

## PROTECTING ALASKA AND THE WAYS OF LIFE IT SUSTAINS

## Dear Friends,

Those of us who love Alaska are rightly concerned about the new administration's and Congress' devastating plans for the state. For over 37 years Alaska Conservation Foundation, our partners and you, have successfully advocated for the protection of Alaska's wildlands, waters and wildlife because we have long recognized their national significance. And now more than ever we must work to safeguard them for their cultural and global significance.

Defending against threats to the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge, the Tongass National Forest and Bristol Bay are as much about defending people as defending the environment—as much about human rights as about conservation.

Alaska Natives continue to rely on their lands, waters, salmon and caribou to provide for their communities. This is a profound spiritual relationship, woven throughout cultures across Alaska. It is also a relationship that impacts their daily lives in ways most of us will never fully understand. But this relationship could be lost forever if we allow Alaska's natural environment to be destroyed by careless decisions today.

The people you will meet in this Dispatch are so much more than ACF award recipients, interns, trustees and grantees. They live today as the bridge connecting Alaska's environment to its people. They work tirelessly to protect their ancestral lands and waters, and the plants and animals that ensure their physical, spiritual and cultural survival. Together, we're determined to make a lasting difference for Alaska's natural environment and those most vulnerable to the weakening of laws and regulations that could harm it.

To ensure that this fight for what we all value has the resources to win, ACF launched the Alaska Defense Fund and set a goal to raise one million dollars this year to support legal, organizing and advocacy work critical to guarding against harmful policies and plans that advance large-scale development and our climate crisis. Our Trustees committed \$200,000 to kick off the fund and thanks to the generosity of our supporters around the country, we have raised an additional \$100,000 to date.

Your ongoing generosity ensures Alaska's irreplaceable wilderness, wildlife, clean waters and cultures, remain not just intact, but thriving for generations to come. We cannot thank you enough for your continued support.

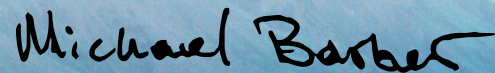
**ALASKA DEFENSE FUND:  
STAND WITH US**

Under OUR collective watch: the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has yet to be opened to oil and gas development, Pebble

Mine has yet to be built in Bristol Bay and industrial-scale logging of old-growth forests in the Tongass National Forest has decreased tremendously. But these successes are tentative now and pointed attacks have already begun.

*Please consider a tax-deductible gift today*

For Alaska!



Michael Barber, Executive Director



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President Jimmy Carter,  
Honorary Chair  
Marilyn Sigman, Chair  
Kerry Anderson, National Vice Chair  
Stacy Studebaker, Alaska Vice Chair  
Don May, Treasurer  
Michelle Ravenmoon, Secretary  
Lisa Marie Lang, At-Large  
Cliff Eames, At-Large  
Jim DeWitt  
Amy Gulick  
Dorothy Larson  
Rachael Posey  
Mark Premo  
Paul Reichardt  
Billy Wailand  
Ruth Wood

## STAFF

Michael Barber, Executive Director  
Mike Coumbe, Deputy Director  
Anna Dalton, Grants Manager  
Kate Gerlek,  
Director of Finance & Operations  
Scott Hed, Program Director,  
Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska  
Ricardo Lopez, Program Officer  
Vicky Parks,  
Finance & Development Assistant  
Amanda Piatt, Philanthropy Manager  
Anne Remick, Program Officer  
Lucas Veldhuis, IT Manager  
Danielle Williams,  
Director of Communications

## CONTACT US

Alaska Conservation Foundation  
911 W. 8th Avenue, Suite 300  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
(907) 276-1917

## STAY CONNECTED!

Sign up for our e-communications  
at [www.alaskaconservation.org](http://www.alaskaconservation.org)



*Thank you* to the photographers  
who contributed to this Dispatch!

Cover: Caribou in the Arctic National  
Wildlife Refuge ©Art Wolfe/  
[www.artwolfe.com](http://www.artwolfe.com)  
Pg. 4: Quinn Aboudara ©Kendall Rock  
Pg. 5: ACF Trustees & Staff  
©Stacy Studebaker  
Pg. 7: Dorene Cameron Schiro  
©Loren Cameron Collection  
Pg. 7: Wood Pile ©Stacy Studebaker  
Back Page: Sitka Sound  
©Bethany Goodrich

## TRIBUTES

We honor two conservation heroes  
and their remarkable contributions



**LOWELL  
THOMAS, JR.**

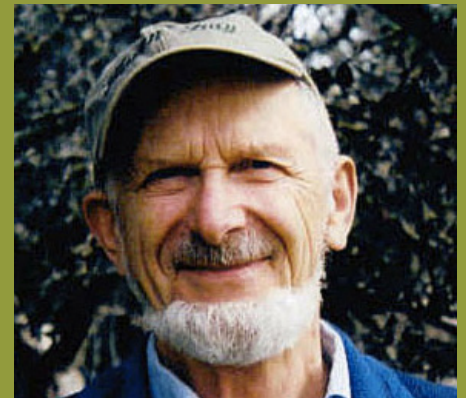
Former ACF Trustee, Lowell Thomas, Jr., passed away on October 1, 2016. He was 92. Lowell's commitment to Alaska's natural environment and the ways of life it sustains was steadfast. As an Alaska State Senator and later as Lt. Governor, he was a leader in separate efforts that created Alaska's beloved Chugach State Park and outlawed aerial wolf hunting.

Lowell's connection to ACF ran deep. He was a supporter from the beginning and he and his late wife, Tay, would go on to become ACF's single largest individual contributors. In 2004, ACF inducted him into our Conservation Hall of Fame. Lowell will be remembered by ACF for his kindness. He led an extraordinary life and we are grateful to have been a part of it.

*At the suggestion of Lowell's family, donations can be made in his memory to ACF. Should you choose to honor him this way, please notify us it is a memorial gift and we will inform his family of your generosity.*

## 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.



**CHUCK  
JOHNSTONE**

Chuck Johnstone, one of the founders of long-time grantee Sitka Conservation Society (SCS), passed away on February 24, 2017 at the age of 93. Chuck was a beloved friend, mentor and inspiration not only to Sitkans, but to the thousands of people across the U.S. whose eyes he opened to the wonders of the Tongass National Forest.

Chuck helped create SCS back in 1967 to organize Sitkans to stand up to industrial-scale logging. Because of his advocacy, West Chichagof Island will forever exist in its natural state as defined by the Wilderness Act, "where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man."

*ACF holds an endowment for SCS called the Living Wilderness Fund (LWF) to help ensure the Tongass continues to be protected. To learn more about Chuck's legacy or how you can contribute to the LWF in his memory, visit [www.sitkawild.org/about\\_the\\_lwf](http://www.sitkawild.org/about_the_lwf).*

## 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.

# GWICH'IN RISING: PROTECTING *THE SACRED PLACE WHERE LIFE BEGINS*

CONTRIBUTED BY BERNADETTE DEMIENTIEFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GWICH'IN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Gwich'in people draw strength from our elders, who began the work of protecting the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge decades ago. We need their strength and lessons today, more than ever. Alaska's congressional delegation and their friends who have long wanted to open the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge to industrial development, are making moves now.

Gwich'in people have lived in this region, which stretches from northeast Alaska to northern Canada, for 20,000 years, long before the current political boundaries were ever relevant. We are the northernmost Native Nation, and the Coastal Plain is sacred to us; we call it *lizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* or *The Sacred Place Where Life Begins*. This 1.5-million-acre area is the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, but it is not yet designated as "wilderness", which would finally protect it, the Porcupine Caribou Herd and our Gwich'in way of life permanently.

Every spring, the Porcupine Caribou Herd migrates to the Coastal Plain to give birth. Our people have always relied on the caribou for our food, clothing, tools—our cultural traditions. We must protect this special place, so that all the animals that live in and migrate to this area—the caribou, polar bears, musk oxen, millions upon millions of



Given the current climate of our federal government, we have grave concerns. The scale of development would devastate the wildlife and our people. They claim it's what Alaskans want, but the Gwich'in Nation, ACF and our many allies across the state are here to tell you differently.

One of our very respected elders Jonathon Solomon once stated, "What befalls the caribou, befalls the Gwich'in." Our identity is not up for negotiation. Our human rights should be respected.

On March 22nd, the Gwich'in Nation asked our friends around the country to take part in *Gwich'in Rising*—a day to share with the world the beauty of the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain. We asked people to help us share our videos, tweets and Facebook posts, and why the Arctic Refuge is special to them too. The response was overwhelming and inspiring. But it's not too late to join us in advocating to protect our homelands, caribou and way of life. Visit [www.our-arcticrefuge.org/take-action](http://www.our-arcticrefuge.org/take-action) and raise your voice to protect the Refuge!

Bernadette with Gwich'in Steering Committee Representatives and Friends

**Our identity is not up for negotiation. Our human rights should be respected.**

- BERNADETTE DEMIENTIEFF

birds—will always be around for us and for future generations.

Despite having the support of our many friends across the nation (most Americans, in fact!), Alaska's congress members have once again introduced bills (H.R. 49/S. 49) to open the entire Coastal Plain to oil and gas drilling.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bernadette Demientieff is Gwich'yaa Zhee Gwich'in** from Fort Yukon, Alaska. She grew up in Fort Yukon and Venetie. Bernadette is the granddaughter of the late Daniel and Margaret Horace of Fort Yukon, and the great-granddaughter of Marcis (Moses) Horace of Canada's Old Crow, Yukon Territory.

*ACF has been proud to support the Gwich'in Steering Committee for more than 30 years. We stand by them in their decades-long struggle to permanently protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge and their right to continue their way of life.*

Would you like to receive the Dispatch electronically, or opt-out altogether? Want to give us feedback on this latest issue? Please direct your questions or comments to [development@alaskaconservation.org](mailto:development@alaskaconservation.org) or (907) 276-1917.

## KLAWOCK, THE WATER AND HER PEOPLE

CONTRIBUTED BY QUINN ABOUDARA, COMMUNITY CATALYST, SUSTAINABLE SOUTHEAST PARTNERSHIP

The water laps against the side of the boat gently, the sound rhythmic and steady, like a heartbeat. The engine thrums softly in anticipation, then roars to life as I twist the throttle to push the 16-foot aluminum skiff away from the dock and onto Klawock Lake.

My name is Quinn Aboudara, and I'm a lifelong resident of Prince of Wales Island, which is in Alaska's Southeast Panhandle, not far from Ketchikan. Adopted and raised by the Taakwaneidi Raven/Sculpin Clan, Klawock Lake is more than just a simple body of water for me, it is part of my identity and life. Like many residents of Klawock and the surrounding communities, I harvest food from these waters like salmon, trout and beaver. Its tree-lined shores provide me with berries and roots to eat, and with bark and grasses for weaving.

Klawock Lake and the watershed that feeds it is a fragile system. Over the last 30 years, this life-giving watershed has seen substantial change, which has raised continued concern for the residents of Klawock. Some of these environmental changes include: declining fish runs, decreased snow caps on the surrounding mountains and more development along valuable spawning habitat.

In 2016, when employed with Klawock Cooperative Association (our federally recognized tribal government), I began working with the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP) as a community catalyst. As the catalyst for Klawock, I'm a part of a network of organizations working to find cultural, ecological and economic balance in communities throughout Southeast like mine.

Shortly thereafter, in partnership with Klawock Heenya Corporation, Kia Environmental and The Nature Conservancy, with funding provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs,

we began a four-month study to address one of our community's concerns: the declining returns of wild sockeye salmon to Klawock Lake. My partners and I began going to the lake with a single question to answer: Is there anything feeding upon the sockeye fry? What we returned with was more questions, because the data gathered from the first season of the study showed that sockeye fry predation was

minimal. A second study is in the works for 2017 to provide stronger data. Simultaneously, we will explore other potential factors in the declining salmon run. This information will be used to inform decisions about how we can help keep our fisheries healthy.

This work, a community priority of cultural concern, is a key component of both my position at Klawock Cooperative Association and as a community catalyst—giving me the opportunity to approach this, and many of the other challenges within my community, holistically. There are many challenges to living in a rural Alaskan island community such as the high cost of food, a lack of stable employment opportunities and limited economic development. Through the partnership between Klawock Cooperative Association and the SSP, I am able to address these, and pursue solutions like

working with local stakeholders to develop a trained local workforce, designing and building greenhouses, providing small business development workshops and many other opportunities.

It's through this multi-faceted approach toward creating a resilient community that I have dedicated my time and energy to protect the way of life in Klawock. I do this work for myself, my family and my community, so we may continue to prosper and enjoy our life along the bank of Klawock Lake *indefinitely*.

Quinn Subsistence  
Salmon Fishing in  
Klawock @Kendall  
Rock




---

**Klawock Lake is part of my  
identity and life.**

---

- QUINN ABOUDARA

---

ACF is proud to support the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, an innovative network of diverse organizations finding common ground to achieve cultural, ecological and economic prosperity for the region, which ACF believes is key to protecting the long-term health of the Tongass and its abundant fish and wildlife populations. To learn more, visit [www.sustainablesoutheast.net](http://www.sustainablesoutheast.net).

**Our Commitment to You!** At our February 2017 board meeting, ACF's Trustees and staff reaffirmed our top conservation priorities—we are committed to **protecting your public lands and waters** in Alaska and to **building resilience to climate change**.

**Mining Giant Walks Away.** ACF is elated to share that on March 31, 2017, PacRim Coal, the company that planned to develop the Chuitna Mine across the Cook Inlet from Anchorage, has suspended seeking permits. If developed, this would have been one of the largest strip mines in the country, the first to mine coal through an Alaska salmon stream and would have threatened the ways of life of the residents of Tyonek and Beluga. Congratulations to our long-time grantees and partners Chuitna Citizens Coalition, Native Village of Tyonek, Cook Inletkeeper, Native American Rights Fund, The Alaska Center, Trustees for Alaska and many others who for nearly a decade worked to raise awareness about and advocate against this destructive project. While efforts to stop PacRim in the near term were successful, work to protect the Chuitna watershed from future coal development will continue.

**Attacks on the Tongass.** Long-time grantee Southeast Alaska Conservation Council reports that among the myriad threats facing the Tongass National Forest, H.R. 232, a bill introduced by Alaska Rep. Don Young, is among the top concerns. It proposes giving 2 million acres of the Tongass to the State to manage—including many of the public use cabins, salmon streams and other favorite destinations in Southeast for both residents and visitors alike. It prioritizes timber production over all the other uses we value. And this giveaway doesn't just apply to the Tongass, but to National Forest lands across the country. Learn more at [www.seacc.org/tongass\\_giveaway\\_h\\_r\\_232](http://www.seacc.org/tongass_giveaway_h_r_232).

**Proactive Measures to Protect Wild Salmon.** During this uncertain time at the federal level, and with the State of Alaska in a fiscal crisis, Alaskans aren't waiting around for short-sighted decisions that roll-back protections for our valued wild salmon—we're advocating for positive, forward-thinking measures to safeguard them! A diverse coalition, including tribes and commercial and sport fishing interests, is actively rallying around legislation (AK H.B. 199) intended to strengthen Alaska's fish habitat protection laws. Fellow Alaskans, join us in standing for salmon! Learn why and how at [www.standforsalmon.org](http://www.standforsalmon.org).

**Save Bristol Bay.** Bristol Bay is the world's largest producer of wild sockeye salmon, but the Pebble Mine continues to loom under our new administration despite great opposition. The commercial fishing economy it supports is valued at over \$1.5 billion a year and more than 14,000 American jobs rely on it remaining healthy. Tell the new President you support protections for Bristol Bay—and the thousands of jobs it has already created! Voice your concerns at [www.action.savebristolbay.org/page/s/new-president-protect-bristol-bay](http://www.action.savebristolbay.org/page/s/new-president-protect-bristol-bay).

**Stay Connected.** Sign-up for ACF's e-communications to receive *The Landscape* and other timely updates straight to your inbox. Subscribe today at [www.alaskaconservation.org](http://www.alaskaconservation.org) or call 907-276-1917.

## STAND WITH US!

Did you know that 100% of our Trustees and staff donate to ACF? We believe it is our responsibility to safeguard Alaska's unparalleled wildlands, waters and wildlife and the ways of life they sustain for today and future generations. We know you agree.

Please help us continue to make the efforts you read about today possible. Use the enclosed envelope, donate online at [www.alaskaconservation.org/giving/donate](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/giving/donate) or call 907-276-1917.

## THANK YOU!



## ESAU SINNOK

2016 RECIPIENT OF ACF'S DENNY WILCHER AWARD FOR YOUNG ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

My name is Esau Sinnok and I am a student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks studying Tribal Management. I am from a community off the Northwest coast of Alaska called Shishmaref—an island that is greatly affected by climate change. Each year, we see three to four meters of land erode from the island because of loss of sea ice, flooding and storm surges. Since the 1950s, we have lost close to 3,000 feet of land.

For the past two years, I have been advocating for climate action, for Shishmaref and all communities in Alaska affected by a rapidly changing environment. In 2007, my uncle went across the ice to the mainland to hunt for ducks and geese. On the way back, he fell through the ice and didn't make it. His memory drives me—I don't want anyone else to experience loss from the effects of climate change whether a loved one, their traditional way of life or their home.

I joined Alaska Youth for Environmental Action and



became an Arctic Youth Ambassador for the US Chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which will continue through 2017. In 2015, I traveled to Paris to be a part of the COP 21 climate change negotiations. While there, I was on every news outlet possible to share our story and show how climate change impacts people. I continue to advocate for climate action in Alaska as well, talking to press, lobbying in Juneau and speaking at climate events.

I hope to see other young leaders prepare for the time when our current leaders retire and we must take on the mantle of fighting for the health of our communities. My plan after college is to run for Mayor of Shishmaref and then one day, for Governor of Alaska. I want to make a positive change not just for today, but for future generations. I hope that world leaders will hear my message and rise to the challenge of lowering our

carbon emissions; because climate change is not just a political issue to me. It's my future.

Read more about Esau Sinnok and the other Conservation Achievement Award recipients at [www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards/2016-recipient](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards/2016-recipient). And to learn more about Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, visit [www.akcenter.org/aye](http://www.akcenter.org/aye).

## CONNIE MELOVIDOV

2016 PARTICIPANT IN ACF'S TED SMITH CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

My name is Connie Melovidov and I'm from Saint Paul, a remote island in the Bering Sea, 300 miles off the west coast of Alaska...way out there. I'm proud to say my father and brothers are commercial halibut fishermen. Growing up around them fishing, and practicing a subsistence lifestyle, inspired my interest in science and fisheries conservation and today, it's my chosen career path.

I was fortunate to have participated in ACF's Ted Smith Conservation Internship Program last summer and was placed at Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC). Their mission is to protect the integrity of Alaska's marine ecosystems and promote healthy, ocean-dependent coastal communities—like Saint Paul. As a Biology major at the University of Alaska Anchorage, I'm very interested in ecosystem-based approaches to federal fisheries management and in ways to reduce bycatch. As their Fisheries



Conservation Intern, I took on roles that gave me the chance to learn more about these issues that I care about. The support and guidance I received from the AMCC staff was a highlight of my assignment.

Being raised on Saint Paul Island, I watched my father, brothers and other community members work hard to catch halibut and subsist off the lands and waters to provide for their families. I'm blessed to have been raised in this rich environment that has inspired me to want to protect it and our way of life. Today, I'm working part-time for AMCC, supporting their membership outreach efforts while I finish up my undergraduate degree this year. I'm even more motivated to pursue higher education in the hopes of conserving Alaska's renowned fisheries that have

given so much to me, my family and our community.

Learn about the Ted Smith Conservation Internship Program at [www.alaskaconservation.org/internships](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/internships). And to learn more about Alaska Marine Conservation Council, visit [www.akmarine.org](http://www.akmarine.org).

## DORENE SCHIRO

MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



I grew up in a remote Arctic village in Alaska where most of our food and even essential supplies came from the land. I learned how to make berry baskets from Clara Lee who was an esteemed basket maker from the region. My father made my backpack frame from wood we harvested, while I sewed the canvas pack. The picture to the left is of me picking berries in the Kobuk Valley with my basket and backpack, circa 1969. From those years, I also learned that the environment must not be over-stressed to provide food for our community, and a healthy place to live.

For those of us who care about Alaska conservation issues but who might not know which of the many conservation organizations around the state to support—or where our gift could have the greatest impact—Alaska Conservation Foundation is a vital partner. As their name implies, ACF is the foundation for conservation in Alaska, they have a statewide perspective of the critical work happening, and the ability to

advise donors on current issues and those that align with their interests. I feel very fortunate and honored to be a donor to, and a former Trustee of, ACF.

While I no longer live in Alaska, my heart is still there. I understand the environmental challenges facing it from a deep, intrinsic level and feel an urgent need to do whatever I can to protect it. ACF is a vehicle for enabling me to do that.

## LISA LANG, TRUSTEE

HYDABURG, ALASKA

As an Alaska Native woman who lives in a rural community in Southeast Alaska, I believe this year is an especially crucial time to maintain my support of our homelands and protect her as the glorious part of Mother Earth that she is. The numerous attacks by the current administration require us to collectively hold hands with the disenfranchised masses. If we stand together for Alaska, we are hard to beat. We have a responsibility to our future generations and I take that responsibility seriously.

The Alaska Native community's voice is underrepresented in most organizations. Serving on Alaska Conservation Foundation's board is an honor and a privilege that comes with a responsibility to navigate the very foreign world of a conservation organization. I serve as a vehicle to inform my fellow Trustees about rural Alaskan villages and to share our unique view of conservation. My fellow Trustees, Michelle Ravenmoon and Dorothy Larson add additional Native perspectives. I am proud to let the world know it is my pledge to do what I can to preserve our resources so that our children's children will have clean water to drink, fish to eat and fresh air to breathe.

This may be the most important time in the history of the organization to support ACF. It will take a collective effort to adequately fund programs aimed at addressing climate change, saving public lands and implementing true sustainable and ecological-based economies in Alaska. I urge you to join us.



## WELCOME & THANK YOU

ACF is pleased to announce and welcome our newest Trustees—**Mark Premo, Paul Reichardt and Billy Willand**. Thank you for sharing your time, expertise and passion for our vision with us.

We send heartfelt thanks to our outgoing Trustees—**Rhonda Bennon, Bill Leighty, Anna Plager, Dave Robertson, Dorene Schiro and Peter Van Tuyn**. ACF is better for your service and grateful for your continued dedication.

We are happy to announce that **Rhonda Bennon, Bill Leighty, Nancy Lord and Dave Robertson** have recently joined the ranks of our distinguished group of Emeritus Trustees—serving a combined 36 years between them!



# Alaska Conservation Foundation

911 W. 8th Avenue, Suite 300  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

## INSIDE...

- 1 ACF Launches Alaska Defense Fund**
- 2 Tributes**
- 3 Gwich'in Rising to Protect the Arctic**
- 4 Klawock, the Water and Her People**
- 5 The Landscape**
- 5 How You Can Help: Stand with Us!**
- 6 Meet Alaska's Emerging Leaders**
- 7 Meet our Greatest Supporters**

A subsistence fisherman heads to herring spawning grounds to harvest roe the traditional way, on submerged hemlock boughs. He will anchor his branches in a cove and return days later to pull them from the water, in hopes that thick layers of sticky roe cover each limb.

Sitka Sound ©Bethany Goodrich/ Sustainable Southeast Partnership

