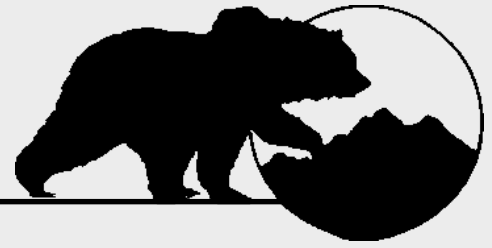


THE NORTHERN LINE



"Inuit are an ancient people. Our way of life is dependent on the natural environment and animals. Climate change is destroying our environment and eroding our culture. But we refuse to disappear." — Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair, Inuit Circumpolar Conference, www.inuitcircumpolar.com



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End of year message from Board President

By Dan Adams
Outgoing NAEC Board President

The two years I have served as NAEC Board President have been anything but dull.

During this period, the Northern Center Board dealt with more than its share of controversial issues, grew with those events and faced the significant challenge of bringing on a new Executive Director.

An underlying theme during this period has been the effort to recognize the diversity of the views of our members and to integrate concerned individuals and stakeholders into our processes and decision-making. The NAEC strategic plan, finalized last year, states, "we use our stakeholders' energy, expertise and enthusiasm to strengthen the organization."

Underlying the increasingly strident political process, we know that the majority of Alaskan's hold a conservation ethic.

We believe in trying to continually improve the Center's effectiveness, and I know I speak for the entire Board in saying that your ideas in doing so are always welcome.

Underlying the increasingly strident political process, we know that the majority of Alaskan's hold a conservation ethic. It is our intention to attempt to capitalize on those sentiments as we go forward. In the process, however, we cannot compromise fundamental principles.

Thus, in the seemingly perpetual struggle between conservation and development, one of our central tasks is to promote a rational approach to striking a balance while maintaining

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 1,000 members.

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Nancy Fresco, Boreal Forest Campaign and Local Issues Coordinator
Katherine Helmuth, Vista Volunteer
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Meg Schlesinger, Mining Coordinator
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Front Page photo: Coyote, Winter, Interior Alaska, by Charlie Ott.

Back Page photo: Glacier River Valley, by Brian K. Allen

This issue of *The Northern Line* was produced by Nicole M. Braem.

open and honest communications that afford all individuals the respect we would like to see accorded to the environment we strive to enhance.

If this era of constant assaults on the environment by power-brokers has been difficult for the Board, it has been more difficult for the Center staff. But it is largely through their fine and steadfast efforts that we achieve success in promoting our environmental principles.

As I step aside after two years as Board President to allow for fresh leadership, I want to thank all those who have contributed their time, energy, ideas and resources to the goals we all hold dear – current and former staff and board members, and members of the general community. I intend to remain active on the Board of Directors and anticipate working closely with the newly elected Board President, Franz Mueter, as well as the entire board and staff.

It has been a pleasure to serve.



By David van den Berg
Executive Director

Fairbanks is frosty and it looks like winter, dark and sort of cold. When low-angle light enflames crystal trees and the moon stays up all day, I say we're fortunate

to live here. At the height of winter, at the end of 2005, I am fortunate to write with good tidings for the New Year.

First, let us revel in two major, recent victories. With a tremendous effort, we won again (by not losing) on the Arctic Refuge, and we beat back an appalling plan by Richard Pombo (R-CA) to pay-down our national debt by selling public lands throughout the West.

Success like this comes from political support built on the foundation of good ideas and good information backed by lots of people. Success like this suggests that America has not gone so far to the dogs as we may have thought! And lasting success is possible if we sustain our efforts to revive a responsible land ethic.

Sustained effort is the work of effective organizations. I'm therefore pleased to relate that the Northern Center has been accepted into the Organizational Effectiveness Program hosted by TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community). This schooling, made possible by generous support from the Wilburforce Foundation, is a wonderful opportunity to assess our capacities and improve our thrust for social change.

Joining our staff in January of 2006 are Pam Miller, the new Arctic Coordinator, and Rob Cadmus, our new Legislative Intern. Pam is a long-time Alaskan and arctic advocate, and Rob is a young, hard-working community organizer from Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

I'd like to address to my Board of Directors the praise they are due. They are a balanced team providing in many ways for the health of this organization. Members of the Board care for and maintain our growing offices. They're extending environmental education to a generation of wee Fairbanksans; they fundraise for our work (oh! do they!); they govern; and they remind us that life is fun.

Letter to our Membership

End of year brings good news for the Arctic and Mining Programs

To close, I want to thank all of our supporters, members and donors for all you do to support the Northern Center, conservation's northern voice. We could not perform the important work we do without you. My wish (and my intent) for the New Year is to strengthen the bonds that bring us success. Happy New Year everyone!

Alaska Legislative Update

Legislative session is underway in Juneau.

The second session of Alaska's 24th Legislature convened on January 9. We have 120 days to enjoy it. Please subscribe to our legislative listserve to stay current on issues of interest and concern to you.

Since politics is the allocation of resources, Governor Murkowski and the Alaska legislature will make their annual allocation of public resources. Plus, this spring, the Alaska legislature will decide (fight over) how best to spend a \$1.2 billion dollar surplus.

It promises to be a hectic, fast-paced session with a whole lot at stake. Issues like the gas line and budget surplus may command much of the legislature's time, leaving perhaps too little for other work, other bills.

The Northern Center will follow the legislative session closely. We will pick the times and means by which to support good legislation and work to change misguided legislation.

To join the legislative listserve, call Nikki at 452-5021, ext. 30, or send an email to info@northern.org.

By David van den Berg
Executive Director

Drilling the Arctic Refuge is a major goal of the Bush administration. If the president himself wants it and his partisans control both houses of Congress, what could possibly stop him?

In November, a provision to drill the Arctic Refuge was attached to the non-filibusterable budget bill. The Senate version of the budget included Refuge drilling. When the budget came to the House, 29 moderate Republicans said that drilling via the budget process was bad policy and then persuaded their leadership to drop the drilling provision from the House version.

With the Refuge almost in the clear, Senator Ted Stevens, desperate to drill the Refuge, interpreted a Senate rule to allow him to “ride” Refuge drilling on a Defense spending bill. Drilling suddenly appeared to have renewed prospects. But the drilling rider was an albatross on the Defense bill, too, and the rider was stripped from the bill so that it could pass.

There is one great, protean reason the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge beat all the odds — people.

People all over America took action. Millions of people came to the Refuge’s defense. We wrote letters, talked to our friends, strategized, badgered members of Congress, contributed money and kept the faith that America knows better than to drill in wilderness when we don’t have to.

Arctic Victory!

Reason prevails as
Stevens’ defense
budget rider is stripped
from the bill.

America won with this great victory for the Arctic Refuge for it is an assertion that the Refuge is better wild, and that America is better-served by choosing to wean-off oil while it’s comparatively painless.

So congratulations everyone! Please do something for yourself and your compatriots to recognize this great come-from-behind victory.

You know, of course, that this is not the end of the story. The Alaska delegation, the oil industry and the Republican machine will try again to drill the Arctic Refuge. The Northern Center will be ready when they do.

From September to December - with the skilled help of Andy Keller and Kaarle Strailey - the Northern Center sent 16 trained volunteer lobbyists to Washington, DC. Over 60 Fairbanksans called to our friends and allies in Alaska and across the country, alerting them to the threat posed to the Refuge by House and Senate action. In all, we called over 6,800 people (and we’ll be in touch)!

To see what you can do to thank the members of Congress who stood up for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, please go to www.northern.org and click on “Thanks for the Arctic.”

Below are the phone and fax numbers (in that order) of those deserving our thanks.

Jeb Bradley(NH) 202-225-5456, 202-225-5822
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Sherwood Boehlert(NY) 202-225-3665, 202-225-1891
Christopher Smith(NJ) 202-225-3765, 202-225-7768
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Tom Davis(VA) 202-225-1492, 202-225-3071
Jim Gerlach(PA) 202-225-4315, 202-225-8440
Jim Ramstad (MN) 202-225-2871, 202-225-6351

By Nancy Fresco
Boreal Forest Coordinator

ORV Overthrow

Seekins' bad bill from the last session meets heavy opposition across the state but we can expect it to resurface in 2006

Just when we hoped that the Dalton Highway off-road vehicle issue that plagued last spring's state legislative session had been nixed, State Senator Ralph Seekins took his pet bill for a little tour of Alaska.

At hearings in Fairbanks, Coldfoot, Nome, Barrow and Chugiak in October, Senate Resource Committee Chairman Tom Wagoner and standing committee members Kim Elton, Donald Olson, and Fairbanks Representative Ralph Seekins sought public feedback on Senate Bill 85, the bill to open the 450-mile long Dalton Highway to off-road vehicles (ORVs).

Senator Seekins may have expected a warm welcome in his hometown of Fairbanks, where motorized use is often considered a divine right rather than a limited privilege. Instead, the bill met extremely heavy opposition.

The issue at stake is whether the existing ban should be lifted on use of four-wheelers and other

as a way to provide public access to "ordinary Alaskans." Participants in the hearing, however, argued that this definition of "ordinary" defies logic by implying that the average Alaskan is wealthy enough to own a four-wheeler and a truck to haul it, but too severely handicapped to set foot on the tundra.

Several hunters who have used the area for years testified against the bill. Hunting on foot is a rare opportunity, they argued, now that motorized users have scared game far into the backcountry in most road-accessible areas of Alaska. Other people expressed concern about the impossibility and cost of

Seekins and others tout the proposed legislation as a way to provide public access to "ordinary Alaskans." Participants in the hearing, however, argued that this definition of "ordinary" defies logic by implying that the average Alaskan is wealthy enough to own a four-wheeler and a truck to haul it, but too severely handicapped to set foot on the tundra.

ORVs along the Dalton Highway corridor. Originally constructed to build the Prudhoe Bay oil fields, the Dalton Highway was closed to public access until 1994, when the State opened the road to private vehicles and tour buses.

However, in order to protect the surrounding delicate tundra wetlands and limit pressures on caribou and other subsistence game species, ORV use is not permitted in the highway corridor, except in cases where a subsistence hunter or trapper must cross the road, having originated travel elsewhere.

Furthermore, current state regulations stipulate that while bow hunting is allowed near the highway, those who hunt with rifles must use non-motorized means to travel at least five miles from the roadway.

Seekins and others tout the proposed legislation

ensuring the security of the pipeline and the safety of unprepared or unlucky ORV users in such a remote and unpoliced area.

Meanwhile, scientists who work at Toolik Lake Long Term Ecological Research site anxiously described how years of painstaking and irreplaceable work could be destroyed by a single pass of a wayward vehicle. Speaker after speaker outlined the plain, inescapable truth: the tundra is fragile, wet, and incredibly slow to recover. The type of use being proposed is simply not socially or ecologically sustainable.

Fairbanks sent a loud, clear message: SB85 should be relegated to the scrapheap. Elsewhere in the state, the response was similar: no joyriding in the far north. Whether that message will be heeded, however, remains to be seen.

By Meg Schlesinger
Mining Coordinator

More than 350 million acres of American lands escaped the auction block last month and millions of Americans didn't even notice.

At stake? More than 350 million acres across 13 Western states, including land within our National Parks, critical wilderness areas, protected wetlands, wilderness, and critical habitats

In November, Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA) proposed a fire sale of the American West as a way to pay down the national debt. While the provision was pulled from the federal budget in December, it highlighted bigger problems. Namely, the lack of educated, well-executed, and ecologically sound land planning in this country and how many Americans are unaware that **mining is the biggest ecological threat to the environment.**

Pombo's bill eliminated the requirement found in the current mining statute, the General Mining Law of 1872, that mining claims have documented mineralization before claiming federal lands. Eliminating that requirement meant that land could be claimed not only by those parties interested in legitimate mining activity, but by any party interested in land development.

U.S. mining claims continue to generate millions annually and none of that commercial wealth is shared in the U.S. ... but it continues to benefit foreign mining companies. One Canadian mining company paid \$10,000 dollars for federal lands with an estimated \$10 billion dollars worth of revenue.

Further, Pombo would have revoked the standing lease option of federal lands and instead optioned federal lands for sale. Currently, U.S. federal lands, under 1872 Mining Law, are optioned by the federal government for leasing of their mineralization rights. Pombo's provision would sell these lands for as little as \$1000 dollars an acre or "fair market value," whichever is higher. Prospective buyers would be allowed to hire an appraiser and submit a proposed price, which the Department of Interior

Yard sale

How Congress nearly sold off the Tongass and other public lands while America wasn't looking

would have been obligated to accept.

By selling them instead of leasing them for their mineral rights, these public lands would be placed into private title and become eligible for development by whoever bought the acreage. Furthermore, the privatization of these lands removes them from federal environmental regulations and law.

Removing them from the protection of the National Environmental Protection Act, known as NEPA, and the other federally mandated permitting structures that control federal lands essentially strips them of any protection and leaves no long term insurance for these lands.

Why is federal mandate regulation so important? It allows for a controlled environmental review standard and assessment system, a regulation system that traditionally has its own bonding requirement that mining claims pay into a monetary fund. This ensures that mining operations have reclamation funds. It also ensures set environmental standards universally across the U.S. that are met and maintained. This safeguards the health of ecosystems and works towards sustainable land use with an intrusive industry. It is the best policy that exists today.

Finally, Congressman Pombo's provision attempted to set a precedent in American land management that would have been devastating. Part of America's wealth is in its lands and natural resources. That wealth is unrecoverable. While it may have provided a short-term solution, it was in no way viable for this country's fiscal or environmental future.

Currently, across the West, the federal government shares leasing revenues from the oil and gas industry with state governments — bringing in revenue from those extractive industries. Selling those lands outright would eliminate that shared revenue.

...Continued on page 7

Yard SaleContinued from page 6

Pombo's provision was pulled. But it is just a sign of what is to come.

We need to pressure our state and federal legislators for mining reform. In October, Representative Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) sponsor of the 1994 Mining Reform Bill, introduced the Federal Mineral Development and Land Protection Equity Act. Rahall's bill attempts to overhaul archaic mining statutes, make the moratorium on the Mining Law permanent, and force mining companies to pay royalties, which they currently do not.

Mining companies do not pay royalties. **The mining industry remains the only extractive industry in the U.S. that does not pay a standard royalty rate.** U.S. mining claims continue to generate millions annually and none of that commer-

cial wealth is shared in the U.S., but it continues to benefit foreign mining companies. One Canadian mining company paid \$10,000 dollars for federal lands with an estimated \$10 billion dollars worth of revenue.

The ANWR debate, Pombo, the tragedy of Katrina, the war overseas, and soaring mineral prices are all showing us that we are not prepared for the future needs and demands of our society. But mining is rapidly demanding our attention, we need to **start paying attention now.** It is an industry dealing with increasing demand for its product as our world wakes up to the realization that the Earth has finite resources, 21st century technology, 19th century mining laws, and a world caught in the middle.

By Nancy Fresco
Local Issues Coordinator

Not happy with getting your electricity from coal plants and oil burners? Not convinced that the cheapest energy is always the best? Fairbankans now have the chance to help support small-scale producers of cleaner, greener, power.

Golden Valley Electric Association has instituted the SNAP (Sustainable Natural Alternative Power) Program, copying an award-winning program from Chelan County Washington. By voluntarily paying an extra monthly charge, consumers can add to a fund that will be paid out to producers of solar power or other sustainable energy.

Thus far, close to 300 GVEA members have signed up, and over \$1400 per month is being added to the fund. At least three producers have already filed applications, and about half a dozen more are interested in joining the program.

The fund not only allows customers a chance to subsidize existing green power; it also creates a



Supporting Green Energy

GVEA's SNAP Program to support sustainable energy

strong incentive for producers to install more renewable power infrastructure. The Chelan program has shown that each dollar contributed by ratepayers results in up to \$28 in green power investment in the community.

Thus far, close to 300 GVEA members have signed up, and over \$1400 per month is being added to the fund. At least three producers have already filed applications, and about half a dozen more are interested in joining the program.

When your next GVEA bill arrives, don't forget to join!

For more information visit www.gvea.com or contact Tony D'Aoust at 455-7689.

By Nancy Fresco
Boreal Forest Coordinator

How can wood waste keep winters warm? How can rural communities reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire? How can we strike a balance between natural fire cycles, the needs of local people, and the potential value of a forest as timber, as wildlife habitat, and as fuel? Members of the Alaska Northern Forest Cooperative (ANFC) are grappling with all these questions and more.

This past September, ANFC held a three-day trip to Delta, Dry Creek, Dot Lake, Tok, Tetlin, and various field sites in the same area. The theme of the trip was “biomass fuels,” although trip leaders, invited speakers, and participants addressed many aspects of forest management, business management, and energy use. More than 40 people participated.

Most conference participants seemed to agree that large-scale harvest of undamaged stands for fuel would not be economically or ecologically desirable without the added benefits of community fire protection and habitat protection.

The Alaska Northern Forest Cooperative is a relatively new organization focused on research and knowledge-sharing regarding all aspects of forests and forest use in Alaska’s non-coastal forests. The group does not advocate, but instead strives for diversity of opinion and depth of scientific expertise. Membership is open to all, and includes professional foresters, state and federal employees, representatives of non-profit organizations and businesses, and university faculty and other educators.

The main focus of discussion during the trip was on finding win-win situations in which wood that is cleared for fire protection or wood that is wasted in the milling process can be used as an alternative source of energy. Standing burned wood from the extensive fires of 2004 and 2005 is also a potential energy source and is particularly attractive because it is much drier than green wood. However, it is unclear how extensive removal of these charred snags might affect forest regrowth, including the development of valuable browse and cover for moose and other mammals and birds.

Balancing Act

Conference addresses biomass fuels, standing burned wood, habitat, and other forest issues.



Forest clearing for fire protection near Tanacross leaves piles of waste wood. Photo by Dan Swift.

Most conference participants seemed to agree that large-scale harvest of undamaged stands for fuel would not be economically or ecologically desirable without the added benefits of community fire protection and habitat protection. Unfortunately, some individuals argued otherwise.

Participants visited several existing examples of creative wood use.

At Dot Lake, a modern wood-fired boiler heats enough water to keep the community’s eight homes and washeteria warm in -60° weather. In the small community of Dry Creek, Joe Young showed us a facility that produces high-quality kiln-dried lumber and uses waste wood for heat.

Just outside Delta, Bob Supernaw has invested in wood pellet-making equipment that produces small, uniform, easily handled fuel from sawdust. Supernaw hopes to tap into a potentially large market selling not only pellets but also pellet stoves, boilers, and furnaces as home or office heating sources – an option that the Northern Alaska Environmental Center is actively exploring.

ANFC has also gathered a compendium of summaries of ongoing forest projects and forest research – a valuable resource for the whole community.

**The Northern Alaska Environmental Center
and
Fairbanks North Star Borough Library
Present:**

Northern Voices:

Writers, artists, composers, and
visionaries
on the Alaskan environment
Thursdays at 7 p.m. at the
Noel Wien Library auditorium



- **February 9, Susan Grace.** Songwriter and musician Susan Grace will share the power of music; to inspire, to unite, and to teach about the world we live in.
- **March 9, Seth Kantner.** Seth Kantner has been a lifelong resident of arctic Alaska and brings his experience to print as the author of the award-winning novel, "Ordinary Wolves."
- **March 30, John Luther Adams.** Alaskan composer John Luther Adams speaks of his musical world grounded in wilderness landscapes, indigenous cultures, and elemental sounds.
- **April 13, Mikki and Julie Collins.** The twins from Lake Minchumina are well-known journalists and authors of several books including "Trapline Twins" and "Riding the Wild Side of Denali."
- **May 11, David Mollet and Artists of the Arctic Refuge.** Artists who have portrayed the Arctic Refuge will discuss their perceptions and portrayals of this much-sought landscape.

Thank you!

Applause for those who gave
of their time and enthusiasm!



*Arctic Campaigners
Andy Keller and
Kaarle Strailey led
the NAEC phone
bank efforts during
the budget battle
over drilling in the
Arctic Refuge.*

*Photo: David van
den Berg*

***Thank you to all those folks who put
in many hours making phone calls on
behalf of the Arctic Refuge:***

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Kim Fackles	Mary Stark
Jeff Gimbal	Jane Trainor
Amanda Lucas	Nancy Wood
Jason Melhso	Doug Yates
Debbie Miller	Katherine Gregorotto
Larry Paquin	Mary Anne Nickles
Don Ross	Natalie Monacci



By Katherine Helmut
*Vista Volunteer

Camp Habitat Corner

*Updates and news about Camp Habitat and other
youth programming.*

This is a very busy time for the after school program even as the summer camp has been wrapped up for 2005.

We are pulling together the lines of funding, staffing, final curriculum development and contacts with the school district to put this program in the harness in January. The four target schools are reacting with

great excitement at the prospect of Camp Habitat becoming part of their After School programs.

To help thank our generous contributors we will start a thank you page on the web site to acknowledge our supporters.

The Camp Habitat Advisory Board has a couple new additions with Carrie Dershin and Mary Shields.

Thank you to our donors!

\$1000+

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 Andy Reynolds & Wendy Warnick
 Carol Kasza & Jim Campbell,
 Arctic Treks
 Elinor Willis
 Bernard Zeligman
 Daniel Wallace
 John and Jane Aspnes



gwandaa ch'ijuk t'igwii'in dai' the more things change



gwandaa nihk'it t'inch'yaa the more they stay the same

Northern Center member Jamie Smith's Alaskan cartoons have appeared in numerous publications including the *Ester Republic* and *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*; he has published two collections of the cartoon, *freeze•frame:freeze•frame* and *freeze•frame ii - beaver fever*.

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