



Sierra Borealis

alaska report

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
SEPTEMBER 2016



Celebrating NPS Centennial with *Fresh Tracks* in Nature

This has been a landmark year for Sierra Club to connect more people--especially youth--to the outdoors as our organization and the entire country celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. Our nation's youth, and the wild spaces we share in our National Park System are among our country's greatest resources. We know the two need one another now, more than ever.

That's why this year a new outdoor leadership program, Fresh Tracks Expeditions, was launched to connect more youth to each other and to their inheritance as the next generation of stewards of our nation's most special wild places. Fresh Tracks is a partnership between Sierra Club, IslandWood, Children & Nature Network through its Natural Leaders, REI, and action-sports retailer Zumiez.

Inspired by the Obama Administration's commitment to connecting more young Americans to the outdoors and in support of the goals of the "My Brother's Keeper" Alliance [<http://www.mbkalliance.org/>], the first ever Fresh Tracks expedition enabled young leaders from Compton, California—a community located in the southcentral Los Angeles area-- and from across Alaska to come together to experience diverse cultures, explore the outdoors, and build critical leadership and workforce development skills.

The Fresh Tracks program went from August 2 to 15. Eight young people from the Los Angeles area and eight from Alaska, ages 17 to 20, came together for this first ever Fresh Tracks experience.

Starting out in Seattle, the group had the opportunity at the campus-like natural environment of Island Wood to do team building and gain leadership skills through guided exercises, dialogue, and presentations.



photo: Allii Harvey

Fresh Tracks youth visiting Arctic Village overlook the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The teens then flew to Los Angeles, where they stayed in dormitories at University of Southern California and ate every night at the dining hall on campus. Participants learned about the USC admissions process, experienced a Drew League basketball game, visited nearby parks and neighborhoods. They also met with Mayor Aja Brown of Compton, and the Mayor presented them with certificates of accomplishment in the Fresh Tracks program.

"The City of Compton and our My Brother's Keeper team is proud to partner with Fresh Tracks on developing, cultivating, and displaying the leadership potential of Compton's young adults," Compton Mayor Aja Brown said, at the launch of Fresh Tracks. "This is a wonderful opportunity for young people from our community to expand their cultural understanding and make a real connection -- continued page 2

to the outdoors beyond the borders of Compton. I'm proud to support President Barack Obama's commitment to making sure that more young Americans have the opportunity to build critical leadership and workforce development skills that they need to succeed. Young people are our future. Every investment in our youth is an investment in a better tomorrow."

Finally, participants traveled together to Alaska. In Fairbanks, Fresh Tracks visited the Morris Thompson Cultural Center and spent the morning with leaders from the Gwich'in Nation learning about indigenous culture, subsistence, and language. The Young people then traveled on all the way to Arctic Village. With a panoramic backdrop of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge behind him, local guide and hunter Charlie Swaney talked about the connection between the youths' experience and



photo: Alli Harvey

Fresh Tracks youth enjoy Denali National Park, where closing ceremonies for their venture took place

what he hoped they'd bring back home with them: a sense of this special place and how critical it is to protect it from oil development, so that others can have this same way of life for generations to come.

Of the experience, youth participant Kimberly Pikok from Barrow said, "I see Fresh Tracks helping me become a leader by giving me the skills to communicate with my community. I actually have an idea of starting my own leadership camp in Barrow for younger kids."

The future of our parks and public lands, and the health of our planet, will depend on a new generation of guardians who reflect the full diversity of our country. These young people, in turn, will inherit challenges that require leadership and workforce development skills, compassion for community, and a global perspective on social, environmental, and economic issues - all traits that can be fostered through life changing experiences in the outdoors.

Interested in learning more? Follow Fresh Tracks youth and participants: <http://freshtracks.tumblr.com/> ❖

-- by Alli Harvey

(And see *sierra borealis'* essay on NPS 100th-- March 2016.)

Alaska Chapter and Group Elections Coming Up

Alaska Chapter Needs You

The Alaska Chapter is in an exciting time of transition to new leadership.

Sierra Club policy and priorities are set by its active volunteers, in democratic processes. Every year, local leaders are elected by the Sierra Club members to their Chapters' Executive Committees. Here in Alaska, at the end of this year, Alaska Chapter Excom members who have served for many years are retiring. Fortunately, some new dedicated, energetic activists are stepping up to run for the ExCom.

And we need more people ready to work to protect Alaska's fish, wildlife, and natural beauty and to influence local decision makers. Would you like to help decide Sierra Club policy? Or do you know someone else you would like to nominate? Please don't hesitate to step forward yourself or nominate another interested volunteer. If you are a Sierra Club member and would like to run, or would like to nominate another member who is willing to run, please contact a member of the Alaska Chapter Nominating Committee for the 2017 - 18 term:

Lindsey Hajduk lhajduk@gmail.com ,
 Yasuhiro Ozuru yasozuru@gmail.com ,
 Besse Odom futureMDOdom@gmail.com , or
 Suzanne Schafer suzeqzin@gmail.com.

The two-year Executive Committee terms are staggered so that half the committee is elected each year. The deadline to submit names to the Nominating Committee is Wednesday, November 2, 2016. The Nominating Committee will report the names of nominees to the Executive Committee at its regular meeting on Wednesday, November 9. The Chapter Executive Committee will also appoint an Election Committee at the same teleconference meeting on November 9; no candidates may serve on the Election Committee. Members who wish to run but are not nominated may run if they submit to the nominating committee a petition to run signed by fifteen (15) members of the Chapter. The deadline for candidate petitions is Wednesday, November 23. This is also the deadline to submit ballot issue petitions. Ballots will be printed and mailed no later than Friday, December 16. Marked ballots must be received at the Sierra Club office in Anchorage by Friday, January 13, 2017, and will be counted by the Election Committee starting at 5 pm. (This notice and schedule are in compliance with Sierra Club bylaws.) ❖

NOTICE to ALASKA CHAPTER Members:

At its regular November meeting, the Chapter ExCom will discuss and vote on a proposal to improve the efficiency of its activities by dissolving the separate Excoms of the three regional groups--no longer seen as necessary due to improved current communications technology. Thus, the Tongass Group representing Southeast Alaska, the Knik Group representing Anchorage and Southcentral, and the Denali Group representing Fairbanks and Interior Alaska would cease to have separately elected executive committees, with the Chapter's Excom handling financial decision making for all. Local conservation activism will not be affected. If you wish to be heard on this matter, please call in to the meeting on Nov. 9, at 5 pm; call toll-free to 1-866-501-6174, then the "code" 1002300#.

-- Pamela Brodie, Alaska Chapter chair

Alaska Chapter 2016 Planning Retreat – Mapping the Way Forward

The Alaska Chapter held a gathering of present and upcoming Chapter leaders--a "retreat"--in Anchorage this summer -- on July 31 and August 1.

As a member of the Sierra Club's national Leadership and Capacity Building Team, I was privileged to be asked to attend, and I flew from Utah to join in.

The Chapter leadership has recognized the need to reach out into the community to invite new people with new talent, skills and commitment to confront the many environmental challenges we face in Alaska. It was this realization that led to the retreat.

Back in 2015 Executive Committee member Lindsey Hajduk, with the support of Chapter Chair Pam Brodie and other chapter leaders, started to draft a plan for building the ranks of volunteer leaders in the Anchorage-based Knik Group. Early this year the Chapter engaged Sierra Club organizer Laura Comer to devote a portion of her time to helping the reorganizing effort. In collaboration with volunteers, Laura planned the summer retreat.

Eleven Alaska volunteers attended the two-day gathering. National Board of Directors member Susana Reyes also attended. In addition to presenting the Sierra Club's national priorities, Susana spent two days in the field meeting with Alaska Natives and visiting Kenai Fjords National Park and its retreating Exit Glacier.



photo: Laura Comer

During the Chapter retreat, Director Susana Reyes, back row, stands second from left, joined by Sierra Club chapter leaders.

In one of the first exercises of the retreat, participants chose two key areas where the chapter should focus its attention in order to become more effective. One area of focus is leadership development, including building relationships among Chapter leaders and connecting people with nature by means of a well-organized outings program. The other need is to become a more inclusive organization so that Chapter leadership reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of Alaska and lets allied groups see the Sierra Club as a partner they want to work with in broad coalitions.

Retreat participants worked on brainstorming a mission statement for the Alaska Chapter. with ideas

Director Susana Reyes on her Alaska visit:

I recently traveled to Alaska to get a first-hand look at the effects of climate change on the state and connect with leaders in the state's Sierra Club chapter. To be frank, when I visited the Exit Glacier in Kenai Fjords National Park I felt helpless upon seeing its rapid retreat. I felt helpless also when I observed the struggles of Alaska's Indigenous people--especially the Inupiat whose coastal homes and livelihood are being eroded by sea level rise and the Athabascans who are fighting against the coal mining projects that are impacting the health of students and nearby villages.

The state is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and the revenues they bring, which have allowed taxes to be low or non-existent. What a conundrum, right? And where's the urgency in fighting climate change in all of this? It's not fair that these Native communities should have to bear the burden of generations of our fossil fuel use.

True, I felt helpless. But not hopeless--I also felt angry and more emboldened to fight the fight. It's a leap of faith for Alaskans to take on climate change with bigger and more diverse partners and allies. I left the state optimistic about what Sierra Club can accomplish by building grassroots coalitions that include diverse people who can bring their own passions and perspectives to the fight against fossil fuels and who can understand how transformative the changes will be. ❖

(Susana Reyes lives in Los Angeles and works in the office of Mayor Eric Garcetti as his Senior Sustainability Policy Analyst. She is the first Sierra Club Director of Filipino heritage.)

on bringing diverse constituencies together; defending and conserving Alaska's world-class environment; and strengthening connections between people and the environment for a healthy, just future for all Alaskans.

Pam Brodie presented the history of the Sierra Club in Alaska. Consideration of that history underpins the goal of having veteran Alaska Chapter activists share their knowledge and experience with newer volunteers.

The retreat laid out a plan to recruit candidates for election to the 2017 Executive Committee ("Excom") and to set a timeline for the Chapter election. Recruiting candidates is an especially important objective. Retreat participants made a commitment to search for candidates by combing through the chapter database, contacting community organizations and tapping their



photo: Laura Comer

What's Lawson LeGate expounding on in the Chapter retreat?

-- continued page 4

Sen. Murkowski's bills attack Alaska's public lands

As Congress nears its scheduled October 7 recess, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) scheduled a September 22 Committee hearing on 21 bills, most by Committee members, including four Alaska bills of her own and one by Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK). Her bills included in the hearing:

- S. 437, Improved National Monument Designation Process Act. Before a national monument could be designated under the Antiquities Act, the President would have to get the approval of Congress and of the legislature of the affected state, and comply with the National Environmental policy Act;
- S. 3204, King Cove Road Land Exchange Act.
- S. 3203, Alaska Economic Development and Access to Resources Act.
- S. 3273, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Improvement Act of 2016.

See the accompanying article (*page 5*) for the Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community's (GCACC) summary of Senator Murkowski's damaging efforts in S. 3203 and S. 3273 to transfer Tongass National Forest lands into private and state ownership.

Elsewhere in Alaska the Chairman's bills have similar designs on the public lands, including ANILCA conservation system units. For example, S. 3203 would open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing and convey to the village corporation of Kaktovik and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation title to 23,040 acres surrounding the village.

S. 3203 (in addition to its harm to Tongass lands), would amend the so-called "no more" provision of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) that terminates executive branch withdrawals of over 5,000 acres unless Congress enacts a joint resolution of approval within one year after the withdrawal. The amendment would apply congressional approval to any withdrawal of 5,000 acres or more that "limits, or has the effect of limiting or impeding activities and uses allowed on public lands as of the date of enactment of this section," including wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, Endangered Species Act critical habitats, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

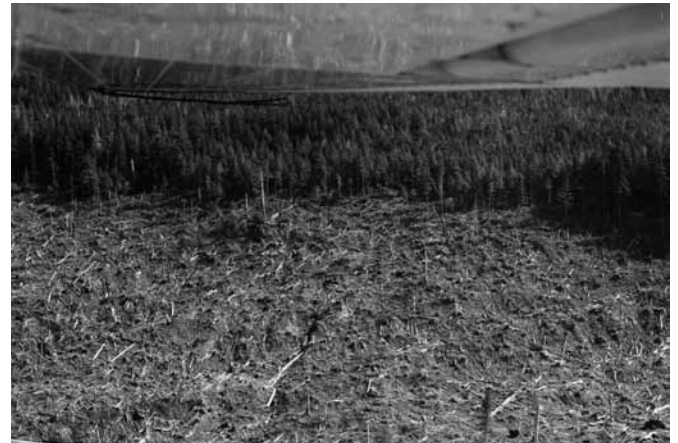
Chapter Chapter Retreat

-- from page 3

personal networks. A Nominating Committee would be named to review candidates. (See election article, page 2).

As a senior volunteer who assists Sierra Club chapters in organizing efforts, I came away from the planning retreat confident that the Alaska Chapter has drafted a clear way forward to increase its effectiveness. There are enormous environmental challenges in Alaska. I believe we will soon hear from a new generation of Chapter activists about how they are successfully meeting those challenges. ❖

-- Lawson LeGate, Salt Lake City, Utah



Sen. Murkowski's plan for Alaska's forests

(ACECs). The amendment also revokes existing ACECs established by the BLM.

S. 3204, King Cove Road Land Exchange Act.

Provides for a federal-state land exchange designed to put a road across the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness.

S. 437, Improved National Monument Designation Process Act. Before a national monument could be designated under the Antiquities Act, the President would have to get the approval of Congress and of the legislature of the affected state, and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

S. 3273 authorizes the Cook Inlet Region Inc., an Alaska Native regional corporation, to select its remaining 43,000 acres from federal land, including from National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, and national forests. Units of the national park system, the two national forest monuments, and designated wilderness areas would not be subject to CIRI selections.

S. 3273 also grants 160-acre Native allotments to Alaska Native veterans, and approves Native allotment applications pending before the Interior Department when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was enacted on December 18, 1971. The bill also gives certain sand and gravel deposits in NPR-A to the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation of Barrow at no cost to the corporation.

For further damaging bills by Sen. Murkowski, see *sierra borealis*, June 2016.



What you can do:

Let Sen. Murkowski know that you want to see your public lands—the heritage of all Americans—protected, not given away for exploitation by private corporations and the State. Urge the Chairman to take no further action on her four bills. Her proposed legislation is not in the national interest.

Contact: Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Building, Washington, DC 20515
Phone (202)224-4971
www.murkowski.senate.gov/contact/email. ❖

-- Jack Hession

Proposed Federal Legislation for the Tongass

Senator Murkowski leads the assault on America's largest national forest

The Tongass National Forest is under assault. There are those who want to carve it up, remove protections for critical fish and wildlife habitat, and diminish the public's voice in how it is managed. These have long been the goals of pro-development, big timber interests, and now with the support of Alaska's Congressional delegation they hope to make it all happen.

Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, and Congressman Young have introduced a flurry of bills which would:

- Carve out 2 million acres of forest from the Tongass National Forest, to be put in State of Alaska ownership for rampant clearcutting (S.3203);
- Give Alaska Mental Health Trust (AMHT) 20,000 acres on Revillagigedo and Prince of Wales Island for clearcutting, in exchange for land AMHT cannot reasonably develop, and exclude the exchange from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements (S.3006 & 3203);
- Exclude the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule¹, opening pristine old-growth forest for logging (S.3203);
- Establish a pro-development Alaska Land Use Council to oversee federal lands in the state (S.3005);
- Give 115,000 acres of Tongass forestland to five new corporations the legislation would establish, 23,000 acres each (S.3004 & 3273);
- In a good approach, *buy-out* Shee Atika Corporation's land holdings on Admiralty Island (S.3004 & 3273);
- Give Sealaska, Inc. 15,000 acres of forestland on Prince of Wales Island in exchange for the corporation's subsurface land under Shee Atika's above land (S.3004 & 3273);
- Allow Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) to select its remaining 44,000 acres of land entitlement from nearly anywhere in the state, including from the Tongass, instead of from its own region or nearby areas (S.3004 & 3273);
- Reopen the already twice-extended period for Native Vietnam veterans to select 160-acre land allotments, potentially as much as 600,000 acres in total (S.3004 & 3273).

➔ What you can do:

It would be game over for other users of vast areas of the Tongass if *any* of this legislation were to be enacted by Congress. It is clear that the goal of the pro-development lobby is to resurrect the unsustainable boom times of the timber industry in Southeast Alaska, and that it has the full support of our Congressional delegation. Their strategy to accomplish this is to move as much acreage as possible into private and state ownership, to avoid effective public oversight. Their tactics are about to unfold in deal-making in the halls and back rooms. Knowing this, there is no other option than to adamantly oppose all of this legislation. **Please send messages to each member of the delegation, especially Senator Murkowski, strongly opposing all of these bills.**

Please also encourage your friends and relatives throughout the nation to do so as well – their senators and representatives are likely to be the only brakes on this juggernaut; in particular it is budget riders that we must fear.

Regarding the AMHT land exchange: This is a dire situation, with AMHT threatening to put its existing forest parcels out to bid for logging, which would greatly damage community viewsheds and most likely cause landslides into residential areas. The solution we must press for is not a land exchange, but a *buy-out* of AMHT lands – just as with the above Shee Atika lands. **Press our delegation to modify S.3006 to do a buy-out instead of an exchange** – GSACC urges that approach and passage of the bill in that form.

The table below gives a clear view of how those provisions are incorporated into the five Senate bills. ❖

-- by Don Hernandez,
for the Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community (GSACC)'s forthcoming newsletter (<http://GSACC.net>).

(Don Hernandez is a commercial gillnetter living in Point Baker, member of the federal Southeast Regional Subsistence Advisory Council, and a board member of GSACC.)

¹ The Roadless Rule is a 2001 federal regulation intended to protect the social and ecological values and characteristics of inventoried roadless areas from road construction and reconstruction and certain timber harvest activities (source: U.S. Forest Service).

Table of Murkowski's 2016 bills	S.3004	S.3005	S.3006	S.3203	S.3273
Gives 2 million Tongass acres to Ak State Forest				•	
Exchanges 20,000 Tongass acres to AMHT			•	•	
Excludes Tongass from Roadless Rule				•	
Estabs. Ak Land Use Council		•			
Gives 115,000 Tongass acres to 5 new corporations	•				•
Gives Sealaska 15,000 Tongass POW acres for Cube Cove subsurface	•				•
Buys-out Shee Atika lands at Cube Cove	•				•
Allows CIRI to pick 44,000 acres, incl in Tongass	•				•
Land Allotments to Native Vietnam Vets	•				•



US FWS issues final regulations on sport hunting, trapping for wildlife refuges

Thumbs down for incompatible State regs

On September 6 the Fish and Wildlife Service issued final regulations (rules) governing sport hunting and trapping on the Alaska refuges. The changes are in response to the Alaska Board of Game's recent rules designed to reduce "predators"--bears, wolves, coyotes, and wolverines--in hopes of increasing prey species--moose, caribou, deer, and Dall sheep--sought by resident and nonresident sport and trophy hunters. With the exception of national parks and monuments, state **sport** hunting and trapping regulations apply to federal lands--including national preserves and national wildlife refuges--*provided that* the regulations are consistent with federal law, regulations, and policies governing wildlife management in the preserves and refuges.

Separate regulations governing **subsistence** hunting and trapping on federal lands are promulgated by the Federal Subsistence Board.

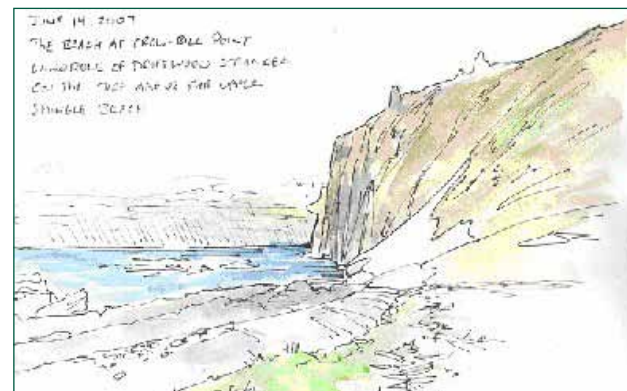
According to the FWS:

"In recent years, concurrent with its adoption and implementation of [intensive management] plans for predation control areas, the [Alaska Board of Game] has also authorized measures under its general hunting and trapping regulations that potentially increase the take of predators to a degree that disrupts natural processes and wildlife interactions. Examples of these recently adopted measures are:

- Harvesting brown bears over bait at registered black bear bait stations;
- Taking wolves and coyotes (including pups) during the denning season;
- Expanding season lengths and increasing bag limits;
- Classifying black bears as both furbearers and big game species (which could allow for trapping and snaring of bears and sale of their hides and skulls); and
- Authorizing same-day airborne take of bears at registered bait stations (5 AAC 85)."

In response to these practices, which the FWS found incompatible with federal wildlife refuge law, ANILCA, and the Wilderness Act, the FWS's final rule prohibited:

- Taking black or brown bear cubs or sows with cubs (exception allowed for resident hunters to take black bear cubs or sows with cubs under customary and traditional



Cape Thompson view by Fred Paillet

use activities at a den site October 15-April 30 in specific game management units in accordance with State law);

- Taking brown bears over bait;
- Taking of bears using traps or snares;
- Taking wolves and coyotes during the denning season (May 1-August 9); and
- Taking bears from an aircraft or on the same day as air travel has occurred. The take of wolves or wolverines from an aircraft or on the same day as air travel has occurred is already prohibited under refuge regulations.



Wolf © Dale DeArmond

The FWS also outlawed predator control on the refuges "unless it is determined necessary to meet refuge purposes; is consistent with Federal laws and policy; and is based on sound science in response to a conservation concern. Demands for more wildlife for human harvest cannot be the sole or primary basis for predator control."

Comparison with NPS's similar rules

On January 1 of this year the National Park Service issued similar final regulations that prohibit certain Board of Game intensive management regulations on the national preserves. (See **sierra borealis**, March 2016, Sept 2015, Sept 2014). A comparison of the two federal agencies' rules:

State-authorized practices both agencies prohibit

- Baiting of brown bears;
- Taking of bears [brown and black] using traps or snares;
- Taking wolves and coyotes during the denning season (May 1-August 9);
- Taking bears from an aircraft or on the same day as air travel has occurred; Take of wolves or wolverines from an aircraft or on the same day as air travel has occurred is prohibited under current refuge regulations. During the Clinton-Gore Administration, the NPS banned this practice for all species in NPS units.

Practices on which the agencies differ

- Taking black or brown bear cubs or sows. NPS prohibits, FWS does also but has an "exception ...for resident hunters to take black bear cubs or sows with cubs under customary and traditional use activities at a den site October 15-April 30 in specific game management units in accordance with State law).
- Using dogs to hunt big game. Banned by the NPS, which noted that "State law also prohibits using dogs to hunt big game," except dogs may be used to hunt black bears, an exception not allowed by the NPS. FWS rules are silent on this issue.

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Usibelli Coal exports bite the dust - a victory for the environment

In late August, the Usibelli Coal Company announced that it is indefinitely stopping coal exports out of Seward and has turned off the power at the Seward loading facility. A company spokesperson said, "We've seen fluctuations in the market over the years, this fluctuation is just lower than what we've seen in the past."

This victory for Sierra Club's campaign to stop our nation's use of dirty coal as a fuel followed another precedent-setting triumph in July: Sierra Club, represented by Trustees for Alaska, and several allies, including the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, won a U.S. District Court decision invalidating a 25-year-old permit for Usibelli's Wishbone Hill coal strip mine in Sutton, Alaska, potentially sending the company back to the drawing board.

Sierra Club and its partners in Alaska have worked for years to protect human health and the region's water from the effects of coal exports, pressuring the Seward coal loading facility to reduce pollution of air and water and battling proposed coal mines in the region. Russ Maddox, a fiercely dedicated Alaska Chapter volunteer leader and Seward resident, has been unrelenting in his work to stop the spilling of coal into Resurrection Bay at the facility. (See *sierra borealis*, Sept 2014) Late last year Sierra Club and Alaska Community Action on Toxics won a legal case that forced a clean-up of the loading facility and the funding of conservation projects in Resurrection Bay.

Since its start in 1943, Usibelli Coal Mine (UCM) expanded its operations to become the largest coal mining operation in Alaska.

The bad news for Usibelli and other companies hoping to increase coal exports is that Sierra Club and its partners are shutting down coal export proposals, cities and communities nationwide are rejecting coal export terminals, and the price of coal keeps falling—as renewable energy gains adherents and becomes competitive economically.

Without growth, the coal industry can't attract capital and cannot spend heavily on lobbyists and political contributions. And that is good news for the climate, for clean air and water, and people's health.

The Seward export facility closure is a clear signal

to the obstinate promoters of the proposed Chuitna coal mine and export terminal 45 miles west of Anchorage across Cook Inlet that their desired export market has faded. The proposed mine would devastate a significant portion of the Chuitna River, a remarkable wild salmon stream, by mining out 11 miles of stream bed. Not just digging in the stream, mind you, but actually digging down hundreds of feet beneath the stream bed. The project would destroy a valuable salmon fishery. (See *sierra borealis*, Sept 2014)

Alaska coal can't compete in a glutted, low-price coal market—and those conditions are not going to change. And unsustainable schemes to ruin sustainable, valuable natural resources like the Chuitna River and its salmon run need to face the realities of the declining coal export market and listen to the communities that are asking them to leave. Our work and that of our allies is succeeding in protecting our planet, wildlife, and people. ❖

-- Bill Corcoran,
Western Director, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign

Alaska Chapter 2016 summer outings

The Alaska Chapter outings team has been very busy this summer: they led more than 30 Chapter hikes totaling 130 miles with more than 170 participants.

Here is a photograph taken by new 2016 Chapter leader Myra Scholze, during a hike to Shelly Lake in Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.



FWS hunting regs -- from page 6

- Taking big game that is swimming. NPS prohibits this practice, noting that while state law also forbids it, a state exception "allows a hunter to shoot a swimming caribou from a boat under power or otherwise; it also allows the hunter to shoot a caribou that has emerged from the water onto the shore while the hunter is still in the boat under power." NPS rules have no exception. FWS is silent on this issue.

In summary, both agencies have very similar wildlife management mandates under federal law, and their revised regulations outlawing incompatible Board of Game regulations comply with these mandates, with one major exception, the

FWS's failure to rule out black bear baiting altogether. During the comment period the FWS was under heavy pressure from the State, other state fish and game agencies, and predator control enthusiasts to drop its proposed regulations.

As this issue of *sierra borealis* goes to press, Alaska Governor Bill Walker has just announced that the State will challenge the regulations in federal court, and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) has a provision in the pending Fiscal Year 2017 Interior Department appropriations bill that would block the regulations. ❖

-- Jack Hession

Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

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UPDATE-

Commuter Rail Planning Committee

Alaska's commuter rail planning committee is an informal adhoc community group being headed by myself and by LaMarr Anderson from the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. It is made up of interested individuals, environmentalists, and representatives from the Mat-Su Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage, the Alaska Railroad, and the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT). The group's purpose is to advocate for passenger rail for commuters between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. The Sierra Club had sponsored meetings from 2002 through 2007, and since the committee restarted meetings this March, we have made progress in getting rail incorporated onto Anchorage's Land Use Transportation Map and in getting the various entities talking with each other. (*sierra borealis*, June 2016.)

I reported on these activities at the Chapter's summer retreat; since the retreat, we have commented on the DOT's 2016-2019 Statewide Transportation Improvement Project (STIP) and helped the Alaska Center comment. Governor Sheffield attended our last meeting and spoke favorably on commuter rail at an Alaska Railroad Board meeting. He studied the *Sierra Borealis* article and asked for another copy.



Since June, I have learned important new information from the Sierra Club's National Transportation List Serve on the contribution of transportation to climate change. While, nationwide, power plants and transportation each account for roughly one third of CO2 emissions, since February 2016 transportation has surpassed power plants, and now makes up 34 percent of total emissions. That is why it is more important than ever

to plan for passenger rail for commuters between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley, the fastest growing area in the state. (Rail emits far less CO2 per passenger mile than other forms of motorized transport.)

The commuter rail planning committee, now growing in membership, will develop an Action Plan. The next meeting will be Thursday, Sept. 29 at 11:30 am, at Anchorage's Organic Oasis Restaurant, 2610 Spenard Road.

The commuter rail planning committee planned a booth at the Mat-Su Transportation Fair, on Thursday Sept.

22, 2016, 4-8 pm, Alaska State Fairgrounds, Palmer. Also participating in the fair are the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, cities of Palmer, Wasilla and Houston, the Alaska Railroad Corporation, Mat-Su Community Transit, and the Mat-Su Borough. ❖

-- Cynthia Wentworth