

## CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT=CONSERVATION IMPACT

### AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION: A COMMON SENSE SOLUTION FOR ALASKA

■ CONTRIBUTED BY RYAN SCHRYVER, ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & ALASKA CONSERVATION VOTERS

Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE) and Alaska Conservation Voters (ACV) know that Alaskans overwhelmingly share our conservation values. Numerous polls and the anecdotal evidence from our daily conversations show that Alaskans understand the threat posed by our rapidly changing climate and place a high value on our sustainable fisheries. Unfortunately, those shared values have largely not been represented by our elected officials.

One reason for this is that the electorate showing up to vote is not reflective of Alaska's actual population. There are currently more than 70,000 Alaskans who are eligible to vote but not registered and as many as 40,000 registered at the wrong address. The first step to electing leaders who more accurately reflect our conservation values is to make sure that all eligible voters are able to cast a ballot.

Alaska's current voter registration system creates unnecessary barriers to registering. Our 30 plus year old, paper-based system is antiquated and inefficient. We need a modern system that will allow all eligible Alaskans, regardless of their political affiliation, the opportunity to vote.

To this end, ACE and ACV have joined with a powerful coalition of community leaders, local businesses and Alaska Native interests to propose a uniquely Alaskan answer to this challenge. By linking voter registration to our Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) application



TURNING IN SIGNATURES ©PFD Voter Registration Initiative

process, for which every Alaska resident is eligible to apply, we can create a simple and secure process that will significantly expand the number of Alaskans eligible to vote. When concerned citizens get involved we can make real change that benefits our wild salmon resources and moves us toward a clean energy future.

*ACF is proud to support ACE and ACV's innovative efforts to encourage more Alaskans to register to vote. Learn more at [www.acvoters.org](http://www.acvoters.org).*



### FAREWELL & THANK YOU BRIAN!

Long-time Program Officer, Brian McNitt, will leave his beloved community of Sitka, and ACF after 16 impactful years, in May, to pursue an exciting opportunity with the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation in Minnesota. Brian worked for many years with ACF's partners to help build a movement in Southeast Alaska that ensures the health of the Tongass while supporting the region's cultural vitality and sustainable economies. *"It has been an honor to work with such an incredibly talented and committed group of people accomplishing important work protecting the places and lifestyles we care for so deeply,"* Brian writes.

*"On behalf of ACF, I want to thank Brian for his strength and courage over the years,"* says Michael Barber. *"He has helped forge new avenues for change in the Tongass and*

*Continued on pg. 5*



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LETTER from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

I'm eager for you to read this latest DISPATCH because it features the amazing work of three of our current grantees, as well as other important announcements. The theme that runs throughout is one of citizen involvement. Our collective ability to achieve conservation gains boils down to concerned citizens speaking up for Alaska's natural environment and the ways of life it sustains.

Alaska Center for the Environment and Alaska Conservation Voters' efforts are focused on simplifying Alaska's voter registration system, an effort we believe

will turn out voters who have a strong stake in a healthy environment. Northern Alaska Environmental Center's efforts are aimed at galvanizing a response to the latest offshore oil and gas development plans for the Arctic Ocean. And our newest grantee, Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, is empowering local fishermen to help advocate for the conservation of Alaska's halibut stocks.

There just isn't enough space to feature all of the meaningful work ACF is supporting around Alaska so we hope you'll consider signing up for our email communications to ensure you're getting timely updates from us about these and similar efforts, to help you stay informed...and engaged! (The sign-up information is to the left of my letter). Thank you for caring about Alaska and for being our ally in protecting its wild lands, waters and wildlife for today and the future.

For Alaska!

*Michael Barber*

Michael Barber, Executive Director

MISSION

Alaska Conservation Foundation protects Alaska's natural environment and the diverse cultures and ways of life it sustains. We do this by promoting conservation philanthropy and by strategically directing resources to conservation leaders, organizations and initiatives.

VISION

Alaska Conservation Foundation envisions an inspiring Alaska that is naturally thriving, biologically and culturally diverse, rich in wildlands, bountiful in terrestrial and marine life, sustainable in its economic development and thoughtfully protected—forever.

**BE A HERO: NOMINATE YOUR HERO TODAY!**  
ACF is calling for nominations for our 2016 Conservation Achievement Awards. Awards in eight categories will be bestowed at a festive luncheon in September.  
**Nominations are due by April 30, 2016.**  
More details and the nomination form can be found at [www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards).

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IN FOCUS

Bringing you current updates  
from ACF and our partners

PROTECTING ALASKA'S RENOWNED HALIBUT FISHERY

■ CONTRIBUTED BY LINDA BEHNKEN, ALASKA LONGLINE FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Each year thousands of Alaskans harvest halibut for subsistence, sport and commercial purposes—and Americans all over the country share this incredible bounty. Alaska's halibut fishery is one of the few long-term success stories in the complex world of fisheries management, with the stock sustainably harvested for over a century. But what most halibut lovers do not know is that Alaska's once abundant halibut fishery is facing a serious threat.

Halibut are commercially targeted with longlines, a traditional hook and line method that has been used to sustainably harvest halibut since the early 1900s. Catch limits are based on annually estimated abundance; when halibut abundance increases, longline catch limits are raised, and when halibut abundance decreases, as it has over the past decade, longline catch limits are reduced to conserve stocks for the future.

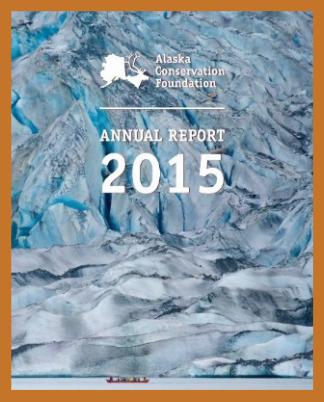
In recent years, trawl bycatch has all but displaced historic halibut fishermen in some areas. Trawlers targeting flatfish, cod, rockfish or pollock are currently killing (and discarding) over seven million pounds of halibut as bycatch each year. (The trawlers having the greatest impact are industrial-scale operations in the Bering Sea, although trawl bycatch is also a concern in the Gulf of Alaska.) Halibut killed in these fisheries are mostly small, juvenile fish, averaging just over four pounds. Because these fish have not yet reached maturity, their loss threatens the future of the halibut stock. And, although longline catch limits fluctuate with halibut abundance, halibut bycatch limits do not. As a result, bycatch pressure on halibut stocks actually increases as abundance decreases.

The Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA)—an alliance of small boat, commercial fishermen committed to sustainable fisheries and thriving coastal communities—is working with project partners such as the Alaska Marine Conservation Council and the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, to change this management disconnect. With funding from ACF, we are working to reduce bycatch and to build the scientific and political will to manage halibut bycatch with a dynamic "abundance-based" approach. If successful, this approach will help protect the world-renowned halibut fishery that Alaskans, and people across the nation, value.

To learn more about ALFA's efforts, visit [www.alfafish.org/halibut](http://www.alfafish.org/halibut).



LONGLINE VESSEL IN SITKA



ACF ANNUAL REPORT IS NOW AVAILABLE!

In this special 35th Anniversary edition, we recognize leadership—past, present and future—on behalf of Alaska's unparalleled natural environment and the diverse cultures and ways of life it sustains. From our grantees to our supporters—together we are a movement that continues to realize remarkable gains for Alaska conservation!

Find the report at [www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/annual-report](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/annual-report) or let us know if we can email or mail you a copy at [development@alaskaconservation.org](mailto:development@alaskaconservation.org) or 907-276-1917.



# AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES IN TIMES OF RAPID CHANGE

■ CONTRIBUTED BY ELISABETH DABNEY, NORTHERN ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



DEMONSTRATORS IN FAIRBANKS ©Northern Alaska Environmental Center

Alaska has been described as the “canary in the coal mine” of climate change impacts and Alaskans and Alaska’s wildlife are experiencing them first-hand, from eroding coastlines to increased wildfires. At a time when we need to be turning away from climate-disrupting fossil fuels, the Department of the Interior recently announced plans to open the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the Arctic Ocean—the third-largest pool of carbon on our planet—to offshore oil development in the next few years. If we want a reasonable shot at limiting global warming, scientists tell us we must leave all of Alaska’s offshore oil and gas in the seafloor.

If climate change were not reason enough to halt offshore oil leases in the Arctic Ocean, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management itself has estimated a 75% chance of a large oil spill resulting from its proposed lease sales. A large spill would devastate Iñupiaq coastal

communities and further harm marine mammals, both already threatened by climate change.

With capacity building support from ACF and a planned gift left by Ginny Wood through ACF, Northern Alaska Environmental Center (Northern Center) has been better positioned recently to build a stronger Fairbanks base of support that is quickly expanding to communities throughout Interior and Arctic Alaska. From this base we have been convening a coalition of concerned scientists, conservationists, members of the faith community and other citizens to try to halt these lease sales. Rarely do Alaskans have the opportunity to weigh in on an issue so critical to the future of our entire planet. We’re seizing this opportunity, and hope you will join us.

Simultaneously to working to stop the lease sales, the Northern Center is committed to ensuring a “just transition” from an oil and gas economy in Alaska. Achieving such a change requires fundamentally changing our state’s economic drivers and political structure. Climate change is the stimulus for the systems change that is needed.

For more information about Northern Center’s work, visit us at [www.northern.org](http://www.northern.org).

## UPDATE: BRISTOL BAY

The U.S. EPA stated recently that due to the delay caused by the litigation brought against the agency by the Pebble Partnership, any agency action to block mining in Bristol Bay will likely have to wait until the next Presidential administration.

## TED SMITH CONSERVATION INTERNS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Samarys Seguinot-Medina proudly hails from Puerto Rico. In 2009, she was placed at Alaska Community Action on Toxics, where she worked with residents of St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea who are suffering with serious health problems due to toxic pollution left behind by the military years ago. We’re gratified to report that today, while she completes her doctorate degree, Samarys is still at ACAT where she now not only directs their Environmental Health Program but is one of the lead scientists continuing to collaborate with the residents of St. Lawrence Island as they fight for their health and cultural survival.

Learn more about the Ted Smith Conservation Internship Program at [www.alaskaconservation.org/internships](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/internships).

## MEET OUR GREATEST SUPPORTERS

Learn what inspires some of our most dedicated supporters

### DRS. TOM HALL & ELIZABETH MCLOUGHLIN

Drs. Tom Hall and Elizabeth McLoughlin have traveled so extensively throughout Alaska even Alaskans are impressed. Between them, they have flown all over the state in bush planes, worked at an amateur observatory on a remote lake in Interior Alaska and rafted down the mighty Copper River. And all the while they have taken the time to get to know Alaskans and understand their interests and needs.

Tom and Elizabeth were introduced to ACF 10 years ago and have been dedicated supporters ever since. “Alaska’s wild places provide a place to regain a sense of wonder about our world and place in it,” Tom shares. “We give to ACF because the whole state is their priority, not just a specific cause or location, and they monitor which conservation activities warrant investment. ACF is a one-stop organization that is effectively putting our donations to work for us—protecting Alaska’s magnificence and the spirit of Alaskans.”



### TRUSTEE MARILYN SIGMAN, ALASKA VICE CHAIR



Marilyn Sigman moved to Alaska 40 years ago, soon after the first Earth Day when the need to live more sustainably on this planet became apparent to her. Her career has included work as a wildlife and habitat biologist and for many years as an environmental educator. She has had the tremendous fortune to have explored Alaska’s wild places and to see first-hand the abundance of its caribou herds, salmon runs and hundreds of thousands of migratory birds.

Marilyn has seen ACF evolve over the years, both as the director of a grantee organization and as a Conservation Achievement Award recipient. “ACF has provided tremendous support for Alaska’s conservation movement so it’s an honor to serve on the Board,” she writes. “Alaska’s unique balance of people, place and healthy ecosystems is becoming increasingly rare in the world. I am proud to support ACF because it is a wonderful way to invest in the groups working every day to advocate for Alaska’s environment and our diverse communities who depend on it remaining healthy.”

Brian McNitt story continued from pg. 1

influenced ACF for the long term. We wish him the very best.” Support for the Tongass efforts will continue with new ACF Program Officer Ricardo Lopez, who will also lead the Alaska Native Fund. ACF is excited for Ricardo to further bridge these two grantmaking programs.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

ACF is a community foundation for Alaska’s conservation movement. We are a 501(c)(3) organization. Our leadership and investment in efforts to protect Alaska’s wild lands, waters and wildlife is made possible by the generosity of donors and foundations from around the country. If you want to support ACF’s efforts and see more great work funded like what you read about on the pages of this Dispatch, please consider a generous gift today!

Use the enclosed envelope, go to [www.alaskaconservation.org/giving](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/giving), contact us at [development@alaskaconservation.org](mailto:development@alaskaconservation.org) or 907-276-1917.

THANK YOU!

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# HELP ACF PROTECT ALASKA'S WILDLANDS, CLEAN WATERS AND WILDLIFE

# THANK YOU!

KODIAK ISLAND ©Stacy Studebaker