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Changes at the Northern Alaska Environmental Center

By Arthur Hussey, Executive Director

Greetings, again. I trust you are all enjoying an active and enjoyable summer. We certainly are appreciating the warm weather here in Fairbanks. But you must be taking a break from the activities to read this issue, so I'd like to update you on matters of import here at 830 College Road: the 2003 legislative session; new faces; and member inputs.

The Good. The Bad. The Ugly

Well, let me rephrase that: the Bad, the Ugly. As far as legislative sessions go, 2003 couldn't have been much worse. In a nutshell, more of the same, despite changing faces in the Governor's mansion and other offices. No agreement on the budget deficit. Threatened cuts to Alaska's future, its educational system. Old, tired policies on resource development. Attempts to eliminate environmental safeguards for the land that Alaskans cherish. Outside-influenced efforts to reduce the governmental checks and balances that Alaskans value. And so on.

Three cases, just for example...

House Bill (HB) 149. Short-sighted law mandating timber first on state forests, then all those other "secondary" multiple-uses such as habitat for sport and subsistence species, wild food harvesting, venues for recreational pursuits. Ne-

glect that timber is a relatively small part of the overall component of the economic value of a forest. Forget that the vast majority of Alaskans appear to favor multiple-uses of forests, as by the way, does the Alaskan constitution.

Executive Order (EO) 107. Eliminates checks and balances Alaskans have come to expect since statehood. This nifty order moves the chickens into the fox's lair. It gives the Department of Natural Resources with its resource development mandate the authority for habitat protection, particularly fish streams.

HB 69. Out of balance legislation promoted by Outside-controlled Evergreen Resources that deregulates coal-bed methane drilling—and does so to the point that local government really can't oversee the process. Left unsaid is the testimony about the tremendous amount of saline water that coal bed methane drilling produces—water that does nothing to keep our habitats healthy, but rather threatens clean drinking and surface water supplies.

Need I say more? If I do, I require but four words: Call Your Representative. Vote.

The News

As many of you know, we have two new faces at NAEC.

(Changes, continued on pg 14)

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 1,152 members.

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The back page picture of a Dall sheep was taken by Charlie Ott in Denali National Park.





Oil Drilling Threatens Native Ways

Compass: Points of View from the Community

By Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak, Mayor of Nuiqsut

(First Published Anchorage Daily News, April 1, 2003)

As the mayor and former community health aide for the village of Nuiqsut, I have serious concerns about the ongoing effects of oil development in Alaska's Arctic. Nuiqsut is west of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Prudhoe Bay oil fields and is near the Beaufort Sea coast in the Colville River delta. We are within eight miles of the Alpine oil development project, often referred to as an example of how new fields have a smaller footprint.

The Alpine oil field already includes roads and pipelines, and we face new development with a gravel road from it to three new oil fields and new leases now being offered in the National Petroleum Reserve and across the Beaufort Sea. The NPR-A is our backyard, and the Inupiat people of this region have been hunting and fishing and living off the land here for thousands of years. Our way of life is increasingly threatened by the cumulative effects of oil and gas development. Seismic vibrators looking for oil and frequent helicopter flights have disturbed the caribou herds where I live. Big herds of caribou do not come through our town anymore, and most of our hunters have found it hard to even get caribou. Our elders tell me that the caribou are having problems, as more are seen with illnesses. Fish have been decreasing in numbers, and multiple species are being affected. Fish caught in the net have been deformed, yellow, with increased parasites, tumors in the muscle or reproductive glands, and some are skinny with a bitter taste to the meat. Many people at the ongoing, never-ending meetings scheduled in the village have voiced these concerns, but devel-

opment activities continue to be approved.

Air pollution is visible over the North Slope in winter as a yellowish haze. Nitrogen oxide emissions from the oil fields are more than twice the total emitted in Washington, D.C. During winter there are many natural gas flares that occur, which caused me to have many busy nights on call responding to community members' complaints about respiratory illnesses. I remember when I began as a health aide there was only one asthmatic patient, and when I quit in 1999 there were 60 people who had to use respiratory medications. There are also increased numbers of thyroid disorders. For this village of more than 400 people, a 600 percent increase in respiratory patients should get some type of response. Our voices are not being heard.

Air pollution isn't the only problem. We have water quality changes, land use conflicts, oil spills, noise pollution, increased traffic and disturbance to fish and wildlife species. And the social fabric of the community is under stress. Truancy, vandalism, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide are all increasing. One of our biggest concerns is a road and what new development that will bring. And how does all of this affect global warming? Remember that all of these sprawling pipelines will eventually go under water and the plates of ice will rise. Then what will happen to the oil facilities? When the pristine white wonderland that we live in becomes a black wasteland, it will be too late.

Many people in our village have grown



© NAEC File Photo

Drilling for oil has significant negative impacts on Alaska's fragile arctic ecosystems.

up with their parents attending meetings about development, and they are still occurring. The land, sea and air provide for us through the long, dark winters and we need them to survive, as the jobs around us often go to outsiders. We need to work together to approve increasing energy alternatives in environmentally safe ways and leave this land that is rich and lush to the caribou, moose, wolves, bears, wolverines and many birds and other animals.

Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak is mayor of Nuiqsut, former community health aide, basketball coach and a mother of five.





Reduce Reuse Recycle

Please remember to follow the “three R’s” – but keep in mind that in most cases, using fewer resources in the first place is much more effective than recycling what has already been wastefully consumed.

By Nancy Fresco, Local Issues Coordinator

Saving Electricity

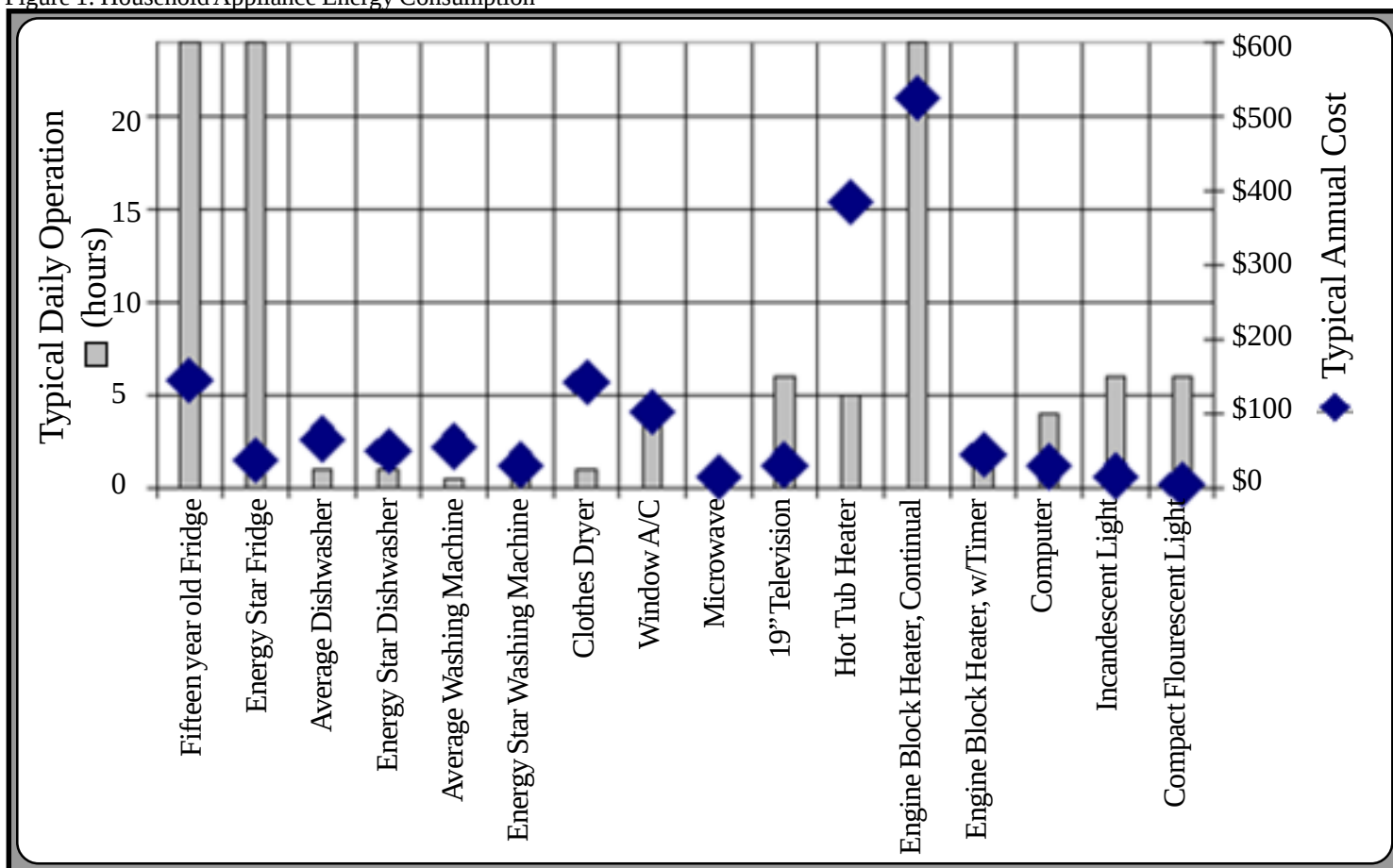
Electrical energy seems clean and innocuous; it is easy to forget that the byproducts of its production are rarely harmless. Because most homes and offices are extremely inefficient in their energy use, much of the pollution produced by electrical generation could easily be avoided. Homeowners can make a positive difference by replacing aging appliances; turning off unused or unneeded energy draws, and purchasing the most efficient electrical devices.

Very few regions of the US rely on electrical power produced entirely by renewable sources, and many power plants are still burning the dirtiest of fossil fuels, coal. Thus, the first step in reducing the impact of your electrical use is to make sure you know where your electricity is coming from, and how much you are using. The average US household uses about 14 kilowatt-hours (KWh) of energy per day, or 420 KWh/month; your electrical bill will tell you how much you have used. Typical wattages and hours

of use for common appliances are shown in Figure 1.

Here in Fairbanks, our power is distributed by the Golden Valley Electric Association, which supplies roughly 60% oil-fired power, 10% hydroelectric, 15% coal, and 15% natural gas. In some areas, you can choose to pay more for your power in order to finance cleaner energy production from renewable sources. But even if this option isn't available, the hints below can greatly reduce your en-

Figure 1: Household Appliance Energy Consumption



vironmental impact – and save you money in the process.

Replacing older appliances

Understandably, conservation-minded folks are loath to throw anything away. But in some cases, upgrading may be justifiable. For example, while the average 15-year-old refrigerator burns \$9.48 worth of energy every month (\$113.76/year), a new Energy Star fridge will cost only \$2.37 per month (\$28.44/year). Modern freezers, washers, furnaces, dishwashers, and water heaters are also generally much more efficient than older ones.

Buying the most efficient model

Some appliances have not become universally more efficient over time, but are now available in energy-saving models. Front-loading low-water washing machines save both water and energy. Compact fluorescent lights use one quarter the energy of regular incandescent bulbs, last much longer, and reduce fire risk, since they don't heat up. A higher-efficiency hot water heater could save you more than \$90 in water heating costs per year. A dryer with a moisture sensor saves energy and prevents over-drying.

Avoiding waste

The first way to prevent waste is obvious: turn off what you're not using, and don't buy what you don't really need. Hang your wet laundry out in the sun; make that shower a little shorter; turn off the TV more often.

However, there are other sources of waste that are less noticeable. Stereos, TV's, computers, and many other electrical devices are getting bigger and bigger, and almost all of them now draw "ghost power." That is, they use energy even when you are not using them, because they are never really off. If a red light or a clock is glowing, or if the device uses a remote control or plugs into a "wall cube" (DC converter), then it is

still "on". This power draw can be fairly high – for example, 28 watts (20 KWh/month) for a 21-inch TV with an "instant on" feature. Several 24-hour-per-day "leaks" add up to a lot of waste. This can be remedied by plugging into power strips, and turning the strips off when you're not using the appliance. Of course, pulling the plug works, too – as does not buying this type of device in the first place.

Most large appliances are required to have labeling that shows their energy use. Be a smart shopper. Compare models, and look for EnergyStar labels, which indicate a product that has exceeded efficiency standards and incorporates power management features such as "sleep" mode.

Last issue: Heating environmentally
Next issue: Eating Environmentally

**Visit our website at
www.northern.org
 to learn more
 about how to
 Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle!**



**While there, you can
 also stay informed by
 signing up to receive email
 alerts on issues
 important to you!**

Boreal Shorts

By Nancy Fresco,
 Boreal Forest Coordinator



Healthy Forests?

On May 20th, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill based on the Bush Administration's Healthy Forests Initiative. The bill, which has not yet passed the Senate, would give the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management the authority to bypass many requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when writing plans to reduce wildfires, or when cutting brush and trees on forest lands. It would also limit the ability of the public to participate in decision-making or to challenge wildfire prevention projects through the court system.

The bill is being touted as a means of dealing with the high fuel loads in many US forests, which in some cases are the result of decades of fire suppression.

Wildfire is a real threat to human life and property; however, wildfire is also part of natural forest systems in much of the American west. This bill is not the best means of addressing the problem.

The plan places too much emphasis on timber profits, and too little on protecting residents from immediate risks. Fire prevention near homes and communities — coupled with urban planning that prevents urban sprawl into fire-prone areas — is less expensive, more effective, and generally more ecologically sound than so-called thinning projects. However, the House rejected by 239-to-184 a bill substitute that would have required that 85 percent of wildfire projects take place within one-half mile (0.85 km) of communities and water supplies.

Energy Odds and Ends

By Deb Moore, Outgoing Arctic Coordinator

Our last issue of the *Northern Line* included an article highlighting the results of our energy survey. One purpose of that survey was to learn how the Northern Alaska Environmental Center could best assist our members and the larger Fairbanks community in their energy conservation efforts. The results indicated that one clear way we could assist would be to provide additional information on some of the energy conservation odds and ends already available. Here is some of that information.

Power Saver Cords

Practically everyone knows you need to plug in and preheat your vehicle when it gets cold outside – to avoid wear and tear on the car, to say nothing about improving our air quality. However, keeping your engine constantly preheated uses a lot of energy – some of which can be saved using a timer or a power saver cord.

Power saver cords allow electricity to pass to the engine block heater to heat the engine up to ~40° F. At that point, a switch in the cord is automatically flipped to turn off the electricity to the heater. When the engine has cooled down to about 20° F, the switch is flipped back and the electricity once again passes to the heater. In this way, the engine is kept preheated without wasting unnecessary energy. Power saver cords are conservatively estimated to reduce each vehicle's preheating energy use by about 40% over an engine-heating season (when temperatures are 20° F or below).

Power saver cords can be purchased and installed at some but not all auto garages. Check with your local mechanic to see if they are available.

Green Power

Over the years, a growing number of Americans have expressed the desire to choose where their electricity comes from. Although the majority of our electricity comes from non-renewable sources such as coal, nuclear and natural gas; more and more people are demanding *renewable* sources such as solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. In fact, to date thirteen states have passed renewable portfolio standards that require power suppliers to obtain a portion of their electrical energy from renewable energy sources.

Electricity that is partly or wholly generated by renewable energy sources has been termed "green power." Currently, about 40% of electricity customers in the U.S. can choose to purchase green power directly from their local utility or a competitive retail electricity supplier. About 300 utilities in 31 states now offer a "green pricing" option where customers choose to pay higher monthly electrical rates so that some or all of their electricity comes from renewable sources. (The more electricity derived from renewable sources, the higher the price.)

For communities (such as Fairbanks) that do not currently offer green power, customers can purchase "renewable energy certificates." These certificates represent the environmental attributes of electricity generated from renewable energy sources. While the physical electricity is sold into the regional market where the power is generated, the certificate can be sold anywhere thereby benefiting everyone. For additional information, go to www.eren.doe.gov/greenpower/summary.shtml and www.eren.doe.gov/greenpower/certificates.shtml#gcertTable.



Energy Star

(Information courtesy of EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/nrgystar/>.)

ENERGY STAR was introduced by the US Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 as a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products, in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. EPA partnered with the US Department of Energy in 1996 to promote the ENERGY STAR label, with each agency taking responsibility for particular product categories. ENERGY STAR has expanded to cover new homes, most of the buildings sector, residential heating and cooling equipment, major appliances, office equipment, lighting, consumer electronics, and more.

If all consumers, businesses, and organizations in the United States made their product choices and building improvement decisions with ENERGY STAR over the next decade, the national annual energy bill would be reduced by about \$200 billion. With that would come a sizable contribution to reducing air pollution and protecting the earth's climate for future generations.

For more information, call the ENERGY STAR Hotline at 1-888-STAR-YES (1-888-782-7937).

Improving Your Vehicle's Efficiency

Wouldn't it be great if everyone could go out today and buy a practical fuel efficient vehicle? Well, if you're in the market for a small fuel efficient car, there are already many decent choices available, including several hybrids. However, if you need a larger vehicle such as a truck or SUV, you'll need to wait a

few more before you'll find anything remotely "fuel efficient." Plus, how many people can really afford to just go out and buy a new vehicle? Although many of us might *want* to be driving the most fuel efficient vehicle on the road, it isn't really an option.

So, what can we do? How about improving the efficiency of the vehicle we already own? There are quite a few tricks that can be tried to increase your gas mileage. Here are just a few, courtesy of California Energy Commission (www.consumerenergycenter.org)

- ◆ **Check Your Habits:** Good driving habits can save you money in the long run. Accelerate gently but steadily — jack-rabbit starts can decrease mileage by up to 12 percent. Use the cruise control — it can save fuel by maintaining a steady speed.
- ◆ **Idling Equals Zero Miles Per Gallon:** Turn off your car when going into the store. Leaving your car idling wastes gas and adds to air pollution.
- ◆ **Speeding:** Fuel economy decreases as speeds go up. U.S. EPA and Oak Ridge National Lab say that for every one mile-per-hour that you drive above 55 mph, a vehicle loses about one percent in fuel economy. A passenger car getting 30 miles per gallon at 55 mph, gets only 27.0 mpg at 65 mph; 25.5 mpg at 70 mph.
- ◆ **Cut That Air-Conditioner:** Using a vehicle's air conditioner on a hot summer day could decrease mileage by as much as 21 percent. If it's cool enough, use the flow-through ventilation on your car instead of the air conditioner.
- ◆ **Don't Top Off:** Don't "top off" at the pump. Spilled gasoline adds to air pollution and wastes money. A vehicle topped off may expel gasoline on a hot day before it has been driven far enough to lower the fuel level. Spilled fuel simply evaporates into the air.
- ◆ **Tire Care:** Make sure your tires are inflated properly. The U.S. Department of Energy says four million gallons of gasoline could be saved nationwide each day for every one pound per square inch (psi) of under-inflation, compared to the mileage if all vehicle tires were inflated to the manufacturer's recommended pressure.
- ◆ **Vehicle Maintenance:** Make sure your car is properly tuned, spark plugs are firing right, and oil and air filters are clean. Old, dirty oil and clogged filters are a sure way to rob your engine of efficiency and can cause an increase in air pollution.

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center is Online!

Visit our website at
<http://www.northern.org>

While at our site you can:

- ◆ Subscribe to our email lists, including Arctic Actions and Mining Memos!
- ◆ Learn more about environmental issues facing Alaska!
- ◆ Make a donation or renew your membership on our secure online server!

Boreal Shorts

By Nancy Fresco,
Boreal Forest Coordinator



Boreal Buffers

After two years of delays, a bill has finally passed the Alaska State Legislature establishing logging buffers along waterways in the state's interior region. The new law will establish no-cut and partial cut zones on public and private land, in accordance with the agreement reached by a consensus based stakeholder group. Buffers will be 100 feet on each bank of non-glacial waterways, and 66 feet on glacial streams. These widths are based on the recommendations of a scientific committee that examined the effects of natural riparian forests, including shading and deposition of large woody debris into streams. While the new regulation is mainly intended to protect fish habitat, the buffers will also help shield the visual effects of logging from local residents and tourists who are boating or fishing.



Time to Move On

By Deb Moore,
Outgoing Arctic Coordinator

For the past four years, I've had the wonderful privilege to work as the Arctic Coordinator for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. Among other activities, I've dedicated my time and energy to protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, increasing public awareness of the values of the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska, and initiating a growing local energy-awareness program. At times stressful and always challenging, this position has provided numerous successes that have kept me going and have made my efforts worthwhile – particularly the successes that have continued to keep the Arctic Refuge undeveloped!

However, the time has now come for me to move on. With both anticipation and sadness, I am leaving the Northern Center to join my husband in our newest challenge – to open a home-based bread baking business. Happily, I will



Deb Moore relaxes with her parents on Lake Superior while attending Brick Oven Building Workshop.

© Deb Moore

still remain in the Fairbanks community and will remain connected with all of my friends at this organization. Plus, I'll be available to provide advice or assistance to Kelly should she need any. However, I'm also extremely confident that Kelly will be a fantastic Arctic Coordinator and is unlikely to need much help!

Working for this organization has allowed me to grow in my abilities, in my confidence level and in my relationship with the community of Fairbanks. I will be forever grateful for the experience and wish the Northern Alaska Environmental Center every success in the future!

What a Long Strange Trip...

Introducing Kelly Hill Scanlon, Incoming Arctic Coordinator

Imagine a little girl marching around the kitchen table carrying a sign reading "Kids should vote. Vote for Jimmy Carter." With those first steps of activism, my, largely apolitical, parents knew they were in for something different with their outspoken daughter.

It was during these times that my appreciation for preserving our natural resources was being nurtured as well. Most of my childhood summers were spent between the Hocking Hills region of southeastern Ohio and exploring the creeks around my Columbus, Ohio home. While horseback riding in Hocking Hills, the group with which I was riding de-

cided to do some exploring and we came across an abandoned strip mine. I couldn't believe this was part of the same beautiful area. To me, it seemed as if I just crossed onto the moon. The landscape went from tall trees, butterflies, and a delectable smorgasbord for horses to nibble to a barren, cracked earth; orange-colored puddles, and; mounds of metal and rock scattered haphazardly. When I found out it was just going to be left like that until the forest reclaimed it on its own, I knew I couldn't let that keep happening. My connection to environmental activism was born.

While pursuing a journalism degree at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, I worked as a

public relations intern with an organization called Rural Action (formerly the Appalachian Ohio Public Interest Campaign). Rural Action tied together the need for finding social justice along with environmental conservation. I think this approach is so important because how can a miner be expected to support coal mining restrictions if it meant losing jobs? At Rural Action we worked with a variety of interests to help find answers to these questions. One way we started to get opposing groups to start talking was to host monthly "Green Luncheons." The lunches featured a speaker, and then opened for discus-

sions among the attendees. Once people on all sides of the issue got to know each other, the dialogue became easier. I also produced a monthly hour-long public radio program featuring environmental issues in the region. Because I'm a firm believer in finding successes while "fighting the big fights," I took part in a lot of local projects such as tree plantings and assisting in the organization of the 20th anniversary celebration of Earth Day.

My political work went into the mainstream for awhile after college while I worked as an aide in the Ohio House of Representatives. This was a great eye-opening experience because I got to see what kind of weight different versions of political activism were given in the decision-making process. This was before the lobbying laws became strict in Ohio, and believe me, there were a lot of free lunches and dinners being handed out. Despite this open attempt to sway legislators, one of the most convincing speeches to a committee that I ever heard came from a Greenpeace activist. I know the committee was expecting to hear an emotional appeal for defeating the bill (related to mining), but what they

got was a well-informed, fact-based testimony of the downside of the legislation. Even the most conservative members of the committee were impressed.

After graduating with a Masters degree in political science from Colorado State University, I worked as an environmental policy specialist for the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), a research-based organization that works with the 50-state legislatures. The areas on which I focused were energy, solid waste and environmental justice. NCSL gave me the opportunity to work with legislatures around the country to educate them about a variety of environmental issues. It was my job to present the issue objectively to the legislatures and help them gather the information they needed to make decisions. My work with NCSL was invaluable because it helped me to see the scope of players involved in every political decision (at the federal, state and local levels). But, despite all of this jet-setting between Denver, D.C. and other states, I missed being able to advocate a position in favor of the environment and started wondering if this was what I

wanted the right "fit" for my political activism. During this time, an opportunity came for me to move to Alaska. Alaska always seemed like the pinnacle of pristine habitat and environmental struggles, and just the place I wanted to be.

Needless to say, I was amazed when I arrived in the summer of 2000. I found Fairbanks to be a warm, welcoming community with boundless opportunities to get involved in community life. My first three years in Fairbanks have been ones of great learning and changes. Most importantly, I met and married my husband, Brendan. We've had many adventures already, from traveling the Yukon River to building an addition onto our cabin. I was a sixth-grade teacher at the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks for the past three years. I am a firm believer that our children are the key to the future, so it was fun to work with an age of children who are learning how to make decisions about what direction they want to take in life. For the past year and a half, I have been the president of the Fairbanks Cycle Club.

With that said, I am really excited to have come full circle back to my environmental activist roots by joining the staff of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. I feel that my experience over the past years will enable me to bring a breadth of knowledge to the position that will help us to achieve our goals of keeping Alaska a place of beauty and wild.

Thank you for this opportunity!

Mining Nuggets

*The mining industry consumes
7-10% of the world's energy,
yet provides just
0.5% of global employment,
and contributes just
0.9% to the Gross World Product.*



© Kelly Hill Scanlon

Kelly Hill Scanlon, NAEC's new Arctic Coordinator (right), with her sister, Lindsay, while biking the Denali Highway outside of Paxson last summer.

Timber First

Alaska's State Forests Vulnerable Under New "Timber First" Legislation

By Nancy Fresco, Boreal Forest Coordinator

Despite the passage of much-awaited logging buffer regulations for interior Alaska, the spring legislative session in Juneau brought damaging and unwarranted changes for our forests. In the very last days of law-making this May, our political representatives passed Senate Bill 149. This bill changes the primary purposes of State Forest management from "multiple use" to "timber management . . . while allowing other uses." It also allows for the creation of new State Forests from unclassified state lands; limits the creation of new riparian protections; eliminates consideration of certain impacts on fisheries, wildlife, and other users; and adds wood pulp to the list of products considered to be "high value added" commodities.

Currently, Alaska's two State Forests are the 270,410-acre Haines State Forest in the Chilkoot, Chilkat, and Ferebee river drainages in southeast Alaska, and the 1.8 million-acre Tanana Valley State Forest that stretches across the state's central region from Manley to Fairbanks to Tok. Although these forests comprise only about 2% of Alaska's state-owned land, they have been selected for their timber values and accessibility. They are

not contiguous, but rather create a patchwork across the landscape. The Tanana Valley State Forest includes some of the most highly valued lands in the state's interior, and is mostly located along the road system and river system.

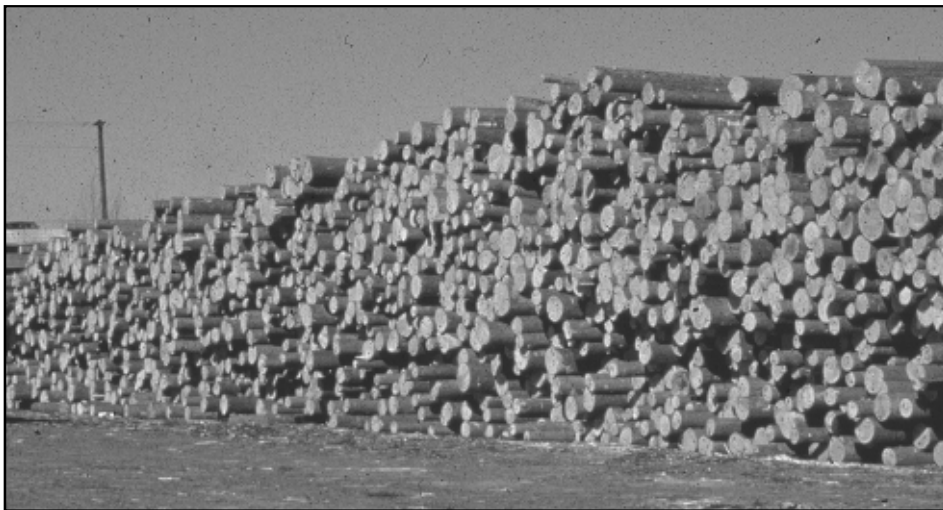
These are the forests that people use for everything from hunting and fishing to skiing to collecting traditional foods and materials. Indeed, recent studies of non-timber forest uses — analyzed by the Alaska Boreal Forest Council and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, among others — indicate that switching to a "logging first" mindset makes little economic sense. Many values of the forest come from resources such as berry-picking, hunting, fishing, and recreation, which have been undercounted economically in the past. In most cases, potentially more desirable or higher-value uses of this land have not been studied, and the desires of Alaskans regarding its use have not been determined. Moreover, the local timber industry is being adequately supported under multiple use management. In fact, in the past few years, many timber sales offered by the Division of Forestry have not even been purchased.

Small-scale local timber enterprises can be sustainable if logging is balanced with other important uses. True value-added utilization can provide local jobs, local revenue, and sought-after products. Certainly, there is an advantage to being able to buy beautiful furniture and handcrafted bowls, utensils, and carvings that are made in Alaska of Alaskan wood. Dimensional lumber, house logs, and firewood play an important role in the local economy, and producing them where they are needed is in general more ecologically and economically viable than transporting them for hundreds or thousands of miles. However, this does not mean that unprocessed pulp can be considered a high value-added product, or that it should be granted the preferred status and streamlined timber sales that accompany that designation. Nor should preferential support for the timber industry lead to other resources being jeopardized.

Because the state of Alaska owns so much land — much of it undesignated — it could prove disastrous to allow the state to create new state forests subject to the timber-first mandate and the weakened protections described above. Converting general use land to timber-first state forests without adequately examining long-term repercussions is not in the state's best interest socially, environmentally, or economically.

The new law goes even further. It expands the areas available for "value-added" logging to include general use land, without even first converting those lands into designated State Forest. It also limits the ability of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to safeguard salmon habitat and other river resources by requiring a finding of "significant state interest" before riparian

(Timber First, continued on pg 14)



© NAEC File Photo

The Alaska State Legislature recently voted to make timber harvesting the primary use of Alaska's state forests, ignoring the concerns of many other forest user groups.

Camp Habitat



Nature Education Camp for Children Ages 4-15

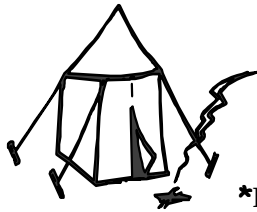
Camp Habitat is an exciting summer, nature education program for young people. Skilled instructors and resource specialists lead small groups of campers through outdoor activities focusing on the ecosystems of interior Alaska, its native flora and fauna, and human interaction with the environment.

Camp Habitat offers hours of fun, laughter, song and adventure!

Programs

Pre-School Ages 4-5

Nature Sprouts II June 16-20 (9:00-12:00)
Nature Sprouts III June 23-27 (9:00-12:00)



Day Camp Ages 6-11

Refuge Adventures (6-7) July 7-11 (9:00-4:00)
Water Striders (8-9) July 16-20 (9:00-4:00)
FULL Nature Detectives (6-11) July 21-25 (9:00-4:00) *FULL*
Older Campers (ages 8-11) venture to Alaska State Parks for an overnight camping trip at week's end!

Backpacking Trips Ages 11-15

Introduction to Backpacking (11-13) July 14-18
White Mountain Explorers (13-15) July 28-August 1



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Modern Mining Myths

By Mara Bacsujlaky, Mining Coordinator

Modern metal mining is producing a legacy of dead rivers, ruined landscapes, and groundwater dangerously polluted by heavy metals and chemicals. Ecological damage of this magnitude isn't just happening in countries with lax environmental regulations. It's also happening in the United States, despite environmental laws like the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act.

Part of the problem is that modern mining with its open pits, massive waste rock dumps and toxic processing chemicals has outstripped environmental and mining regulations. They simply weren't written to deal with massive open pits over a mile wide, mountains of waste rock and water pollution that can last 1000 years. And where regulations prohibited some actions, such as dumping tailings in stream drainages, industry has successfully gained exemptions to the law.

Another part of the problem is perception. Greenwashing by the mining industry portrays mines as strictly regulated facilities that temporarily use the land with minimal lasting effects. Public relations campaigns by industry trade groups, such as the Gold Institute, imply that with modern technology, mining nowadays poses little risk to the environment or public health. This article looks at two major mining components – cyanide leaching and “zero discharge” tailings impoundments – in an effort to explode these myths.

Cyanide - Mining's Poison Pill

Used to process both base and precious metals, cyanide is the reagent of choice at modern mines. 85% of the world's gold is produced through the cyanide leach process¹. Although acknowledging cyanide's acute toxicity (1 teaspoon



Ft. Knox tailings impoundment.

of 2% cyanide solution will kill an adult) the mining industry maintains that accidental releases of cyanide are rare, but that when they do occur, impacts “are transient and the recovery of the environment occurs in a short period.”²

However, that claim is not born out on the ground; lots of mines leak lots of cyanide into ground and surface waters. In Idaho, the Grouse Creek mine had numerous violations discharging cyanide at levels two to five times higher than allowed. Even after mining ceased in 1997, cyanide continued to leak into nearby Jordan Creek at levels harmful to aquatic life. At the Beal Mountain, Kendall, Golden Sunlight and Zortman-Landusky mines – all in Montana – numerous cyanide spills and leaks contaminated drinking water aquifers and killed streams. These weren't transient effects. Because of persistent cyanide contamination, Pegasus Gold had to provide an alternative drinking water source to the town of Zortman, and Placer Dome bought out landowners downstream of the Golden Sunlight mine³. In

fact, Montana has so many streams and aquifers contaminated with cyanide from mining operations that, in 1999, a citizen's initiative to ban new cyanide leach operations passed by a healthy margin. Clearly Montana taxpayers, after watching their streams die and faced with a clean-up bill of close to \$60 million, didn't buy industry's argument that cyanide doesn't cause long-term problems.

“Zero Discharge” – Fact or Fiction?

Most mines process millions of tons of ore a year. The consistency of wet cement, tailings are what's left over after the ore has been processed. Current practice for permanent tailings storage is to construct a dam across the mouth of stream, divert the stream, and dump the tailings in the drainage. At Ft. Knox, outside of Fairbanks, for example, over 1,000 acres of the upper Fish Creek drainage will be consumed by tailings. (insert photo somewhere near this.)

The Clean Water Act, Section 402, pro-

hibits polluting streams or wetlands with millions of tons of sediment laced with heavy metals and chemicals. Modern mining has circumvented this by arguing that through the construction of a dam, the stream is converted to a waste treatment facility, and thus is no longer subjected to Section 402 regulations, unless there is discharge from the facility. In general, mines do not apply for such discharge permits because they assert the facility is designed for "zero discharge". In theory this means the dam is high enough and the impoundment large enough to hold all tailings, entrained water, normal precipitation and major storm events so that no fluid escapes from the impoundment. In practice, however, zero discharge is mostly fiction.

First, although the dams are lined, the drainage impoundments aren't – mining companies rely on underlying bedrock characteristics to keep tailings fluid contained. But all too often, bedrock has fractures and cracks not adequately modeled in the design phase. These become conduits for contaminated fluid to leach into ground water outside of the impoundment. Roughly two years after mining began, the Ft. Knox tailings im-

poundment started leaking. Now, pumps below the dam keep contamination from reaching groundwater and lower Fish Creek, mechanically maintaining the operation's compliance as a zero discharge facility. Second, a dam/pumpback containment system can fail. In 1983, at the Golden Sunlight, an open pit cyanide vat leach mine like Ft. Knox, the containment system failed, polluting groundwater with 19 millions gallons of cyanide solution.

The only true zero discharge facilities are those that are designed with redundant liners and require no pumpback wells to contain fluids. Impoundments created out of sacrificed stream drainages, like the one at Ft. Knox and proposed at Pogo, aren't lined. Such facilities eventually leak, making the term "zero discharge" a paper fiction.

Thus, as a result of weak enforcement of the Clean Water Act, drinking water, streams, wetlands and aquatic life can be seriously impaired by tailings impoundments masquerading as waste treatment facilities. And as the pollution problems in the western mining states demonstrates, cyanide really is a poison

pill for the industry. Left with a legacy of dead streams, poisoned aquifers and huge clean-up bills, Montana – long a stalwart mining state – looked beyond industry mythology and banned cyanide leach operations. It may be time to take a similar hard look at drainage tailings impoundments. It is definitely time to look beyond the mining myths and hold mining companies accountable to their corporate environmental policies, which, without exception, promote their commitment to environmental excellence and protection⁴.

¹ *Global Mining Snapshot*, Mineral Policy Center

² *Making Sense of Cyanide*, The Gold Institute, August 1999

³ *Reasons to Vote Against SB 436*, Montana Environmental Information Center

⁴ See, for example, Kinross Gold Corporation (Ft. Knox) at <http://www.kinross.com/corp/hse/enviro/index.html>, Hecla Mining Company (Grouse Creek) at <http://www.hecla-mining.com/mainEnvironment.html> and Placer Dome (Golden Sunlight) at <http://www.placerdome.com/sustainability/environment/>

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(Changes, continued from pg 2)

These replace familiar characters whom you have come to know:

Our **Arctic Coordinator** position changed hands on 21 May, when Deb Moore left us to pursue her brick oven bakery business in Fairbanks, following four years with NAEC. We will miss her sorely. However, we are pleased to welcome her replacement, Kelly Hill Scanlon who joined us on 16 June. Kelly comes to us via way of the National Conference of State Legislatures and, locally, the Immaculate Conception School.

Early in August, **Membership and Communications Director** Paul Ollig will depart for further studies in Wyoming. We regret his departure, too, but are happy that Jessica Groshek will replace him, building upon her environmental activism and journalism work in the Lower 48 and experience in a variety of leadership positions for outdoor activities. Jessica starts with us on 30 June and Paul leaves on 05 August.

Please join me in wishing future success to Deb and Paul and in welcoming Kelly and Jessica to their challenging tasks.

The Members

A number of you, in keeping with our interest in members' support, have contacted staff and board on various issues over the past few months. I welcome this and I'm glad you've spoken to us. After all, you are one of the main reasons we exist.

In this spirit, I thought it prudent to clarify that, as a matter of policy and to the extent feasible, we welcome your (members') comments on possible directions for the NAEC. We accept your ideas through means you have at your disposal—email, snailmail, phone calls, among others. While we shy away from engaging with you on NAEC personnel matters, we certainly welcome comments and inputs on a wide variety of other topics. We might not always come to the same conclusion you do, but I as-

sure you that we are glad you contact us. I also wish to emphasise that your opinions and, in particular, suggestions on strategy as we negotiate these turgid waters, are valued. Keep up the flow!

Speaking of flow, I end this with hoping that you'll indeed be able to go with the flow this summer: enjoy a bit of Alaska if you are here, recreate and appreciate whatever wilderness you find yourself in and otherwise enjoy the summer. It really is a great time of the year. All the best until the fall.

Is Platinum Really Green?

Although the mining industry touts platinum as *the* environmental metal because of its use as an automotive catalyst, a fuel additive to reduce emissions, and a catalyst in many biodegradable household-cleaning products, the international jewelry market remains the largest consumer of the metal (51% of total world production of platinum).

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(Timber First, continued from pg 10)

buffers protection can be increased. Such a finding is both unprecedented and unclearly defined. In addition, SB149 takes away some of the requirements for analyzing long-term site-specific impacts when individual timber sales are in the planning stages.

A huge amount of public input has gone into achieving a multiple-use balance in Alaska's State Forests and other state land. The most recent planning process for revision of the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan included dozens of public meetings, hundreds of written and oral comments, and years of effort and compromise. The people have shown time and time again that they value a wide range of forest uses, not just logging. They have shown that they are concerned about balance, forest integrity, sound economics, and long-term sustainability. It is a shame that the state legislature appears not to respect the people's interests.

Forest Facts: Boreal Carbon Credits

By Nancy Fresco, Boreal Forest Coordinator

The spindly black spruce in our northern forests and the slow-to-decay needles they drop may turn out to have hidden value. The last Alaskan legislative session in Juneau saw the introduction of a bill that proposes tapping into an atypical forest resource: carbon.

Senate Bill 144 (SB144) did not suggest exploiting timber or firewood, nor did it advocate profiting from hunting, fishing, gathering, or recreation. Instead, the bill addresses the forest's potential capacity for carbon storage.

Why does carbon storage or "sequestration" matter? Although the issue is far from simple, the heart of the matter lies in limiting the total amount of carbon in the atmosphere at any given time. When carbon is immobilized in soils or

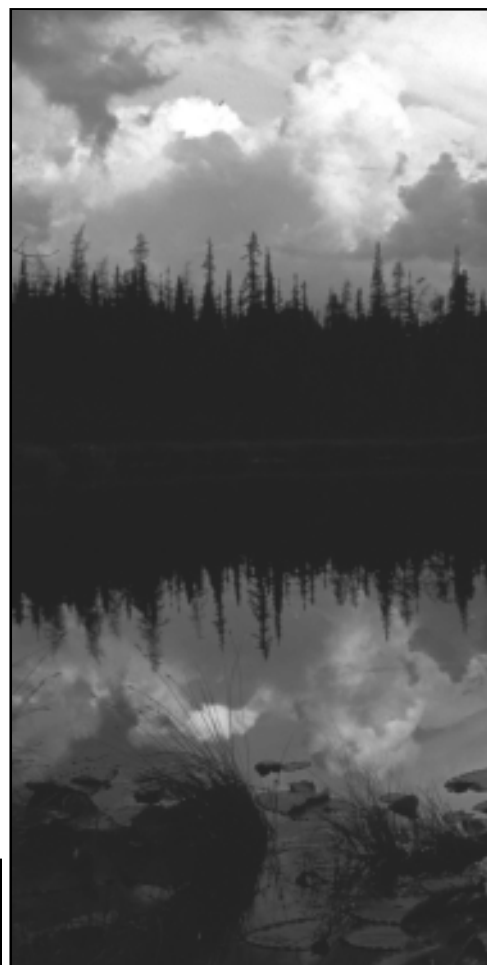
plant matter, or trapped in the transformed organic matter that we know as fossil fuels, it is being kept out of the air. Atmospheric carbon — in the form of carbon dioxide and other gases — exacerbates the greenhouse effect that leads to global climate change.

The international community is gearing up towards establishing systems of trading in carbon credits. These credits would effectively pay those who create systems to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas buildup in the atmosphere, while charging those who add to the problem. Although many researchers feel that reducing outputs of greenhouse gases is the key to long-term success — and even planetary ecosystem survival — some scientists and politicians believe that forests could play an important role in shorter-term carbon management.



Looking for a good book?

There are strange things done 'neath the midnight sun, but a little environmental reading in a beautiful locale seems perfectly reasonable to us. This photo, taken near midnight on Solstice 2002, was part of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center's recent display at Noel Wien Library. Not only are we always glad to recommend inspirational books, but we also stock some excellent titles for kids and adults in our gift shop at the center.



Huge expanses of boreal forests stretch across much of northern North America.

The legislative session ended before SB144 could be passed. However, if the bill becomes law next session, it would create a representative Carbon Sequestration Advisory Committee, which would recommend policies or programs to the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. The Commissioner in turn would be expected to produce a comprehensive assessment of carbon sequestration potential in the state. SB 144 states that "it is the intent of the legislature that efforts to quantify and verify carbon sequestration on state and private lands enhance the ability of the state to participate in any system of carbon sequestration marketing or trading." In other words, if there is money to be made through carbon storage, Alaska wants to know how to cash in.

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© Nancy Fresco

Fairbanks or Bust!

Introducing Jessica Groshek, Incoming Membership and Communications Director

If you would have told me that I would be moving to Fairbanks and working for the NAEC five months ago, I would likely have responded with disbelief. But, life works in mysterious ways, and I am happy to accept the Membership and Communications Director position. In fact, when a friend asked why I accepted the position, I could only respond by stating that it had seemingly selected me. On my visit to Fairbanks for an interview with the Northern Alaska Environmental Center I fell in love with the nature of the job, the people I encountered, and, of course, the landscape.

Born and raised in rural central Wisconsin, my connection with nature formed as a result of family camping, hiking, and canoeing trips. An avid adolescent interest in biology further bolstered that connection. My favorite television shows as a kid were Great America, NOVA, Nature, and National Geographic - all on public broadcasting. I would pour over books about animals, sleeping with them piled high in my bed. Years later, my interdisciplinary interest in environmental issues still runs strong as I have just graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a double major in Biology and Environmental Ethics.



© Jessica Groshek

Jessica Groshek, originally from Wisconsin, takes over as Membership and Communications Director on June 30.

Holding a communications position with the Northern Alaska Environmental Center will allow me to mix two realms that I hold dear to my heart: people and nature. One of my conservation mentors has always touted that environmental problems are people problems at their root. Whether it is laws, relationships, socioeconomic issues, education, or value systems - it all boils down to working with people to find solutions.

All in all, it is shaping up to be a whirlwind

of a summer. I just spent three weeks backpacking in Isle Royale National Park. Now, I turn my gaze northward as my partner Joel and I prepare for the drive to Alaska. Without a doubt, our first year in Fairbanks will represent a tremendous learning curve. In closing, I can't help but state that I feel like I have hit the jackpot of jobs. I extend a warm hello to NAEC members and look forward to building a relationship with all of you. Fairbanks or bust!

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Denali's Backcountry at a Crossroads

By Linda Paganelli, Denali Coordinator

The comment period for providing input on Denali's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Backcountry Management Plan (BCMP) closed on May 30th. In our comments to the National Park Service (NPS), the Northern Alaska Environmental Center (NAEC) urged the Service to select some close facsimile of actions delineated in Alternative B of the Draft BCMP for stewarding Denali's wilderness backcountry.

Goal of the BCMP

Congress, in the Organic Act of 1916 and subsequently in the Redwoods National Park Expansion Act of 1978, clearly specified that the primary role of the NPS is to protect and preserve the resources, both the tangible and the intangible. As written, the BCMP goal indicates that the primary role the NPS is undertaking is to "provide future generations with a variety of opportunities to experience the backcountry," and that secondarily, the resource will be pro-

tected. The NAEC would argue that it is not the role of the NPS to predetermine what "variety of opportunities" future generations will have but rather it is the fundamental role of the NPS to ensure that the opportunity to enjoy the natural resources, wilderness values, and subsistence uses embodied in Denali's backcountry remain viable. The NPS BCMP should focus on preserving the opportunity to experience wilderness and all its associated values rather than providing for prescribed uses that may or may not be deemed appropriate at the present time or in the future.

Need for a Plan

The NAEC notes that, to date, there has been inadequate planning for the protection of resources in the 1980 Park Additions and that visitation and uses that are degrading those resources, some occurring with questionable legal authority, have increased, at an alarming rate. Therefore, the NAEC agrees that some approach to managing these activities is

warranted. "Throughout the history of the park, management decisions have been oriented to the preservation of the intangible values of wilderness." The NAEC encourages the NPS to maintain this historic precedent and to not be compelled to create "new methods of management" that cater to the "pressure for comfortable, convenient, and predictable access" to an outstanding wilderness resource.

Alternative B - The "Wilderness First" Alternative

The basic premise of Alternative B is to "emphasize wilderness resource values and opportunities for self-reliant, non-motorized recreation" and to "expand motorized access only after Congress acts on new wilderness designation." The NPS has identified 3.75 million acres of the additions as suitable for wilderness, a new review would likely add to that inventory, and 2.25 million acres of the 1980 Park Additions were recommended by the NPS for Wilderness classification. Although the wilderness review process is in limbo, the NAEC contends that the NPS must manage Denali's backcountry so as not to jeopardize the future inclusion of these lands as Wilderness.

The "wilderness resource values" for which the park is set aside are clearly those values of wilderness identified in the Wilderness Act and ANILCA, which include the absence of reminders of civilization and mechanized devices. Because motorized access into the additions has been allowed to expand since 1980 with resulting negative impacts to resources, some of the recommended land areas are probably no longer suitable as wilderness. Although, the NPS may suggest that their proposed recreational motorized access scenarios in Alternatives A, C, D, and E may be re-



© John Lyle

Denali National Park's Backcountry Management Plan could potentially ensure that the incredible natural resources, wilderness values, and subsistence uses embodied in Denali's backcountry remain viable.

(Denali BCMP, continued)

scinded at some future date if the land in question is designated Wilderness, the political pressures to undo such uses will be formidable and unlikely.

Alternative D – NPS Preferred Alternative

Under their preferred alternative, the NPS proposes to expand “recreational opportunities in many areas of the park and preserve.” Unfortunately, the thrust of the expanded opportunities relates to motorized recreation. Snowmobile use would be condoned over larger areas of the Park Additions and scenic air tour landings would be introduced in areas where it presently is not occurring.

The NPS stated objective to “protect and preserve the park’s natural and cultural resources and values, and wilderness resource values, including natural soundscapes and intangible values such as solitude,” are fully supported by the NAEC. However the NPS, in selecting Alternative D as the preferred course of action, falls short of fulfilling this objective.

NAEC Committed to Preserving Denali’s Wilderness

Sound science and the philosophical imperative for preserving wilderness for



© John Lyle

Barren-ground caribou, one of the most visible inhabitants of Denali National Park’s backcountry, depend on a balance between preservation of the park’s wilderness character and accessibility of the park to visitors to remain a healthy and stable population.

present and future generations, rather than politics, needs to guide the future management of the Park’s resources and the uses that are permitted to occur within its bounds.

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center has urged the NPS to take the following actions prior to implementing a backcountry plan that will have consequences over the life of the Park:

1. Support the prudent precepts

enumerated in Alternative B, resource protection is the first and foremost mission of the NPS, and make no decisions regarding the appropriate or inappropriate use of motorized vehicles in our wilderness Park until Congress acts on the NPS wilderness recommendations.

2. Use 1980 as the baseline for determining types and levels of use that are in keeping with the legis-

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lative intent of ANILCA and for establishing a starting point from which to measure impacts to the Park's resources, those that have occurred over the last 23 years and those that the NPS deem are appropriate for the future.

3. Programmatic plans, such as a Wilderness Plan for the Old Park, the Soundscape Preservation and Noise Management Plan, and a Subsistence Plan, need to be formulated and implemented prior to further efforts being made on the BCMP to ensure that these plans are not constrained by the action plan and that resource protection precedes planning for rec-

reational use of the backcountry.

4. The NPS must define within the context of the BCMP the ANILCA term "traditional activities" for the Park Additions. Without defining this term, the NPS fails to guide what uses may lawfully occur on the land.

In conclusion, the Northern Alaska Environmental Center is hopeful that the National Park Service will modify to a great extent their preferred Alternative D. In selecting an alternative that more closely adheres to the principles summarized in Alternative B, the NPS would exhibit their dedication to not only protecting the Park's resources, but to restoring the wilderness character of Denali National Park and Preserve.

Do you enjoy reading *The Northern Line*?

Is there a topic that you would like to see us discuss more often?

We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have regarding its content. Feel free to email us at info@northern.org with your thoughts!



We would like to take a moment to thank the following foundations, for their dedication and support of our work!

Thank you to the **Brainerd Foundation** for its support of the membership and mining programs.

Thank you to the **Alaska Conservation Foundation** for its support of Camp Habitat through the ACF internship program, and for its support of our memberships in the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club.

We also thank the more than 20 individual **Major Donors** who participated in the 2003 Major Donor Campaign who helped this campaign raise more than \$20,000.

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Conservation Abstracts

By Florence Collins, Member

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AN ARCTIC NATIONAL Wildlife Refuge exhibit of photos at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History was moved from near the main rotunda to a spot in the basement designed for photographic displays, and captions were trimmed to just a few words. The photos, by Subhankar Banerjee, had captions, including one by ex Pres. Carter, clearly advocated preservation of ANWR as wilderness, and at a Senate hearing on May 20, 2003, Sen. Durbin (D-IL) said the Smithsonian moved the exhibit in reaction to political pressure. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, May 2, 2003, p. A1, A6; May 21, p. A1, A11.

ABOUT 17,000 ACRES of Afognak Is. may be acquired by the state, as environmental groups will 'match funds' with the Exxon Valdez oil spill money, and other sources to buy the land from Native corporations. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, May 3, 2003, p. A3.

PLASTIC GROCERY BAGS are banned from at least 30 villages, including Galena, Emmonak, and Kotlik, and Bethel will probably vote on banning them in October. They were blowing out of trash dumps, catching along roads, in trees, in rivers, and tangled around salmon and seals. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, May 3, 2003, p. A3.

COMBINING THE FISH and Wildlife Protection Division and the State Troopers, as proposed by the Murkowski administration, has caused the resignation of the Divisions director, who said the change will shortchange wildlife protection. Public Safety Commission Tandeske announced the merger in March and still backs the proposal but will not make a final decision until July or August. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, May 4, 2003, p. A3.

AN INITIATIVE PETITION to ban bear baiting has been filed—it needs to be signed by 23,148 verified voters to be put on the 1004 ballot. The Spirit, Spring 2003, p. 1.

THE JUNEAU-SKAGWAY ROAD proposal has been "re-started" by the Murkowski administration, which asked the Dept of Transportation to collect "scoping comments on Juneau transportation options." The road poses safety risks (avalanche danger would make it "the most dangerous road in Alaska"); would waste taxpayer money (estimated at more than \$300 to \$500 million). It would also harm Berners Bay, near Juneau: recreational use as well as spawning grounds that feed marine mammals there would be destroyed. Ravencall, Spring 2003, p. 1,7.

A STERLING HIGHWAY BYPASS around Cooper Landing, proposed by the Dept. of Transportation, has 9 alternatives; environmentalists are opposing the 4 that involve Juneau Ck., in order to protect the Resurrection Pass Trail. They and many local people prefer upgrading the present highway, to 'protect the river and the safety of the traveling public.' Sierra Club Alaska, e-mail, May 14, 2003.



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