



Sierra Borealis *alaska report*



SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
MARCH 2021

The Historic Interior Secretary Nomination of Representative Deb Haaland

In 243 years, this country has never had a Native American serve in the presidential cabinet. And in all that time, only a handful of Indigenous officials have served in our federal government at all. Because of this, the needs and input of Native communities have never been properly considered at our country's highest levels. Those who have the most intimate relationship with and knowledge of the lands we live on have been ignored and wrongly passed over time and time again for the pursuit of profit. And we are paying the price as we see the devastating effects development has had on the beauty and health of our planet.

Representative Deb Haaland of the Laguna Pueblo tribe in the Southwest U.S. has been nominated to serve as Secretary of the Interior by President Biden. If confirmed, she will end our country's shameful history of having no Native American cabinet secretaries. She has been a fierce advocate for the rights of Native people and a proven champion for the environment. Not only would



photo: Liz Ruskin, AK Public Media

Congresswoman Deb Haaland with Gwich'in and New Mexico Native American leaders

her confirmation be an historic day for our country, but a hopeful one for the state of Alaska. Representative Haaland has been an outspoken advocate for protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its threatened Coastal Plain. The leasing of this land, which is sacred to the Gwich'in people, is a perfect example of our government's ignoring the warnings and pleas of Native people. Having a trusted partner as we navigate future public land protection battles would be a gamechanger for Alaska. In a state that has so many Native communities who have been slighted by our government and so much land that needs protecting from corporate interests, her confirmation is vital.

You can contact the offices of Senator Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan at (202)224-3121 to voice your support and urge them to vote to confirm Representative Deb Haaland to lead the Department of the Interior. Or, contact them in Alaska: Senator Murkowski (907)271-3735; Senator Sullivan (907)271-5915. **FLASH**--on March 4, Sen. Murkowski voted YES for Haaland in committee; do thank her. On to the full Senate! ❖

-- Andrea Feniger

➡ **Featured in this issue:**

<i>Haaland Interior nomination</i>	p. 1
<i>Leasing the Arctic Coastal Plain</i>	p. 2
<i>Alaska Chapter Election results</i>	p.3
<i>Litigation Update</i>	p. 4
<i>Prince of Wales Island wolves</i>	p. 5
<i>Snowmachine hunt use sought</i>	p. 6
<i>Good future for electric vehicles</i>	p. 7
<i>Oppose Central Yukon Plan</i>	p. 8
<i>Outings: Fairbanks trails</i>	p. 9
<i>Book review</i>	p. 10

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain fate--*still uncertain*

When the Trump Administration looked at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, they saw potential profits to be gained from drilling, instead of all the ecological values that will be lost. Even as insurrectionists stormed the Capitol on January 6, the Administration was hosting a virtual lease sale to sell off sacred Arctic lands. Despite overwhelming opposition and an unclear path forward, the federal government went ahead selling leases on tracts to be drilled in the Arctic Refuge. They did so with the full support of our state's political leaders. The sale went on despite the passionate warnings of Native Alaskans—especially the Gwich'in people--against clear science and against common sense economics.

Even after the decades of promotion and work leading up to it, the lease sale was essentially a failure. They claimed this lease sale would net over a billion dollars; it ended up at \$14.4 million. Not a single major or midsize oil company bid on this land, sending a clear signal that this drilling in a remote, harsh environment is not a worthy business venture. That did not stop Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) from purchasing 11 tracts--which accounted for the majority of the funds raised. AIDEA likely does not have the infrastructure to actually drill and instead just wants to hold on to the tracts until a company with that capability pursues a permit. A public corporation that is supposed to promote economic growth in Alaska, AIDEA has consistently been involved in controversial and simply bad business projects, such as the Road to Ambler. It is also frustrating that they spent scarce Alaska state funds on federal land that they do not have the capability to develop, instead of actually supporting the people of the state of Alaska. The only other bidders were two small companies, Regenerate Alaska LLC and Knik Arm Services LLC, who each secured one tract.

The Arctic Refuge is one of the world's last untouched wild places. It is the only refuge specifically designed for wilderness purposes, and at 19.6 million acres it is our nation's largest wildlife refuge. Its habitats range from boreal forests to glaciated mountains and Arctic rivers, tundra, lakes and wetlands to coastal lagoons, and barrier islands of the Arctic

Ocean. Even for many who may never set foot there, the Arctic Refuge is an important symbol of the wild and of our country's determination to preserve some of it, and also a cornerstone of the hope and peace of mind found in connecting with nature. The refuge is sacred to Alaska Native communities. For centuries the Gwich'in and Inupiaq people practiced subsistence living here.



photo: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Caribou on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain

The Gwich'in refer to the Arctic coastal plain as the "Sacred Place Where Life Begins." The protection of the coastal plain is a matter of survival and food security for the Gwich'in people, whose traditional way of life is tied inextricably to the health of the caribou.

Since this sale happened, President Biden has been sworn in and has put into place an indefinite moratorium on new oil and gas drilling on public lands. It is not clear how this will impact the Arctic Refuge, since the tracts have already been leased and the permits are in the hands of these companies. For this situation, the federal government will need to find a way to invalidate the permits or buy them back. The path forward is blurred at best.

The government ignored Alaska Native communities, the complexities of a unique ecosystem, and the health of our planet in pursuit of profit, and there likely won't be profit anyway. Large oil companies, all major U.S. banks and many Alaskans have realized, as the nation transitions away from fossil fuels to a renewable energy future, that Arctic drilling is bad business. But our politicians have not.

As mentioned, it is not clear what comes next, but we will always continue to fight for the Arctic. While we expect AIDEA, Regenerate Alaska LLC, and Knick Arm Services LLC to sit on these permits for the foreseeable future, it is concerning that this land is in the hands of people who do not appreciate or understand its true value. We will continue to explore legislative protections and pressure the Biden Administration to use every tool at their disposal to invalidate these permits. ❖

-- Andrea Feniger

Arctic Wilderness bills reintroduced in Congress

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) has introduced S. 282, the Arctic Refuge Protection Act, into the 117th Congress to designate as wilderness approximately 1.5 million acres in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge--the Coastal plain-- with 27 Senate cosponsors by March 4. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Congressman Jared Huffman, (D-CA2) has introduced the Arctic Refuge Protection Act, HR 815, into the House of Representatives, with 57 cosponsors by March 4; it has been referred to the House Natural Resources Committee, (on which Mr. Huffman sits.)

Three candidates elected to 2021 Chapter Executive Committee

With this past December and January came our annual Alaska Chapter Executive Committee election, and I am happy to announce that all three candidates were accepted by our voting Chapter membership and have begun their terms on the Executive Committee. Congratulations to Adrienne Canino, Susan Hansen, and Gregory Stewart! In case you missed out, you can find all of their candidate bios in the December 2020 *Sierra Borealis*.

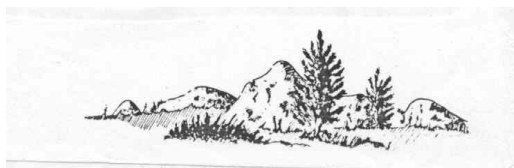
We are excited to welcome Adrienne Canino as our new Chapter treasurer!. To learn more about our newest Executive Committee member, her passions, and how she's been adjusting to Alaska, check out a brief introductory note from Adrienne, right here on this page.

Gregory Stewart continues as the Chapter's legal chair, following a special Executive Committee vote in March of 2020 to fill a vacant ExCom seat. In his time as legal chair since last March, Greg has made an exceptional addition to the ExCom, working closely with Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program on some important conservation fights. His latest litigation update is on page 7. We are thrilled to keep him as a valued member of our Executive Committee.

Susan Hansen continues her lifelong dedication to Alaska's outdoors and longtime deep involvement with Sierra Club as she remains our conservation chair. With an unwavering passion for conservation and the protection of Alaska's wild animals and places, Susan has brought to the Executive Committee a wealth of knowledge and experience. As our only current Executive Committee member in Fairbanks, Susan also provides a crucial perspective and insight into the interior.

As our new Executive Committee settles in to begin work for the year ahead, I'm reminded of the passion, dedication, and support of our members and volunteers. On behalf of the 2021 Executive Committee, we are honored to help all of you continue the fight to enjoy, explore, and protect our great state's vast wild places. ❖

-- Heather Jesse, Alaska Chapter chair



A greeting from new Alaska Chapter treasurer, Adrienne Canino

"Adrienne is an excited new member of the Alaska Chapter. She currently works at a technology company, recently coming from a position as data librarian at a university library. Before libraries, she worked in environmental conservation, specifically a youth conservation corps that included environmental educating, street tree coordinating, and green infrastructure promoting. Adrienne has recently moved to Anchorage from the Finger Lakes area of New York, with her husband and an adorable coonhound."

Hi fellow Alaskans! So, as my candidate bio above says, I'm new to Alaska. What I want to talk about right now is the color blue. For some reason, I really expected the scenery here to be mostly white and green in the winter, and then green and dirt-color in the summer. Then, as soon as I got here, I learned how wrong I was to assume that.

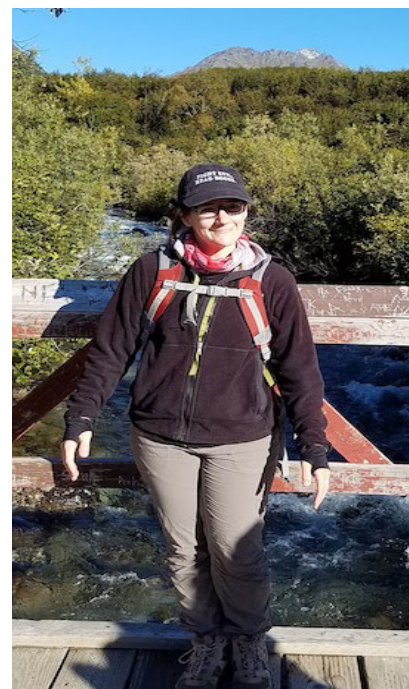
I would stare out at the mountains from my office windows. For a girl from the east coast, they're so tall and stark against that slate blue gray sky. In complete delight, I could spend long afternoons watching the water of glacier-fed lakes and rivers. I would call those a playful combination of turquoise and baby blue.

Even the bright colors of the birds startled me: I *had* seen blue birds before--but it was that deep cobalt on steel of jays that was brand new to me.

Why did I expect this place to be all white-and-green- and-dirt colored? I cannot recall now. Autumn used to define my color palette - the full parade of brilliant earth tones that the deciduous forests of New York show off. Even in that brief and glorious fall season here, when yellow/gold really dominates the landscape, I saw it mainly as a cheeky dancing partner for the blues. Then winter came, and although I'm no stranger to snow, for me snow used to have a gritty undertone of salt and sand. My first Alaska blue glacier snow made me feel like a kid all over again. Snow days are for adults too, right?

This revelation of a natural canvas of blues has captured my attention. It is a defining moment in my introduction to Alaska. It is all the more reason I feel compelled to explore, and protect, this beautiful place. I can't wait to go and find more blues, now, with every new hike or trip. I want to work hard, with all my fellow chapter members, to keep the clean blue snow of glaciers alive for others to see and delight in. ❖

-- Adrienne Canino



Adrienne outside

Alaska Chapter Litigation Update

“Good News for Conservation in Alaska as Biden Takes Office”

In December of 2020 there were a number of pending Alaskan issues on the docket for Sierra Club’s litigation team. We grappled with the U.S. Forest Service’s attempts to roll back the roadless rule in the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska; we awaited a decision from the court regarding a request for a preliminary injunction to keep ConocoPhillips from starting oil exploration in the northwest part of the state on their Willow project; and we awaited confirmation from the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Agency (AIDEA) that they would not start construction on the Ambler road project. While December—and early January-- proved contentious, the end of January and February of 2021 have provided the Sierra Club with good news on the litigation front in Alaska.

The biggest and best highlight is that the court granted our preliminary injunction for the Willow project—which means that ConocoPhillips will not be able to start exploring for oil this winter. This oil exploration project, proposed for the National Petroleum Reserve in Northwest Alaska, has been the point of ongoing litigation for several months. There have been issues with permitting and impact statements, and the Trump Administration’s Bureau of Land Management attempted to get exploratory vehicles into the tundra this winter to start the process for setting up an oil rig without properly identifying environmental effects of such exploration. And there were inadequate studies on human impacts of this project, such as considering the effect of harm to the caribou herds as they pass through the preserve on Native communities which hunt for subsistence. The case continues, but we expect no construction until at least next winter. Meanwhile we hope the court will address the merits of the case, which clearly call for a much more stringent analysis of potential impacts to the land, wildlife, and people. Without such an analysis, we hope the court will block the project altogether.

Second to the Willow litigation was the news that a stay



Bear © Christine Sundly

has been granted for the Tongass Forest, meaning that nothing will happen to implement the Trump effort to take away roadless rule protection until June 25, 2021. Now that the stay has been granted by the court, our attorneys will focus more on getting the Biden administration to initiate action to reinstate the rule, which would keep logging companies out of crucial portions of the Tongass.

In the Ambler case, our attorneys worked out a schedule with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to produce the administrative record that pushes the overall case schedule out a bit. Given the large number of agencies that we’re suing, the record is going to be huge, and the DOJ needed more time to produce it. So, that’s good news, and we expect to have plenty of time for the Court to resolve this case on the merits before AIDEA begins anything in the way of actual road construction. DOJ is also giving us additional time to review the record to ensure it is complete, which is helpful. All told, we are looking at filing our opening brief in this case at the end of May. There has been right-of-way paperwork issued on this project, but that is just the first of many steps that AIDEA and the Bureau of Land Management must take before starting any construction, so there is no imminent threat.

All said, we’ve seen the cards fall in our favor lately in many legal cases, and we expect the Biden administration to continue to work towards preserving Alaska lands and moving away from fossil fuels in general. This does not mean the fight is over though; we remain vigilant against those who want to undertake destructive and extractive activities on Alaskan lands. ❖

-- Gregory Stewart

CAUTION!

Watch out for phishing scams claiming to come from our Chapter Chair, or other ExCom members. We’ve had a few members reach out to us reporting suspicious emails requesting that members purchase gift cards with the promise of future reimbursement. The Alaska Chapter will reach out to our members only for donations, using the proper channels- that means we’ll never send you an unofficial email promising reimbursement or requesting emergency funds. If you receive any such email, please notify Chapter Director Andrea at andrea.feniger@sierraclub.org or Chapter Chair Heather at heather.g.jesse@gmail.com.

Prince of Wales Island wildlife and the Alexander Archipelago wolf-

Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska is the nation's fourth largest island and the largest in Southeast; in Alaska only Kodiak island is larger. The Tongass National Forest covers a considerable part of the island's 2,577 sq. mi., but there are also extensive Native lands. The abundant wildlife and salmon long ago attracted Tlingit and Haida people to settle on Prince of Wales Island.

Prince of Wales Island is home to the genetically distinct Alexander Archipelago wolf (*Canis lupus ligoni*), a smaller subspecies of the gray wolf, with darker fur-- isolated from the gray wolf by mountain and water barriers.

Now the economy consists primarily of tourism, recreation, and commercial fishing--rather than the former decades of clear-cutting logging of the roadless old-growth together with building of logging roads--which removed a majority of old-growth trees. This degraded the habitat and caused the decline of Sitka black-tailed deer as well as the Alexander Archipelago wolf. Larry Edwards of Sitka points out, "there is very little quality habitat left."

The old-growth forests of the Tongass National Forest were of key importance to maintaining the populations of the wolves and the deer on Prince of Wales. The wolves depended on using that old growth forest floor for denning and raising their pups. And the Sitka black-tailed deer foraged off that forest floor during the winter.

State and federal policies have affected the health of both the wolf and the Sitka black-tailed deer populations. The U.S. Forest Service has supported the logging industry on Prince of Wales island. With over 3,000 miles of logging roads, wolf poaching is rife and nearly impossible to curb. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and State Board of Game support predator control and thus support high trapping/hunting mortality rates of wolves. In turn the population decline of the wolves and their isolation on Prince of Wales island encourage inbreeding.

In 2015 the number of these wolves reached an historic low on the island-- estimated to be 89 wolves. In 2014 several conservation groups had petitioned that the Alexander Archipelago wolves be listed under the Endangered Species Act. That listing was denied, but more stringent trapping quotas were introduced. By 2018 the wolf population had rebounded to 170 wolves. In 2020, Defenders of Wildlife and Center for Biological Diversity filed another petition, requesting that these wolves be protected by being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

In the state's efforts to restore wolf populations on the island's Game Management Unit (GMU) 2, the Board of Game used a harvest quota system. During the trapping season, trappers would trap wolves and seal the hides within 14 days of killing each animal. With this up-to-date information ADF&G would track how many wolves were killed and compare that number to their most recent population estimate. When the number of wolf kills reached a

number that was considered unsustainable for the population, ADF&G would close the trapping season.

Then the Board of Game changed the above system in GMU 2, dropping the 14-day sealing requirement. It required trappers to seal the hides within 30 days after the season is closed. This system lacks any real-time tracking of how many wolves are being killed and is monitored only by trapping season length.

In the fall of 2019, estimating that the 2018 wolf population was about 170 wolves, ADF&G opened a two-month season. There was no limit on the number of wolves a trapper could kill, or on the number of trappers, or on the number of wolves that could be taken throughout the season.

The results of this "no limit on trapping wolves" plan on Prince of Wales island were shocking. In March 2020, after the trapping season closed, the Division of Wildlife Conservation announced that 165 wolves were killed during that season. This number did not include illegal and unreported kills or natural mortality. Killing 165 of the estimated 170 wolves is a big problem.

Prior to the planned 2020 wolf trapping season, Alaskans FOR Wildlife requested the trapping season be delayed until ADF&G could provide an estimate of the 2019 Prince of Wales wolf population. Although they delayed opening the trapping season until October 31, ADF&G still did not provide population estimates for the Alexander Archipelago wolf to the public

or with the Federal subsistence board. A local news outlet, Coast Alaska, filed a Public Records Act request a few days before the trapping season was to open.

Alaska Wildlife Alliance (AWA) filed a lawsuit, with co-plaintiff Joel Bennett, an active hunter who had served for 11 years on the Alaska Board of Game. They sought to delay the season until there was proof that the wolf population was within the Board of Game's population objective.

According to Joe Geldhof, a Juneau -based attorney representing AWA and Joel Bennett: "The failure of Commissioner Vincent-Lang to responsibly manage the wolf population in Game Management Unit 2 undercuts Governor Dunleavy's contention that Alaska is a responsible steward of our state's natural resources."

Hours after the lawsuit was filed, the ADF&G and the Forest Service released an estimate that the wolf population in 2019 was 316 wolves. A former ADF&G biologist for Prince of Wales Island wrote that a "population jump of the wolves from an estimated



Prince of Wales Island wolf

photo: ktoo.org

-- continued next page, 6, bottom

Federal Subsistence Board considers snowmachine use in hunting wolves and wolverines

This year the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) will continue its review of a proposed regulation (rule) from the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council (Council) that would set guidelines for the use of snowmachines in subsistence hunting of wolves and wolverines on BLM land in the region. (see *Sierra Borealis*, September 2020.)

Proposed rule: "Assist in the taking of a wolf or wolverine means a snowmachine may be used to approach within 300 yards of [a wolf or wolverine] at speeds under 15 miles per hour, in a manner that does not involve repeated approaches or that causes [these species] to run.



A snowmachine may not be used to contact an animal or to pursue a fleeing [wolf or wolverine]."

Enforcement is a problem, according to the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) in its vetting of the Council's proposal last year: "If the proposal is adopted, it will be very difficult to enforce, or to determine if hunters have violated the regulation. Hunters will need to be able to differentiate between state, BLM, and USFWS land" [and NPS areas].

Recognizing that little is known about wolf and wolverine numbers on BLM and other land in the region, the Board postponed a decision on the Council's proposal and established a "working group" of subsistence users, the Council, and federal land managers tasked to see if a rule can be agreed to that the Board could adopt.

Prince of Wales Island wolves -- from p. 5

170 in 2019 to an estimated population of 316 wolves in 2020 is simply not credible..."

Unfortunately the judge ruled that the lawsuit filed by Alaska Wildlife Alliance did not prove irrevocable harm and thus dismissed their request.

Currently, the groups that filed the petition request for Endangered Species status for the Alexander Archipelago wolf on Prince of Wales island do not know the status of their petition, according to Larry Edwards. ❖

-- Susan Hansen

The working group met with the Council in October and December of last year and in January of this year. Dissatisfied with the lack of progress, the Council has revised its proposal to apply to all federal lands in the region, including BLM land, two national preserve areas, a national wildlife refuge, and four NPS-managed national wild river segments during the next regulatory period, July 1, 2022-June 30, 2024.

The Council's revised proposal and others from around the state will be analyzed for the Board by the inter-agency panel within the Office of Subsistence Management in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Regional advisory councils and the public participate in this lengthy process. The OSM's recommendations go to the Board for final action at the Board's Spring 2022 meeting.

The Council's revised proposal is incompatible with NPS and FWS rules and policies protecting wildlife subject to subsistence hunting. NPS and FWS representatives on the inter-agency panel will need to ensure that their existing safeguards for wolves and wolverines will not be weakened in any final version of the Council's proposal. ❖

-- Jack Hession

Climate "extremes" -- no longer extreme

Climate scientists say a warming planet is likely to make big rainstorms in Southeast and Western Alaska more common. And rising temperatures are also forcing researchers to reconsider just how much rain a storm can drop. Researchers project storms that might have occurred on the average once every 20 years could start to happen every five to 10 years in Southeast Alaska, and every three years in Western Alaska. Just how much more common these "20-year" storms become depends on how much warmer the planet gets. That depends on what's done to curb greenhouse gas emissions, among other things. Jeremy Littell, a U.S. Geological Survey researcher who works with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy said that, regardless of many unknowns, it pays to prepare for a warmer future, even if the United Nations' most dire predictions of an eight-degree Fahrenheit rise in global temperatures by 2100 don't come to fruition.

--From *Alaska Public Media*, as part of a collaboration between KRBD and Alaska's Energy Desk.

Volunteer position available

Interested in getting more involved with the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter? We are looking for a volunteer to become assistant newsletter editor. You'll collaborate with our newsletter editor and executive committee to help produce our quarterly *Sierra Borealis*. You'll assist with soliciting articles, formatting the newsletter and coming up with creative additions--gradually taking over more of the layout work over time.

Contact Andrea at andrea.feniger@sierraclub.org.

Electric vehicles – the future for automobiles

Electric vehicles are the future of automobile transportation. This is indisputable. The question for our country is when this will happen. Alaska is an interesting case study because of our history with fossil fuels, particularly oil. The production of oil in the state peaked more than 30 years ago¹, but many in the state still regard the industry as the backbone and future of our economy.

This means that public perception of EVs may be met with harsh criticism from individuals in this area. The biggest barriers to EV adoption in our state are lack of infrastructure and lack of knowledge. Currently there are 33 charging stations in the Anchorage area, our largest city². There are only six in the Fairbanks borough and none on the Kenai peninsula, a popular tourist destination. In Southeast Alaska there are 32 charging stations in the Juneau area. The problem, however, is that these charging locations are mostly located in garages that charge to park, which does not lend itself to in-and-out charging methods.

Many of the popular destinations in Alaska can be more than a hundred miles apart, so the infrastructure is essential to helping EV adoption. Individuals can choose to charge their vehicles at home, but that requires the installation of a 240v or 480v quick-charging system to ensure faster charging times—which can cost several thousand dollars to install. In the long run this will save you money over an ICE vehicle (internal combustion engine), but it will cost more money up front³. There is currently a \$7,500 tax credit offered for purchasing new electric vehicles, but as the legislation is now written this credit gets phased out as each manufacturer hits 200,000 vehicles produced⁴. This means that companies like Tesla or GM that have had an EV option for years cannot now offer this incentive. There is no plan currently to extend this credit, but many EV enthusiasts hope this will occur. I personally hope a credit can be extended to EV charging installation, but that remains to be seen.

Knowledge is another critical piece. We live in an age where disinformation is quickly spread through social media and word of mouth. One of the biggest pushbacks against EVs is range anxiety or the fear of running out of a battery charge. Most EVs on today's market have a range of over 200 miles, and Americans drive less than 40 miles per day on average⁵. Alaska's average is probably slightly higher because of the distances involved. A more robust charging network with fast charging options will remedy this for our state. There is also a misconception that EVs are less safe because an electric battery is located underneath the vehicle. While there have been vehicles catching fire, the numbers are

well below internal combustion engines catching fire. In a standard gas vehicle, you are sitting mere feet away from an engine that is burning combustible fuel at a pressurized rate, and most of us do not even give it a second thought⁶.

To an Alaskan the question of battery range in cold weather will come up quickly. The cold itself does not lower the range of the vehicle; however, added energy is needed to heat the vehicle. This range can also be affected by braking habits and the preferred cabin temperature for the driver⁷. There is extensive work being done by manufacturers to help mitigate these issues--such as installing heat pumps and shielding and adding winterization packages. Currently the country with the quickest EV growth per capita is Norway, which has a similar climate to most of Alaska. Compared to the way that a gasoline vehicle's range diminishes in the cold this should be a moot point. As the technology develops this will become less and less of a concern.

2020 was supposed to be a big year for electric vehicles, but the pandemic threw a wrench into some manufacturers' plans. 2021 is shaping up to be a promising year. Volkswagen has committed to having a 100 percent electric fleet by 2030. Many other manufacturers, such as General Motors, Kia/Hyundai, and Ford are making great efforts to add electric vehicles to their offerings. Several promising startups are looking to come to market either this fall or early next year – Rivian, Lucid, and Lordstown to name a few⁸. I think Alaskans will be most receptive of electric pickup trucks when they start hitting the road. In the 2019 Alaska vehicle market, 29 percent of all new vehicles purchased were pickup trucks, which have historically been gas guzzlers⁹.

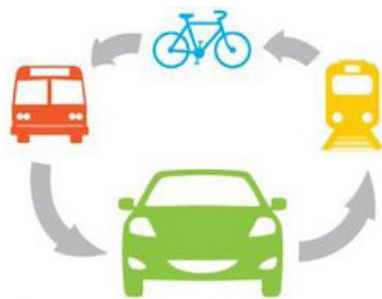
The future is bright regarding the shift to electric vehicles. Many European countries have more aggressive plans for EVs and green energy in general than our country currently does, but I hope that we can make strides over the next couple of years. Regardless of how hesitant our market may seem now, the shift overseas will drive change because of demand. Costs will lower as manufacturing becomes more efficient.

Some cautions concerning EVs

There are certainly still questions about environmental impact in the mining of lithium and cobalt, which are two popular ingredients for most batteries used in EVs. As denser batteries are developed, it is hoped they can become less reliant on a higher concentration of these minerals and that progress can be made on improving mining efficiency.

Consumer behavior definitely needs to be addressed as well. Our current level of individual vehicles is at an unsustainable rate, and simply switching everyone to electric will not solve that problem--will not reduce congestion;

-- continued next page -8, bottom



BLM's Draft Central Yukon Resource Management Plan

After Congress conveyed 103 million acres of public lands to the State at statehood in 1959, transferred 44 (now 46) million acres to Alaska Native corporations in 1971, and designated another 103 million acres in ANILCA conservation units in 1980, the Bureau of Land Management was left with about 70 million acres in Alaska in scattered tracts of various sizes.

Since 1980 BLM has been issuing resource management plans (RMPs) for its holdings, including for example, the huge 23 million-acre so-called National Petroleum Reserve (NPR-A). The BLM's draft Central Yukon RMP, issued in December by the outgoing Trump Administration, covers 13.1 million acres, and replaces the 1986 Central Yukon RMP and the 1991 TAPS utility corridor RMP.

BLM's preferred alternative C2 "emphasizes a blend of resource protection and resource development," with extraction of minerals given priority over renewable resource protection. In contrast, Alternative B, the most protective of the five alternatives, would manage 363,000 acres "for wilderness characteristics as a priority over other resources," propose 11 wild and scenic river segments suitable for inclusion in the national Wild and Scenic River System, and close 4.2 million acres to oil and gas leasing and another 1.4 million acres to the mining laws.

One of the draft plan's more controversial issues is the fate of the Dalton Highway/Trans-Alaska Pipeline corridor. A 1971 public land order still in effect reserved the public lands for construction of the pipeline and associated haul road, now the Dalton Highway, from Livengood to Prudhoe Bay. North of the Yukon River the corridor in the Brooks Range is bordered on the west by Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and on the east by the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, thus making it one of the most

scenic highways in the nation.

A problem: The State wants to select the reserved public land in the corridor and has "top-filed" for it. The State seeks to own the reserved public land in the corridor and has identified the land for potential state selection in a process called top filing. But the State can't take ownership unless the public land order is revoked. BLM's preferred alternative would revoke the order. Alternative B would revoke the order covering the outer ir corridor but retain it for the inner corridor that contains the pipeline and haul road.

If the State is allowed to select some or all of the corridor land north of the Yukon River, the scenic quality of the corridor would probably be compromised. The state would be under pressure to sell or give away corridor land for commercial development, homesteads, cabin sites, etc., pursuant to state land disposal law and policy.

Now with the advent of the Biden Administration, the draft Central Yukon plan should be on the list of Trump Administration policies under critical review. In addition to strengthening the overall plan, the Secretary of Interior can maintain the public land order and propose legislation that would afford permanent protection for the corridor. ❖

-- Jack Hession



photo: Beth Blattenberger

From a photo portfolio of flowers seen near camp at the the North Fork of the Kivalina River on a Sierra Club national outing to the Western Arctic.

Electric vehicles-(EVs)

-- from page 7

we need great progress to improve our transportation infrastructure in metropolitan areas. Upgraded bus networks and subway systems are two obvious areas of focus, but there are upstart ideas like Virgin's HyperLoop and the Boring Company's tunnel systems that may help offer a future solution. Fewer vehicles on the road equals less traffic, and think no one would be upset about that. Power grids must also be addressed so these electrical transportation sources are not being charged by fossil fuel power stations, although it's not as serious as some detractors would like to believe¹⁰. This is not a quick fix, which is why it has been on the back burner for so long. It will take bold vision and commitment to pull off this transition to a cleaner energy grid and transportation sector--not just dipping our toe in the water.

Since Alaska is slow on adoption of most trends, I expect that we will be a few years behind the curve, but there is plenty of opportunity in the Last Frontier to blaze a trail few thought possible ten years ago. Great things

happen when we stop saying things are impossible and start to ask, "how can we make this possible?" ❖

1 <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=7970>

2 <https://www.plugshare.com/directory/us/alaska>

3 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/electricvehicles/charging-home>

4 <https://evadoption.com/resources/federal-electric-vehicle-ev-tax-credit-works/how-the-federal-ev-tax-credit-amount-is-calculated-for-each-ev/>

5 <https://www.caranddriver.com/research/a32880477/average-mileage-per-year/>

6 <https://www.businessinsider.com/tesla-facing-scrutiny-for-car-fires-but-more-ice-fires-2019-5>

7 <https://www.energy.gov/eere/electricvehicles/maximizing-electric-cars-range-extreme-temperatures>

8 <https://www.caranddriver.com/news/g29994375/future-electric-cars-trucks/>

9 <https://www.experian.com/blogs/insights/2019/08/king-road-breaking-popularity-pickup-trucks/>

10 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikescott/2020/03/30/yes-electric-cars-are-cleaner-even-when-the-power-comes-from-coal/>

-- James Kolstedt, Alaska Chapter volunteer

Nature beckons!
Get Outside

Winter hikes around Fairbanks? YES!

Some Fairbanks trails in winter

It's 11:00 am on a Monday in Fairbanks. 11 F. outside, the sun turning snow-covered hills and trees dazzling white. You've been working at home all morning and are already itching to get out and make some vitamin D! Where to go?

The Interior Alaska Land Trust (IALT) has some popular trails and a few hidden gems you might not have heard of!

The Peat Ponds Wildlife Area is a 26-acre wetland. Access it from an unmarked pullout on the south side of Goldstream Rd., right before the Sheep Creek bend. The parking area itself is quite nice, complete with a picnic table, benches, interpretive signs, and a public fire pit. In winter, the pond is ringed with ski trails that connect south and east to more trails and Goldstream Creek. The creek is a skiers highway in the winter, and in summer the Peat Ponds is a hotspot for birdwatchers. Horned grebes, greater scaup, and the occasional rusty blackbird have been spotted making nests and raising their young and foraging for food in the boggy habitat.

The heart of the Goldstream Valley Greenbelt is a mosaic of protected areas: blueberry preserves, Stefensen-Dix homestead, the Tabbert properties, and the State-owned Goldstream Public Use Area. The greenbelt is accessed from Ballaine Rd.--there is a pullout at the bottom of the hill, and in winter multi-use trails extend east and west. It's common to encounter no fewer than seven happy dogs and their owners while walking or skiing those trails. In the summer the ground is too soft and saturated to hike far, but in fall the area is a prime blueberry picking spot.

Tucked away along Chena Ridge on the west side of

town is the Koponen homestead. Park at the end of Remnant Court, approximately a mile from Chena Pump Rd. on Roland Rd. These groomed ski trails are peaceful and quiet, weaving through forest and fields that used to be a yak farm! An occasional ungulate might be seen--moose enjoy browsing the low birches and willows.

The newest trail project by the Interior Alaska Land Trust is a two-mile walking loop trail in Chinook Conservation Park, an 88-acre park along the west side of Chena Pump Rd. Last year IALT restored water flow to the historic Cripple Creek channel, by diverting it from the drainage ditch. The loop trail traces the banks of the creek. In summer there is a dedicated parking area in between Palo Verde Ave. and Old Chena Ridge Rd. In winter you can park at JustaStore or near the Chena Pump Transfer Site to access the park.

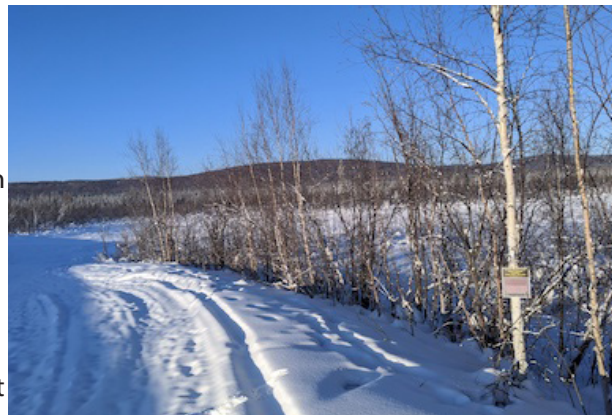
Although it isn't an IALT property, Creamer's Field is a wonderful recreation area and birders' hotspot. Groomed ski and multi-use trails stretch for miles and aren't too far from town. Park at the Creamer's Field visitor center off College Rd. or access trails via the Musher's Hall on Farmer's Loop Rd. The Interior Alaska Land Trust hopes to help locals create a dedicated trailhead on the Farmer's Loop side, perhaps this summer or next.

Finally, for those living on the east side of Fairbanks, Birch Hill Recreation Area is a very well-maintained trail system exclusively for skiers (no dog walkers allowed in winter). In summer the trails are multi-use, and many can take you to great views of Fairbanks and the distant Alaska Range.

Wherever you decide to go to enjoy a few hours of daylight, remember to bring a leash for your dog, a hat for your head, a thermos of tea or water, and your common sense! ❖

-- Christin Swearingen

Editor's note: official Sierra Club trips are canceled at least through July 4th holiday. We hope pandemic issues will ease off by then to allow our hikes to resume--but keep on getting outdoors even before that.



One access point to Goldstream greenbelt

photo: Christin Swearingen



Along Goldstream Creek

photo: Christin Swearingen

Wake of the Unseen Object by Tom Kizzia, out in new edition

Thirty years after his book *The Wake of the Unseen Object*, first appeared, author Tom Kizzia has overseen a new edition, now in paperback. While the text of the book—of which the subtitle is “*Among the Native cultures of bush Alaska*” has deliberately not been altered or updated, the author has provided a new introduction.

The book began as a series of newspaper columns when Homer-based Kizzia was Kenai Peninsula reporter for the *Anchorage Daily News*, tasked with reporting on his travels to various remote Native communities. Many of the villages whose life he describes are located in the area of the vast Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta—in scattered villages looking to Bethel as their commercial center.

In preparation for the appearance of the new edition, Tom held a remote “Live-Book-Launch” event in December of 2020, via Zoom, at which he read several incidents from the book. I was privileged to attend that event, sponsored by UA Press.

As Tom travels from village to village, with his sleeping bag and tent that he sets up at the edge of a village he’s visiting, he learns about rural hospitality, and the frequent challenges of making himself welcome – and the gratification when he is welcomed.

What emerges is an honest, unromanticized picture

of a culture caught between two world – the old world of Native law and the new of Native corporations; the old of subsistence lifestyle—the new of a cash economy; we see people in a constant, never ending struggle that permeates their whole lives to balance these two worlds—striving to keep the best of the old and adapt to best of the new. But they can’t always limit themselves to best of the new—they get caught in dangers such as a sugar-based diet, or a more sedentary lifestyle.

And this basic dilemma has not changed in the intervening 30 years. As Tom says in his new introduction: “The struggles of a first people to persist in their ancestral landscapes, while asserting themselves fully in the modern world, remain the focus of rural politics and village life.”

Tom realized early on that, considering how much of the year Alaska was blanketed in long, dark winter, he could not get a full picture of village life by summer visits only. So he determinedly ventured out on a series of winter trips—well

described. (No, he did not camp outdoors in winter, but relied on indoor hospitality for himself and his sleeping bag.)

The final chapters describe his participating in fish-camp life from the village of Scammon Bay with a welcoming extended family.

Qavlunaq!

“**Wake of the Unseen Object**” [UA

Press Classic Reprint Series]

Price: \$21.95

<https://www.alaska.edu/uapress/browse/detail/index.xml?id=602>

-- reviewed by Vicky Hoover



Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

Sierra Club Alaska:

P.O. Box 230323

Anchorage, AK 88523-0323

alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org

CHAPTER DIRECTOR

Andrea Feniger

andrea.feniger@sierraclub.org

Chapter Directory

Executive Committee:

CHAIR: Heather Jesse, heather.g.jesse@gmail.com

TREASURER: Adrienne Canino, adrienne.canino@gmail.com

CONSERVATION CHAIR: Susan Hansen, skhansen@ak.net

OUTING CHAIR: Alyssa Shaefer, alyssaschaef@gmail.com

LEGAL CHAIR and COUNCIL DELEGATE: Greg Stewart,

4sierragreg@gmail.com

COMPLIANCE CHAIR: Traci Bunkers, tnbunkers@gmail.com

Other Officers:

SECRETARY: Deanna Nielson, deanna.nielson@yahoo.com

WEBMASTER: Kayleigh Mazzocoli, kayleighmazzocoli@gmail.com

Newsletter editor: Vicky Hoover, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org

Alaska Field Office:

Dan Ritzman, Alaska Program Director, 206-378-0114,

dan.ritzman@sierraclub.org

Mike Scott, Our Wild America campaign rep., 406-839-3333,

mike.scott@sierraclub.org

Sierra Borealis: <https://www.sierraclub.org/alaska/newsletters>

<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubAlaska/>



Please visit us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubAlaska/>

SierraClubAlaska/

Find Sierra Borealis at: <https://www.sierraclub.org/alaska/newsletters>