

Summer 2002

THE NORTHERN LINE



The Journal of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center

Volume XXIV, Number 3



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A Change of Seasons

By Arthur Hussey, Executive Director

August in Alaska marks the beginning of a change in seasons, heralding the entrée for the state's most dominant season, winter. This in mind, I devote this Director's column to changes and events of the recent past and immediate future for the Northern Center.

It's an election year. The electorate heads to the polls in Alaska shortly to vote on a variety of candidates and issues, ranging from elements of our federal delegation, to the state governor and various local ballot initiatives. We will refrain from electioneering but will await the results knowing that the outcome will have a significant impact on our operations and how we relate to government. A more conservative swing (as some polls suggest may happen) will make our work even more challenging than it already is. Stay tuned.

We're raising the flag. The Northern Center has been active in Fairbanks' flurry of summer activities, and more. We have a display at the Fairbanks Noel

Wien Library describing our work, along with listing steps citizens may take to improve environmental quality. As a following article describes, we entered our first ever float in the Golden Days parade. In the following weeks, we staffed our third annual booth at the Tanana Valley State Fair. We have a new and very much improved website (same address: www.northern.org). And between Thanksgiving and New Years, we will run brief ads in Fairbanks' movie theatre. Each of these is a fairly small event on its own (albeit labor-intensive), but through the whole package we hope to raise our profile in the community.

Guard(s) are changing. Camp Habitat has completed another successful year and is going into "slumber mode" until early in 2003. This unfortunately means we say good-bye to our enthusiastic Camp intern, Reece Edwards, as well as, temporarily we hope, Camp Director Leah Sansone. So, too, has Mining summer intern Kate Waffner left to return to her work with Patagonia. Meanwhile, Nancy Fresco, our indefatigable Boreal Forest Coordinator, will be entering a Ph.D. program in Forestry at the University of Alaska. She'll stay with us as Boreal Forest Coordinator, but will share Local Issues duties with myself.

The economy bedevils us. Isolated as we may seem in Fairbanks, we are not immune to economic trends and events in the Lower 48 and, indeed, in places as far flung as Washington, Baghdad and Singapore. To date, we have not been significantly impacted by the US economic downturn: foundation support remains respectable, member renewal rates are healthy and event attendance is strong. However, there is every possibility that foundation and corporate resources may be squeezed and we are adopting measures designed to both preserve our programs as well as maintain a high degree of fiscal prudence. One example is the decision to devote staff and Board resources into training that will update us on trends in corporate and major donor fundraising.

Plenty of things to keep up with. But not all has changed. Our programming priorities, supported by our membership remain solidly fixed on conserving those wild areas that we hold important; the Board and staff continue their commitment to quality programming; we remain involved with our partners; and we welcome the approach of the Alaskan winter, with its attendant swaths of white and abundant winter sports.

THE NORTHERN LINE

Environmental News of Arctic and Interior Alaska

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The Northern Alaska Environmental Center promotes conservation of the environment in Interior and Arctic Alaska through advocacy, education, and sustainable resource stewardship. The Northern Alaska Environmental Center has 1,075 members.

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The Northern Line is produced by Paul Ollig.

The cover photo of an ermine is an NAEC file photo. The back page picture of a Dall sheep ram was taken by Charlie Ott in Denali N.P.



Disappearing Wilderness: the Exploration and Development of Alaska's Most Remote Wildlands

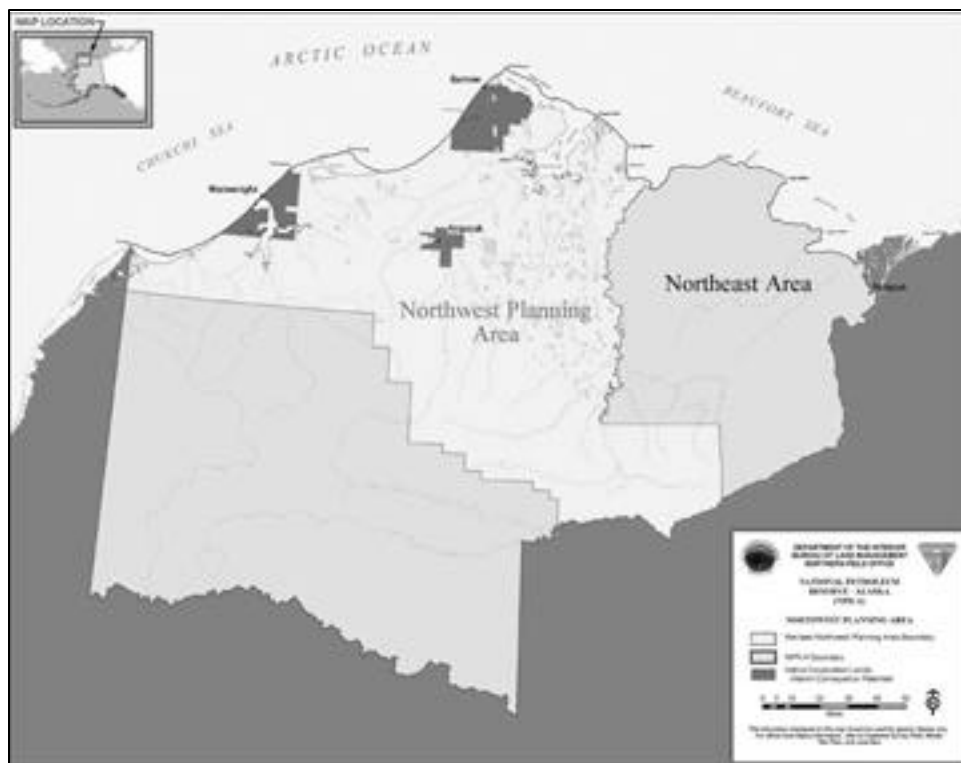
By Deb Moore,
Arctic Coordinator

As the spread of Big Oil continues throughout Alaska's Arctic, a vast wildlands in Alaska's western Arctic stands to be defaced and irrevocably transfigured. The 23.5-million acre National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (Reserve) – the largest expanse of undeveloped public land left in America – is now the popular favorite for expanded exploration on the North Slope.

Following two lease sales in the 4.6 million acre Northeast Planning Area – the first in 1999, the second in June, 2002 – the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is planning a much larger lease sale (>9 million acres) in the "Northwest Planning Area" for 2004. The Northwest Planning Area encompasses most of the coastal wetlands of the Reserve not previously included in the Northeast area. It also cuts diagonally across the Reserve to encompass lands west and south of the Northeast area plus a section of the Colville River (see map). BLM is currently in the process of writing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Northwest Planning Area and expects to release the draft EIS (dEIS) for public review and comment sometime in December 2002.

Although in rough form and subject to change, the alternatives currently being considered by BLM for the Northwest draft EIS run the gambit from the area being 1) completely closed to oil and gas leasing ("No Action"), 2) partly closed with various areas recommended for wilderness or wild and scenic river designations, and 3) completely open to oil and gas leasing.

The Northern Center believes that there is no demonstrated need to lease for oil and gas in the northwest planning area. The National Petroleum Reserve was set aside for use in a time



Map Courtesy BLM

when our petroleum resources were running out. However recently, the owners' of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) projected at least 30 more years of oil production off the North Slope, without invading the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and discounting new discoveries in the Reserve and adjacent state lands. This is plenty of oil to use as a transition resource while we develop alternatives that will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels – thereby increasing both our energy and national security and improving the health of the planet.

In addition, since 1999 the Northern Center, along with six other conservation organizations, has been actively involved in a lawsuit challenging the decision to authorize leasing in the Reserve. We assert that the Secretary had no authority to lease pending further authorization from Congress and that he failed to meet the National Environmental Policy Act's requirements for a full assessment of site-specific and cumulative environmental impacts. This

challenge is pending in the D.C. District Court.

Finally, despite the designation as a "petroleum reserve," many areas within the Reserve should be recognized and protected for their wilderness and wildlife values. The Northwest planning area encompasses some of North America's greatest wetland habitats. This is the primary habitat on the North Slope for threatened spectacled and Stellar's eiders as well as Canada, greater white-fronted and snow geese, black brant, Pacific, red-throated and yellow-billed loons and numerous plovers and shorebirds. In 1976, Congress recognized the Reserve's unique wildlife and wilderness values and transferred jurisdiction over the Reserve from the Department of Defense to the Department of Interior. At this time, they also closed the Reserve to oil development until it could determine how to manage and protect its resources for the future. Although Congress authorized an expe-

(NPR-A, continued on pg 7)

North Denali Access Study:

Phase 1 - Project Startup

By Linda A. Paganelli,
Denali Watch Coordinator

On March 6, 2000, the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities [DOT] and the Denali Borough signed a Transfer of Responsibilities Agreement [TORA] to *“Conduct planning, reconnaissance and preliminary environmental studies for a proposed North Denali Access Route that would begin in the Parks Highway Corridor near the north side of Denali National Park and end in the Kantishna area.”* The negotiated agreement obligates the Borough to assume all responsibilities related to conducting the study and outlines a Work Plan. DOT, which was entrusted with the combined state and federal appropriation of \$1.65 million, will oversee the execution of the study and reimburse the Borough for approved work.



© NAEC File Photo

Wonder Lake, in Denali National Park and Preserve, is visited by thousands of people every year, most of whom travel the 98 mile park road to get there.

The Work Plan

The preliminary Work Plan of the TORA is organized into four phases:

1. Project Startup
2. Consultant Selection
3. Detailed Work Plan
4. Planning and Reconnaissance Study

Each of the first three phases delineates a precise group of tasks to be accomplished by the Borough. Phase 4 will be defined by the “Detailed Scope/Schedule/Budget” produced in Phase 3 or under amendments to the agreement [TORA]. The Denali Borough is presently working within the parameters outlined in Phase 1 of the Work Plan.

Phase 1 Project Startup

In the initial phase, the Borough will perform the following tasks: assemble a Project Management Team, hold preliminary meetings with the National Park Service [NPS] and other agencies, publish a public announcement,

prepare a Preliminary Scope/Schedule/Budget and, once these steps are accomplished, request a Notice to Proceed from the State.

Project Management Team

The function of the **Project Management Team** [PMT] is to represent the Assembly on matters relating to the study. At the June Assembly Meeting, Mayor Gonzales announced and requested the Assembly’s approval for his selection of members for the PMT. The present composition of the Team includes the following individuals: Borough Mayor, Borough Clerk - Shelley Acteson, District 1 Assemblyperson - Jim Caswell, and Bill Nordmark - Healy business representative. An obvious omission from the team is a District 2 West [includes Healy] Assemblyperson. As this District is the most populated in the Borough, with four elected representatives, and as any proposed North Access development would most heavily impact these constituents and their lifestyles, Denali Watch

supports and encourages the solicitation of a District 2 Assemblyperson, one who will be held accountable to the voters, as a member of the Team.

The Mayor has hired Don Lowell, of Alaska Transportation Consultants [ATC], as **Project Manager** to assist the PMT in defining the scope of the study, setting up a schedule, compiling a budget for the project, and preparing the Request For Proposals [RFP], the first step in the consultant selection process [Phase 2]. These complicated aspects of the study require a level of expertise and knowledge of transportation issues that the Borough does not possess. ATC, a group of ex-DOT employees, has worked previously for the Denali Borough, via Resolution No. 00-05 passed on August 13, 2000, to negotiate with DOT for a memorandum of understanding for the North Access project and to lobby the State Legislature for the matching funds.

A **part-time employee** has been hired by the Borough to perform ac-

counting duties associated with the project. Payment for these services and the Project Manager will come from study monies not the Borough's coffers.

The preliminary meeting with the **National Park Service** [NPS], required by the TORA, took place on May 20th. The Park Superintendent-Paul Anderson, Park Planner-Mike Tranel, DOT representative-Paul Prusak, Assemblyperson Caswell and Mayor Gonzales were in attendance. According to the Mayor, there will be no formal "partnership" between the Borough and the Park Service as "the Borough is solely responsible for the project as per the agreement [TORA]." NPS is willing to provide the Borough with constructive information on resources in the Northern Region. Although the NPS 1997 North Access Feasibility Study conducted in cooperation with DOT and other State agencies will provide some basis for the costs of construction and the economic feasibility of the project, its conclusion that the cost of constructing a northern access route would be prohibitive has been refuted in certain circles; thus, we can anticipate that there will be overlap and redundancy in the new study.

Preliminary Agency Scoping Meeting

DOT will provide the Borough with a list of all **State and Federal Agencies**, whose jurisdictions or interests may be affected by North Access development. All agencies will be invited to provide input at Preliminary Agency Scoping Meetings. In order to facilitate agency participation, three separate meetings will be scheduled one each in Fairbanks, Anchorage and the Denali Borough. No timeline for these meetings has yet been delineated.

A Study NOT An EIS

Although Denali Borough Assembly Meeting Minutes dating back to 1999 refer to the appropriation obtained by Sen. Murkowski as funds to execute an Environmental Impact Study [EIS] on North Access, the Denali Borough is about to embark upon a reconnaissance study, not a full-fledged EIS. An EIS,

which would be guided by the precepts of the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA], requires an investigation of alternatives and ensures public participation in the process. The expressed intent of the present "study" is to identify possible corridors for rail or road access from Healy to Kantishna/Wonder Lake and further the information gathering process.

Because the "study" will not, in and of itself, cause impact **OR** result in a decision as to whether or not a road or railroad should be constructed, the "study" is excluded from further NEPA evaluation at this time. All parties involved recognize that before any impacts to National Parklands can occur or construction of any kind is initiated further NEPA evaluation with NPS participation would be required.

The focus of the Borough's reconnaissance study is very narrowly framed to address access into Denali National Park and Preserve **only via the Stampede Corridor**. Thus, the study will do nothing to:

- ◆ resolve the bigger question of what are the access options for getting more people into the National Park,
- ◆ dissipate the high level of controversy that surrounds the North Access alternative, or
- ◆ in any way bring a definitive resolution to the validity or necessity of providing a northern route into the National Park.

At some point, these significant factors will need to be addressed with lively debates from all affected entities: the NPS, state and federal agencies, the general public and local residents. Although 1.5 million dollars of American taxpayers money will be expended, the Denali Borough's reconnaissance study, as it is now devised, sidesteps these issues and, as a result, will do nothing to help build a consensus on how we might best enhance visitors' experiences to Denali National Park and Preserve.

6th Annual Run for the Refuge a Wet Success

When it was all said and done, not even the rain could soak the spirits of those attending the 6th Annual Run for the Refuge. Held on Sunday, August 18 on the campus of UAF, 116 brave runners and walkers trekked the muddy 5K and 10K courses. With this Run being the wettest in memory, organizers were impressed with the attendance -credited to effective publicity and loyal support from the Run's participants.

The purpose of the Run is to offer a fun, non-controversial way to encourage support for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and learn more about its biological diversity. Attendants learned more about the Refuge through an educational booth sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks and the Caribou Commons Project: "Walk to Washington." A local expert also offered the opportunity to learn more of Alaska's renewable energy resources.

Following the Run, the participants enjoyed a host of post-race activities. Lousiaska, Fairbanks' own bluegrass band, provided music while folks cooled down with refreshments. These events were highlighted by the celebration of Mardy Murie's 100th birthday, a loyal advocate of the Refuge. Under the direction of Debbie S. Miller, cheerful voices sang Happy Birthday to Mardy after enjoying a cake made in Ms. Murie's honor. Local donors also provided door prizes given to those in attendance.

(Run, continued on pg 12)

The Hunt for Red 'Bou

By Robert Franz,
Northern Alaska Environmental Center Member

Our small group headed out into the Delong Mountains in northwest Alaska, about 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle, in search of red 'bou. This area, unlike the more famous cousin, the Arctic Refuge, is in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), Number 4. But like the Arctic Refuge, this is also pristine wilderness, but less visited and with less press. We were there to explore and see for ourselves the nature of the land. During our first week of hiking, we did see portions of the Western Alaska caribou herd, and some young calves, but not the red caribou, which would indicate recently born calves.

We then flew to do our river portion of the trip (north of Lookout Ridge), and encountered large congregations of caribou, and in one magnificent show of nature, witnessed thousands of caribou crossing the river just ahead of us. The show went on for hours, in two major groups, with caribou crossing from over the hills and down the snowfields like ants coming to a picnic. The first major group seemed rather disorganized, and there were countless scenes of cows and very young caribou calves (red 'bou) searching for each other, having gotten separated in all the confusion. The crossing was noisy, with bleats between the calves and cows, since separation will lead to death to the new calf. Cows would repeatedly cross the river to try and find their calf, and calves would cross back trying to connect with their mothers. The second large crossing seemed more organized with fewer separations noted. While the cows could climb up some steep slopes, the difficulty of the slope did not stop some of the young calves from trying to climb in the same spot, and one could observe cows bleating perhaps directions to their calf to try a different spot.

Later that evening, another group of caribou came down the slope across from camp and two red 'bou in particular seemed to be in turbo mode, racing all over the tundra (tussocks) and up and down the snowfields. I don't know if this behavior has ever been documented, but it was like a celebration of life by the two caribou. In their very young lives, they had yet to experience the mosquitoes, nose bot flies, warble flies, and other predators of the caribou. The following morning, a grizzly bear was checking out that same area looking for an opportunistic meal. Later that morning, we found a dead red 'bou by the river crossing, perhaps a testimony to the perils of separation.

On the flight back to Kotzebue, we observed huge masses of caribou. Having hiked and done river trips in the Arctic Refuge, there is every much as valuable of wilderness values in the NPR-A as in the Arctic Refuge, and to



Robert Franz in the NPR-A.

sacrifice this to the oil companies would be a terrible injustice. The oil companies have their sights on all of Alaska, while some fail to realize that one fight (Arctic Refuge) is only part of a larger battle.

Robert lives in Plymouth Meeting, PA, and is a member of NAEC. He has hiked extensively in Alaska, especially in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He also drives a hybrid-electric automobile.

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(NPR-A, continued from pg 3)

ditional leasing program in the 1980s via an appropriations bill rider, *it still has not resolved the long-term management and protection of the Reserve's natural values.* The Northern Alaska Environmental Center believes that these issues should be resolved prior to any additional leasing within the Reserve.

However, while we strongly believe in the "No Action" alternative, in light of the current administration and the Administration's National Energy Policy requiring BLM to develop the NPRA, we are realistic enough to understand that the No Action alternative will have little chance of being chosen.

With that in mind, the Northern Alaska Environmental Center will wait to assess the draft EIS prior to determining which alternative (e.g., the least destructive of the leasing alternatives) to support. Once the dEIS is released, we will send out email and regular mail action alerts providing information on the context of the dEIS and letting you know where to send written comments.

(If you do not receive our Arctic Action email alerts, you can subscribe to this free service by sending an email to info@northern.org.)

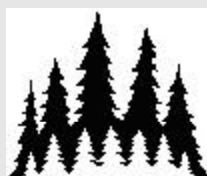


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The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is the largest undeveloped wilderness area in America.

Boreal Shorts

By Nancy Fresco,
Boreal Forest Coordinator



Fires and Misinformation

It has been a big summer for forest fires. Statewide, more than a million acres have burned. Here in the Interior, the blaze out near Chena Hot Springs scorched over 20,000 acres, the Vinsale fire burned about 200,000, and dozens of smaller blazes were started by either humans or by lightning. The headlines have also been full of news of more distant fires, in the Rocky Mountain West.

As property is lost to flames, some politicians blame conservationists – and suggest that fires would not occur if more logging were allowed. Said Pat Williams, a former Montana congressman, "The only thing that burns hotter than a wildfire in the West is the demagoguery of some politicians trying to take advantage of it." (New York Times, 6/30/02) The truth, however, is more complex than the rhetoric.

Fire-driven ecosystems such as the boreal are destined to burn; human management can only affect when and how. In general, frequent small fires are

better for an ecosystem than large blazes, because they leave a complex patchwork of partially unburnt areas, and do not consume all organic material. Fire suppression often increases eventual fire severity by allowing burnable materials to accumulate. Logging, ironically, can also exacerbate fires, because older forests with large trees are cooler, damper, and less likely to burn. After harvest, many forests regrow as dense burnable thickets. To further confuse matters, standard commercial logging has sometimes been misleadingly labeled "fuels reduction," while appropriate thinning has occasionally been inaptly vilified by conservationists.

The situation in the boreal is typically better than that in the Lower 48. Our history of fire suppression and logging is short, and many fires are still allowed to burn until they die out naturally. Furthermore, much of the forest is not close to any human habitation that would be directly threatened by fire, reducing

incentives to artificially suppress fire.

In order to bring about better long-term forest practices nationwide, forest fires should not be treated as a partisan political issue, but rather as a matter of pragmatic science. Several simultaneous strategies are necessary:

- .. Around urban areas and homes, thinning of the small fire-prone trees, even at an economic loss, will save a lot of money in the long run.
- .. In forests far from human habitation, fires should be allowed to burn.
- .. Urban and suburban sprawl should be prevented, as much as possible, to minimize the so-called "urban-forest interface".
- .. Where buildup of fire-prone material is already a problem, small prescribed burns can help prevent large uncontrolled burns in the future.

While these solutions sound simple, they may not be easy to put into effect nationwide. Thus, extensive fire education and open discussion between land managers, scientists, and policymakers must be part of any long-term plan.

Forest Facts – Choosing and Using Wood

By Nancy Fresco, Boreal Forest Coordinator

Faced with stacks of lumber at a vast super-store, even the most conservation-minded consumers often have no idea what to buy. We hear a lot about the importance of “value-added” forest products. We want to support small local businesses. We want wood that has been harvested sustainably. But when it comes to actually selecting lumber for that new deck or set of bookshelves, many of us are at a loss.

The concept of adding value to wood products is fairly simple. A tree that is turned into lumber is worth more than a tree that is turned into pulp or exported as a whole log. If it can be hand-crafted into beautiful cabinetry, its value soars, and fewer trees need to be cut to sustain a decent profit.

Ideally, all wood would be used logically, locally, and sparingly. Low-value products like newspaper could be

made mostly from recycled materials, while small trees could provide simple structural components such as two-by-fours. Larger trees and the finest woods would be used only for the highest value uses. All wood products would be sold as locally as possible, to reduce energy wasted in transport and to help foster a sense of stewardship.

Unfortunately, such frugal common sense is rarely put into effect. Old-growth ends up in paper mills, paper ends up in landfills, and few people even know which products are local to their area. However, the following primer for the Alaska boreal gives a brief overview of local choices, and can also be used as a template for those in other regions.

Local lumberyards will usually be able to give consumers much more information about specific wood than large national stores. Wood from certified forests is usually marked as such,

and has an FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) label, but other distinctions are less obvious. Wherever you shop, don't be afraid to ask where the wood came from, what species it is, and how it was harvested. You have a right to know.

The commercial timber mix in the boreal forest is about 64% white spruce, 21% birch, and 15% poplars (aspen and cottonwood). Local woods can be categorized according to their preferred uses and similarities to other woods that may be more commonly referred to in how-to manuals and construction guidelines.

Wood is generally judged according to the following properties:

- “ **Strength** For construction purposes, it is often useful to know what type and degree of force will bend, compress, and/or break wood. It may be tested under impact, crushing, tension, and shear.
- “ **Hardness** Conifers are classified as softwoods, while deciduous trees are hardwoods, but this can be misleading. Many hardwoods are softer than the average softwood. The hardest woods are particularly useful in floors, countertops, and other heavy-wear uses where durability is an asset.
- “ **Cutting and planing quality; gluing and nailing capability** uneven porous woods may need to be cut and planed carefully to avoid unattractive deformation of fibers. Ease and strength of gluing and nailing vary from one species to another.
- “ **Color, grain, staining and painting quality** These are purely aesthetic considerations. Some woods have even color while others have very visible rings or other variations. Some woods will absorb too much stain, while others may stain unevenly.
- “ **Defects** These can include de-



© NAEC File Photo

Mills, such as the Nenana Lumber Company, can help consumers choose lumber that is appropriate for their project.

cay, splitting, shakes and checks (separation along the grain), warping, and knots.

- **Susceptibility to decay** This is particularly important if high moisture or humidity is present.
- In some circumstances, characteristics such as **weight, specific gravity, moisture content** (after drying), and **shrinkage** (during and after drying) may also be of concern.

White spruce is a light, soft wood useful for general construction purposes. In overall strength, it is roughly comparable to White Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Eastern Hemlock, and most types of fir, although Douglas Fir is somewhat stronger. It is easily worked, stained, and glued, and readily sliced to a smooth silky finish. However, it is not particularly resistant to decay. Its pure white color and lack of odor also make it appropriate for food containers and veneers.

Paper Birch is a medium-hard, fairly strong wood – comparable to Chestnut or American Elm. It has a fine, even texture and is easy to work. It is ranked as difficult to glue and poor in decay resistance, but has high nail-holding capacity and takes stains well. The sapwood (outer layer) is white, while the heartwood tends to be light reddish brown, creating interesting color variations in decorative products. Birch is increasing in popularity for cabinetry, bowls, and other furniture and housewares. It can also be used for flooring and dimensional lumber.

Quaking Aspen and Balsam Poplar (cottonwood) are not as strong or as hard as birch – or even as white spruce — but are lightweight, white and even-grained, with no odor when dried. As a result, they are appropriate woods for use as food containers or for decorative purposes such as veneers.

There are many ways to obtain local firewood without using wood that might have had a higher value for another purpose. Slash (small wood and branches) and stumps can be gleaned from some logged sites, and many lumberyards offer slab wood and other waste from the milling process. For larger logs, gnarled and knotty trees can be used. For more information on firewood sales, contact your local Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry office.

Mining produces less than 1 % of the world's economic product, but consumes close to 10 % of world energy.

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Introducing Reece Edwards

Camp Habitat and Run for the Refuge Intern

Our latest Intern hales from the thriving metropolis of Bandera, TX; population 1100. Recruited through the Alaska Conservation Foundation, Reece served double duty as the Assistant Director of Camp Habitat and Coordinator for the 6th Annual Run for the Refuge. Born and raised in Texas, he graduated in the spring of 2000 with a degree in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, which lies deep in the heart of south Texas. Upon graduation, he decided that he wanted a career that combined people and wildlife, which led him into outdoor education. He has served as a naturalist in the Catskill mountains of Central New York state and most recently the Sierra Nevadas of California. Last summer, he surveyed small mammals and birds as an Urban Park Ranger for New York City.

Reece enjoys most outdoor activities including running, hiking, and camping and obviously traveling, a passion that has lead him to work in MD, NM, WA, TX, CA, and AK during his brief environmental career. He also likes writing, spending time with family and

freinds, and remaining active in the local Baptist church.

At summer's end, he plans to return to California to continue serving as a naturalist in the southern Sierra Nevada mountains.



Reece checking a live trap while working as an Urban Park Ranger in New York City.

Terminal Trouble in Northwest Alaska

By Mara Bacsujlaky,
Mining Coordinator

Project economics appear to sink proposed Delong Mountain Terminal expansion

For the past two years, the US Army Corps of Engineers has been conducting a joint economic feasibility analysis and Environmental Impact Statement process for a proposed expansion of the Delong Mountain Terminal System in northwest Alaska. The Delong Terminal – financed, constructed and owned by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) – was built in the late 1980's to support the development of the Red Dog zinc-lead mine, which needed a means to transport its ore to market. Located on the shores of the icy Chukchi Sea, 15 miles south of the Native Village of Kivalina, the Delong Terminal consists of a shallow water dock, an off-shore conveyor system, concentrate storage barns, and other port facilities. It is connected to Red Dog mine by a 52-mile long haul road. Although the Delong Terminal is officially available to

any entity willing to pay a user fee to AIDEA, practically speaking the only tenant of the Delong Terminal is Teck Cominco, operator of the Red Dog mine. To maximize ore shipment and mine supply delivery, Teck Cominco uses the available storage and docking space to such an extent that the Delong Terminal is essentially unavailable for other uses.

Teck Cominco wants to increase ore production at Red Dog, but the shipping capacity of the Delong Terminal is the pinch point. To increase ore exports, Teck Cominco, with AIDEA, proposes dredging a deep-water harbor and building a direct loading facility that will allow larger ships to dock, reduce downtime due to bad weather, halve the amount of time it takes to load ore and extend the shipping season from three to four months.

The project's price tag is somewhere between \$152 and \$178 million. When it appeared the expansion might sink under its own fiscal deadweight, Alaska's Congressional delegation revitalized the project with federal appropria-

tions, and in late 1999, the Corps started a joint Environmental Impact Statement and feasibility study of the proposed Delong Terminal expansion.

The feasibility study will be used to determine if this expansion is a navigation improvement that is in the federal interest, which would pave the way for Congress to authorize the Corps to construct and implement the project and to appropriate capital funding. To be in the federal interest, the project must demonstrate that it benefits the public, contributes to national economic development while protecting the nation's environment and provides the greatest net economic benefit.

On all three points, the Delong Terminal expansion is dead in the water. A port that is ice-bound for eight months of the year is an unlikely candidate for a regional transportation hub, but that's its public benefit according to the Corps. The agency envisions the expanded port being used by other mining companies to ship out copper and coal and by local villages for the import of fuel and goods. But the expansion project contains no provisions for transporting coal and copper from as yet undeveloped deposits, or for moving fuel and goods from the port to the villages. On close examination, the advantages of the port expansion – faster loading times, larger ships – benefit only one user: Teck Cominco. Ignoring regulations that explicitly prohibit Corps involvement in projects that do not primarily benefit the public, the Corps blithely acknowledges that Teck Cominco will achieve 78% of the benefits of the port expansion, but denies that this amounts to the majority of benefits accruing to a private user.

Their fuzzy math doesn't stop there. From the beginning, the economic benefits of the Delong Terminal have been in serious doubt, and it is evident from the Corps' public record that the



Concentration storage barn at the Delong Mountain Terminal, northwest Alaska.

agency is under extreme political pressure to “make the numbers work”. Pesky items that increase costs, such as ongoing maintenance dredging to keep the deep-water channel open, are reserved for future consideration and thus eliminated from current economic analyses. On the other hand, economic benefits appear to be seriously exaggerated and national economic development cost seriously underestimated. Non-monetary costs and benefits, especially subsistence uses and passive uses, have not been addressed at all in the preliminary benefit-cost analyses, and uncertainty and risk have not been properly incorporated.

Economic problems aside, there is ample evidence that dredging a deep-water channel will irreparably harm the fragile marine environment. Impacts to marine species include noise pollution from construction and increased shipping, loss of habitat, and toxic contamination from spillage of ore concentrates and fuel. The Delong Terminal area hosts four endangered species (fin, northern right, humpback and bowhead whales) and two threatened species (Stellar’s and spectacled eiders), yet the Corps has only superficially evaluated the project’s potential harm to the marine environment, and has yet to initiate formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, the federal agencies tasked with implementing the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammals Protection Act.

Local Inupiaq have observed that since the Delong Terminal was built, the marine species they depend on for food, such as bowhead, beluga and bearded seal, avoid the area. Expanding the port will only exacerbate the problem and will result in losses to subsistence resources. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) – the Corps must insure that subsistence remains a priority consumptive use on public lands and waters. However, to date, the Corps has rebuffed requests for government-to-government consultations from local Alaska Native tribes, and has

Staff Happenings... Summer 2002

As staff here at the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, we often get so engrossed in the issues and projects we are working on that we forget that sometimes it is important to put a human face to all of the hard work and dedication that you, our members, both support and come to expect from us. So we’ve decided to take a moment and let you know a little more about some of us, and what we’ve been up to lately.

Mining Coordinator and Assistant Director Mara Bacsujlaky, after returning from an unsuccessful, but wild-weather caribou-hunting trip on the North Slope, headed to Denali National Park to help collect native seeds for their re-vegetation projects. In September, she’s planning to hike the Circle-Fairbanks trail from Cleary Summit to 12-Mile Summit - hopefully a chance to enjoy Interior fall at its best.

Bookkeeper Sara Elzey has had a busy summer filled with walks, bike rides, and gardening. But now she is gearing up for the snow, excited about the upcoming skijoring season!

Boreal Forest and Local Issues Coordinator Nancy Fresco’s summer has passed quickly. She was busy with her wedding in June, her cabin-building project, and as much hiking, biking and running as she could fit in — mostly to and from work.

Executive Director Arthur Hussey, family, and friends built a 16x12 cabin in the Brooks Range this summer. He con-

tinues to fly downriver on weekends for a local airline.

Arctic Coordinator Deb Moore and her husband are currently preparing for a fall fishing trip with Deb’s parents. Afterwards, they hope to get re-motivated to finish off the interior of the house they built last year.

Membership and Communications Director Paul Ollig, and his wife Sonja, spent part of the summer exploring the backcountry of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and recently had a close encounter with an inquisitive Minke whale while kayaking in Homer, Alaska. He is planning on spending the winter dreaming about kayaking trips in Southeast Alaska and in Peru that they are planning for next year.

Camp Habitat Director Leah Sansone, has wrapped up Camp Habitat and is finishing small details on the house-building project started last year. She and her husband Greg have two months to prepare for their baby’s arrival early November.

marginalized concerns about impacts to subsistence resources.

For economic, environmental and cultural reasons, the Delong Terminal expansion should be scrapped. It’s an ill-fated, prohibitively expensive undertaking that should never have made it beyond the reconnaissance phase. Despite the smoke and mirrors efforts by the Corps and the project’s political backers to make it look otherwise, this

expansion primarily benefits Teck Cominco while incurring significant public costs: decreased subsistence resources, irreparable harm to a fragile arctic marine ecosystem, and federal subsidization of a questionable project. Five million dollars have already been spent on this boondoggle – it’s time to sink the Delong Terminal expansion before more state and federal money is wasted.

Mine Dredgings

By Mara Bacsujlaky,
Mining Coordinator

Summer heats up on Red Dog mine issues



July saw a flurry of activity on issues new and old at the Red Dog lead zinc mine and the Delong Mountain Terminal near Kivalina, Alaska.

On July 15, the Kivalina Relocation Planning Committee of the Village of Kivalina notified Teck Cominco, operator of the Red Dog lead-zinc mine, of its intent to sue the company for more than 3,200 violations of the Clean Water Act. The Committee, represented by the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, is citing contamination by the mine of their drinking water and traditional hunting and fishing grounds, and wants the company to fully comply their operating permits, as well as to pay up to \$88 million in fines. In a press release announcing the action, Enoch Adams, a member of the Committee, stated that the effects of the mine on subsistence hunting and fishing has been adverse from the beginning – with fish kills, and changes in caribou and beluga migration patterns.

On July 23, the Northern Center, the Ecology and Law Institute and the Forest Conservation Council sent the US Army Corps a sixty-day notice of their intent to file a citizen suit under the Endangered Species Act if the Delong Mountain Terminal expansion project is authorized as currently planned (see accompanying article on Page 10). The Delong Terminal, located on the Chukchi Sea, is used by Teck Cominco to export Red Dog ore and import fuel and goods for the mine. Currently two years into the Environmental Impact Statement process for the proposed expansion, the Corps has yet to initiate formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, as it is required to do under the National Environmental Policy Act. Present expansion plans would severely impact subsistence uses and destroy sensitive marine ecosystems that host four endangered and two threatened species.

On July 30, the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the US Environmental Protection Agency acted within its authority when it issued three enforcement orders to Teck Cominco for failing to comply with the Clean Air Act. The Court also found that the EPA did not abuse its discretion when it required Teck Cominco to install more expensive anti-pollution controls than what the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation deemed necessary. ADEC argued that the pollution controls the EPA wanted on a new mine generator would cost Teck Cominco too much money and were not environmentally justified. In response to the ruling, Governor Knowles expressed disbelief that Teck Cominco should be required to spend \$10 million for, in his opinion, no environmental benefit, and indicated that the State will appeal the decision. Red Dog produces 7% of the world's zinc, and for 2001, Teck Cominco reported overall net earnings of \$101 million.

(Run, continued from pg 5)

One of the unique facets of the Run for the Refuge is that it is annually organized by an intern of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. This

year's intern was Reece Edwards. Reece, an avid runner since grade school, was responsible for the over-all organization of the Run. Several of his duties included seeking sponsors, recruit-

ing volunteers, facilitating t-shirt and flyer design; even directing the raising of the tents. Reece stated that as a avid runner he found it both challenging, interesting, as well as fun to see all the details involved in directing such an event.

Finally, the organizers wish to thanks all the sponsors and donors for their financial support. Also, thanks to the tireless volunteers who made the Run such a tremendous success. So look ahead and mark your calendar's for next summer's 7th Annual Run for the Refuge. See you there!



© NAEC File Photo

Participants at the rainy start of the 6th Annual Run for the Refuge.



From the Woodpile

By Ginny Hill Wood,
Founding Member of NAEAC, and Regular Columnist

August already! Where has the summer gone? Here in Interior Alaska the imperatives and opportunities of each distinct season bring different demands, delights and annoyances (such as mosquitoes and forest fire smokes this year), leaving us alternatively exhilarated, exhausted and frustrated - but never bored. Summers just don't last long enough.

An important imperative will be the choices to be made at the voting booths this fall. On October 8, Fairbanks folk vote on an ordinance by citizen's initiative on whether to establish an area in the heart of our community where snow machine operation is prohibited. With over 2100 signatures, it met the requirements for placing it on the ballot.

As expected, this petition has been met with considerable opposition from snowmachine devotees who always vehemently protested any restrictions on their activities at any public hearing and in print. They demand unlimited access everywhere their machines can get to with no regulations as to speed, licensing driver requirements, age, or "rules of the road" - rules required by other motorized transportation on land and water.

This petition was conceived and circulated mostly through the efforts of Stan Justice, frequent past Equinox marathon winner, cross country skier, long distance sea kayaker, and untiring volunteer trail maintainer. In a recent Fairbanks News Miner "Community Prospective" article explaining the petition he stated:

"With contentious issues perfect solutions are rare. This snowmachine control initiative is no exception, but we

have reached a reasonable compromise. Earlier drafts would have closed the entire Fairbanks bowl. We compromised, slashing the size of the closure area leaving the Noyes Slough and the Chena River open for their use... 99.6 percent of the Borough remains outside the closure area."

Anchorage avoided dealing with user conflicts on their extensive bicycle path and ski trail system within the municipality by outlawing off road vehicle use on them from the start. On a cross-country ski trip in Norway several years ago, I asked my Norwegian companion how they enforced their no snowmachines restrictions. The answer was, "we only use them on ski trails for grooming them." In Norway, recreational use of snow machines is not acceptable anywhere, except for work on farms, logging operations, hauling supplies for their extensive hut system for hikers and skiers, and for reading electricity meters at remote cabins.

One of the objections by the opponents to this petition at a Borough hearing was that these restrictions on snowmachine users could be difficult to enforce. (Sort of like if you can't be caught, what's the crime?)

No matter how annoying to many people - their fumes, the noise, the disturbance of wildlife, destruction of vegetation, and sometimes a threat to life and limb, these over-the-snow pleasure machines are not going out of style. They will only proliferate. Moreover, their manufacturers and merchants have a million dollar industry. This gives the sport a lot of clout politically. Above all, snowmachining is a whale of a lot of fun. Although it hardly qualifies as engender-

ing physical fitness, it does enable a way to be mobile outdoors anywhere the snow is deep enough rather than sit indoors just enduring our long Alaskan winter.

Despite escalating road rage and traffic gridlock, no one endorses eliminating cars. We do accept the need for laws to regulate them, otherwise no one could drive anywhere with some safety or satisfaction. So why should any vehicles that can now go over 100 mph be free from restrictions on bike/ pedestrian paths, along certain highways, on certain residential or even designated wilderness areas? Even boats and aircraft are regulated.

When automobiles first appeared popping and spouting fumes on roadways used only by pedestrians, saddle horses, and horse-drawn buggies and wagons, the public reaction was probably, "get that carn-sarn contraption off this road. The blast of a horn probably decided who got out of who's way. The eventual denouement was a nationwide highway system for cars, trucks and buses. Perhaps we need to consider a system of long distance routes for snowmachines just as existed when the past Alaska Territory Road Commission provided for dog teams.

Locally, this petition is a good start on an issue that is nationwide where the snow falls. Snow machines need designated access routes across heavily developed populated areas, but they will have to accept regulations and restrictions along with our present emphasis on "move," "growth," and "development." The solution has to be resolved on a win/win basis, not a win/lose one.

Northern Center Joins Fairbanks' Golden Days Parade

By Jeff Merkel,
NAEC Board Member

I've only been in town two years, and I avoided the Golden Days parade my first year. But in my second summer here, I've begun to realize that Fairbanks is really a small town at heart, and operates on people power. When people put out, the lights go on. If something happens, it's because people get engaged.

Well, that's been true in the conservation community for years. Persistence on the part of a very few can turn the corner. So it was appropriate that our first float concept was to have a bicycle powered sign, and would be pulled by three or five bicyclists. People power! Appropriate technologies! No diesel tractor trailer in front of a Northern Center float!

But the theme of the parade was



Jay Cable, Jeff Merkel, and Nancy Fresco provide the horsepower, while Deb Moore enjoys the ride on the Northern Alaska Environmental Center's Golden Days' float.

"Days of Gold, 100 Years Old," remembering the discovery of gold hereabouts in 1902. So, we went back in time. We wanted to represent a time when most

everyone recycled. "Waste Note, Want Not" was our entry.

NAEC forestry expert Nancy Fresco was the energy behind building the float – basically her (and husband Jay's) bed design mounted on wheels. Deb Moore, Arctic Coordinator, converted a refrigerator box into a log cabin, and took a seat in front of it for the parade, looking all 1920's and quilting squares of cloth together. A crew of vivaciously dressed girl scouts pulled wagons gathering aluminum cans and paper from watchers for recycling. Instead of bicycles, the float had a troika of human pullers, human huskies. Director Arthur Hussey, in bib overalls and a hat, was the perfect recycled hayseed.

Walking through the city, collecting recyclables, we saw thousands of faces. High energy and enthusiasm greeted our simple – simplifying! – entry. We waded in palpable goodwill and even cheers from conservationists, fellow-travelers, friends, and acquaintances. By the end of the parade, we felt exhilarated by the town's energy, and were planning our next year's entry.

Buying a house is an investment!

Now you can invest in the future of the Northern Center by providing a one time only donation to buy part of our new building.

A \$50 donation will buy 1/2 square foot of 830 College Road.
All proceeds will go directly to purchasing our new home.

☐ **YES, I wish to buy 1/2 Sq. Ft. of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center for \$50!**

Please send your donation to:

Northern Alaska Environmental Center
830 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

- ☐ Enclosed is my check for \$50 made payable to NAEC
- ☐ Please charge my donation to my Visa/Mastercard (circle one) Card

Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Starting At Home: Improving the Northern Alaska Environmental Center's Energy Efficiency

By Deb Moore,
Arctic Coordinator

The staff of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center believes organizations that advocate for improved energy conservation should first make their own building and business practices as energy efficient as possible. However, for the past 20 years, the Northern Center's offices were housed in an extremely inefficient and largely unimprovable building. In fact, Fairbanks' only broad-based environmental organization may have been housed in the least efficient building in town!

Fortunately, all that has changed. Last summer, the Northern Center finally upgraded to a dwelling that, while still far from efficient, has the *potential* for efficiency. Since then, the Northern Center has undergone two energy audits to determine ways to improve our energy conservation. These audits looked primarily at three categories: space heating, water heating and electrical use (lights and appliances). Over the course of the next several years we intend to implement as many of the recommended improvements as feasible. Through this and other energy-related efforts, our goal is to improve our own energy conservation standards to meet those set by Green Star or similar organizations.

Prior to these audits, the Northern Center had already begun to make some of the more obvious electrical energy improvements. These included converting most of the lighting to compact fluorescent bulbs and installing power saver cords in all employees' vehicles. Compact fluorescent bulbs save between 66 – 75% of the energy used in incandescent bulbs for comparable illumination. Power saver cords (which allow electricity to pass to the engine

block heater when needed and shut off when the heater reaches ~40° F) are conservatively estimated to reduce each vehicle's preheating energy use by ~40% over an engine heating season (when temperatures are 20° F or below).

During the first audit – focused primarily on electrical use - we found several more ways in which we could conserve electricity. The biggest way was to turn off our computers at the power strip, not just the computer. (Computers have internal components that use 5 to 15 watts per hour even when switched "off". Switching off the computer, monitor, and peripherals at the power strip eliminates these standby losses.) The same is true for many household appliances including battery chargers, boomboxes, home audio systems, TVs, VCRs and microwaves.) In addition, by turning off our monitors and computers whenever they're not in use (i.e. turn off monitor if idle for >1/2 hour; turn off entire computer if idle >1 hour), we could save up to an additional 50 to 250 watts per hour per computer, re-

spectively.

However, the Northern Center's biggest waste of energy comes not from electrical use but from space heating. Our second audit consisted of a walk-through assessment for air leaks, insulation and heating/cooling equipment along with a blower-door test to determine air tightness. The walk-through assessment concluded that the majority of our heating costs are going toward space – with the greatest heat loss coming from inadequately insulated walls. The report from this audit recommended two major and several minor cost-effective improvements to our building; the major ones being to install additional R-14 insulation to the below grade exterior walls and to replace both our old oil-fired water heater and oil-fired boiler with one new boiler and storage tank. These improvements would increase our energy rating from 51% to 83% and lead to an annual CO₂ reduction of 53,936 lb.

The blower door test involved a large fan - mounted into the frame of an

(Energy, continued on pg 16)



The offices of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, located on College Road in Fairbanks, recently underwent an "energy audit" to determine the energy efficiency of the building.

(Energy, continued from pg 15)

outside door – which pulled air out of the building, lowering the air pressure inside. The rate at which outside air refilled the building was then determined. An adequately ventilated house should have 0.35 natural air changes per hour. Our building was found to be underventilated - with a turnover of 0.12 air changes per hour.

While it may first appear that having a tight, underventilated house would offset the underinsulation, thereby decreasing our heating energy use, this isn't the case. Controlling heating costs through underventilation does not work – counting on natural air leakage for ventilation means that you have more leak-

age when you want it least (winter) and not enough when you need it most (summer).

Plus, an underventilated house results in poor indoor air quality and moisture damage leading to possible health problems for the residents and degradation to the building's structure. Instead, the report from the second audit recommended treating the ventilation and heating problems separately by installing a mechanical ventilation system and making the heating improvements previously mentioned.

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center encourages our members to have their homes either personally or

professionally audited for energy use. For more information on these options, please check out the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse (EREC)'s briefing on home energy audits at <http://www.eren.doe.gov/consumerinfo/refbriefs/ea2.html> or call to request the information at 800-363-3732 (Voice Only).

We are grateful to Greg Egan of Alaska Renewable Energy and Robert Maxwell of Alaska Energy Associates for their generous donations of time and expertise to conduct these audits and help us on our way towards improved energy efficiency. Thank you.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

By Nancy Fresco, Local Issues Coordinator



Driving Efficiently

Driving is convenient. It's easy. Nevertheless, it shouldn't be overused or taken for granted. Consider that while the average American throws away a staggering 1270 pounds of garbage every year, even this wasteful consumption pales in comparison to the approximately 2890 pounds of gasoline per capita burned in our cars*.

Gasoline combustion produces huge amounts of carbon dioxide, which exacerbates global warming. It also releases toxic air pollution in the form of carbon monoxide, nitrous oxides, sulfur oxides, and particulates.

Even moderate improvements in efficiency can make a big difference:

- √ Don't need a giant SUV or truck? Then don't buy one. For any size vehicle, make gas efficiency a priority. *The purchase of a vehicle is one of the big-*

gest environmental choices most people ever make.

- √ Get regular tune-ups. Fixing a faulty oxygen sensor can improve mileage by 40%. Cleaning air filters can save 10%, and properly inflating tires, 3%.
- √ Don't drive in a "jack-rabbit" manner; this can reduce efficiency by as much as 33% – as well as being dangerous.
- √ Fuel efficiency drops rapidly at speeds over 60mph. Your car is 25% less efficient at 75 mph than at 60 mph.
- √ Avoid idling whenever possible – even in winter.
- √ Combining errands not only reduces total miles driven, but also reduces the percentage of driving time when your car isn't fully

warmed up. Mile for mile, cars are much more polluting on short trips than on long ones.

- √ Remember to plug in (with a timer or power-saver) when it's below +20F. Fairbanks suffers the greatest number of carbon monoxide violations when the temperature is between 0 and +20F.

Go to www.fueleconomy.gov for more info.

*Average per capita consumption of fossil fuels = 2889 pounds (361 gallons) of gas for personal transportation, 2248 pounds (281 gallons) of fuel oil for heating, and 3,080 pounds of coal burned to produce electricity.

Coming soon:

**Heating efficiently
Conserving electricity
Eating environmentally**

Denali Snowmobile Controversy Drones On

By Linda Paganelli,
Denali Watch Coordinator

In July of 2000, the National Park Service [NPS] finalized regulations [36CFR13.63] that maintained the historic management policy of prohibiting snowmobile access into Denali's Wilderness Core [Old Park]. The NPS based the regulation on past administrative policy and on the legislative intent of Congress in the formulation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act [ANILCA].

ANILCA Revisited

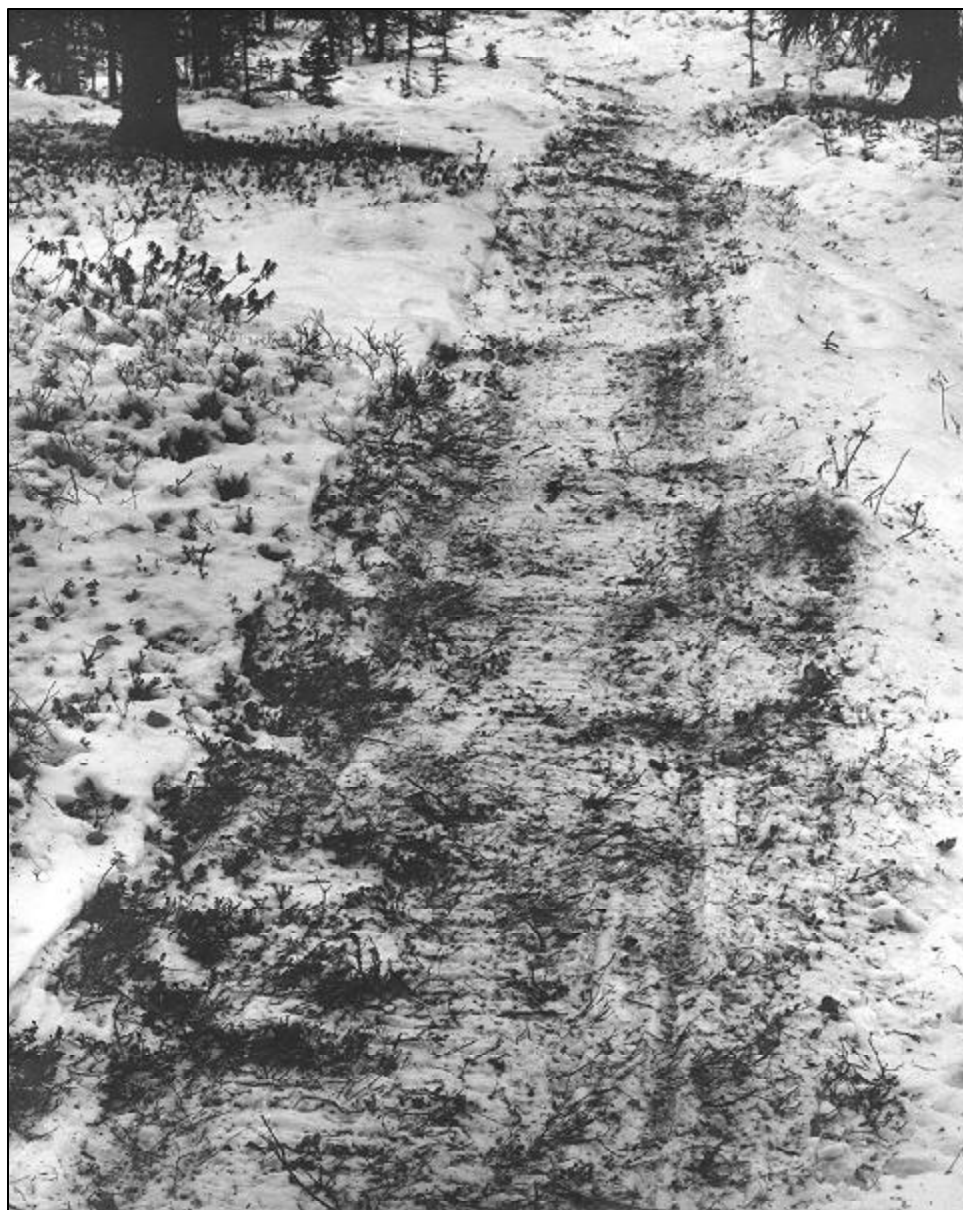
Under Section 1110(a) of ANILCA, snowmobile access could be permitted for "traditional activities" and for travel to and from homesites, villages and other valid occupancies if there was adequate snow cover and that use had been occurring in the area prior to the passage of ANILCA. As Congress never clearly defined "**traditional activities**" and as a definition was deemed essential by the courts, the NPS determined that in ANILCA a traditional activity involves the consumptive use of one or more natural resources, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, berry picking or similar activities. "Based on the application of the definition of traditional activities within the park to the factual history of the Old Park, there are no traditional activities that occurred during periods of adequate snow cover within the Old Park; and, thus, Section 1110(a) of ANILCA does not authorize snowmachine access." Under the definition, recreational use of snowmachines is not considered a traditional activity. Prior to the enactment of ANILCA there were **no homesites or other valid occupancies that were accessed via travel through the Old Park** and thus Section 1110(a) does not authorize snowmobile access under this condition either.

The Old Park, which was established in 1917, was **designated a Wilderness Area** in ANILCA. While Con-

gress did not specifically exempt the Old Park from ANILCA Section 1110(a), which allowed the use of motorized access to maintain the possibility of the continuation of a subsistence lifestyle in rural Alaska in newly-created conservation units, Congress did specify how new Wilderness Areas were to be treated. Congress stated that in order for the Wilderness Act to be overridden, it must be done so "specifically." In Section 1110(a), the Wilderness Act was not "specifically" overridden, though it is worth noting that the Wilderness Act

was specifically made inapplicable for other purposes elsewhere in the Act. Instead, Congress used general language in Section 1110(a) that its provisions would apply "notwithstanding" any other law. This is not the specific override required to render the Wilderness Act inapplicable. This general "notwithstanding" language, which was used no fewer than 21 times in ANILCA, is clearly not what Congress intended when it said that the Wilderness Act must be overridden "specifically" if it is to be rendered inap-

(Snowmobile, continued on pg 18)



Snowmachines can damage fragile tundra vegetation that can take centuries to grow back.

Introducing Kate Waffner

Mining Intern

This is my first time to Alaska, and I was happy to be able to stay for two months. While here, I assisted Mara Bacsujlaky write a 10 years out report on the Fort Knox gold mine outside of Fairbanks. For the past three years, I have been living in California working for Patagonia, Inc., an outdoor apparel company based out of Ventura. The company has a strong environmental ethic, and works to get its employees working with the grassroots environmental community. In an effort to practice and not only preach, Patagonia offers its employees the possibility to do a two-month internship with an environmental organization. I applied for the internship and here I am working for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.

This past year I was involved in an intense letter-writing campaign opposing oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Looking for more details on the Refuge, I found the Northern Alaska Environmental Center's



© NAEC File Photo

Kate observes the main pit during a tour of the Fort Knox gold mine outside of Fairbanks.

website, and after some research discovered that they could use my help. Although I did not work on an issue directly involving the Arctic Refuge, I helped Mara on specific mining issues in Alaska (both have to do with resource extraction). This was a big learning curve for me, since I had no prior education on mining, but I felt like a zealous kid learn-

ing something for the first time. I had so many questions. It was an interesting challenge!

Thanks to the staff of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center for their warm welcome, and to Mara for all the time she took out of her busy schedule to set me up so comfortably in Fairbanks.

(Snowmobile, continued from pg 17)

plicable and as such the provisions of the Wilderness Act remain pertinent to the Old Park.

In August of 2000, the snowmobile industry, upset with the language contained in the NPS Final Ruling, which banned recreational snowmobile access into the Old Park, filed suit in federal court challenging the regulations. After holding settlement talks with the Bush Administration and the Department of the Interior, the snowmobile industry dropped its lawsuit and instead chose to pursue a legislative fix.

Although Alaskans, who weighed-in on the issue, gave overwhelmingly support for maintaining the historic closure of the Old Park and the NPS interpretation of the Congressional intent of the use of the term "traditional

activity", Representative Young [H.R. 4677] and Senator Murkowski [S. 2589] have both recently introduced bills in Congress to undo the NPS regulation. Specifically, the bills revoke the NPS definition of "traditional activity" and would open the door to allowing recreational snowmobiling in a portion of Denali's Designated Wilderness [Old Park].

Far-reaching Effects

The so called "compromise" being offered by Alaska's federal representatives defies the extensive public process that NPS underwent in order to formulate the Denali ruling, threatens to undermine the long-standing policy of prohibiting snowmobile use in the Old Park, and for the first time ever, sanctions recreational snowmobile access into a Designated Wilderness Area, which runs

contrary to the Wilderness Act of 1964. What eventuates at Denali, regarding the definition of "traditional activity" and the appropriateness of allowing recreational snowmobile access into a Wilderness Area, is likely to impact future management decisions in all conservation units created by ANILCA in Alaska. There are millions of acres open to motorized recreation enthusiasts throughout Alaska and the Lower 48; unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for Americans to enjoy their cultural heritage, which includes the opportunity to find reprieve from our progressively technological society. In our modernized world it is essential to ***guarantee that our public lands, which have been set-aside as Wilderness Areas, remain the sanctuaries of solitude and quietude for which they were established.***

Thank You to All of our Hard Working Volunteers!

**With your help, we are able to
continue to protect and conserve Interior and Arctic Alaska!**

SPECIAL THANKS to **Patagonia Inc.** for supporting an intern for our Mining Program, and to **Kate Waffner** for her work as intern. To **Aldona Jonitis, Beth Spalding** and **Steve Harbison**, and **Chuck and Margaret Johnson** for providing housing for Kate, and to **Jim Johnston and Claudia Clark** for providing a vehicle for her use during her stay.

MANY THANK YOU's to **Jeff Merkel, Colleen Ryan, Dana Durham, Jay Cable** and **Cynthia Binkley** and her **Girl Scout Troop #188** for helping to build and pull our Golden Days Parade float.

For their help staffing our booth at the Tanana Valley State Fair, **Bernadette Woods, Linda and John Benson, Frank Keim, Fran Mauer, Ann Mallard, Val Barber, Jay Cable, Jess Pena, Margaret Eagleton, Kerynn Fisher, Debbie Miller, Marie Beaver, John Hagey, Dan and Ann Swift, Amy Turner, Michelle Murt, Clarice Dukeminier, Dana Durham, and Janet Daley**, THANK YOU!

THANK YOU to **Bonnie Howard** for all her help clipping newspapers and stuffing and addressing envelopes.

THANKS to **Lauren Attanas**, who helped with the TAPS mailing.

Also, THANK YOU to **Magali Vincent** for her help with the TAPS phone banking.

And to **Colleen Ryan** for helping clip newspapers in addition to many various office tasks, THANK YOU!

THANK YOU to the Camp Habitat Advisory Board of **Susan Grace, Mark Ross, Lizanne Hanson, Becky Hammer, and Alice Mural** for helping out with our Crane Festival fundraisers!

And to everyone who helped make the 6th Annual Run for the Refuge such a tremendous success, despite the rain: **Mary Shields, Debbie and Dennis Miller, Todd Burnside, Magali Keller, Niilo Koponen, Franz Mueter, Stan Justice, Janet Daley, Juliana Daley-Hussey, and Lousiaska** for providing the entertainment...THANK YOU!

If we've left anybody out, it's not because we don't appreciate you! THANK YOU!



*We would also like to
take a moment to thank
the following founda-
tions, for their dedica-
tion and support of our
work!*

Thank you to the **Alaska Conservation Foundation** for a rapid response grant in support of our work on True North.

Thank you to the **Brainerd Foundation** and the **True North Foundation** for funds to design and publish Mining Alaska.

Shape and Protect Alaska's Future...

...become a member of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center or make a donation.



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Conservation Abstracts

By Florence Collins, Member

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BRITISH PETROLEUM'S chief executive, Lord John Browne, says prospects for a gas pipeline from the North Slope are not good now. Oil production there is falling, costs are rising, and Alaska isn't competitive with other gas sources. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, July 3, p. A4

THE 84,000-ACRE WILD FIRE that burned south of Fairbanks in 2001 was started accidentally, but burned in 100,000-acre area that had a "burn plan" first issued in 1995. Fire control since the 1950s "allowed the habitat to age", so it is dominated by stands of old spruce, and had lost habitat used by many wild-life species, including moose. The area had not burned since 1941-1942. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, July 15, 2002, p. B1

BALD EAGLES HAVE INCREASED in the Lower 48 from about 400 breeding pairs in the 1960s to more than 6000 now. National Geographic, July 2002, p. 34-35

A FEW DENALI tourist busses and a diesel generator at the park will test a no-sulfur "gas-to-liquid" ("GTL") fuel that also lacks carcinogens such as benzene and toluene. It will be checked for emissions, efficiency, and effect on engines. It is made by converting natural gas, a process that involves loss of energy; it is expensive, but a demonstration plant is being built in Nikiski., and if the price can be lowered it could be used in village electricity-generating diesels that use 95% of the diesel fuel used in Alaska. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, July 14, 2002, p. D1, D2

THE HUBBARD GLACIER near Yakutat has advanced enough now to shut off Russell Fjord, turning it into a lake; in 1986, the glacier cut off the Fjord for more than 4 months. FDNM, July 24, 2002, p. A5

THE 3-MILLION-LITER oil spill on the Galapagos Island of Santa Fe apparently caused a 62% loss in population among its iguanas—a year after the spill, "skeletons littered the shores". A small amount of residual oil in the sea may have been the cause. Iguanas on the island of Genovesa which was not in the "path of the drifting oil" were not affected. Science News, June 8, 2002, p. 357

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE hits Alaska harder "than any place in the world", according to Sen. Stevens. The EPA "also found few positives to Alaska's thermal rise", but "Pres. Bush was dismissive" of the report. Sea ice has retreated 14% since 1998, and thinned by 40% since the mid-1960s; Shishmaref is losing so many houses and other buildings to the sea that people will vote next month on whether to move the whole village inland. Seattle Times, June 16, 2002, p.A22



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