



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Sierra Borealis

alaska report

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
JUNE 2024



Ambler Road slammed—a victory for Alaska’s wilderness

The Biden administration has taken a first decisive step to reject the proposed Ambler Road, protecting the Brooks Range and respecting the traditional lifeways of more than 30 Alaska Native communities.

On April 19, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released its final supplemental environmental analysis for the Ambler Road project, a proposal by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) to build a 211-mile road across the south slope of Alaska's Brooks Range, some of the wildest country on the continent. The BLM identified "No Action" as its preferred alternative. If finalized in a Record of Decision, this means that the AIDEA would not receive a permit for a right-of-way to build the road across BLM-administered public lands. (see **sierra borealis** Dec '23, March '22, June '20, Dec '19)

The Interior Department found that all alternatives other than "No Action" would significantly and irrevocably disturb wildlife habitat, pollute spawning grounds for salmon and threaten the hunting and fishing traditions of more than 30 Alaska Native communities "in ways that cannot be adequately mitigated."

Chief Brian Ridley, chairman of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, which represents 42 villages in interior Alaska, said the Ambler Road decision "is a monumental step forward in the fight for Indigenous rights and environmental justice."

The action fortuitously came just before the celebra-

tion of Earth Day. The administration also announced stronger protections for 13 million acres inside the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, the 23 million-acre environmentally



photo: George Wuerthner, The Wildlife News:

The Kobuk River, in the path of the proposed Ambler Road

sensitive federal land in the Western Arctic. A statement from President Biden said: "Alaska's majestic and rugged lands and waters are among the most remarkable and healthy landscapes in the world, sustaining a vibrant subsistence economy for Alaska Native communities."

"That caribou were heard over cash is a really big deal," said China Kantner, an activist from an anti-road group called Protect the Kobuk. (The organization American Rivers recently called the Kobuk one of America's most threatened rivers.)

AIDEA issued the Ambler Road proposal to facilitate huge mining operations that would benefit a private Canadian company at the expense -- *continued page 2, bottom*

➔ *Featured in this issue:*

<i>Ambler Road nixed</i>	<i>pp. 1-2</i>
<i>Ranked Choice voting</i>	<i>p. 2</i>
<i>ANILCA's significance</i>	<i>pp. 3-4</i>
<i>Chugach land exchange</i>	<i>pp. 4-5</i>
<i>Measuring highway GHG emissions</i>	<i>p. 5</i>
<i>Carbon Capture</i>	<i>pp. 6-7</i>
<i>Alaska events and activities</i>	<i>p. 7</i>
<i>Poem</i>	<i>p. 8</i>

Ranked Choice Voting in Alaska



In 2020, Alaskans voted yes on a measure that enables voices of the people in our democracy to be heard more clearly. I, for one, am proud that our state is one of only a handful that have passed such a measure, narrow though the margin was. It demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of a government by and for the people. Yes, this is an article about Ranked Choice Voting.

First, the basics. The new system passed by ballot measure, meaning individuals voted yes or no on a new rule of government directly, with the language on the ballot for us all to read.

This rule opens primaries to all voters. It also sets up a mechanism for expressing preference on multiple candidates, instead of a binary choice. That's the 'ranking' of choices. This is for state legislature, gubernatorial and congressional races. Not presidential elections, which are determined under a different set of party primary rules.

So, what does that mean? When Alaska voters look at a ballot for general elections, they see a list of names. Then, instead of one bubble at the far side of the list to vote 'yes', we see four bubbles per name, in tidy columns labeled ordinally from one to four. We get to 'rank' who we want to win that race, from 1 for the most wanted, to 4 for the least.

When it's time to count ballots, the first round of counting checks if any single individual won the position by getting 50 percent or more of the first choice votes. If not, a second round of counting begins. During this round, the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated, and every ballot this applies to is assessed for the second choice that citizens selected. So that ballot is not 'thrown out' but is applied as a vote for another candidate. There is another check for a candidate to have

Ambler Road

-- from page 1

of Wilderness and wildlife.

If built, the Ambler Road would cut a long slash westward across present wild, unroaded country from the Dalton Highway leading to the Prudhoe Bay oil field. The road would cross a corner of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and the Kobuk Wild and Scenic River, both ecologically significant, enormous swaths of public lands. The Ambler Road would impact numerous Athabaskan and Iñupiat villages in the southern Brooks Range. While some Native Alaskan communities supported the road and the economic benefits they would derive from mining, many others have vigorously opposed the road.

If built, this intrusive road would lead to more use and motorized intrusions into the designated Gates of the Arctic Wilderness. Road noise, dust, and vehicle headlights would further degrade the area's wild character and sharply reduce its renowned wildlife habitat values for grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, and countless smaller animals. ❖

50 percent or more of the vote. If not, a third round of counting begins. This repeats until two candidates remain, and one has a majority vote.

There are a lot more explainers and information out there, from folks who do a better job talking about this than I. For further details, here are some resources, including a video from our Alaska Chapter ExCom member Santa Claus (who, you may remember, has first-hand experience, as a candidate to represent us in Congress.)

<https://alaskapublic.org/2022/09/15/why-alaska-uses-ranked-choice-voting-and-what-we-know-about-how-it-affects-elections/>

<https://apnews.com/article/alaska-ranked-choice-voting-5ae6c163af2f8a70a8f90928267c4086>

<https://youtu.be/cWnr6bRbRsA?feature=shared>

Now let's look at what ranked choice voting system does for us, as citizens who seek to explore, enjoy and protect our wild spaces. What follows are my own opinions. Many experts hypothesize that ranked choice voting will reduce cronyism and partisanship in elected officials because the candidates will realize they need the second choice position, and even the third, from voters, pressuring folks to the center. I agree.

Opening up the gubernatorial election, in particular, to ranked choice voting is where I hope to see the biggest effect. Of course, our Governor has a large influence, thanks not only to the implied power landscape of political hierarchy but also the explicit power landscape of appointments, discretionary funding, and the veto.

With Alaska's vast environmental resources, this power is crucial in determining management regulations and land development. Ranked choice voting for governor gives us another mechanism to hold elected officials accountable.

Also, I just want to see more people vote. I am disheartened in my hopes for a joyful, equal and climate stable America when I hear someone say flippantly, 'I don't vote.' But who can blame these peers of ours, when it's easy to see faults in the system. For instance, Alaska has not seen a candidate for Senate garner more than 50 percent of the vote since 2002:

(please see <https://www.politifact.com/article/2022/apr/26/democracy-experts-support-alaskas-move-ranked-choi/>).

The chance to express nuance in our political choices is a great way to give more voice back to the people--I want to shout about it from the rooftops! I would love to hear from our membership if you have comments, questions, agree or disagree. I love writing letters (digital or otherwise), please write to me!

Even more resources are available here:
<https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-alaska-legislature-state-elections-general-elections-387ba5f6b3ab79bb841bc5c29c8bceee>

<https://apnews.com/article/alaska-ranked-choice-voting-5ae6c163af2f8a70a8f90928267c4086> ❖

-- Adrienne Canino, Alaska Chapter chair

The lasting significance of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)

During the summer of 1977, across the nation, a monumental conservation and environmental justice effort was fully underway. Newly in Alaska for my first full summer, I was invited to hear about this exceptional and well-organized opportunity at a meeting featuring Jack Hession, Alaska Regional Representative of the Sierra Club.

At that meeting, Jack showcased a massive map and described the audacious -- but in his impassioned words --"achievable" goal of protecting over 100 million acres of federal public lands in Alaska, including, for the first time, entire intact ecosystems. We had the once-in-a-lifetime ability, and responsibility, to secure the single greatest piece of conservation legislation in the history of the nation, despite the objections of Alaska's entire Congressional delegation. The key, we saw, was involving the entire nation.

From the very beginning, starting in the 1960s, the Sierra Club was instrumental in the eventual passage of the resulting unprecedented legislation: the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Requiring over a decade of momentous sustained effort, the quest began in earnest with the efforts of Mark Ganopole, secretary-director of the Alaska Wilderness Council, who helped organize the Sierra Club Chapter in Anchorage. She (yes, she) had been asked to prepare a document showing the federal lands in Alaska that should be protected for National Parks and Wildlife Refuges. Springing into action, she helped coordinate a remarkable group of people dubbed the "Maps on the Floor Society."

At the same time, national President of the Sierra Club, Dr. Ed Wayburn, led the entire organization in determining that saving Alaska wildlands was a national Club priority. He had also made sure that the Sierra Club hired a full-time Alaska Representative -- Jack Hession

As a first legislative step, in 1971, the Sierra Club and others helped make sure that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) included a provision requiring the temporary withdrawal of up to 80 million acres of land suitable for establishment of and additions to National Park, Wildlife Refuge, Forest, and Wild and Scenic Rivers System units. If, however, these lands were not protected by 1978, their withdrawal status would expire, and they would be open to mining, State selection and more.

Over the course of the next nine years, the intense, strategic and exceptionally collaborative efforts to achieve the protection of these lands represent one of the greatest chapters in environmental history. The Alaska Coalition--consisting of the Sierra Club and over 50 other organizations, ranging from The Garden Clubs of America, to the United Automobile Workers of America and to the Federation of Fly Fishermen --coordinated one of the greatest nation-wide grass root efforts ever seen.

Of critical importance, in 1978, President Carter used

his powers under the Antiquities Act to continue safeguarding the lands, until, finally, in late 1980, Congress acted, due primarily to President Carter's and the Alaska Coalition's unceasing efforts. Alaska Natives were also very much involved throughout, working to make sure that the lands to be protected allowed subsistence hunting and fishing opportunities and priorities for them, essential for environmental justice.

Signed into law by President Carter in December, 1980, ANILCA protects more land than any other single piece of legislation in our nation's history and also safe-



ANILCA has protected enormous swaths of Alaska wild land, like this broad landscape in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Photo: Colin Arisman, Wild Confluence Media, from Sierra Club photo library

guards subsistence hunting and fishing rights for rural Alaska Natives. The lands encompassed by ANILCA represent over 60 percent of our National Parks, more than 50 percent of our country's Congressionally designated Wilderness, and over 80 percent of our terrestrial National Wildlife Refuges. Given the increasingly critical importance of conserved lands and waters for climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, ecosystem services, inter-generation equity, and environmental justice, understanding and protecting the continuing achievements of ANILCA has never been more imperative.

Since its passage, ANILCA has faced many serious threats. Determined and effective actions by the Sierra Club, other NGOs, Congressional champions, people throughout the nation, the press, and current and former federal officials have thwarted these threats. New and renewed grave challenges to Alaska land protection and subsistence are intensifying, and these need to be successfully addressed. At the same time there are meaningful opportunities in key areas to strengthen and expand ANILCA protections, both with legislation and regulations.

Because of climate change, the biodiversity crisis, the threats to ecosystem services, the 30x30 Initiative including President Biden's "America the Beautiful" program, environmental justice imperatives, and more, Alaska's public lands have never been more important.

Next year, we celebrate the 45th anniversary of ANILCA. A whole new generation -- continued page 4

Alaska Delegation's bill targets Chugach National Forest, plus certain NPS and BLM lands

In May Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski introduced S.4310, Chugach Alaska Land Exchange and Oil Spill Recovery Act, with co-sponsors Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Rep. Mary Peltola D-AK). Chugach Alaska Corporation (CAC), the Native regional corporation, would trade 231,306 acres of its subsurface (mineral) estate for 63,443 acres of surface/subsurface estate in the national forest and 1,960 acres in NPS and BLM surface/subsurface estate.

The corporation has identified "parcels" totaling 65,403 acres almost entirely in the Chugach National Forest except 1,960 acres in NPS and BLM areas elsewhere.

--Drier Bay 2,996 acres, mineral estate only. [west side of Knight Island];

(the following parcels are are both surface and subsurface estate).

--Kushtaka Lake 7,876; 6,375; 6,376; and 1,280 acres [east of the lower Copper River];

--Snow River 11,402 acres [east of the Seward Highway];

--Hinchinbrook Island 2,646 acres [Prince William Sound];

--Martin River 2,240; 8,305; and 3,170 acres [east of the lower Copper River];

--Johnson River 5,200 and 6,165 acres [Cordova area];

--Robinson Mountains 5,728 acres [east of the lower Copper River];

--Taan Fjord 450 acres [off Icy Bay, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park];

--Kageet Point 310 acres [entrance to Taan Fjord, Wrangell-St. Elias NP]; and

--Thompson Pass 1,200 acres [Richard Highway north of Valdez, BLM].

CAC owns 378,000 acres of surface and subsurface land and 550,000 acres of surface estate only, including the 231,036 acres of subsurface estate it proposes to trade to the federal government. Chugach region Native village corporations sold the



surface estate of 231,036 acres to the federal government, along with some conservation easements, for addition to the national forest, with the subsurface estate remaining in CAC ownership.

What's at stake

The Chugach National Forest, NPS, and BLM lands CAC would acquire if S. 4310 is enacted are valuable public use areas. For example, Drier Bay on Knight Island, one of the most scenic islands in Prince William Sound, is also within the Nellie Juan-College Fiord Wilderness Study Area. The area east of the lower Copper River is largely undeveloped *de facto* wilderness of diverse landscapes, wildlife habitats, river systems, and high-quality scenery. In contrast, the corporation's 231,036 acres of subsurface mineral estate apparently have little or no economic value.

In her press release about the bill, Sen. Murkowski claims that "The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill forever changed the lives of Alaskans, particularly those living in the Chugach region. Chugach's subsurface rights were restricted and subjugated to the EVOS [Exxon Valdez Oil Spill] Program's environmental conservation goals, which unfairly prevents Chugach from realizing the economic benefits of its mineral interests under ANCSA."

This claim, the basis of her case for the bill, is incorrect. Although the surface and conservation easements have restrictions designed to protect them, CAC, under existing federal law and despite the restrictions, has legal access to its property. It can undertake exploratory drilling and extract whatever mineral or minerals it discovers on its property.

The basic question, then, is the proposed exchange in the public interest? When the natural resources committees consider S. 4310 they will want the Administration to provide appraisals of the exchange areas. At this stage, the exchange appears to be a dramatically unequal-value trade. Committee -- *continued, p. 5, bottom*

ANILCA -- from page 3

of Alaskans has grown up since 1980, and many are not familiar with this great law and its significance for our land. Educating people about ANILCA, defending and strengthening ANILCA are essential for current and future generations.

➔ What Can We Do?

Collaboratively, we need to get the word out and boost understanding and appreciation for ANILCA, in order to assure its defense going forward. And we must address major threats to ANILCA, such as illegal land exchanges, the elimination of subsistence rights on navigable waters, and the undermining of the two clear purposes of ANILCA. There are also numerous opportunities, including legislative protections for lands in the Western Arctic and d-1 lands, reducing damage from uncontrolled ORV use, strengthening wilderness protections, and more.

Many people, including representatives from the Sierra Club, are engaged in discussions about next steps. We would appreciate your recommendations and involvement going forward. Also, when you get a chance, share the inspirational and vitally important ANILCA story, especially with younger conservationists.

Here's to Alaska's wonderful wild landscapes, wildlife habitat, intact ecosystems and subsistence opportunities--and to ANILCA, now and forever. ❖

-- by Deborah Williams

(Deborah Williams served as President Clinton's Special Assistant to the Secretary of Interior for Alaska, and later as the Executive Director of the Alaska Conservation Foundation and then as President of Alaska Conservation Solutions. She is currently an environmental consultant and lecturer with the University of California Santa Barbara Environmental Studies program.)

Assessing Performance of the National Highway System, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Measure

On Dec 7, 2023, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) adopted a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Measure as part of assessing performance of the National Highway System.

One of the national goals of both the Interstate and non Interstate Highway System is environmental sustainability. Supporting environmental sustainability means assessing the system's environmental performance, specifically its carbon footprint.

This greenhouse gas emissions measure adopted by the FHWA requires State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and Municipal Planning Organizations (MPOs) to establish declining targets for reducing CO2 emissions from road vehicles over time.

The rule specifies that state DOTs will establish two and four year statewide emissions reduction targets, and MPOs will establish four-year emissions reduction targets for their municipalities.

To realize the benefits of a GHG measure as soon as possible, State DOTs were to establish targets and report these targets by Feb 1, 2024. However, due to present litigation, States and MPOs are not required to submit initial



Glenn Highway commute in winter.

photo: Anchorage Daily News, Oct 30 2018

targets and reports at this time. And, if and when they are, as yet, no penalties exist for missing the targets.

Sierra Club members all over the country need to actively monitor the situation. They need to urge the governmental entities with which they work to begin implementing this GHG emissions measure by establishing targets, BEFORE penalties are imposed for not doing so.

Alaska applications

How would this apply in southcentral Alaska, where

Chugach Land exchange -- from page 4

members may also be wary of the precedent set if they approve the exchange, as other regional corporations could follow the Chugach Corporation's lead and try for similar land exchanges involving BLM, FWS, NPS, and Tongass National Forest lands.

News just in! On June 12, the Senate subcommittee is to take testimony on this and other bills. ❖

-- Jack Hession

(Deborah Williams who led the habitat acquisition program for the EVOS Trustees, contributed to this article.)

for many years the Alaska Chapter has advocated for commuter rail on the Alaska Railroad between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage?

Our state governmental entity is the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOTPF), and our MPOs are Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) and the newly forming Mat-Su Valley MPO.

As made clear in the national Sierra Club's Rail Transportation Statement (August 2023) rail gives off only one-third the GHG emissions of the highway mode. The Glenn Highway parallels the railroad between Anchorage and Wasilla, so assessing its environmental performance, specifically its carbon footprint, would give us important information.

The Mat-Su Borough, whose principal communities are Wasilla and Palmer, about 40 miles northeast of Anchorage, is establishing an MPO, making it eligible to receive federal transportation funding. The Matsu Valley Planning for Transportation (MVP) has written a Unified Planning Work Program; a Draft plan came out in December, 2023. Right now, it is almost all about new highways and a little about buses. Although the Alaska Railroad bisects the area, the work program has nothing about commuter rail.

The Matsu Valley Planning for Transportation does not seem aware of this federal GHG emissions measure and the importance of establishing declining targets. Our commuter rail planning committee is gearing up to increase their awareness.

Commuter rail would help our state and local governments meet these future declining targets by commuter rail's ability to lower vehicle traffic on the Glenn Highway. People, including lower income people, would have a transportation alternative. Some families could get by with one instead of two or three cars, and students without cars would have easier transportation. Reducing the numbers of cars also means less traffic congestion, freeing up the remaining cars from morning and evening traffic jams.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the communities of Palmer and Wasilla were not only smaller but more compact and walkable, both of them oriented near the Alaska Railroad. However, as more and more highways have been built between and around the two communities, there is now vastly more sprawl. Commuter rail would again allow and promote more transit-oriented development, the very kind of walkable land-use patterns that reduce GHG emissions and help lessen the effects of climate change.

Anchorage, which began in 1915 as a headquarters for building the Alaska Railroad, also used to be much more walkable. Now, as cars and highways dominate, transportation accounts for 46 percent of GHG emissions. A piece of exciting news however: Anchorage's incoming mayor, who takes office July 1, has stated she plans to re-establish the Climate Action Plan! ❖

-- Cynthia Wentworth

Carbon Capture: Can It Help Alaska?

Alaska's Governor Mike Dunleavy supports carbon capture and storage technology and carbon tax credits as ways to boost short-term state revenue. But he refuses to address the current climate catastrophe.

"The (Governor's) Carbon Management and Monetization Bill is part of a carbon management plan the governor unveiled last year that he said could earn the state hundreds of millions of dollars," according to Alaska Public Media (APM)

A major driver of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels that produces lots of carbon dioxide (CO₂) released into our atmosphere.

One method of keeping CO₂ out of the atmosphere is carbon capture and storage. CO₂ is captured at the point of release and pumped into and stored in deep underground rock formations.

Alaska's Department of Natural Resources estimates CO₂ storage leases could garner more than a billion dollars over 40 years. However, APM notes that, "Right now, the state's ideas are far from materializing."

Volker Sick, of the University of Michigan's Global CO₂ Initiative, reports that, "No carbon-capture technology works at 100 percent efficiency, and some CO₂ will always escape into the air. Capturing CO₂ is also expensive. Without a product to sell, underground storage can become a costly service. If CO₂ is captured from air, water or biomass, then, yes, less carbon is in the air afterward. However, if the CO₂, instead, comes from new fossil fuel emissions, such as from a coal- or gas-fired power plant, carbon neutrality isn't possible."



© Israel Shotridge, Tlingit

APM reports that, "one idea is to capture CO₂ from the exhaust from industrial power generators around the state, like the generators that power drilling operations on the North Slope. But this kind of carbon capture technology is still a ways away, said Mark Foster, an energy consultant and former state utilities regulator. It is... generally considered too expensive to be worth it." And, Lili Fuhr, of the Center for International Law, says the technology "is fraught with uncertainties and ecological risks."

The New York Times (NYT) notes, "Yet a growing number of studies and reports have found that many carbon offsets simply don't work... Instead, they say, companies should just focus on directly cutting their

own emissions."

Meanwhile, the Governor's supporters in the Alaska Legislature failed to bring Alaska Senate Bill 114 (Oil and Gas Production/Income Tax) up for a vote, during 2024. Senate Bill 114 would have afforded Alaskans the opportunity to increase State revenue by more than one billion dollars this year, plus more than a half-billion dollars annually, during the next nine years, according to the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition's projections.

Passing Senate Bill 114 would have:

- ** Closed the S-Corp tax loophole, and taxed all private and public oil and gas entities operating throughout Alaska; and,
- ** Reduced per-barrel subsidy and tied it to investments, so that oil and gas producers could have offset their tax bills only when and where they brought their specific tax offset-linked field into production.

The Governor's administration continues to fund and subsidize Alaska's oil and gas industry -- the state's largest corporate welfare system. LLCs Hilcorp and Harvest, who seem to pay no corporate income tax whatsoever, are laughing all the way to the bank, at Alaska's expense.

The Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition notes that, "Fossil fuel companies have posted record-breaking profits year after year, while Alaskans are faced with historically high prices for fuel."

Alaska's substantial oil and gas subsidies could be better spent transitioning Alaska's energy grid and labor force to renewable energy sources. Alaska's Renewable Energy Future Report estimates a potential net gain of 100,000 renewable energy jobs.

Instead of subsidizing oil and gas, Alaska should address the real social, environmental, and health costs of fossil fuel development—costs like the harms inflicted by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill—shoreline pollution, wildlife deaths and habitat loss, and billions of dollars in clean up costs."

If the Governor truly wants to save money and generate income for Alaska, he should support legislation such as SB 114 and restrict the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority's expenditures. The Sierra Club points out that, "The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) is a state corporation that spends huge sums of our money on boondoggle projects that are often unsuccessful and controversial with little to no public input or legislative oversight....It's time for the state to perform meaningful oversight and hold AIDEA accountable to the public."

Also, the Governor should support Senate Bill 152 (Saving Alaskans Money with Voluntary Community Energy) -- bipartisan legislation, passed by the Legislature and awaiting the Governor's signature. Phil Wight of the Alaska Public Interest Research Group has said, "This [the bipartisan SAVE Act] is common-sense -- continued page 7, bottom

Happy Crabfest!



We had so much fun hosting a booth at Crabfest in Kodiak this year and asking attendees to pledge one positive thing they will do to help the environment, and thus crabs, in 2024. Even if you couldn't attend this year from May 23 to 27, you can help us all be less crabby about climate change by making your own pledge to take better care of our environment this year.

-- Andrea Feniger

Carbon Capture -- from page 6

legislation that allows Alaskans to access the deployment of low-cost, clean electrical generation, further diversifying generation sources and providing significant consumer bill savings."

So let's urge legislators to put complex carbon capture and storage proposals aside and, instead, reintroduce Senate Bill 114; and support House Bill 121 and Senate Bill 101 (Renewable Portfolio Standard that sets goals for renewable energy generation for utilities from Fairbanks to Homer), House Bill 154 and Senate Bill 125 (Green Bank that creates a state loan fund for renewable energy), and House Bill 150 and Senate Bill 197 (Building Codes which could create energy efficiency standards). Doing so can help ensure a livable climate and sound economic future for all Alaskans, especially our children. ❖

-- Santa Claus, Sierra Club Alaska Executive Committee member

Nature beckons! *Get Outside* Activities and Events



Alaska Youth for Environmental Action Summit

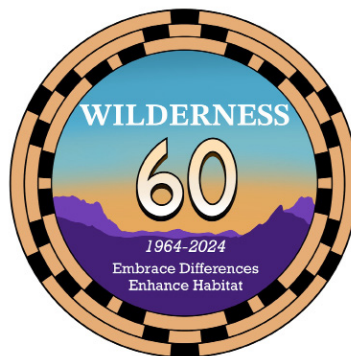
Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) is excited to announce that 2024 AYEA Youth Organizer Summit Applications and Nominations are open! Alaskan teens ages 13 to 18 are eligible to apply for this opportunity by June 30. This year's Youth Organizer Summit will be held from September 13-17 on Dena'ina Elnena in Anchorage! Alaskan teens ages 13 to 18 are eligible to apply for this opportunity by June 30. Help spread the word!

Nominate an awesome teen you know today for this year's Youth Organizer Summit! Nominations are due June 25.

<https://akcentereducationfund.org/ayea/youth-organizer-summit>



Celebrate Alaska's Wilderness! 1964-2024: Sixtieth Anniversary of the Wilderness Act



HOW will the Alaska Chapter celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act this year? Outings in honor of Wilderness? A photo exhibit? A library Display?? A letter to Editor of your local paper? Invite your local reporter to join a hike. YOUR ideas welcome...

A poem for June

A Thousand Songs

I heard them again this evening while walking below the meadow, a wild cacophony of a thousand frogs at the dappled fringe of a reedy marsh now fully awake with the warmer days and singing their siren songs, patiently awaiting mates to couple with, then spread their diaphanous seed over her eggs so they may merge as one, hatch into tadpoles with their tiny black eyes and nimble tails that help them wriggle playfully at the water's edge till ever so quickly they grow lungs, shrink their tails to stubs, sprout four legs, and hop onto terra firma where they become part of Nature's panoply of weird beauty and eternal wonder for this kindred human spirit whose curiosity never stops listening and wondering and watching...

what ancient wild animals frogs are, their beginnings stretching far back in time, all the way back to the Permian

more than 265 million years ago, when they split from their other amphibian kin and became what we call frogs, or toads...

but that was just the beginning, for it was only 66 million years before now, after the Chicxulub asteroid obliterated the dinosaurs that frogs morphed again and again into more than 5000 species of others with names like leopard, wood, tomato, poison dart, horned, desert rain, and spotted and shovel-headed tree frogs, all of these and more offering us a rainbow of color to feast our eyes on...

but we sapiens have not been kind to frogs, multiplying to impossible numbers as we have, like the chytrid fungus that is now

decimating them everywhere to only skeletal fragments of what they once were and leaving us feeling pauperized and tearful about what we've become, a lineage, no longer deserving of accolade or acclaim, in spite of our bulbous brain that once gave us the promise for something better... and yet, there still shines the faint glow of hope in some of us that if we try hard enough, together, we may save some of these ancient woven threads of Gaia for new human generations into the future so they, too, may hear a thousand songs in spring, and learn to love them, as I do.

-- Frank Keim, Fairbanks (Springfield, Oregon Feb. 2024) ❖



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 OFFICE: 308 G Street Anchorage 99501

Chapter Directory Executive Committee:

CHAIR: Adrienne Canino, adrienne.canino@gmail.com CONSERVATION CHAIR: Susan Hansen, skhansen@ak.net TREASURER: Dick Anderson: 4fjord4@gmail.com LEGAL CHAIR and COUNCIL DELEGATE: Greg Stewart, 4sierragreg@gmail.com COMPLIANCE CHAIR: Kim Kirby, kimandedo@yahoo.com AT LARGE: Santa Claus: santaclaus@usa.net Other officers: SECRETARY: Heather Jesse: heather.g.jesse@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/>

"Every decade is consequential in its own way, but the twenty-twenties will be consequential in a more or less permanent way."
- Elizabeth Kolbert, *The New Yorker*

Correction: The article, "The Alaska railroad--a climate benefit that needs more use" in our December 2023 issue, p. 5, appeared without attribution. It was written by Cynthia Wentworth. Alaska Chapter transportation chair.)

