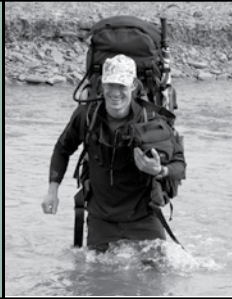




Summer 2009



# 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](mailto:acinfo@alaskaconservation.org)

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## Supporting Alaska Grassroots from the Ground Up:

*How your donation makes a difference for Alaska*

By Nick Hardigg and Tina M. Adair

**Since** its beginnings in 1980, the Alaska Conservation Foundation has seen amazing events and changes rumble through our state. We have seen the Tongass subjected to government-subsidized clear cutting, witnessed a catastrophic oil spill in Prince William Sound, and watched remote Native villages literally slide into the ocean from the effects of climate change. Controversial personalities like former Governor Sarah Palin have led chants of “Drill, baby, drill!” and then faded from the scene. Yet through it all, a committed community of conservationists stands firm to protect Alaska for future generations.

One important constant in that community has been ACF’s work to support Alaska’s grassroots conservation organizations. We raise and distribute vital conservation funding that wouldn’t reach Alaska otherwise, with nearly \$30 million granted in 30 years. Hundreds of grants have been awarded, all chosen for their ability to truly make a difference.

The role of ACF grants—and of the donors who support them—is made even clearer in relation to some bleak realities: Alaskans’ per capita giving to nonprofits ranks 49th in the nation, while the state’s total foundation endowment ranks dead last—50th. Alaska’s wealth is due in large part to the extraction of its natural resources, an area where the concept of careful and safe development has had little importance.



Grantee Erin McKittrick of Ground Truth Trekking with an old-growth spruce in the Tongass National Forest. Clearcutting has destroyed thousands of acres of phenomenal trees in the Tongass © Bretwood Higman

**Nowhere in America is there so much in danger of being lost—and nowhere can your support be more influential. Grants are testament to your power to make a positive difference in Alaska.**

Given that scenario, a conservation nonprofit could certainly find a more generous, welcoming environment than Alaska—yet nowhere else in America is so much priceless beauty and natural vitality at risk of being lost forever, and no other state needs dedicated conservationists more.

**Subsidized clearcutting of old-growth trees to make toilet paper? Risking the world’s richest salmon fishery—a multimillion-dollar industry, and source of Indigenous people’s sustenance for thousands of years—for an open-pit mine? Unfortunately true.**

These unthinkable trade-offs, however, are more than offset by our ability to create a solution.

ACF grants provide support for campaigns and projects that shape the future of Alaska’s wilderness. They keep organizations healthy, promote teamwork, further education, and address sudden threats. They enhance the strength, diversity, and capacity of the entire conservation community, enabling organizations to work more effectively.

**And our grants are testament to the power that you—our donor—possess to make a positive difference in Alaska’s future.**

*Continued on page 2*

## Continued from page 1: The Power of Grantmaking

### Campaigns and Community Capacity—a Strategy for Success

**Alaska's Largest Conservation Campaigns.** As a foundation with decades of expertise, ACF is an objective partner for some of the world's largest foundations and most capable grantees, helping to ensure that Alaska's grassroots network can function effectively and that funds are allocated as efficiently as possible.

ACF is the central hub in Alaska's three largest conservation campaigns: Bristol Bay, the Tongass, and promoting a wise energy future (less coal development, more renewable energy and energy efficiency). We raise funds—nearly \$4 million last year—directly from foundations and donors. We work with campaign steering committees on strategy, and allocate funds based on the skills and attributes of each grantee organization. We then serve as a liaison with funders, reporting on campaign progress and needs. (To learn more about our energy campaign, check out Matt Rafferty's story on page 6.)

### Staff

Nick Hardigg, *Executive Director*  
Tina M. Adair, *Communications Manager*  
Polly Carr, *Program Officer*  
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*  
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George R. Page, *Director of Finance and Operations*  
Matt Rafferty, *Program Officer*  
Ann Rothe, *Deputy Director*  
Danielle S. Williams, *Program and Communications Associate*

For a list of ACF's Board of Trustees, visit [www.alaskaconservation.org](http://www.alaskaconservation.org).



Cook Inletkeeper's Bob Shavelson keeps an eye on the oil tanker *Seabulk Arctic* © Cook Inletkeeper



Terry Jorgensen, a commercial setnet fisherman and member of the Chuitna Citizens NO-COALition, snags a red in the Chuitna River © Dennis Gann, Cook Inletkeeper

**Community Capacity.** Beyond the larger, issue-specific campaigns, **is there a critical gap in Alaska's protection?** The answer is **yes**: a strong, statewide grassroots network promoting conservation throughout Alaska. For example, the protection of Bristol Bay's world-renowned salmon cannot succeed without broad, in-state support, and such support cannot be generated without strong, diverse grassroots efforts. Therefore, our strategy to protect Alaska is increasingly focused on building the strength and diversity of our conservation partners, as well as their ability to work together and respond quickly to conservation threats. We achieve that through operating support grants, leadership transition support, Rapid Response and Opportunity grants, building leadership through our internship program, and supporting a variety of donor-advised funds. Those efforts are described on the next page.

### Major Campaigns: Groundwork for Alaska's Healthy Future

ACF's role in supporting major campaigns to combat Alaska's largest threats includes partnering with important groups around the state. One important partner in such efforts is Cook Inletkeeper.

Cook Inletkeeper describes itself as a "citizen-based nonprofit group dedicated to protecting Alaska's Cook Inlet Watershed and the life it sustains." Considering the fact the Cook Inlet watershed is about the size of the entire state of Virginia, you can imagine that Cook Inletkeeper has its hands full.

In addition to their efforts for clean water and healthy fish, they work to protect wildlife habitat, build strong communities with sustainable jobs, and promote one of Alaska's most abundant resources: clean, renewable energy.

The fight to grow and utilize renewable energy also involves keeping Alaska's massive coal resources in the ground. The coal's removal and combustion—

now feverishly sought by several transnational corporations—would destroy habitat, contaminate Alaska fish with mercury, and produce greenhouse gas pollution of epic proportions.

One massive coal strip mine is planned near the Chuitna River, a pristine, salmon-rich waterway that empties into Cook Inlet. Not only would this project dump billions of gallons of mine waste and runoff into Cook Inlet fisheries each year, but it would be the first large project in Alaska history to mine directly through an active salmon spawning stream.

While ACF has provided Inletkeeper with invaluable project support, it is the general support that plays a vital role year-in and year-out.

"ACF general support is some of the best support we get, because it fills the cracks other funding can't reach," said Inletkeeper's Executive Director Bob Shavelson.

"For anyone running a busy nonprofit, there's no better support."

For more information on Cook Inletkeeper, visit [www.inletkeeper.org](http://www.inletkeeper.org).



Dillingham residents protest the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay © Matt Davidson

## Transition Grants: Helping Crucial Organizations Through the Rough Patches

Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC), a critical group linking ocean protection and community sustainability fledged by ACF in 1996, had a more challenging spring than most conservation organizations.

It was discovered that a large amount of money had been stolen from the group's coffers. Faced with unexpected financial difficulties, the new director who had been there less than a year departed, and longstanding staff member Dorothy Childers returned to the executive director position to set things right. A Transition Grant from ACF helped.

"Times are very tight for us now," says Childers. "ACF's \$5,000 transition grant provided me with an assistant for a few months, as I retake the reigns as executive director and work to restore fiscal stability. This grant is making a challenging situation much more hopeful."

For more information on AMCC, visit [www.akmarine.org](http://www.akmarine.org).

## Operating Support.

Alaska's in-state conservation movement is funded about 80% by foundations, and foundations are generally more open to funding specific projects than giving unrestricted grants—operating support—to pay critical, yet "unexciting" expenses such as rent, utilities, salaries, and office supplies. For many of the 20 grantees who receive operating support each year, **ACF is the single largest provider of their unrestricted funding.**

The grantmaking committee of our board meets annually to evaluate operating support proposals. They base their funding decisions on an organization's track record, the relevance of its work to ACF's conservation strategy, and the organization's financial need

and opportunity to advance conservation.

**Leadership Transition Support.** These grants are invitation-only, and they provide assistance when an organization loses its executive director. In the past 18 months, fully two-thirds of ACF's operating support grantees have experienced a turnover in leadership, including Alaska's three regional conservation groups (Alaska Center for the Environment, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council) and the Alaska Conservation Alliance.

Transition grants have provided funds for executive director recruitment, financial assessments, salary reviews, and multi-year salary support to help these challenging changes go smoothly and successfully.

**Opportunity Grants.** These are small grants that are awarded throughout the year. They are designed to address discrete, short-term projects dealing with an emerging threat or capitalizing on an opportunity. **Often, these grants work to leverage a relatively small investment into a potentially large, meaningful return.**

## Operating Support: Lifeblood for the Movement

ACF supports about 20 organizations through operating support grants each year. One of these grassroots groups is Friends of Mat-Su.

Despite the country's recent economic slump, the population of the Mat-Su Borough—located in the verdant valley just north of Anchorage—has boomed more than 400 percent since 1990, and risen 35 percent just between 2000 and 2007.

That type of growth can give rise to unwise development decisions; for more than 10 years, however, Friends of Mat-Su (FoMS) has been working to build awareness of conservation ideals in the valley, supporting sound planning and responsible growth. For much of that time, ACF has provided operating support grants to help keep FoMS healthy and effective.



Executive Director Kathy Wells, Friends of Mat-Su © Deborah Schildt

"We're grateful for the ongoing support of ACF as Friends of Mat-Su addresses the challenges of rapid development. We are the voice in this region that keeps conservation in the planning equation," says Executive Director Kathy Wells.

"This is resulting in more informed and aware citizens who are joining in Borough-wide planning efforts with a conservation mindset as the Mat-Su Valley grows."

For more information on Friends of Mat-Su, visit <http://foms.net/>.

## Rapid Response Grants: When Time is of the Essence

At the end of 2007 and in early 2008, officials at the Department of the Interior and the US Minerals Management Service attempted to delay a decision on whether or not to place the polar bear on the Endangered Species List. At the same time, they approved offshore oil and gas development in the Chukchi Sea—a crucial part of the polar bear habitat.

Thanks to a Rapid Response Grant from ACF in early 2008, the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) were able to work with concerned scientists at the Department of the Interior to blow the whistle on these illegal actions.

The scientists provided e-mails and internal correspondence showing their strong opposition to holding the lease sale before the polar bear listing decision was made. Their information also indicated that the scientists told Interior officials that, in their professional judgment, oil and gas exploration and development would have major negative impacts on the Chukchi Sea ecosystem.

On May 14, 2008, the polar bear was officially listed as “Threatened” on the Endangered Species List—the first species to be listed as a result of global warming’s melt of arctic sea ice.



Polar bear, now listed as “Threatened” on the Endangered Species List © Magnus Elander, *International Conference for Arctic Research Planning*



### Continued from page 3: *The Power of Grantmaking*

**Rapid Response Grants.** The ACF Rapid Response program is Alaska’s only fund for quickly addressing fast-breaking, unforeseen environmental threats. These grants help conservationists keep decisive issues adequately publicized, alerting the public to threatening legislation or government action when their voices are truly needed to communicate concerns to elected officials.

### *Building Future Leaders*

For ten years, our **Conservation Internship Program** has provided funding, training, and logistical support for college and graduate students to be introduced to careers in Alaska conservation. Each summer, talented and enthusiastic interns are chosen from among hundreds of applicants from across the country to work on specific conservation projects with ACF grantees.

Host organizations are chosen according to the strength of their internship grant applications. We consider a range of factors including organizational strength, project quality and mentorship, and alignment with our conservation mission. Interns are an investment in Alaska’s future—many have returned after graduation to continue their work in Alaska’s conservation community.

Former ACF interns Benjamin Jones and Kelly Harrell board a float plane for Teshekpuk Lake © Tony Zvierink

### Internship Leads to Success, Romance

When Kelly Harrell, Friends of Bristol Bay Project Director at Alaska Marine Conservation Council, applied for a conservation internship with ACF in 2005, she had little idea of the life-changing decision she’d made. At the time, she was a master’s student at the University of British Columbia, anxious to learn more about Alaska and the issues emerging in Bristol Bay.

“My ACF internship went miles beyond a summer job,” says Kelly. “It put me on an accelerated path to leadership in the conservation community and has led to 4 years and counting with one of the state’s foremost marine conservation organizations.”

Since then, she has completed her degree and continued her work at AMCC to fight for permanent protections for the region’s precious, salmon-rich waters.

Kelly recently became engaged to ACF intern Benjamin Jones, who is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks Geophysical Institute and working as a research geographer for the US Geological Survey, focusing on coastal erosion and methane release.

Kelly and Ben met on an intern trip to Seward in 2005. He proposed to her in July on the shores of Teshekpuk Lake, in Alaska’s western Arctic.

## Donor-Advised Funds

Our Donor-Advised Fund program allows funds to be established by donors (both endowed and non-endowed), and grants directed toward their particular interests. Donors benefit from low fees, a socially and environmentally screened high-performing investment portfolio, and the ability to discuss grantmaking options with our expert program officers. Grants range from hundreds to thousands of dollars, and can be made in a donor's name or anonymously. We currently have funds dedicated to environmental education (Studebaker Family Fund for Environmental Education), specific regions of Alaska (Debbie Miller Fund for the Arctic), types of wildlife (Jean Tam Loon Conservation Endowment Fund), and many other causes.

## Ensuring the Best, Most Effective Use of Your Donations

The Alaska Conservation Foundation has a special Grantmaking Committee consisting of Trustees and staff members who determine the disposition of many grants. Organizations apply for the funds they need, completing specific paperwork and fulfilling other requirements such as providing proposed budgets and projected outcomes. The review and selection process for our grants is rigorous and often difficult.

After a grant is awarded, the grantee must file a formal report detailing how the funds were spent and the results of the work that was supported. The quality of those results is taken into account when ACF determines the eligibility of grantees for funding in the future.

**Grantmaking is the most important thing we do, because it allows us to strategically channel funds to the most effective programs, projects, and people in conservation.** Yet as impactful as it may be, our grantmaking ability is entirely dependent on the involvement and generosity of our donors. Just as every grant is important, so is every donation. Our donors provide the tools we work with, and we place those tools in the most capable hands. **In essence, our donors are truly the “foundation” of this foundation.**

*For a list of all the organizations and individuals who received grants in fiscal year 2009, see page 8.*

## Ken Leghorn on The Power of the Donor-Advised Fund

The year we sold our tourism company it made tremendous sense to establish a donor-advised fund at Alaska Conservation Foundation. We have never regretted it. The grants we've made through the Leghorn Family Fund have supported internships and helped important grassroots groups such as Alaska Youth for Environmental Action, Sitka Conservation Society, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and Discovery Southeast.

ACF takes care of oversight; they keep track of our fund balance and earnings, and let us know how much there is to grant from our fund each year. They even send us a reminder if they haven't heard from us by year's end!

I also appreciate that we can consult with ACF about grant options and choices—they help us determine how and where our funds will make the most difference. In many instances, we have been able to effectively leverage or multiply the power of our relatively small grants by collaborating with ACF and helping fund one of their high-need projects. We know that we're making a real difference in Alaska!

I also feel great knowing that when my mother passes away, her ACF annuity will feed directly into the Leghorn Family Fund, thus expanding our ability to make donor-advised recommendations, in perpetuity!



Ken Leghorn © Tom Bol



Sockeye salmon, one of Alaska's most abundant—and fragile—natural resources  
© Dave Menke, US Fish & Wildlife Service

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*Northern Highlights!***

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**A Note from the Director:** One of our greatest achievements in the past two years is raising awareness of the considerable threat that developing Alaska's massive coal deposits poses to Alaska and the world's climate. ACF plays a central role in raising funds for a multimillion-dollar coal campaign and in developing its strategy. Surprisingly little is known of the immense beauty and ecological significance of the largest of these coal fields, in the Western Arctic region. Program Officer Matt Rafferty put his vacation time to great use to explore and photograph this region over the summer, and to meet its people. Following is his story.

## Trekking Across the Western Arctic:

*Pristine land of beauty and abundance*

By Matt Rafferty, Program Officer

*I awoke at 7 AM to the distinctive sound of an animal grunting outside my tent, sending my heart into a more frenzied beat. We'd already encountered 10 grizzly bears in our first week in the Western Arctic, so I felt certain one was now roaming our camp.*

*I laid still in my sleeping bag, eyes open and ears alert, as I awaited another sound to gauge the distance of the animal and the nature of its intent. What I heard next was a complete surprise. Splashing—and lots of it.*

*Quickly unzipping my bag, I raced out of the tent to see a group of around a hundred caribou crossing the river within 50 yards of our camp. These were members of the 300,000-strong Western Arctic herd making their annual migration from their calving grounds to the coast of the Chukchi Sea.*

*I waited until the last handful of caribou crossed the river, and then ducked through the willows behind our tent to watch them swarm, antlike, up the mountainside. This phenomenon occurred five more times over the next three hours and served as a summation to the abundance of life we found in the far reaches of the Western Arctic.*

Tim Leach, coordinator of AlaskaCoal.org, Brook Kintz, a freelance graphic designer, and I set off in mid-June for a 15-day backcountry exploration of the coal-bearing regions of Western Alaska.

On our route, we traveled by foot over the mountainous divide of the Brooks Range before inflating our packrafts and paddling nearly 200 miles to the shores of the Chukchi Sea and then hiking into the Native Village of Point Lay. We undertook this journey to get a firsthand sense of how massive the region's coal reserves really



The Western Arctic © Damion Brook Kintz



Matt Rafferty © Tim Leach



Gyrfalcon chicks © Damion Brook Kintz

are, to experience the wilderness in which they're contained, and to learn from the people who would be most impacted by their development.

The Western Arctic region of Alaska contains up to an astounding one-ninth of the world's remaining bituminous coal. Along the river, each cut bank exposed seams of coal—thick, shiny, crumbly bands of black rock. Breeding pairs of sharp-shinned hawks and peregrine falcons nested on each outcrop, with the cut banks providing habitat for predatory birds with hungry chicks that squawked from deep inside their oversized nests.

In addition to being a reserve for coal, this region serves as a nursery for birds. Thousands of snow and Canada geese plied the waters, trailing tiny yellow chicks not yet able to fly, while ducks, terns, gulls, and jaegers were present nearly all the time.

The area is also home to an amazing concentration of nesting raptors. The river is nearly continuously lined with cliffs of moderate height for 180 miles, dotted with active raptor nests, including rough-legged hawks, gyrfalcons, peregrines, and golden eagles.

Each time I travel in a truly intact wilderness, I can't help but feel humbled and marvel that places like this still exist—and that our intrusion could be so inconsequential.



Few Americans are aware that up to 50% of the nation's coal reserves lie beneath Alaska's wilderness. Its development and combustion pose threats to Alaska and to our global climate, yet coal is sought by corporations from around the world. ACF is helping change that. © USGS

In 15 days of backcountry travel, we saw no other humans and very little sign that humans had ever passed through the region. Our journey brought us to perhaps one of the most remote regions left on Earth—one that is facing increasing threats due to the impacts of global climate change and the booming global demand for coal.

As of yet, there are no mines in this region. However, a great deal of interest in the development of the resource exists due

**As of yet, there are no mines in this region. However, a great deal of interest in the development of the resource exists due to increasing global demands for coal.**

to increasing global demands for coal, particularly from Asian markets. Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) had contracted with BHP Billiton, the world's largest mining company, to explore the region and determine its potential for coal development. In July, BHP announced their termination of this agreement, citing the economic challenges of the project.

ASRC and the North Slope Borough are still intent on bringing this coal to market and consider its development a top priority. ACF and our partners, however, consider such development one of the biggest threats to global climate change.

*As we reached the coast of the Chukchi Sea, our last few days in the Western Arctic were an amazing contrast to the first two weeks. Leaving the mountains, tundra, and wildlife behind, we were welcomed into the village of Point Lay. Despite the fact that we arrived as strangers, literally wandering in from the wilderness, the people there took us in as trusted friends.*

*We were reminded that, as remote as parts of Alaska may seem, they are home to many people. Their cultures and futures hinge upon these regions and habitats remaining vibrant, intact, and healthy.*



Massive coal seam © Tim Leach, AlaskaCoal.org

**Inside:**  
⊗ What **your** dollars are really doing for Alaska  
⊗ An enlightening journey across the remote Western Arctic

## ACF Celebrates Record Grantmaking Year: more than \$2.3 million awarded!

The Alaska Conservation Foundation made a total of 145 grants in the 2008-2009 fiscal year for a total of \$2,365,870. These grants supported the following individuals, groups, and organizations:

Alaska Bird Observatory	Cook Inletkeeper	Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance
Alaska Center for the Environment	Copper River Watershed Project	Sitka Conservation Society
Alaska Coal Working Group	Denali Citizens' Council	Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
Alaska Community Action on Toxics	Discovery Southeast	Taiya Inlet Watershed Council
Alaska Conservation Alliance	Earth Island Institute	Tongass Conservation Society
Alaska Conservation Voters	EARTHWORKS	Trout Unlimited, Alaska Program
Alaska Geographic	Dan Fitzgerald	Trustees for Alaska
Alaska Marine Conservation Council	Friends of Mat-Su	Garrison Wilts
Alaska Public Interest Research Group	Ground Truth Trekking	Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment
Alaska Wilderness League	Gwich'in Steering Committee	Yakutat Salmon Board
Alaska Youth for Environmental Action	HEA Members Forum	Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council
Alaskans for Clean Water	ICLEI	
Alaskans for Responsible Mining	Juneau Watershed Partnership	
Anchorage Citizens Coalition	Lynn Canal Conservation, Inc.	
Anchorage Waterways Council	MEA Ratepayers' Alliance	
Bicycle Commuters of Anchorage	National Wildlife Federation	
Butte Area Residents Civic Organization	Native Village of Point Hope	
Cascadia Wildlands Project	Newtok Traditional Council	
Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, Inc.	Northern Alaska Environmental Center	
Center for Science in Public Participation	Nunamta Aulukestai	
Chugach Reliability Group, LLC	Prince William Soundkeeper	
Chitna Citizens NO-COALition	Renewable Energy Alaska Project	
	Resource Media	

### ***In This Issue:***

**Grantmaking:** *Putting Your  
Donations to Work for  
a Better Alaska*

**Trekking Across Alaska's  
Western Arctic Region**