



Fall 2009



DISPATCH

Alaska Conservation Foundation

441 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 402, Anchorage, AK 99501 • tel: 907-276-1917

fax: 907-274-4145 • email: acinfo@alaskaconservation.org

www.alaskaconservation.org • #D72

Bristol Bay Partners File Suit to Challenge Pebble Permits

On July 29, a Bristol Bay Alaska Native organization and several individuals filed a civil suit in Anchorage Superior Court on July 29 asserting that the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) repeatedly violated the Alaska Constitution in granting permits for exploration work at the Pebble Mine site. The lawsuit asserts that the agency failed to consider the public's interest in sustaining the region's rich salmon, wildlife, and subsistence resources, which are negatively affected by exploration activities.

The six-count civil suit was filed by public interest law firm Trustees for Alaska (an ACF grantee) on behalf of Nunamta Aulukestai. It does not seek monetary damages. In a press release from Trustees, Nunamta spokesman Bobby Andrew said, "Current exploration is having a serious impact on water and wildlife, yet the agency continues to rubber stamp permits and ignore the public interest."

Plaintiffs have asked for a preliminary injunction prohibiting the State from granting or extending permits for exploration and water use on mining claims held by the Pebble Limited Partnership. This effectively stops further exploration until the court makes a final decision, or until the Alaska Legislature enacts a new regulatory framework for onshore mining exploration. Plaintiffs have also asked the court to void all exploration permits already issued by DNR to the Pebble Limited Partnership, Pebble East Corp., and Pebble West Corp.



Pebble Mine protest in Dillingham © Matt Davidson

Is Pebble Really Such a Gold Mine?

Resounding majority of Bristol Bay residents say "No!"

A poll released on September 22 showed that an overwhelming majority of Bristol Bay residents strongly prefer their subsistence way of life to the promise of jobs at Anglo American's proposed Pebble Mine.

The poll was conducted by Anchorage-based Craciun Research, which sampled 411 Bristol Bay residents from six parts of the Bristol Bay region between May 18 and June 2, 2009. It was statistically drawn to get an accurate assessment of opinion in the Alaska Peninsula, Lake Iliamna/Lake Clark, Nushagak Bay, Nushagak River, Togiak, and Kvichak Bay. The margin of error was plus or minus 4.8 percent.

The poll, which is the most in-depth survey of local Alaska Natives' opinion on the Pebble Mine, found that 79 percent of respondents believe the mine, located in the headwaters of two of the region's largest salmon-spawning rivers, would damage Bristol Bay's wild salmon fishery—a key resource that many residents depend on for income and food.

If constructed, the Pebble Mine would be one of the largest open-pit gold and copper mines in the world, and it would threaten the existence of the planet's most productive sockeye salmon fishery. The region's salmon are a vital subsistence resource and are sought annually by thousands of sport fishing enthusiasts from around the globe.

Continued on page 3

A Word from the Director:

Why we protect Bristol Bay

By Nick Hardigg

This newsletter focuses on what many consider to be Alaska's single greatest environmental challenge to date: protecting Bristol Bay. One of the world's most productive ecosystems, Bristol Bay is of vital ecological importance globally. One word captures that significance: salmon! Bristol Bay is home to the **largest remaining wild salmon runs on Earth**. Every part of the bay's web of life is connected to salmon, and nearly every aspect of the lives of its people and wildlife is connected to salmon as well.

The annual migration of salmon from the bay's pristine waters to the free-flowing streams of its watersheds pumps millions of tons of protein and nutrients into the bay's ecosystem, providing the foundation for life in Bristol Bay and beyond. Now the salmon—and the ecosystem they sustain—face grave threats to their survival.

Staff

Nick Hardigg, *Executive Director*

Tina M. Adair, *Communications Manager*

Polly Carr, *Program Officer, Community Capacity*

Leah M. Doney-Neel, *Annual Giving and Development Coordinator*

Lorraine Guyer, *Donor Relations Manager*

Scott Hed, *Outreach Director, Sportsman's Alliance for Alaska*

Ramona Keebler, *Donor Information Specialist*

Brian McNitt, *Program Officer, Tongass Permanent Protection Campaign*

George R. Page, *Director of Finance and Operations*

Matt Rafferty, *Program Officer, Energy & Climate*

Ann Rothe, *Deputy Director*

Danielle S. Williams, *Program and Communications Associate*

For a list of ACF's Board of Trustees, visit www.alaskaconservation.org.

At the head of the watershed, a partnership of multinational mining companies wants to build one of the **largest open-pit gold and copper mines in the world**. Offshore, the US Minerals Management Service has proposed opening 5.6 million acres to oil and gas development. Without exaggeration, the world's last great remaining wild salmon runs are under threat of being lost forever.

A common element of success in these efforts is ACF's focus on empowering the region's people, not just by facilitating coalitions but by building capacity for advocacy. We serve as fiscal sponsor for Nunamta Aulukestai ("Caretakers of Our Lands"), an increasingly powerful coalition of Bristol Bay Native villages working together to manage their lands sustainably (see story, page 1).



Exploration rig, Pebble Mine East © Erin McKittrick, Ground Truth Trekking

The fight to protect the Bay is being waged on two fronts. The battle to preserve Alaska's most precious salmon habitat—headed by the ACF-sponsored Bristol Bay Working Group—has made great progress. They have issued legal challenges regarding permits and protections that may help stop the devastating development of the Pebble Mine.

Meanwhile, Friends of Bristol Bay—a coalition of conservation groups and commercial fishermen that received startup funds from ACF has convinced Secretary of the Interior Salazar and the Obama Administration of Bristol Bay's critical importance (see related story, page 6). The Administration is considering abandoning the Bristol Bay oil lease sale.

ACF also recently organized Alaska's first Seminar on Indigenous Capacity. This important gathering brought Native nonprofit leaders and foundations together to build partnerships and set priorities for building local capacity to advocate for protection of intact ecosystems that sustain traditional ways of life (see page 6). The seminar is part of our new Community Capacity program. Its purpose is to build a statewide conservation movement that will take on Alaska's increasing threats on non-federal land with a more powerful, unified Alaskan voice.

ACF has awarded more than \$xxx million to protect Bristol Bay in the past year. We have much more to accomplish, and can succeed with your continuing commitment to Alaska.

Continued from page 1:

Bristol Bay residents say “No!”

“What Anglo American’s CEO told us when we met in London earlier this year was that if local communities did not want the Pebble mine, then Anglo American would not build it,” said Bobby Andrew, spokesperson for Nunamta Aulukestai, a coalition of eight village corporations (Ekwok, Koliganek, New Stuyahok, Clarks Point, Aleknagik, Togiak, Manakotak, and Dillingham) that commissioned the survey.

“A majority of local people know the mine will pollute and destroy subsistence, commercial, and sport

The Numbers Don’t Lie

Sample results from the Craciun Poll

- ✧ The vast majority of residents favored renewable energy development (94 percent), value-added fish packing (89 percent), and tourism that Alaska Native communities could be involved (82 percent) in over mining.
- ✧ Survey respondents agreed almost unanimously (97 percent) that maintaining subsistence-lifestyle resources and their subsistence lifestyle is important.
- ✧ Seventy-two percent of those surveyed reported that a significant part of their diet came from fish, game, berries and other subsistence sources.
- ✧ Only 8 percent of survey respondents supported the Pebble mine project, less than the one-third the number that support oil and gas drilling.
- ✧ The strongest opposition to the mine was in the Nushagak Bay area, but even in Iliamna-Lake Clark area, where local businesses benefit more from current exploration activities, 73 percent of survey respondents oppose the mine.
- ✧ A majority (78 percent) thought the Pebble mine would damage commercial, guided, or subsistence fishing.

fishing and adamantly oppose it,” said Andrew. “We are asking Anglo American to honor its promise and withdraw from the Pebble project.”

Andrew and three other local Alaskans who met with Anglo American executives and shareholders earlier this year in London sent a letter to the company’s CEO, Cynthia Carroll, along with the survey results. They asked her to adhere to promises she made in a private meeting that the company would abandon the project if local communities rejected it.

“A majority of local people know the mine will pollute and destroy subsistence, commercial, and sport fishing and adamantly oppose it.”

~Bobby Andrew

The letter stated: “Opposition to the mine is overwhelming and unwavering despite significant outreach efforts by Anglo American and Northern Dynasty over the years.... With that in mind, we ask you to keep your stated commitment to forego development of the Pebble mine given the ongoing community opposition.”

“We are not going to risk our subsistence way of life, which has sustained our families for generations, on the Pebble Mine,” said Lydia Olympic, an Igiugig native who joined the group that met with top company officials in London in April.

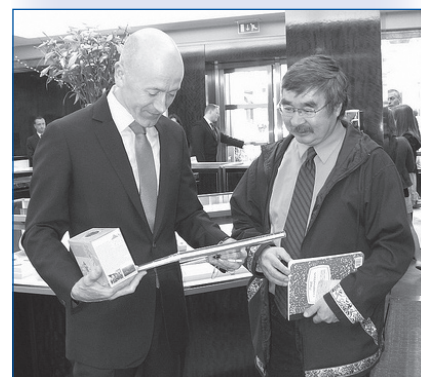
“Mining is not the answer,” said Olympic. “Sustainable development can only be based on our wild salmon, clean water, and renewable energy—not on a mine that will pollute our land and water with toxic waste.”

The Alaska Conservation Foundation is a primary supporter of Nunamta Aulukestai.

Jewelers Boycott Pebble Gold

Bristol Bay supporters gain unexpected advocates

After visiting Bristol Bay on a fly fishing trip, Tiffany & Co. Chairman and CEO Michael Kowalski decided the world-renowned populations of salmon are quite valuable—in fact, they are worth more than gold. At a meeting of his board of directors, Kowalski proposed that the region’s fishing community is right—Bristol Bay should be protected from the potential devastation of the huge



Tiffany & Co. UK President Melvyn Kirtley and Thomas Tilden, Bristol Bay village representative, discuss the need to protect Bristol Bay © Harlin Savage

proposed Pebble Mine. After hearing his case and watching the film *Red Gold*, Tiffany’s board agreed.

If the Pebble Mine proceeds as planned and begins producing gold, Tiffany’s has declared it will boycott all gold mined from the Pebble project. Kowalski says the issue is one of risk assessment, and that he doubts that the Pebble Partnership could develop the mine without a severe impact on the fisheries.

Tiffany & Co. ran an ad urging its peers to join the boycott, and many have followed their lead. Joining Tiffany’s in its pledge not to use Pebble gold are 17 other jewelers, including Helzberg Diamonds, Ben Bridge Jeweler, Birks and Mayors, and two of the nation’s largest manufacturers of class rings.

Obama Administration Opens Door to Halting Offshore Oil Threat in Bristol Bay

By Kelly Harrell, Friends of Bristol Bay Project Director, Alaska Marine Conservation Council

While the “Drill baby, drill” chant has died down and President Bush is long gone from the White House, the clock continues to tick toward selling off some of the most productive and valuable marine waters in the world to oil and gas leasing.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement is currently in preparation for a lease sale scheduled to occur in 2011 in a 5.6-million-acre swath of fish-rich waters at the southern end of Bristol Bay. That sale is included in the current 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Leasing Program that runs from 2007 to 2012.

However, just days before President Bush left office, he rushed through an unprecedented new drilling plan that would overlap the current one and run from 2010 to 2015. That 5-year plan would dramatically expand leasing in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. It includes not only the 2011 Bristol Bay sale but an additional sale in 2014 at the heart of vital habitat for globally important populations of fish, marine mammals, and seabirds. The future of Bristol Bay and the southeast Bering Sea’s ecologically, economically, and culturally important living marine resources now lies with the new Obama administration.

Thankfully, President Obama and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar—who ultimately call the shots on offshore drilling decisions in federal waters—have taken positive steps toward an offshore energy policy that offers hope for the wild salmon capitol of the world. Secretary Salazar announced in February a new approach to OCS leasing that is balanced, science-based, and includes a focus on renewable energy development. He extended the comment period on the new Bush 5-Year OCS leasing plan—which ended on September 21—and held regional public hearings on the topic of OCS



A blowout that took place on August 21, 2009 at the West Atlas/Montara oil rig off the northwest coast of Australia dumped an estimated 9 million gallons of oil into the Timor Sea. The well continued to leak oil for 10 weeks, and satellite photos indicate that the oil has spread across more than 9,000 square miles. Such an event in Bristol Bay would be devastating. © Chris Twomey/Australian Greens, Courtesy of WA Today

energy across the country, including one last April in Anchorage.

Signaling an interest to learn more about Bristol Bay, Salazar even took a side trip to the regional hub of Dillingham prior to the Anchorage hearing. Along with Senator Mark Begich, Salazar held a well-attended town hall meeting where residents voiced staunch opposition to proposed offshore drilling and the Pebble Mine.

In April, after the Secretary’s visit to Alaska, a DC court of appeals decision based on a suit brought by Pacific Environment, the Native Village of Point Hope, Alaska Wilderness League, and the Center for Biological Diversity seemingly vacated (i.e., threw out) the 2007-2012 OCS Leasing Program that includes the 2011 Bristol Bay lease sale.

That court decision had many breathing a sigh of relief, but recently the court provided clarification to the Department of Interior (DOI) on its ruling. The court is requiring DOI to redo the

environmental sensitivity analysis for the Alaska lease sales, including those in the Beaufort and Chukchi as well as the 2011 Bristol Bay sale. During the reanalysis, DOI will have the opportunity to alter the leasing schedule and halt Bristol Bay and other leases, or move forward as planned.

Essentially, the Secretary currently has broad authority to chart a new path for our nation’s energy future as a result of the court decision and his review of the potential new 5-year plan.

While decisions made by the Secretary over the coming months offer promise of removing Bristol Bay from current and future 5-year leasing programs, permanent protection solution is ultimately necessary to ensure this tremendous threat is stemmed once and for all. Bristol Bay was off limits to drilling for nearly 17 years, but what was in place was only temporary and vanished when political tides turned. That’s why strong legislative action by Congress—or strong executive action



Herendeen Bay, Port Moller, and Izembek are critical habitat for Emperor geese and other waterfowl © Donna Dewhurst, US Fish & Wildlife Service

by President Obama—is needed to permanently protect Bristol Bay from drilling before we can declare victory.

For now, let's hope—and ask—for that short-term reprieve the Secretary can provide, while remembering that a long battle still lies ahead to achieve the permanent protection Bristol Bay deserves.

NOAA Joins Fishermen, and Communities in Calling for Bristol Bay Protection

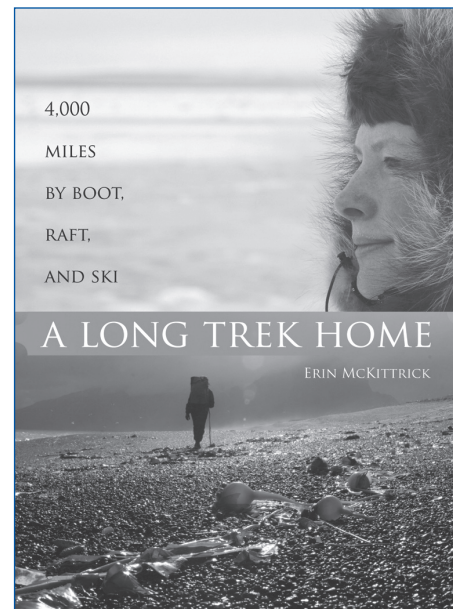
The Department of Interior received an overwhelming show of support for Bristol Bay protection during the comment period on the draft 5-Year OCS Leasing Program for 2010-2015 that recently ended. Over 300,000 concerned Americans, a thousand Bristol Bay fishermen, and dozens of fishing organizations, fishing-related businesses and Alaska Native Tribes from the region submitted comments urging that Bristol Bay lease sales be removed from the OCS plan.

Lending credence to those calls was the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), responsible for stewardship of our living marine resources. NOAA's comments on the 5-Year plan recommended that the presidential withdrawal for Bristol Bay from offshore drilling that previously existed for the region be put back into place due to the extreme value of the region's fisheries and sensitivity of the environment there.

Pointing to the controversial and costly history of offshore drilling in Bristol Bay, Alaska Senator Mark Begich also submitted encouraging comments on the 5-Year Program which questioned the benefits of revisiting leasing there.

To learn more about proposed offshore oil and gas drilling in Bristol Bay and how you can help, visit www.akmarine.org.

ACF is a longtime supporter of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council.



A Journey on the Wild Coast

In June 2007, Erin McKittrick and her husband Hig set out from their Seattle home on a bare-bones expedition to the Aleutian Islands—via foot, skis, and packraft. In her new book, *A Long Trek Home: 4,000 Miles by Boot, Raft and Ski*, McKittrick chronicles their never-before-attempted 13-month journey that led them across difficult ocean crossings, through incessant storms, and into the path of unruly bears.

What began as a trek to raise awareness about climate issues, unsustainable logging, and mining in sensitive wilderness areas became an awe-inspiring life adjustment. A year of sleeping outside, visiting villages, and staying with rural families gave the couple a new perspective on the wilderness and their own lives.

Their journey is an adventure that will take the reader from the developed urbanization of Seattle to the “last wild frontier” of Alaskan wilderness.

Learn more about Erin and Hig's trip and their other conservation work at www.groundtruthtrekking.org.

ACF is proud to have helped support this phenomenal journey through an Opportunity Grant.

Philanthropy and Alaska Native Capacity:

Taking a first step

By Polly Carr, ACF Program Officer for Community Capacity

Alaska is home to 231 federally recognized tribes and 107,000 Alaska Natives, nearly 60% of whom live in rural Alaska and depend on subsistence activities for cultural and physical survival. Despite their reliance on the environment and stewardship history, Alaska Native organizations receive only a fraction of funding from nongovernmental sources for conservation work.

Of the \$853 million in corporate and foundation grants awarded in the Pacific Northwest states in 2006, less than \$1 million was awarded to Native groups for conservation efforts. This funding discrepancy, combined with the impacts of climate change, skyrocketing energy costs, and unsustainable development on Native communities, inspired the *Alaska Seminar on Private Philanthropy, Indigenous Capacity, and Environmental Stewardship* (September 28-29, 2009).

ACF partnered with the Oak Foundation, Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP), International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, and Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development to host the seminar. The event launched an important dialogue on building the capacity of Alaska Native organizations to address critical environmental issues—and the role foundations can play to advance this goal.

Thirty grantseekers from Alaska Native regional nonprofits, tribal governments, advocacy organizations, and commissions convened on the first day to network and explore issues like climate change, extractive industries, waste and watersheds, and marine subsistence. Sessions also addressed the role



Subsistence fishing on the Koyukuk River © Steve Hillebrand, US Fish & Wildlife Service

“A lot of time, funding requirements do not fit rural Alaska—because many funders cannot visualize rural Alaska. This seminar created an opportunity for us to get our foot in the door and it opened the eyes of funders.”

Arthur Lake, Bering Sea Elders Advisory Group

of funders and relationships between Indigenous organizations and foundations. Andrea Sanders from Bethel remarked, “I was frustrated to learn that millions of dollars are raised in the name of Indigenous communities, when very little reaches the people who need it most. But that is what we are here to change.”

Twenty-five funders from Alaska, British Columbia, and the Lower 48 attended the next day and learned about environmental issues from the perspective of the Native grantseekers. An afternoon panel and roundtables explored action steps for building partnerships. Kerry Anderson of True North Foundation stated, “Meeting all of the people was valuable to me, as

well as the sense that we could work through the funding issues together.”

“This was a giant first step—this type of event has never happened before,” said Arthur Lake of the Bering Sea Elders Advisory Group. “A lot of time, funding requirements do not fit rural Alaska—because many funders cannot visualize rural Alaska. This seminar created an opportunity for us to get our foot in the door and it opened the eyes of funders.”

Lily Tuzroyluke from the Native Village of Point Hope agreed. “The [seminar] was informative and historic,” she said. “I feel honored to help pioneer the relationship between funders and tribes and I learned about the structure of foundation funding for environmental issues.”

Joy Persall of Native Americans in Philanthropy said, “Having met the people most affected by these issues, I can take the knowledge I’ve gained to philanthropy at large and fulfill [NAP]’s goal of increasing resources to Indigenous communities in a culturally responsible way.”

ACF is compiling a report on the seminar that will address next steps. Emerging themes include hosting

Continued on page 7

Strength From Within:

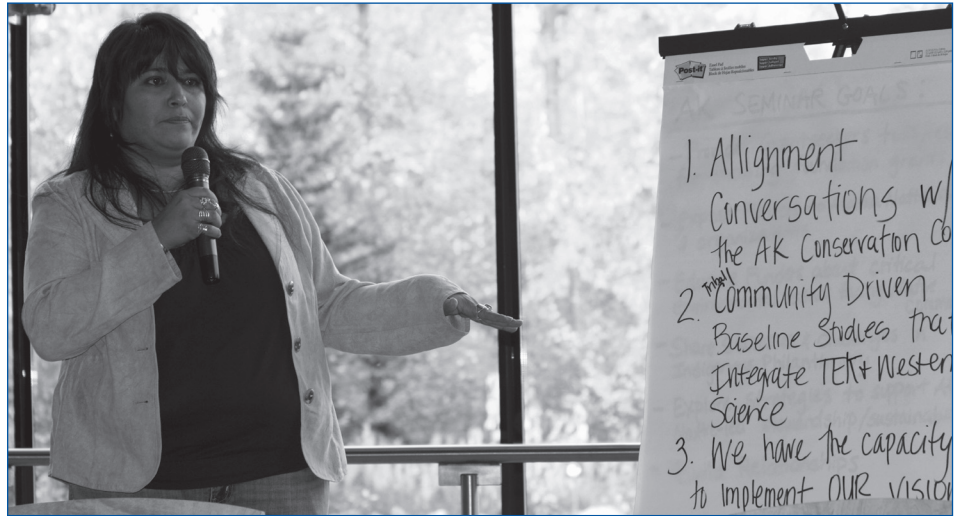
Building capacity to forge a better future for Alaska

The Alaska Conservation Foundation is revitalizing our efforts to support the people and organizations that protect our environment. We have launched a Community Capacity program to aid organizations as they navigate the new economic and political reality while implementing strategies for sustaining the movement over time.

Our vision is a strong, vibrant conservation community marked by cultivated leadership, effective organizations, and diverse networks that can be leveraged to solve collective issues. ACF will implement a combination of short- and long-term strategies to achieve the following overarching goals:

- 1** Strengthen the community's capacity to achieve conservation goals in the new economy by convening leaders to explore new business models and ways of working together
- 2** Strengthen the capacity of leaders and organizations to sustain their work through strategic funding, technical assistance, and training/support of executive directors, boards, and program staff
- 3** Grow and diversify the Alaska conservation movement through focused support of Alaska Native organizations, emerging leaders, and volunteer activists

If you would like information on ACF's Community Capacity program, contact Program Officer Polly Carr at pcarr@alaskaconservation.org or call 907-276-1917.



Faith Gemmill, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (RedOIL), shares highlights from her group's discussion of extractive industries on the first day © Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development

additional events in rural Alaska, and dialogues with non-Native conservation leaders and funders to understand where goals align.

"The [seminar] provided several Alaska Native leaders an intimate look at the inner workings of foundations, their funding process, and a unique opportunity to network with colleagues in other parts of our vast state," stated Tiffany Zulkosky, Rural Director for Senator Mark Begich. "This groundbreaking gathering, hopefully the first of many, helped several local leaders strengthen their community's

technical expertise and understanding of the grant-making process. Having many Alaska Native leaders armed with the knowledge of how to tap into financial resources, many of our rural villages and communities will be able to continue addressing the dire environmental issues within their regions at the local level."

ACF extends special thanks to Anna Sattler, the Seminar Event Coordinator, for her tireless efforts, and to Jon Waterhouse of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and Frances Nelson, formerly of Nunamta Aulukestai, for their planning assistance.



George Edwardson of Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (back facing) addresses a small group discussion on climate change impacts and solutions. Seated (clockwise from George): Iris Matthews, Alaska Community Foundation; Dana Lanza, Swift Foundation; Cindy Dickson, Arctic Athabaskan Council; Liz Medicine Crow, First Alaskans Institute; Victoria Hykes-Steere, Kenaitze Indian Tribe; Sonja Swift, Swift Foundation; Jonathon Freeman, Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development; Michelle Davis, EPA Tribal Office; Larry Merculief, Alaska Native Science Commission; Zora Inga, Old Harbor Traditional Council © Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development

**Subscribe to
our monthly
e-update,
*Northern
Highlights!***

E-mail us at

**[acfinfo@
alaskaconservation.
org](mailto:acfinfo@alaskaconservation.org)**

**to join the
distribution list.**

INSIDE:

- ⊕ Bristol Bay Salmon, Alaska's Precious Gems: *Can we help them survive?*
- ⊕ ACF Sponsors Indigenous Seminar
- ⊕ Offshore Oil Threat May Be Thwarted
- ⊕ A Journey Along Alaska's Wild Coast
- ⊕ Jewelers Back Boycott of Pebble Gold
- ⊕ ACF's New Community Capacity Program

Little girl on Kenai River © Steve Hillebrand, US Fish & Wildlife Service

In 50 years, will she still be able to fish in Alaska's salmon-rich streams? Will her grandchildren gaze in wonder at the Great Land's astounding herds of caribou and marvel at its stunning, unspoiled forests, mountains, and tundra?

Or will there be nothing left but memories?

The Alaska Conservation Foundation works through grassroots organizations across the state to ensure that Alaska's incomparable wilderness and wildlife will endure forever.

Please give generously. Your donation will help keep Alaska wild and beautiful for generations to come.



Visit www.alaskaconservation.org to make a gift for Alaska.

THE ALASKA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION