soil is nothing more than a layered mixture of rock fragments (rocks, gravel, sand and silt) and organic matter in various stages of decay. For ideal growth, most trees prefer soil conditions with ample room for root growth, plenty of

available nutrients, aeration, and continual access to adequate moisture. However, soils in the Interior almost always lack at least one of these conditions, and sometimes lack all of them.

In the Fairbanks area, soils are dominated by permafrost, with as much as 75% of the land underlain by perpetually frozen soil. To a tree, permafrost might as well be solid rock. Roots cannot penetrate it. In some locations, roots cannot extend more than a few inches below the surface. Obviously, this poses a structural limitation on tree growth. The presence of permafrost also causes very poor soil drainage. Summer rains and winter snowmelt can't trickle deep into the ground to the water table. As a result, water tends to pool on the surface, creating bogs and fens. An excess of water drives air out of the soil. Non-aerated soil, in turn, does not favor decomposi-

minors in International Agriculture, Agriculture Economics, and Environmental Studies. I wanted to gain experience in the field educating others about the environment and that is how I ended up as an intern for Camp Habitat in Alaska.

It has been a truly rewarding experience reassuring me that I made the right decision for my future. Currently, I just found out that I will get to spend my next two years in Romania as a Peace Corps volunteer working in environmental education.

Molly worked from May to August 2001 as Assistant Director for Camp Habitat and the Run for the Refuge Intern.



Variations in soil composition create a mosaic of ecosystems in Alaska's boreal forests

tion, since many forms of decay require oxygen. Thus boggy ground tends to be poor in the nutrients released by decomposition.

In addition to water-logged soil, cold temperatures also slow the process of decay. Long, icy Fairbanks winters do more than freeze the soil. Nothing rots quickly here, so dead leaves and needles, branches, whole trees, and the other varied detritus littering the forest floor take years to break down. Almost 80% of the soils are classified as "inceptisols," a term that implies that they are new and unlikely to be nutrient-rich.

The average Fairbanks temperature is about minus 3 degrees Celsius, but there is enough variation between sites to ensure that some locations have average temperatures above freezing — south-facing slopes that get plenty of sun, or high spots that experience significant inversions in the winter, for example. River basins also experience a certain immunity from permafrost, at least along the flood plains of glacial waterways, because these rivers constantly erode existing banks and deposit the material elsewhere. The soils that form under such conditions are gravelly, sandy, and silty. There is little topsoil at first, but a succession of herbs, willow, and hardwoods such as balsam poplar gradually create conditions favorable to the largest and longest-lived local trees, white spruce.

Once soils are tenable by white spruce, the spruce out-compete aspen, poplars, and birch because they need less light than these deciduous species. They also create a dense shade in which the other species cannot thrive. Oddly enough, this dense shade can, in some cases, cool the ground enough to change soil conditions. Old white spruce stands may start to develop permafrost soils in locations where there was no permafrost previously. Occasionally, this can lead to an eventual change from a white spruce to a black spruce forest.

From the point of view of timber harvest, black spruce is unproductive. The average white spruce stand has 3 to 4 times

the biomass (total weight of living material) of a black spruce stand. The average aspen stand grows (gains biomass) five times faster than black spruce. But from an ecological perspective, black spruce is the ultimate survivor. It can grow with a shallow root system above permafrost, in thin soils near treeline, and under conditions of extreme cold. Black spruce can also live in nutrient-poor soil and can be found in all but the wettest of bogs. In an environment where so much of the soil is thin, wet, frozen, or otherwise unfavorable for tree growth, it is the little black spruce that holds together the continuous expanse of our forests.

This article incorporates some information from articles written by Glenn Juday, John Zasada, Leslie Viereck, CT Dyreness, Keith Van Cleve, and Joan Foote



© Charlie Ott

Northern Hawk Owls thrive in interior spruce forests

Teck Cominco Workers Exposed to Toxic Metal

By Mara Bacsujlaky

On August 23, Teck Cominco announced that 65 contract workers at its Trail lead-zinc smelter were contaminated with thallium, a highly toxic metal linked to nerve damage. 15 micrograms per liter is considered to be dangerous — one employee tested at 406 micrograms per liter.

Work in the area of exposure at the British Columbia plant was immediately suspended after workers complained of sore throats, nausea and other health impacts. However, internal documents from Teck Cominco later showed that the company had concerns about the potentially poisonous metal more than a month before workers became ill, but did not disclose the presence of thallium to employees. A Teck Cominco spokesman stated that the internal report, dated June, was available to employees through their computers, while also admitting that thallium was not listed on the Material



Safety Data Sheets provided to employees, as required by law.

Teck Cominco has taken full responsibility for the accidental exposure, which it says was in part due to deficiencies in its testing procedures for hazardous materials in components of the smelter. It also has expressed regrets for the unusually large amounts of thallium — up to 20 times the normal discharge levels — that have on occasion been dumped into the nearby Columbia River. But the company, to date, has not provided explanations for the elevated discharge of thallium — despite vocal concerns of Canadian and US citizens living downstream of the smelter.

Teck Cominco is the operator of the Red Dog lead zinc mine near Kivalina, Alaska, and the operator of the proposed Pogo gold mine near Delta.

Roads and Resources

By Mara Bacsujlaky

Most Fairbanksans know that the Fort Knox gold mine, located not far out of town, is a big industrial open pit gold mine that employs approximately 300 people. They may even know that it is the largest mine in Alaska, and one of the largest of its kind in the United States. What they are unlikely to know, unless they were part of the mining company's decision-making process, is that without the proximity to town, existing roads, and easy access to power, Fort Knox would have remained a largely undisturbed tract of boreal forest and wetlands.

As any miner fresh off a creek will tell you over an after-work beer, infrastructure is as integral to mining as finding the mother lode. Regardless of the size of the operation, mining is about tipping the balance in favor of metal extracted over metal spent. And every ounce of metal extracted requires power, heavy equipment, personnel, and a means to get the metal to market without loss or theft.

In mining, unlike in other industries, economy of scale does not prove up; a small placer miner employing his family as heavy equipment operators can often turn a profit more easily than a multinational mining corporation. The hardrock metal mines with their complex chemical processes and huge material-moving needs are power hogs – gargantuan consumers of water, electricity, diesel and gasoline. They require a large equipment fleet, a sizeable workforce, and truckloads of chemicals, explosives and reagents. Before a deposit can transition from a gleam in a geologist's eye to a hole in the ground it must be determined that the wealth of the deposit will come out ahead of the capital, production, closure and reclamation costs of the mine. Important components in that equation are



The Fort Knox open pit gold mine, Fairbanks

© Mara Bacsujlaky

whether or not existing transportation corridors and readily available power sources are adequate (for example, electricity, coal, or gas).

Therefore, the resurrected Northwest Alaska Transportation Plan (NWATP) is setting off alarms. It's no surprise that with Representative Don Young chairing the Transportation Committee, plans for roads, rails, bridges and ports are multiplying like rabbits. Yet the NWATP has enough federal dollars behind it to make it more than a cluster of colored lines on a map of Arctic Alaska.

For the past year, an Alaska Department of Transportation planning team, headed by Mike McKinnon, has been working on Phase I of this multi-phase process. The project is a pre-feasibility study to assess the transportation needs of rural communities in the region, as well as to determine which transportation corridors could move resources to market. McKinnon and his team fanned out through northwest Alaska, visiting 50 villages and soliciting opinions on transportation needs. They also contracted CH2M Hill, a nationally known engineering firm, to provide a long-term strategic assessment of the value of surface transportation access to metal and coal deposits, and to concentrations of oil and natural gas.

CH2M Hill is also providing the state with suggestions for "a system design, routing and partnered financial structure which would make such a system economically feasible for industry and the state and compatible with the social and environmental values of the people of Alaska."¹

The draft map from the Resource Transportation Analysis shows proposed routes (which may be either rails or roads) stringing out like ganglia from the nerve centers of identified deposits of metals and coal – the Ambler Copper Belt, the Nome gold fields and the Cape Lisburne and Point Lay coal deposits. North and south of the Brooks Range, proposed corridors snake from the Dalton Highway to coal deposits along the Colville, to the Red Dog mine, and to Bornite in the heart of the Ambler Copper Belt. Further south, a corridor stretches from Nenana to Alakaket and on north again to Bornite – giving Kennecott Minerals, the majority holder of copper claims in the Ambler District, yet another option for ore transport. In addition, five deepwater ports are sited along the western coast – from Cape Darby, south of Golovin on the Seward Peninsula, to Omalik Lagoon – between Cape Lisburne and Point Lay.

The DOT planning team is remarkable for its objectivity, its eagerness to talk to as many stakeholders as possible about the NWATP, and its efforts to seek out and consider information from a variety of sources. But what is troubling is that while this preliminary phase may be somewhat immune to special interest pressure, the next phase – the short-listing of transportation corridors for further consideration – will not be. It is already evident from informal conversations with the DOT, that what northwest Alaska communities want (improved local roads and airstrips, winter trails) and do not want (surface connections with the rest of Alaska) is going to be a hard – if not impossible – fit with the objectives of resource transportation. Community transportation needs may well get lost in the planning shuffle in light of the heavies that are pumping for improved access to Alaska's mineral resources – oil and gas, mineral and coal companies, the Native regional corporations, and the State itself represented by the Alaska Industrial and Economic Development Authority, the Alaska Railroad, the Department of Revenue, the Division of Mining, Land and Water, and the Alaska Legislature.

The proposed transportation corridors cut across some of the most pristine wild regions in the world. Alone, these corridors, if built, will impact wildlife and habitat, fragment ecosystems, increase hunting pressures, and bring remote villages types of outside contact they may not want. They may also prompt accelerated and unrestrained mineral development. Not only would ore move to market more cheaply and easily, but arctic coal and gas could be used to power the mines.

For decades, mining companies have been sitting on claims in one of the richest base metal belts in the world – waiting for the perfect alignment of circumstances to move from claim holders to miners. The creation of a subsidized transportation corridor may well be the catalyst that sparks widespread and pervasive re-

Mine Dredgings

By Mara Bacsujlaky



Northern Center Sponsors Mining Workshop

On July 12th, the Center for Science in Public Participation (CSP²), presented a workshop on reclamation bonding for hardrock metal mines. Presenters were Dave Chambers, Executive Director of CSP² and Jim Kuipers, a consulting mining engineer for CSP² with 15 years experience in operating hardrock mines. The conference was well attended with over 20 representatives from state and federal agencies, local and national conservation organizations, and industry. Although the material – especially on methodologies for bond calculation – at times threatened to be dry, the lively discussions that were sparked by critiques of mine closure plans here in Alaska and in the Lower 48 kept people

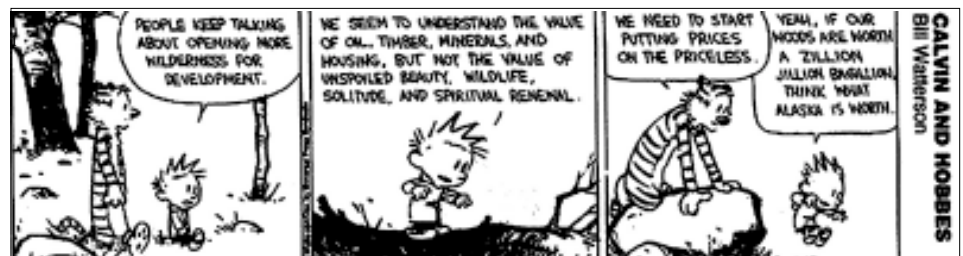
focused. The workshop was a good first step towards developing a dialogue among the industry, regulators and public on how Alaska should address its inadequate reclamation bonding requirements. Currently, the maximum bond amount for both placer and hardrock mines is \$750.00 per acre. For large mines, particularly those with environmental liabilities, such as acid mine drainage, bonds upwards of \$50,000 per acre are more reflective of true costs of closure at these facilities.

source development in the western Arctic.

The report for the Phase 1, which will summarize the results of the village visits and the Resource Transportation Analysis and set forth the next phase of the process is expected to be released sometime in early September.

Statement of Services, Resource Transportation Analysis (RTA) for Northwest Alaska Transportation Plan, CH2M Hill, August 31, 2000.

For more information on the NWATP, go to www.dot.state.ak.us//external/state_wide/planning/nwplan.html, or contact Mike McKinnon at the Juneau office of the Alaska Department of Transportation at 907.465.4069.



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Introduction to Solar Energy

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From the dawn of mankind, the sun has served as both a religious and psychological symbol of strength, energy, vitality and almost everything labeled good by the multi-cultural populations that have lived their lives under its rays. Let the sun shine and the world's energy problems are theoretically solved. According to the American Solar Energy Society, a minute's worth of sunshine provides enough energy to power the earth's needs for a year. So then, what's the problem? Translating the laws of physics into practical applications often turns out to be as challenging a task as is the task of discovering those same laws.

The pace of research and development in the area of solar energy, slow compared to the current energy needs of the global population, need not necessarily cast an umbrella's shadow, let alone rain on the renewable energy parade. Advances in solar energy thinking and technology have moved at the proverbial hare's pace during the past fifty years covering topics that range from cooking to

space exploration. With a little patience, any child can learn to convert a pizza box into a solar oven. NASA scientists, with a bit more patience and research and development funds, have developed solar panels as a primary energy source for their space vehicles. It's also probably a safe bet to suggest they ate a good deal of pizza during the process.

The language of solar energy may sound Greek to any layman's ears, however, all the terms used to describe the various technologies in use today deal with two very simple sun observations. Walk outside on a sunny day and you will notice that the sun provides heat and light. These basic observations provide the starting point for differentiating between the two different types of solar energy technologies employed today, solar thermal and photovoltaics (PV).

Solar thermal technologies work on some very simple principles, with albedo one of the easiest to understand. Albedo is a scientific term describing the amount of light, and consequently heat, a material reflects or absorbs. Generally speaking, lighter colored materials have a higher albedo, meaning they reflect a higher per-

centage of light and heat away from them. Wearing white or light colored clothes in the summer is not only fashionable, it's also practical. Darker colored materials, on the other hand, absorb more light and consequently heat. Solar thermal technologies pick up on the idea of albedo and use black colored plates as their core heat collecting device.

Solar thermal technologies also fall into either a passive or active category and are usually distinguished by their having an additional level of activity connected to the heating process. The simplest example of passive solar heating is opening the draperies during the winter to let the sun in and heat the room. Passive solar thermal technologies move up the complexity ladder in instances that require a concentrated collection of sun heat, such as for heating water. Commonly a solar water heating system, for pools, residential and industrial use, consists of the collector, which gathers the sun's heat and transfers it to water passing through the plumbing system on its way to a storage container. Solar water heating systems save money by reducing the electricity costs associated with traditional water heating. They are also environmentally friendly. Saving electricity in most cases means avoiding the types of emissions associated with electricity production.

Active solar thermal technologies run the gamut of simple to complex machinery. Solar water heating systems unable to operate on basic water pressure and gravity principles, require the use of electric or other pumps to move the cold water through the collector. Larger scale solar thermal projects for electricity generation promise to be the next wave of sun heated water practices and operate on principle similar to their small scale counterparts. Even the non-scientist understands that water heated to very high temperatures turns to steam. The latest generation of solar heating technology consists of collectors (mirrors or parabolic dishes) that can either move and track or gather an adequate amount of sun to transform water to steam. The steam

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serves as a force to move electricity generating turbines. The environmental benefits are obvious. Emissions from steam generated electricity share little in common with their cousins, emissions from fossil fueled generated electricity plants, the primary causes of air pollution such as smog, acid rain and climate change.

The term photovoltaics (PV) derives from two roots, photo or photons, particles of light, and voltage, a measure of electricity. In brief, photovoltaics means electricity generated from light. The discovery of photovoltaic properties of some substances rivals the discovery of fire by an ancestor of man when he rubbed two sticks or stones together one day and created a spark. Back in 1839, Edmund Becquerel, a French physicist from a family of scientists, (his son won a Noble Prize in physics), saw electricity sparks fly, so to speak, in his laboratory while conducting an experiment.

Modern day photovoltaic science traces back to 1950s with the discovery of the process for producing relatively pure silicon crystals, the material most commonly used to produce solar cells.

In 1954, the Bell Telephone Laboratories produced the first silicon based photovoltaic cell, and since that time, the technology has advanced in leaps and bounds. Three different technological approaches drive current research and development practices today characterized primarily by the type of crystal used as solar cell's core electricity generating medium: single crystal, multicrystal, and thin film technology also known as amorphous crystals.

Efficiency (the amount of sunlight received that can be converted to electricity) is the sine qua non of solar cell research and development and over the course of the past decade, efficiency improvements have been close to stunning. Whereas in 1997 solar cell efficiency levels of 17% or so were record setting, today's solar cell efficiency levels are reaching 32% in the laboratory, with whispers of the possibility of surpassing the 40%

mark in the near future.

Because solar cell efficiency levels have traditionally been relatively low, meaning the cost of producing solar energy has been comparatively high, widespread adoption of solar cells has been limited to their use as power devices for watches, calculators and other small electronic devices. Solar panels (collections of solar cells tied together) are gaining increasing acceptance as residential electricity generation tools, especially in areas remote from established electric power grids. The most recent projections from the Energy Information Agency (EIA) suggest continued growth in small scale solar projects through the year 2020, but little growth in large scale adoption of the technology.

Forecasting, of course, is always a risky business. EIA forecasts for stable oil and natural gas prices through 2000-2001, for example, needed to be adjusted in light of actual events.

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- " Learn more about environmental issues facing Alaska!
- " Read past Northern Line issues!

Continued improvements in solar cell research offers the hope that large scale solar energy projects will move to the mainstream sooner rather than later.

Boreal Shorts

By Nancy Fresco
University Lands Lawsuit

The question has never been whether the University of Alaska needs better funding. Undoubtedly, it does. But rather than appropriating adequate funds directly, the state legislature has repeatedly attempted to appropriate land. The University would then be expected to manage this land for rapid generation of revenue.

When state land is given away or sold, the public loses much of its right to provide input on how that land is used. When land is earmarked for quick cash-making without adequate public input, the results can be environmentally disastrous. Poorly managed logging, mining, and construction can leave lasting scars.

Thus, the Northern Center has long opposed such deals. Unfortunately, the state legislature passed a University land-transfer bill last year. Governor



Tony Knowles vetoed it. The legislature countered with what may – or may not – have been a legal override. The constitutionality and legality of the bill is extremely uncertain on more than one count.

At that point, the only recourse left was in the courts. Represented by EarthJustice Legal Defense Fund, The Northern Center joined a lawsuit this July, along with the Alaska Center for the Environment and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. In August, the court ruled in our favor, stating that the veto override was not legal. The case may or may not be challenged in the State Supreme Court. Our hope is that a successful suit may encourage the legislature to fund the university by more direct means.

Increased Access to Denali National Park?

By Linda Paganelli

Over the past couple of decades, pressure has been exerted on the National Park Service to increase access into Denali National Park and Preserve. The National Park Service has given ample consideration and has committed a fair amount of resources to studying this issue. Through intensive planning processes that involved much public input and cooperation with state and borough governments, the Park Service has concluded that their Front Country Plan and development of the South Side of Denali will address the needs of future visitor growth over the next 15 to 20 years. North Side Development proposals, which would position a second route to the Kantishna District through prime wildlife habitat, have been determined by the Park Service to be an adverse development scheme and one they do not wish to pursue.

Nonetheless, Senator Murkowski and the Alaska Interior Delegation prodded along by a private developer and retired Alaska Department of Transportation employees continue their relentless quest of a second access into North Denali with the final destination being one that is already accessible by the Park's 90-mile long road. This past legislative session two means of achieving this end were introduced to the state legislature.

Senate Bill 29, the state's capitol budget bill, allocates an appropriation of \$330,000 to revisit the feasibility of a second access route to Kantishna. This bill matches federal monies allocated for the feasibility study in 1998. Evidently, Senator Murkowski, who obtained the additional federal dollars, was dissatisfied with the National Park Service's 1997 North Access Feasibility Study, which concluded that the project was most likely not economically feasible or in keeping with the purpose of the 1980 northern additions to the park. SB 29 passed through both houses and was subsequently signed into law by the Governor on June 30th. \$1.65 million dollars is now appropriated, to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, for further studies to enumerate alternative modes of access, alternative routes of access, environmental impacts, socio-economic impacts, input from the public, and input from state and federal agencies.

The second approach, introduced by Representative James, came in the form of House Bill 244. The bill requires the transfer of 3,500 acres of prime state land, designated by the Tanana Basin Area Plan to remain in the public domain due to its intrinsic values, to the Denali Borough for the purpose of developing a railroad and utility corridor. The proposed corridor runs from Healy to the eastern boundary of the National Park. Kantishna Holdings, Inc., a company founded with the sole purpose of constructing a rail route to Kantishna, is legislatively mandated in the bill to be the contractor for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the railroad. The bill stipulates that the Denali Borough must lease the land for railroad development by September 2010 or it reverts back to state ownership.

Despite testimony given in opposition to passage of this bill, by the Alaska DNR, local borough residents, and conservation groups, House Bill 244 was fast-tracked through the legislature. Governor Knowles, after due deliberation, vetoed the bill. Although the Governor supports increased access into Denali, as being in the best interest of the state, his declared reasons for vetoing House Bill 244 are resoundingly supported.

1. It violates the public process by disposing of state resources without opportunity for public input.
2. It violates the competitive bid processes of the state by designating a sole source contractor.
3. It violates and is inconsistent with the Department of Natural Resources land use planning process.
4. It transfers lands of undeniable state

and national interest to a borough that has no demonstrated ability to administer transportation services or to conduct land planning.

5. It is premature and could be endorsing construction of a railroad to nowhere. Without the cooperation of the National Park Service, the railroad falls far short of the implied destination, Kantishna.

In conclusion, while the Governor has vetoed House Bill 244, funding is available to determine if additional access on the north side of the park is warranted and if so determined where and how that access would best be addressed. To attempt to predetermine additional access into Denali National Park through the state legislative process without consulting the citizens of the borough and the state, local businesses, and agencies to be affected, is irresponsible, makes for bad legislation, and does not bode well for its success. Urge your state representatives to sustain the veto of HB 244 and to support the study that will promote appropriate planning, public participation, and cooperation with state and national agencies.



A pair of grizzly cubs trailing their mother through Denali National Park

© Paul Ollig

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: A Gwich'in Perspective

By Adeline Peter Raboff

Adeline is a former Northern Center board member and shares with us her viewpoint of the Arctic Refuge as a member of the Gwich'in community

Over the course of the last year the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has become a household phrase. If it had not been for the pro-development stance that the Bush administration ushered in, perhaps it would have taken longer for the issues that surround the Arctic Refuge to come to the public's full attention. As it is, what with the California power shortages, the constant watch on the world oil reserves, and two oil men as President and Vice-President, we have the Arctic Refuge in the spotlight. From the Gwich'in perspective this is a good thing.

The Gwich'in people have since 1987 actively and collectively worked for the wilderness designation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Our reasoning has been based on the age-old traditional belief of our ancestors that everything (animals, plants, and minerals) and every place (geographically) is imbued with the Spirit of the Creator.

Secondly, we have through centuries of living in northeastern Alaska and northwestern Yukon Territory Canada been dependent upon the Porcupine Caribou herd as our main subsistence resource. We have a real vested interest in the welfare of the Porcupine Caribou herd.

And thirdly, our elders unanimously charged us, the present and future generations of Gwich'in people, to do everything in our power to protect our land and our resources, but most vigorously the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Many have said, "You don't live on the Arctic Coastal Plain, why should this concern you?" As you may know the Porcupine Caribou Herd calves on the Arctic Coastal Plain. The Arctic Coastal Plain, in the area of the caribou calving activity, is about 25 to 40 miles from the mountains to the Beaufort Sea and is about 150 miles long. Since this is in the heart of the Arctic Refuge, yes we are concerned. We have a vested



The Sheenjek River in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

interest in the welfare of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

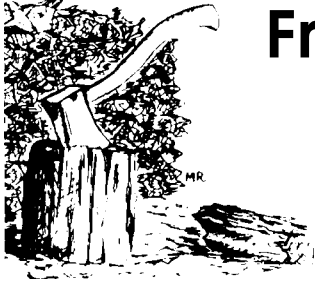
We also appreciate the wildlife that the Arctic Refuge supports in all of its seasons. We harvest ducks that nest there on Gwich'in lands. We are concerned about the amount of fresh water that will be diverted from rivers and lakes. Where will the birds and fish go? Where will the mosquitoes spawn? We need all the mosquitoes we can get! They are at the bottom of a food chain that absolutely depends upon them to be there.

The oil industry cannot be expected to behave any differently than it has in the past. Oil spills continue, rusty pipes break, the industry has been granted rights that no other industry in the State of Alaska has been granted. There has been no environmental impact statement for development of any oil field on North Slope lands in the last 20 years. The State Legislature is considering allowing virtually unlimited usage of water from lakes and rivers for periods of up to five years with automatic renewals. And the State of Alaska has given \$4 million dollars to Arctic Power (a lobby group) to promote the opening of the Arctic Refuge at our nations capital. As much as we would like to see it, no the oil industry will not change.

As Native Americans and as Gwich'in people we also have another perspective that has placed us in a unique position. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has become an international symbol; a symbol of how 21st Century America has reviewed their regard for the environment.

For centuries the white fathers have taught exploitation of people and natural resources without regard for the future consequences to others. But over the years a growing number of people, who are a part of the American landscape, have gradually come forth and expressed their love for the environment, appreciate its intrinsic value, and see the need to protect it. This is being expressed by those who design, engineer, and implement new technologies, who design homes that are energy efficient, those who recycle, who volunteer, and who contribute to environmental issues.

We sincerely hope that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a turning point for all of us, and want to extend our gratitude to all.



From the Woodpile. . .

by Ginny Hill Wood,
founding member of NAEC, and regular columnist

Greed, growth, and graft! Power, profits, and politics! Is this the *modus operandi* that motivates governments and society these days?

Sometimes it does seem as though mankind is bent on self-destruction by the gavel or the gun. But there are glimmerings of an impending epiphany. We may yet get it right. The bottom line should be not who can be the bully on the global block, or just looking out for our own national interest and economy; but how we treat one another and the earth that sustains us. Dubya—"the

shrub"—and his regime in Washington, DC just don't seem to get it!

But our species is still in its sentient adolescence in the cosmic sense. No one woke to say, "Welcome to the first day of the Renaissance." Only historians in retrospect give names to eras. The yeast for it had been fermenting for a long time before in the dark of medieval times. The difference is that seeds of change for better or for worse used to germinate over centuries. Now they happen in a decade.

I think our awakening is happening not in palaces or parliaments but in small, often informal gatherings; with the NGOs (non-governmental organizations); off

beat publications and on Public Radio and TV; and by lifestyle changes and goals in personal lives.

There seems to be an increasing awareness that despite our 21st century technology, the information age of instant electronic communication, and the Affluenza that has afflicted us, abetted by credit cards, nothing is working as well as it used to. Even with all our labor-saving gadgetry, we don't have as much free time as of yore. We don't feel as safe from violence anywhere, and everything costs more than it did. Nothing is for free now.

The wider, faster, and more "improved" our highways and byways; the more the road rage and traffic gridlock.

Encounters with old friends are too often terminated with, "Gosh, I'd like to talk with you longer, but I gotta run!"

And far too many of us are getting too fat, while too many go hungry.

How do we fix this? Not by revolutions or dictatorships, violence or a new "ism," and certainly not with guided missile systems, or drilling for oil in our last remaining wild places, so we can drive more gas guzzling SUVs and motorized off-road playthings; not by replacing family farms with corporation-owned ones, or by the World Trade Organization (WTO) or by the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA).

Hopefully, our new goal will be sustainability, not the growth that acts like a cancer cell; cooperation not competition; respect for all living things; a sense of humor about our foibles; and slowing down to smell the flowers, hear the birds, enjoy our friends, and above all, just to rejoice in the gift of being alive on this wondrous, unique planet. Gotta go now and do just that!

Denali Watch

By Linda Paganelli

Threats to Denali's Wilderness Unabated by Final Regulation

Although the National Park Service promulgated a final regulation last June reinforcing a long-standing management policy of not allowing snowmobile access into the core of Denali National Park, the regulation is in jeopardy of being overturned. Representatives from the snowmobile industry and their plaintiffs dropped their lawsuit opposing the regulation. They have instead begun closed-door sessions with the new administration to seek an appropriations rider that would serve to negate not only Denali's regulation, but also regulations put in place to protect Yellowstone National Park and Big Cypress Preserve. This back door attempt to change public policy would nullify the extensive publicdebate and input that went into formulating these regulations. It would be a disservice to many citizens, both statewide and



across the nation, that favor a higher form of protection for our National Parks.

Conservation communities and individuals throughout the state and the nation will continue to rally to protect Denali's Wilderness and other national lands from a back door rider until October 1st. Please call your senators in Washington, D.C. and ask them to oppose any appropriations rider that revokes National Park Service regulations protecting our parks. Alaskans be sure to contact Senator Stevens, who is a member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. Remind him that 96% of all respondents and 91% of all Alaskan respondents voiced support of the regulation to protect Denali's Wilderness core by banning the use of snowmobiles in the "Old Park".

Meet Paul Ollig

Membership and Communications Director

I've been thinking a lot about how to start the story of my path to the Northern Center. Going back fifteen years or so, it's easy to see how I ended up in Alaska working to protect the wilderness that I hold so dear. As a 12-year old in central Minnesota, I spent my days exploring the wooded lot next door, or paddling across the lake in our backyard. I would leave the house with an oar in one hand, a lifejacket in the other, a pack filled with snacks on my back, and binoculars around my neck as I set out to explore the farthest, wildest reaches of my world...much to the chagrin of my mother. Even then I was already well-established as a bonafide bird-nerd and budding naturalist. I was lucky enough to be raised by parents who encouraged my wildness through numerous family campouts each summer, including an annual two-week adventure in the Rocky Mountains. As I grew, my love for nature blossomed, but my goals and dreams turned skyward.

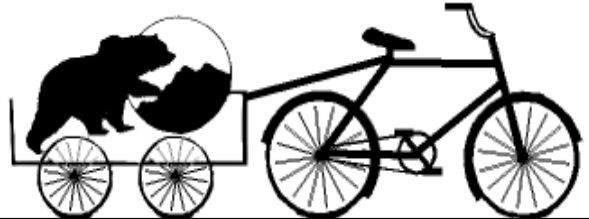
When I left high school, I donned a camouflage uniform and picked up an M-16. My goal was to learn to fly, and the means by which I chose to accomplish it was to join the Army. I still went camping, but instead of taking leisurely hikes through the woods carrying a guide to North American birds and wearing a layer of bug dope, I was now raiding enemy bunkers while dressed in full camo with several grenades hanging off of my belt. When I wasn't blowing up Bambi, I was learning to be a pilot. As a young man bent on high adventure, I was having the time of my life. I was flying helicopters and going to college during the week, and playing soldier on the weekends. However, as my senior year approached, I began to look beyond myself. The price I felt I was paying to become an army aviator became too high. I searched my soul (and the course catalog at the U of North Dakota), and made a decision. Less than a year from my commission as an Army officer, I chose to withdraw from the program in order to start over, changing my major from Aeronautical Studies to Wildlife Biology. To my superior officers, I was a fool to give up a full scholarship and a career as an army helicopter pilot. To myself, I was turning my back on one dream to begin searching for another. The summer after leaving the Army, I found it.

I was hired as a camp counselor for the National Wildlife Federation's Wildlife Camp in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and began a journey that would guide me through ten states in three years. I took a break from school to jump from internship to internship. During this time I worked as the Youth and Teen Programs Intern at the National Wildlife Federation's headquarters in Washington, DC, then moved to New Mexico to join Hawkwatch International's environmental education efforts. From there I moved to

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Estes Park, Colorado, where I again donned a pack full of goodies and the goofy grin of a camp counselor before migrating north to enroll in classes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Within a week of moving to Alaska I had settled in, started classes, found a job, and met my wife.

Three years later, I find myself joyfully married to the most inspirational and influential person in my life. Together, Sonja and I have developed a deep and lasting love for Alaska. We have both committed ourselves to ensuring that there will always be an Alaska that people can look to for hope in a time when the future of the natural world seems bleak. Having both now worked for the Northern Center, we understand the importance of such a team of dedicated individuals in the effort to preserve this place that means so much to us. I am honored to count myself a part of such an incredible organization.



Paul taking a break while hiking the Na Pali Coast in Hawaii

Roadless Rule Revisited

By Nancy Fresco

Eight months ago, the U.S. was on the verge of implementing one of the most forward-looking conservation measures in history. Then, the Bush administration began backtracking, and deemed the largest outpouring of public comments in history to be "insufficient". At stake are the vestiges of what once carpeted the continent: old forests, uncut by humans and unbroken by roads.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule recognizes that conserving forests means more than ensuring that enough acreage is covered by trees; it also means protecting ecosystems, and to some extent, history. Logging roads and mining access roads change the movement patterns of wildlife, the spread of wildfire, and the very character of the landscape. They create mile upon mile of "edge" habitat, which attracts certain species while upsetting the balance of others. Roads also attract high-impact human use, bringing diesel fumes, noise, and erosion into the forest.

When the Roadless initiative was being developed, the goal was not to shut people out of America's National Forests, nor to stop all logging, mining, or motorized recreation on National Forest Land. The intention of the Clinton Administration, in partnership with the National Forest Service, was to come up with a plan that would provide for all these uses, while conserving the land most in need of protection.

The American people were asked to comment, and overwhelmingly agreed with this approach. Of the 1.6 million official comments, ninety-five percent favored the strongest possible protection for the remaining roadless areas in America's National Forests. Over 600 public hearings were held all around the nation, including 17 in Alaska.

Many of Alaska's politicians argued that the Chugach and the Tongass should be exempt, because Alaska's National Forests contain a comparatively large acreage of roadless land. But this argument misses the whole point of the initiative, which is to protect the best of what we have left. Alaska, undoubtedly, is the best of the best, and to leave it out would be worse than counterintuitive. The people agreed. Even in Southeast Alaska, where the timber industry has a heavy influence, 75 percent favored including the Tongass in the final rule. Nevertheless, the Bush administration declared that this rule was made with inadequate public input.

Thus, the people were asked to comment — yet again.

Ostensibly, no specific changes to the plan were suggested. However, the ten questions posed to the public in the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking were heavily biased towards reverting to local decision-making.

But which local voices were being sought — those of individuals, or those of the timber industry? What the notice failed to mention is that over past decades, local forest planning has consistently favored exploitation over conservation.

The administration also failed to mention that it is in the midst of amending the forest planning regulations to greatly weaken environmental safeguards and public participation opportunities. Under current forest plans, about 60 percent of the remaining roadless areas are available for road construction, logging, and other commodity development. The notice specifically pointed out that roadless areas contain 9 million acres of "productive timberland."

The ten questions also unnecessarily revisited issues of fire management, inholdings, and forest health, all of which are thoroughly addressed in the original plan.

The comment period on the plan ended on September 11th. It is estimated that close to a million people once again voiced their opinions, but how the issue will be resolved remains to be seen.

Welcome to Our New Members!

...and welcome back to old friends.

Thank you for supporting the Northern Center!

In Alaska

Duane Howe, Tok
Julie Collins, Lake Minchumina
Jennifer Jolis & Dan Gibson, Ester
Frank Maxwell, Fairbanks
Jon Paulsen, Fairbanks
Bob Ritchie, Fairbanks
Marsha Sousa, Fairbanks
Timothy & Debbie Tilsworth, Fairbanks
Patricia Walsh, Fairbanks
Laura Weaver, Fairbanks
Hannah Burnett, Fairbanks

Lynn Harrison, Fairbanks
Donna DiFolco, Fairbanks
Arthur Greenwalt, Fairbanks
Bob & Lura White, Fairbanks
Jana Canary, Fairbanks
David Payer, Fairbanks
Angela Matz, Fairbanks

Outside of Alaska

David Costello, Alexandria, VA
Roger Flynn, Boulder, CO
Jan Ollig, Alexandria, MN

Emma Schweighofer, Alexandria, MN
Constance McPeak, Cleveland Heights, OH
Karin & Tom Anderson, Fishers, IN
Margaret Hunter, Huntington, NY
John & Ellen Middleditch, Los Alamos, NM
Lynn Crescimon, Los Angeles, CA
John & Cindy McLean, Peoria, IL
Paul & Marcia Whitehead, Pittsburgh, PA
Lexy Kirk, Sacramento, CA

Thanks to Our Hardworking Volunteers!

We could never do it without the undying support of our volunteers. The following folks have significantly contributed their time to the Northern Center in the past few months.

Thank you!

In June, the Northern Center moved to our new office at 830 College Road. This tremendous undertaking would not have been possible without the help of the small army of volunteers that helped us move and fix up the new place! Jeremy Fritts, Betsy Chronic, and the Presbyterian Hospitality House helped carry boxes and shuttle furniture from Driveway Street to College Road.

Thank you to the following people who helped with the Camp Habitat backpacking trips: Ed and Jackie Debevec, Andy Blossey and Darren Rorabaugh. Thank you also to David van den Berg for donating a backpacking tent to Camp Habitat and a special thanks to all the members who donated money towards purchasing new equipment for camp this year. With your funds we were able to purchase three new, beautiful wall tents that kept us dry all summer. 2001 brought us many great guest speakers, thanks to the following people for sharing their knowledge with the Camp Habitat campers: Laurel Devaney, Jim Kruse, Frank Keim, Paul Ollig, Stephen Petersen, Mark Ross, and Jen Steitz.

Our booth at this years Tanana Valley State Fair was a huge success! Thank you to the following people for donating your time answering questions and selling our merchandise in our booth: Linda & John Benson, Dana Durham, Trish Johnston, Jose Reuter, Stacy Fritz, Janet Daley, Amy Turner, Jonathon Klaas, Stan Justice, Sarah Gilbert, Marie Beaver, Ann & Dan Swift, Arthur Hussey, Paul & Sonja Ollig, Sean McGuire, Dave Klein, Molly Davies, Jon Malone, Pat Kerber, Nancy Fresco, Jay Cable, Margaret Eagleton, and Vera Sampson.

The 2001 Run for the Refuge was also a huge success, thanks to the help of Debbie Miller, Rich Seifert, Brooke Kirkland, Greg Egan, Linda & John Benson, Todd Burnside, Arthur Hussey, Amy Turner, Mary Shields, and Connie Stricks.

Our website has gone through several major overhauls in the last several months. Special thanks go out to Ed Debevec for all the hard work he did to streamline the site!

We recently sent out 6,000 letters all across North America encouraging people to contact their senators to help protect the Arctic Na-

tional Wildlife Refuge. Thank you to Mary Shields, Connie Stricks, Margaret Eagleton, Patrick Kerber, Lane & Dorothy Thompson, Stu Pechek, Clarice Dukeminier, Ann Swift, Ann Mallard, David van den Berg, Betsy Chronic, Louisa Bolt, Jacob Wilson, and Karoline Frey. Without your help, these letters never would have gone out!

In addition to sending letters to help save the Arctic Refuge, we also conducted massive phone banks with the help of Trish Johnston, Denali Miller, Kerynn Fisher, Dana Durham, Melody Wright, John Lyle, Russell DeForest, Sunna Fessler, Ray Trainor, Dave Klein, Phil Wildfang, Coert Olmsted, Marie Beaver, Brendan Raymond-Yakoubian, Doug Yates, Karen Toland, Jeff Merkel, Sean McGuire, Andy Keller, Paul & Sonja Ollig, Carol Kasza, and John Bost.

On a rainy Saturday morning, Melody Wright, Todd Burnside, Ann Swift, Doug MacIntosh, and Ron & Vivian Tinsley trudged merrily along a two mile section of College Road picking up trash and making Fairbanks a little more beautiful. Special thanks to Melody for organizing the highway clean-up effort!

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Conservation Abstracts

by Florence Collins, member

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ON AUGUST 2, 2001, THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTED 223 TO 206 to open ANWR to oil exploration; the vote was apparently due to a last-minute decision by the AFL-CIO labor unions to join their efforts to those of the Teamsters Union in lobbying for the opening. The matter now will be addressed in the Senate.. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, (FDNM), Aug. 2, '01, p. A-1, A-7

WHETHER TO OPEN THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COASTAL PLAIN—Area 1002—to oil exploration or not will be voted on in the U. S. House of Representatives on August 2nd or 3rd; it is “too close to call,” but environmentalists are hoping enough moderate Republicans will join Democrats to defeat the Bush administration and other Republicans to eliminate the “ANWR-opening language” in an energy bill. Export of any ANWR oil would be prohibited, in any case. Alaska News Nightly, July 31, 2001

A RED DOG MINE TRUCK SPILLED ABOUT 10 TONS OF ZINC CONCENTRATE on the haul road between the mine and the Chukchi Sea coast on July 20th; it was nearly all cleaned up 11 hours later. High contamination levels along the road could be due to dust blowing from trucks, rather than from spills. FDNM, July 22, 2001, p. A_3

FOUR DOUBLE-HULLED OIL TANKERS are now in service—BP Exploration Alaska Inc. has 3, and plans to add 3 more, beginning in 2003. Phillips Alaska Inc.'s first one left Valdez with a load of crude oil July 12; it “poured out more smoke than state rules allow, but it is being given time to “fine-tune its operations.” FDNM, July 12, p. A-4, B-3; July 28, p. A-3

THE COPEPR RIVER DELTA WILL BE “drilled for oil” if a National Forest Service decision is carried out. “Also pending is a proposal on a coal strip-mine operation “and power plant there. National Wildlife, June- July 2001, p. 65

THE GRIZZLY POPULATION IN is estimated at 12,000, of which 1000 to 1600 are shot yearly; biologists feel this is a sustainable number. Parts of the Alaska Peninsula can support 1500 bears in 1000 square miles, but on the North Slope the same area can hold only 465 bears. About ¾ of the cubs survive under natural conditions, more do so in the North slope “oil patch,” but the number “plunges toward zero” when the bears head for camps, native villages, and hunters' bivouacs. National Geographic, July 2001, p. 2-25

AN ORCA (KILLER WHALE) THAT WAS STRANDED AND DIED LAST SUMMER outside Cordova had high levels of industrial poisons such as PCB and DDT. Among orcas tested in the Gulf of Alaska in 1999 and 2000, “...several transients appear to be among the most contaminated marine mammals ever measured.” Another orca in the Gulf had the highest PCB and DDT ever measured in Alaskan waters—651 ppm and 1003 ppm respectively. The standard for PCBs in fish for human consumption is 2 to 5 ppm. FDNM, July 23, 2001, p. A-3

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