



Sierra Borealis *alaska report*

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
DECEMBER 2019



TAKE ACTION by December 17: Support the No Action Alternative To keep the Tongass National Forest in the Roadless Rule!



photo: archipelgan -- from
Alaska Rainforest Defenders



alternative. (See p. 2)
The Roadless Area Conservation Rule [Roadless Rule] was adopted in January 2001. The Rule prohibits road construction in Forest Service inventoried

In October, the Forest Service released its Tongass Roadless Exemption Draft Environmental Impact Statement with six alternatives. All but the first, No Action alternative would gut current roadless areas, but the last one is the agency's preferred alternative and intends to completely remove the Tongass National Forest from the protections of the 2001 Roadless Rule. Governor Mike Dunleavy, supported by Senator Lisa Murkowski, directly requested this alternative from President Trump.

Even a foot-in-the-door rollback of the Rule is unacceptable—but especially its complete overturn.

roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres, because roads "have the greatest likelihood of altering and fragmenting landscapes, resulting in immediate, long-term loss of roadless area values and characteristics." Since adoption, the Rule has survived several court challenges, one all the way to the Supreme Court, which declined in 2016 to overrule the Ninth Circuit's decision to uphold it. One case is still pending in DC District Court.

Before its final adoption in the last days of the Clinton administration, the Roadless Rule was the subject of 600 public hearings, received an avalanche of strong support of more than one million public comments, and had -- *continued page 2*

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Send the Forest Service your comments opposing the proposed Tongass exemption and supporting the NO ACTION

*You are invited to join Alaska Chapter
Wednesday, January 22, 2020, from 7 pm-9 pm
at the Arctic Recreation Center,
4855 Arctic Blvd. (south of Tudor).
Speaker will be Erik Grafe from Earthjustice
<https://earthjustice.org/about/offices/alaska>
For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org/alaska*

Tongass Roadless Rule exemption alert-- from page 1

the backing of hundreds of natural resource scientists, who insisted on inclusion of the Tongass in the Rule.

During the recent round of public scoping for the proposed exemption of the Tongass from the Roadless Rule, "just over 144,000 entries" were received and "the majority wanted to keep the Tongass in the Roadless Rule for Alaska." The current push for exemption is clearly NOT for the good of the environment but to heed the demands of a small but well-connected timber extraction industry, namely Viking Lumber of Klawock, AK and Alcan Forest Products (a timber exporter that is an arm of multinational Transpac Group of Vancouver, B.C.)

⇒ **What You Can Do for the Tongass:**

Send your Comments by: 11:59 pm, December 17, 2019.

HOW to comment:

- Web: www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54511
- Email: akroadlessrule@fs.fed.us
- US Mail: USDA Forest Service, Attn: Alaska Roadless Rule, P.O. Box 21628, Juneau, Alaska, 99802
- Fax: 907-586-7852
- In-person delivery to Forest Service: 709 W. 9th Street, Room 535B, Juneau, Alaska 99801

Points to make, as an Alaska voter who cares about forests---

select some of these--put in your own words:

- Support The Roadless Rule In Its Entirety.
- Tell The Forest Service to choose the "No Action Alternative".
- The Roadless Rule does not block all road construction in roadless areas. For example, it allows the Forest Service to approve roads necessary for hydropower and mine development and for linking communities. In fact, "some 55 projects within roadless areas in Alaska have been rapidly approved by the Forest Service". Clearly, development interests' claims that the current rule prohibits such projects from proceeding are a red herring and without merit.
- The Trump/Dunleavy administrations are promoting a destructive timber industry that contributes less than one percent to the regional economy.
- The timber industry has already caused a massive, seven decades-long drain on the public's financial resources. According to Taxpayers for Common Sense, "In total, the Forest Service has lost approximately \$600 million over the last twenty years or \$30 million per year on average and could end up losing more than \$180 million in the Tongass over the next four years."
- This proposed exemption would force the American tax payer to further subsidize round log exports to China and elsewhere in support of manufacturing in those countries—not for Alaska.
- Undoing the Roadless Rule would continue the trend of managing Tongass public lands as a subsidized timber colony for the exclusive benefit of Alcan/Transpac Group and Viking Lumber. Viking is also a large-scale raw log exporter.

- Through the years, public support for the Roadless Rule in Southeast Alaska has been overwhelming, including during the latest go 'round. According to the Forest Service, since 2017, "in total, 17 public scoping meetings were held in 16 locations with nearly half (44 percent) of all Southeast Alaska communities hosting a public scoping meeting.
- Most recently, the sovereign Tribes of Alaska's Southeast (16 tribal entities) and the City of Skagway endorsed the Roadless No Action Alternative.
- Industrial logging of Tongass roadless areas severely damages animal habitat and salmon streams and will degrade other important regional economic drivers like the commercial and sport fishing industries, wildlife populations—including species like deer, which are important for subsistence uses, scenic resources, recreation, and tourism.
- The Roadless Rule protects many of the world-class, old-growth forest environments that fish and wildlife depend on, American people treasure, and Alaskans rely on for their collective livelihoods and quality of life.
- Seven decades of high-grading—taking out the biggest, highest-value trees--has dramatically depleted the Tongass Forest's largest (4-10 feet in diameter) old-growth trees. And those rare, old-growth stands provide some of the most valuable fish and wildlife habitats on the Tongass.
- The Tongass is North America's largest carbon sink and sequesters eight percent of all greenhouse warming gases of national forests in the US. Logging these forests will have severe long-term environmental and economic consequences.

For more information, the website for the proposed action is:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54511> ❖

-- from an alert by Alaska Rainforest Defenders <https://alaskarainforest.org>



Attention grassroots organizers!

The Alaska Chapter is hiring for a part time administrative assistant and we would like to hear from you! Our administrative assistant will be a paid position to help us organize as a group, find great candidates for our new position for a paid Director, and facilitate the onboarding process. If you are hard working, organized, self motivated, passionate, and experienced in administrative work, grassroots building, or organizational restructuring please be on the lookout for our job postings, coming soon!

Victory! Another Year Passes With No Arctic Refuge Drilling Leases

Administration has “missed its 2019 drilling target”

Every year with no drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a good year -- so you can imagine how thrilled we were the week before Thanksgiving to learn that the Department of the Interior has confirmed it will “miss its target of holding the first-ever oil drilling lease sale in Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge this year due to delays in the environmental review process.”

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and the Trump administration had spent the year pushing hard for these sales -- bragging that it would be done even though the process should require a more extensive review process.

Trump administration political appointees also did their best to suppress serious concerns from career scientists about the impacts of drilling in this sensitive area.

Yet despite this outrageous attempt to suppress science, the Trump administration still hasn’t found a way around the obvious fact that drilling in the Refuge would be an environmental disaster. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge teems with life -- polar bears, musk oxen, and more than 200 species of birds, as well as being the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, which has sustained the Gwich’in Nation for millennia. The Refuge has also become an important symbol of the wild, and an emblem of the hope and peace of mind that can be found only in connecting with nature -- in knowing it exists. Drilling in the coastal plain would permanently destroy the ecological integrity and the wildness of this sacred place.

Indigenous people in Alaska are fighting to protect their ways of life from destructive drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Join us in rising in solidarity with them on #IndigenousPeoplesDay!

#ProtectTheArctic

#StandWithTheGwichn

<http://sc.org/arctic>. ❖

-- by Lena Moffitt

(Lena Moffitt is Senior Director of the Sierra Club’s Our Wild America Campaign, which is dedicated to protecting our lands, water and wildlife, to increasing equitable access to the outdoors, and to keeping fossil fuels in the ground.)



Eagle and bear canoe
© Israel Shotridge

(Editor’s note: True victory for the fragile, biologically rich coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge, sacred to the Gwich’in people, will come only when that area is designated as wilderness—joining the majority of the Refuge, which is already wilderness. The remote Arctic Refuge, in the far northeastern corner of Alaska, is America’s largest national wildlife refuge. Of its 16 million acres, more than nine million is designated by law as wilderness.)

Sierra Club Alaska Chapter Divests from “Oily Wells” Fargo

When policy fails, block the funding.

In 2017, Senator Lisa Murkowski slipped a provision into Trump’s 2017 tax bill that “presumed” oil revenues from the Arctic and thus, backhandedly, opened the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. Suddenly, the coastal plain was more threatened than it had been in decades. Protests successfully delayed seismic exploration, and the anticipated lease sales have stalled in face of a clear message to corporations and to banks that loan them money: Drilling in the Arctic is bad business. British Petroleum (BP) heard demands from the Gwich’in Steering Committee and is selling off their assets in Alaska. We hope that Hilcorp gets the message too, that sacred lands are no place for drilling.

This year the Gwich’in Steering Committee travelled to shareholder meetings of six big banks to ask them directly if they will commit to NOT invest in the Arctic Refuge. Wells Fargo is one of the banks that refused. Wells Fargo has been a target of divestment campaigns before, because of their fraud scandals and their continued funding of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

UniCredit, Italy’s largest bank, in early December became the latest global bank to rule out financing for Arctic oil and gas projects, including in the Refuge.

Climate change is here, our snow is disappearing, and we have no tolerance for banks that fund oil companies. So I am proud to announce that the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter has divested from Wells Fargo, opening a new account with First National Bank! Whether it is \$5 or \$100,000, you can divest too!

If you have an account in one of the banks below, do it today: walk into your nearest branch, tell them you are pulling your money out because they won’t pledge to not invest in the Arctic Refuge, and then move your money to a local credit union or ethical bank.

Bad Banks:

Wells Fargo

JPMorgan

Chase

Citi Bank

Bank of America

Goldman Sachs

Morgan Stanley

You can even film yourself at the bank, and post online to inspire others to follow! Watch the “Oily Wells Fargo” video at <https://youtu.be/7gZMDTQMWWM> or google “oily wells fargo funds dirty fossil fuels”. Join the movement at sc.org/divest. ❖

-- by Christin Swearingen, Alaska Chapter Chair

Alaska Chapter election for 2020

It's that time of the year again... Sierra Club Alaska Chapter Election! We have been fortunate to have passionate, well informed, and diverse leadership in our current Executive Committee (ExCom). Three of these Chapter ExCom members will move on to new roles as their terms are ending, and they are opening up their seats for new leaders to step in. Outgoing from the ExCom is Christin, our inspirational chair; Su Chon, our community-connected secretary; and Amy Murphy, our trail expert outings coordinator. Thank you to these three active, tireless ExCom members for their service to our chapter.

The candidates running for these open seats are Heather

Jesse for Chair, Taylor Asher for secretary, Alyssa Schaefer for outings coordinator, and Christina Lewis for ExCom member-at-large. Please see their bios on this and the following page. ExCom member Toshihide Hamazaki has also just decided to step down, so there are four vacancies with four candidates. You can vote for four.

Ballots are being mailed by December 16, and are due by the end of January (Jan. 31). This year you will have the option to vote electronically as well! Instructions for online voting will be emailed to you if that is your expressed preference. This is a new feature that we're very excited about as we hope it will -- *continued next page (p. 5)*

Candidates for ExCom



TAYLOR ASHER

Taylor grew up in Talkeetna enjoying all that Alaska's pristine outdoors has to offer, which developed her passion for social and environmental justice. Professionally she works to develop and manage renewable energy projects throughout the state with the goal of displacing fossil fuels, keeping money in the local economy, and supporting local jobs. Taylor earned her undergraduate degree in anthropology and her masters in Climate Science and Solutions from Northern Arizona University. In Taylor's free time she enjoys traveling, scuba diving, hiking, and spending time with her ten siblings.



CHRISTINA LEWIS

Christina Lewis is currently a Sierra Club outings leader from the Angeles Chapter in southern California. She has co-lead several camping trips to Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, as well as led several day hikes. She earned her bachelor and master of science degrees in Environmental and Occupational Health and has made it her career for two decades to protect the public and workers. Now that she has made beautiful Alaska her home, she wants be more involved on the grassroots level in protecting our precious environment. Being on the Executive Committee of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club offers the opportunity to learn more about Sierra Club's efforts in Alaska and contribute to the cause in a meaningful way.



ALYSSA SCHAEFER

Alyssa is an avid hiker and adventurer who enjoys traveling and visiting beautiful places. She moved to Alaska from Washington, DC a year and a half ago to pursue a summer internship in Denali National Park and Preserve, where she served as an exotic plant management intern, identifying, mapping, and removing invasive plant species. She fell in love with the vast beauty of the park (and Alaska) and moved to Anchorage in October, 2018. Now she works in nonprofit fundraising, but gets outside as much as possible. She is a Chapter outings leader and has enjoyed organizing activities so people can experience nature together. She looks forward to hosting a wider array of outings (trash clean-ups, invasive plant removal, tree plantings, etc.) Alyssa is deeply concerned about protecting natural places and the effects of the warming climate on Alaska's ecosystems. Her dream is to one day lead a completely waste-free lifestyle, to run a guinea pig rescue, and own a vegan soup kitchen/bakery.

Alaska Chapter election -- from previous page,

increase accessibility and involvement. You can also use the mailed ballot which you'll receive if you've requested paper communications.

Voting is one of the most powerful and easy ways to engage with your local chapter, and it is your right as a Sierra Club member. We hope that the new online voting option will allow for more members to engage in voting and connect with our chapter. We would love to engage with all of our members and hear about issues that matter to **you** and how we can work together to explore, enjoy and protect this wild place we call home. Please reach out to us on facebook or email us at alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org. We are hosting a holiday party on December 8 at the Anchorage Kincaid Chalet and would love to see you there! .

Happy holidays!

-- Hope Meyn, Alaska Chapter Vice Chair

Candidate for Chapter Chair

HEATHER JESSE

Heather Jesse is a lifelong resident of Anchorage, Alaska, and a recent graduate of the University of Alaska Anchorage, where she earned her bachelors of business administration in economics in May, 2019. Heather currently works at UAA where she has recently accepted the position of Financial Aid Counselor after working for the Office of Financial Aid for almost two years. As a student, she was an active member of the student body, serving on UAA's Green Fee Board from August 2016 to May 2019. As a member of the Green Fee Board, she helped champion many sustainable improvements to the campus, including introduction of hydroponic growing cabinets and erection of 27 solar panels on the campus' humanities building. Since graduating, Heather has become an active member of the nonprofit Alaska Trails. The mission of Alaska Trails is to build and maintain sustainable trails across Alaska in an effort to increase the use and value of Alaska's extensive trail system. As a proud member of the Anchorage community, Heather is excited about the prospect of serving on the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter and furthering her conservation efforts to cultivate a safe and friendly Alaska to be enjoyed by friends, family, and visitors alike. ❖



Update: Pebble Mine Proposal Environmentalists Sue EPA

In October, Sierra Club was one of more than a dozen conservation groups who sued the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for failing to protect Alaska fisheries, jobs, communities, and way of life from the proposed Pebble mine. (see **sierra borealis** March & June 2019, March 2018, June 2017, Dec. 2015, and many earlier.)

The lawsuit charges that the EPA broke the law when it withdrew its previous 2014 Proposed Determination calling for protections for Bristol Bay, Alaska. Bristol Bay groups soon filed a related lawsuit, as did Trout Unlimited.

The EPA had announced in July it would abandon protections for the Bristol Bay watershed. According to news reports, the reversal occurred after President Trump met with Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy, a proponent of the mine.

Trustees for Alaska filed the suit on behalf of 12 clients: Alaska Center, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Alaska Wilderness League, Cook Inletkeeper, Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of McNeil River, McNeil River Alliance, National Parks Conservation Association, National Wildlife Federation, SalmonState, Sierra Club, and Wild Salmon Center. NRDC joined the case representing itself. Earthworks also joined the case and is represented by Earthjustice, a nonprofit environmental law firm.

The litigation was filed weeks after Senator Lisa Murkowski expressed concerns over the scientific and technical deficiencies in the Army Corps' draft environmental impact statement for Pebble. As chair of a Senate subcommittee, she supported an appropriations bill that encourages agencies to use their enforcement authorities to protect Bristol Bay.

EPA's Action "legally indefensible"

"Pebble Mine faces near-universal opposition, and for good reason," said Sierra Club attorney Peter Morgan. "It would gouge a hole in the Bristol Bay Watershed, threatening the abundant wildlife in Bristol Bay and the thriving fishing economy that depends on it. Today we take an important step to fight back against the Trump administration's plans to greenlight this destructive project."

"The EPA's attempt to reject its own science-based conclusions is clearly arbitrary and capricious, political, and legally indefensible," said Katie Strong, senior staff attorney for Trustees for Alaska. "The EPA's Proposed Determination found that even a small mine in the headwaters of Bristol Bay could devastate the region's fisheries and communities. Science overwhelmingly supports that conclusion, yet this administration continues to aggressively undermine science."

Tim Bristol, executive director of SalmonState, said, "Pebble Limited Partnership perpetuates a myth that building a colossal open-pit and underground mine will not have negative impacts. Backroom deals and cronyism between political appointees and mining lobbyists have left us with no choice but to petition the courts for relief." ❖

-- from an October 2019 press release by Trustees for Alaska

Book review—
“Listen to Bears”



In *One of Us, A Biologist's Walk Among Bears*, Dr. Barrie Gilbert, a grizzly bear scientist and retired Utah State University professor, relates what he has learned about grizzlies during 40 years of observing grizzly-human interactions in Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, Alberta, coastal British Columbia, and Katmai National Park and Preserve.

His central theme and purpose is that
*...we can live with harmony with bears if we choose.
They tell a story that our fear of bears is unrealistic.
They don't want to hurt us; in fact, they even take some
of their cues and good ideas from us, if we let them. As
the late naturalist Charlie Russell was fond of saying,
we rarely listen to bears to hear what they are saying.*

He focuses on his park-funded field research at Katmai's Brooks River, which hosts the most important grizzly bear concentration area in the national park system. He and his graduate students and former park biologist Tamara Olson studied human-grizzly interactions and bear behavior as the number of bears and bear watchers steadily increased. The researchers found that excessive numbers of visitors plus the nearby vicinity of Brooks Camp, consisting of the private Brooks Lodge and NPS park visitor and maintenance facilities in prime bear habitat on the north side of the river, are interrupting bear travel routes and habitat use, thus altering the bears' natural behavior. And despite this interference and the continuing presence of hundreds of visitors daily during the peak salmon run, grizzlies and people peacefully coexist. The bears are not hunted, they have an ample supply of protein-rich salmon and other food, and upon arrival, bear-viewing visitors and anglers are instructed to keep a safe distance from the bears.

Dr. Gilbert notes that in heavily visited parks and other areas in which he conducted research, where grizzlies are collared by researchers, sometimes repeatedly; or where they are chased off by agency personnel or harassed by visitors; or where trophy bear hunting is allowed; the bears are less tolerant of humans than the blasé bears of Brooks River. To accomplish “*liv[ing] with harmony with bears*,” Gilbert says more grizzly bear habitat should be managed as bear sanctuaries, although he doesn't specify candidate areas (Admiralty Island National Monument, which is open to trophy hunting of grizzlies, is one that qualifies).

To its credit, the Park Service edged toward harmony during the Obama Administration when it banned the baiting of grizzlies (and black bears) by sport hunters (but not subsistence hunters) in the national preserves in Alaska. The Trump Administration, strongly supported by the State of Alaska, soon revoked the Service's no-baiting regulation.

As the State continues its endless war on bears and wolves, Barrie Gilbert offers a major and timely contribution to the debate over grizzly management. ❖

— Reviewed by Jack Hession

The Ambler Road: "Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project"

The proposed Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project (aka “Ambler Road”, and hereafter, the Project or the Road) of interior Alaska is a monumental undertaking.

According to the Executive Summary of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) has applied for:

“a right-of-way (ROW) authorization across federal public land. The ROW approval would allow for an industrial access road from the Dalton Highway westward to the [Ambler Mining] District in north-central Alaska. The application proposes construction of a road, including multiple material sites, temporary construction camps and long-term maintenance camps, airstrips, a fiber optic communications line, radio communications sites, and guard stations. The requested term of the ROW authorization is 50 years, after which the road would be closed and reclaimed (i.e. camps, communications, bridges, and culverts removed).” The Project is intended to be a restricted-access toll road, public access prohibited.

AIDEA wants to finance construction of the Road to connect the Ambler Mining District to Alaska's limited road system, so that Canadian firm Trilogy Metals can commence operations on a series of copper, zinc, and bornite open-pit mines in the District and have a way to truck the ore to ports near Anchorage.

The Road would traverse the river plains and foothills along the south side of the Brooks Range for 211 miles from the Dalton Highway westward to the Ambler Mining District (currently accessible only by air). The Road – as described by AIDEA's preferred alternative – would cross about 45 miles of BLM and NPS-managed lands, parallel within one-mile-proximity a 16-mile section of Wilderness-designated Gates of the Arctic National Park, have 18 major river crossings, require 11 major bridges (one of which would cross the Kobuk Wild and Scenic River), and would pose a multitude of threats to wildlife—such as grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, moose, wolverines, and three different caribou herds, and to fish, and soil-, air-, and water-quality. The visual impacts of such a massive project would mar an otherwise pristine landscape.

A similar operation—Red Dog mine north of Kotzebue, has been plagued by toxic levels of windblown lead and zinc dust, and wastewater discharge issues, with resulting fines and a major lawsuit between developer Teck Resources and the Native village of Kivalina.

ANILCA language gives basic permission

The legislation allowing a proposal with such a dizzying array of environmental impacts to even reach the desks of federal land managers is a subsection of the Alaska National Interest Lands and Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980 – Section 201 (4)(b): (b) Congress finds that there is a need for access for surface transportation purposes across the Western (Kobuk River) unit of the Gates of the Arctic National Preserve — *continued page 7*

On September 21, for International Coastal Cleanup Day the Sierra Club held a trash cleanup work party along the Coastal Trail starting at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage. Using the Ocean Conservancy's CleanSwell app, volunteers recorded how much they collected of each type of trash. The app then automatically sends the data to Ocean Conservancy's global ocean-trash database. The trash item that the group picked up the most was cigarette butts (105), with "plastic and foam pieces" coming in second with 63 pieces collected. Beverage cans (aluminum) were also common (59 cans collected), along with plastic bottles (40 collected). We also found various other items—including a refrigerator door, a fire extinguisher, and a backpack!

In the past couple of months, the Alaska Sierra Club also hiked to Rabbit Lake, along the South Fork Rim Trail by Prospect Heights, and along the trails at Eagle River Nature Center. More hikes will be announced soon—follow us on Facebook to stay informed. <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubAlaska>

Upcoming Outing

What: DIY Holiday Wreath Making with Sierra Club Alaska

When: Saturday, December 14 starting at 1 pm

Where: Meet at Bartlett High School - main parking lot, near the relocatable buildings

Let's make festive winter wreaths out of natural materials! We will meet in the parking lot at Bartlett High



photo: Adma Babcock

Alaska Chapter volunteers are busy on coastal cleanup day in September

School and then hike on the rolling trails nearby and collect spruce boughs. Then, you will have the option of going with the main group to Sierra Club member Amy Murphy's home (about ten minutes from the high school) to make wreaths together, or you can take your boughs home and create wreaths on your own! Sierra Club will supply wire frames; please RSVP so we will be able to have frames for everybody who needs one. Feel free to bring your own materials (pine cones, berries, etc.) to decorate if you wish!

Please contact Alyssa if you are interested in attending this event at alyssaschaef@gmail.com.

-- by Alyssa Schaefer

Ambler Road Briefing

-- from page 6

from the Ambler Mining District to the Alaska Pipeline Haul Road) and the Secretary shall permit such access in accordance with the provisions of this subsection.

In theory, the Road itself will be reclaimed after 50 years (despite the notorious difficulty of reclamation in subarctic environments and the resultant mine sites and tailings repositories needing active maintenance and management **in perpetuity** to guard against airborne toxic levels of heavy metals and naturally occurring asbestos, and that bane of so much heavy metal mining—Acid Mine Drainage.)

While AIDEA officially submitted the application, the cast of characters is extensive, with the primary beneficiaries being Trilogy Metals Inc.—which plans to construct and develop a series of open-pit mines—and NANA Regional Alaska Native Corporation, which owns much of the land where the mines would be located and would partner in the venture with Trilogy.

Trilogy expects production of their anticipated Arctic operation to reach 10,000 tons/day of material. Statements by Trilogy CEO Rick Van Nieuwenhuysen in 2018 indicate a strong interest in shipping product to the Asian countries of Korea, Japan, and China from Anchorage...nullifying any arguments that the ore produced will contribute to domestic self-sufficiency and/or alleviate any national security concerns about dependency on foreign nations for critical materials.

This project would irrevocably alter one of the last great wildernesses on Earth so that a Canadian company can grow ever wealthier by selling the product to China. Expected to operate for no more than 15 years, the AMBLER open-pit mines would give a short-lived economic boost in exchange for long-term environmental degradation of these untrammeled landscapes that are truly endangered and now very rare.

AIDEA estimates that construction would cost in the range of \$190 to \$300 million, whereas AKDOT estimates \$400 million for initial construction and \$8.5 million per year for maintenance. Research by Ground Truth Trekking suggests that Trilogy Metals is likely to pay back only a fraction of the Road's cost to AIDEA.

Since the Project – or some iteration of it – is provided for in ANILCA, it may literally take another Act of Congress to block the planned development.

The DEIS is available on the BLM's Central Yukon Field Office ePlanning website at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=111130>.

More information can be found at:
Brooks Range Council (brooksrangecouncil.org)
Ground Truth Trekking (groundtruthtrekking.org)

The public comment period closed at midnight (AK time) on October 29, 2019. ❖

-- by Adam Babcock, Alaska Chapter

Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

Sierra Club Alaska Chapter

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Anchorage AK 99523-0323

There is a NEW Chapter email address to reach the chair and administrative staff: alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org.

Phone: 907-338-2238 -- Denise Saigh Sierra Club Alaska

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



Passing of former Alaska Chapter staffer, Maryellen Oman

Maryellen Oman was an Alaska Sierra Club staffer--half national program assistant and half Chapter staff, from 2001 until 2009. Her sister Diane Sheldon sent us this obituary:

"Maryellen Haesloop Oman, 73, of Fredericksburg passed away on Sunday, November 17, 2019 in Reston, VA. Maryellen was born September 3, 1946 in Washington, DC, grew up in Maryland and graduated from Chatham College, Pittsburgh. She loved music and was an advocate for the environment working several years with Sierra Club, Alaska. She is survived by sisters, Betty Lee of Chester, MD and Diane Sheldon of Herndon, VA, two step-children, Anne Oman of Richmond, VA and Andrew Oman (Elizabeth) of Fairfax, VA as well as five step-grandchildren and five nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. Richard J. Oman and parents, Donald C. and Betty V. Haesloop. A Memorial service will take place at 1 pm on Saturday, December 14, 2019 at Reston Bible Church, 45650 Oakbrook Ct., Dulles, VA 20166.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Sierra Club Alaska."

Cynthia Wentworth, Alaska Chapter transportation activist who worked with Maryellen, told us: "Maryellen ran the Alaska Chapter's commuter rail planning committee for seven years, from 2002 until 2009 when SC lost funding for her position. She was the impetus behind commuter rail being chosen as one of the best projects on the Sierra Club's "Smart Choices Less Traffic" Map in 2002. She was passionate about Alaska and an incredibly hard worker who worked with the business community as well as environmentalists. Coming from an urban area (Washington DC) where she was used to taking trains, made her see how rail could protect Alaska's wild lands as south-central Alaska grew." ❖



Please keep an eye on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubAlaska/>

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

photo: from Diane Sheldon



photo: Vicky Hoover

Maryellen in 2015 in Fredericksburg, VA, where she and her husband Richard