



## ACF Interns Get to Work

Summer 2010

On a sunny day in June, over 20 interns gathered for an orientation. Many interns were fresh off the plane, their young faces beaming with excitement to participate in the ACF Conservation Internship Program (CIP). With your support, ACF recruits young activists from around the nation to intern with host organizations for 12-weeks during the summer.

In this *Dispatch* issue, several 2010 interns share their initial impressions about their work, from organizing coal campaign rallies to preserving vital ecosystems.

In "Where Are They Now?" we catch up with nine former interns whose experience has brought them back to Alaska for longer-term work commitments.

Andrew Thoms, executive director of the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS), shares his views on the impact of interns on his organization and the solutions being explored in the Tongass.

Overall, the program is having a major impact on host organizations, interns and ultimately, Alaska!

### Save the Date!

#### ACF Conservation Achievement Award Banquet

Friday, September 24, 2010  
Lucy Cuddy Hall, UAA

### MOVING ALASKA BEYOND COAL ACF Interns Rachel Fussell & Amy Scoville-Weaver

"The campaign to move Alaska beyond coal touches on almost every critical conservation issue that Alaska currently faces," Amy Scoville-Weaver explains a few weeks into her internship with the Alaskans for Energy Freedom campaign. With as much as 50% of the total U.S. coal reserves and 12% of global reserves, Alaska's coal is in high demand. If developed, Alaska's coal could release **trillions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere**, exacerbating the climate crisis and posing far-reaching environmental, social and economic problems.



Interns Rachel Fussell & Amy Scoville-Weaver rally against the Wishbone Hill coal mine.

This summer interns Rachel Fussell and Amy Scoville-Weaver are working on the campaigns against two of Alaska's immediate coal mining threats—the proposed Chuitna coal strip mine and the Wishbone Hill coal mine. Together, the sites are believed to house more than 310 million tons of coal that would be destined for Asian markets. If permitted by the state, the Chuitna project would be the **first** coal strip mine to be developed through an active salmon breeding stream. It would destroy over 30 square miles of pristine habitat.

Amy describes her previous internship experiences as being on the periphery. In contrast, the ACF internship has placed these interns in the thick of the coal campaign. On their first day they attended a heated discussion at the Mat-Su Valley borough over the issuance of the permit to the Usibelli coal company for Wishbone Hill. The following week, they were not only participating in, but also planning a rally and petition signing event.

The two interns, along with two additional ACF interns working in Fairbanks, will conduct a major outreach campaign. They will be participating in events across the Interior, South-central and the Kenai Peninsula to educate over 3,000 Alaskans on the perils of coal development in Alaska. Their work is a strategic component of the ACF sponsored Alaskans for Energy Freedom campaign that seeks to keep Alaska's coal in the ground and transition the state to a clean energy economy. Follow the progress of the campaign and the interns on the ACF website.

**"This internship has already made me more passionate about conservation issues and how I can help find solutions." - Rachel Fussell**

## Your \$ at Work

With support from individuals & foundations, ACF has awarded more than \$3.8 million in grants to over 60 Alaska conservation organizations in the 2010 fiscal year.

Thank you for helping us achieve a record-breaking year!

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## Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends of Alaska,

Each day that oil gushes into the Gulf of Mexico, a community of Alaskans is reminded of the Exxon Valdez disaster. Oil deposits don't fade like our national memory of news headlines. The cost to the environment and communities has been extreme. Prince William Sound will never be the same and neither will the Gulf. See page 7 to find out how Alaskans are helping out.

At ACF, we wonder what lessons can be learned from the Exxon Valdez and BP oil spills, and how we can best plan for the future. A few lessons are clear: it is human nature to underestimate risk, especially when it's profitable to do so. If a corporation or individual won't be held responsible, what incentive is there to act wisely? Consider Exxon, BP, or the banking industry: accountability is a critical problem for our nation and those who need to be held accountable have considerable influence. Second, our national memory of environmental tragedies and errors is alarmingly short-lived. In the 30 years since the Exxon Valdez disaster, Exxon has been resurrected from national pariah to only a localized enemy.

How can we hold businesses accountable, avoid unnecessary risks and protect our environment? Empowering local communities is absolutely essential. It is local communities that are our most effective spokespersons, watchdogs and organizers to protect Alaska. ACF is the only public foundation focused on strengthening grassroots efforts in Alaska by building diverse networks, strong leadership and innovative solutions to our environmental issues. In this *Dispatch* we share one aspect of leadership development: the ACF Conservation Internship Program. For 12-weeks this summer 26 interns will be making an impact on Alaska conservation and increasing the capacity of the organizations they support. Meanwhile, past intern graduates are taking senior positions across Alaska to help us manage our resources efficiently.

The BP oil spill is a frightening reminder that your support and ACF's role are critical to protecting some of the last great ecosystems left in the world. Let's hope our nation can learn from its lessons, and stop the next disaster from occurring, either offshore or in Bristol Bay.

Sincerely,



Nick Hardigg



ACF Executive Director Nick Hardigg & son enjoy the Tongass National Forest.

**Alaska Conservation Foundation builds strategic leadership and support for Alaskan efforts to take care of wildlands, waters and wildlife, which sustain diverse cultures, healthy communities and prosperous economies.**

## Identifying Bird Habitat in the Arctic

Six years ago Chris Free visited Alaska on a family vacation. Taken with its beauty and intrigue, he yearned to return ever since. This summer he joins ACF grantee Audubon Alaska as an intern. Armed with a degree in conservation biology, Chris also has an interest in biogeography, conservation and spatial ecology. His Audubon internship is allowing him to use his combined interests in developing a new methodology for delineating important marine bird habitat in the Bering Sea region.

The nearly one-million-square-mile Bering Sea eco-region is home to many species of birds, including the red-legged kittiwake, bristle-thighed curlew, red-faced cormorant and spoon-billed sandpiper. Other bird species rely on the region for breeding, nesting, feeding, molting, staging and wintering habitat. As the Arctic ice pack recedes, oil development, commercial fishing and shipping activities are expanding into Arctic waters. The identification of habitat areas is essential for the livelihood of these birds and to ensure successful protection from onshore and offshore development, commercial fishing, shipping lanes and chemical pollution.



Chris Free shares his office with a moose.

Chris has an opportunity to participate in new meth-

ods for mapping these areas. He will then help promote habitat protection strategies to policy makers and the public. So far his typical day involves research, analysis, mapping, consultation and at least two cups of tea!



## ANDREW THOMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SITKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY ON THE IMPACT OF INTERNS...

Since its founding in 1967, the Sitka Conservation Society (SCS) has advocated for appropriate management and protection of the Tongass National Forest. As we work to find a pathway towards social, economic and environmental sustainability for Sitka and the rest of Southeast Alaska, we are guided by our core mission of advocating for the appropriate management of the 17 million acre forest which completely surrounds Sitka. Increasingly, as global threats and issues impact our corner of Alaska, we are taking on the challenges of figuring out exactly how communities can live within our spectacular environment and thrive while also conserving and protecting the resources that they depend on. The issues we deal with are a complicated mix of global and local. There are no easy or clear answers to our challenges. The solutions are complicated with a lot of gray areas.

For close to a decade, ACF's Conservation Intern Program (CIP) has helped us take on these challenges. In essence, the CIP program helps us to advance our conservation program as well as build the skills and ideals of a new generation of potential leaders. The interns learn from first-hand experiences related to the issues we are dealing with, the solutions we are striving to implement, and the dynamics of working in complex social and political environments.

ACF has worked closely with SCS in developing creative and innovative ways to use the CIP program to best meet our strategic goals. In one instance, SCS and ACF developed a program where our CIP intern was placed within the City of Sitka Utility Department and launched a municipal program on energy efficiency and action on climate change. At other times, interns have done more traditional political organizing and advocacy and reached out to diverse stakeholder groups that use the resources of the Tongass and Southeast Alaska. Last summer our ACF intern met with both of our Alaska Senators to make a case for action on climate change and to deliver statements from a diverse group of Sitkans who want Alaska to be a leader in renewable energy.

Through the CIP program, we are able to bring young and energetic individuals to Alaska who have always dreamed of seeing the last frontier and want to do their part to keep it wild. SCS has also been able to hire hometown Sitkans to put their undergraduate degrees to work conserving their favorite places. The CIP program has been an important component of our efforts over the years and continues to help SCS achieve successful outcomes in our conservation endeavors.

## Two Interns Come Home...

*This summer 6 interns from Alaska are returning or staying here in order to get involved in conservation and gain professional experience in the process.*

### PROTECTING THE “JEWEL OF THE TONGASS”

**K**elsey Skaggs is Alaska grown. Her commitment to conservation stems from growing up in the Tongass, where she spent a lot of time exploring Yakobi Island as well as fishing on her family’s boat. After graduating from the University of California Davis in May, Kelsey returned home for an internship with ACF grantee Sitka Conservation Society (SCS). She observes, “attending school in the Lower 48 has made me appreciate the uniqueness of Alaska even more. It is more than land: Alaskans possess a sense of place that most people crave but will never experience.”

Kelsey is spending her summer in the field learning more about the people and places she grew up with. Her SCS internship is focused on studying the uses of Kruzof Island for research, recreation and business. Kruzof Island is described as the “jewel of the Tongass,” and is the site of commercial activity upon which many locals depend. Geologically and ecologically unique, the island contains miles of rich salmon spawning habitat, provides unparalleled wildlife viewing and is home to the Mount Edgecumbe volcano. It is of great cultural importance for the Tlingit people and for all residents of Sitka.

Currently there is an effort underway to designate Kruzof Island a national monument which provides an ideal opportunity for developing a broad-based, community supported land use and management plan, and would increase its public profile.

In addition to gathering information, Kelsey will be telling the story of Kruzof Island through multimedia. “My

work will give SCS a clear picture of the activities that take place on Kruzof and the people who depend on the island. Having the perspectives of a variety of users collected in one place



Kelsey Skaggs on her way to Kruzof Island. Photo courtesy of Andrew Thoms.

will help us to understand the many roles and meanings of Kruzof Island. From this understanding we can build those powerful and essential coalitions that will be the future of Alaska conservation.”

The Tongass is an amazing ecosystem and one of the most important forests in the world. Kelsey is excited to be identifying ways to bring the community together to preserve its “jewel.”



Intern Nara McCray gives a speech at a press conference.

### SPREADING THE WORD FOR YOUTH ACTIVISM

**A**CF’s Conservation Internship Program (CIP) focuses on emerging leaders generally at the undergraduate or graduate level. For Alaskan teenagers who want to pursue their conservation interests they can join ACF grantee Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA). AYEAs members develop leadership and civic engagement skills at an early age so they can influence issues impacting their communities. For the past decade, AYEAs teens have influenced policy on pesticide use, renewable energy, cruise ship pollution and recycling.

ACF intern (and AYEAs grad!) Nara McCray understands how Alaska’s environment can inspire activism at an early age. Born and raised in Anchorage, she spent her childhood playing in Alaska’s great outdoors. Nara says, “As I grew I realized that the Earth has a balance that needs to be maintained. The pristine condition of my home is at risk because many view the abundance of natural resources in terms of monetary wealth. To have a sustainable income from our resources we need to preserve our natural commodities.”

To encourage youth involvement, Nara is helping AYEAs use technology in their community outreach. She explains, “I am using social media like Facebook, Myspace and Twitter as a means of communicating with the public.” This summer she will also train Alaska teens in using these tools to communicate about the importance of local and traditional foods to sustainable communities.

## 2009 Interns: Where Are They Now?

*Nine out of 20 of the 2009 interns have directed their career paths north to Alaska for work in a variety of fields, from environmental education & health to ecosystem conservation. We found where they are headed!*

### Nora Gecan

After an ACF internship at REAP last summer, Nora has returned for a second internship this summer. She is applying her design skills to help the Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC) boost their branding. Her projects include designing logos, newsletters, a line of ocean-themed merchandise, event posters and more. "I am not a scientist but I knew my skills and passion for conservation and environmental justice could be utilized by an organization whose work directly impacts the lives of many Alaskans." Nora aspires to attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks for a degree in Northern Studies in the future.



Julia Beatty (L) & Nora Gecan (R) at the AMCC booth.

### Kate Teale

When we last heard from Kate she was in Winnipeg, Canada on her way to Homer, Alaska for a seasonal position with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). As a Biological Sciences Technician she will be conducting soil surveys to find out what impact climate change is having on private land conditions. Kate returned to Alaska because she was taken "by the beauty and ruggedness, not to mention the great people." She hopes to find a permanent job in Alaska when the summer is over.

### Liza Mitchell

In January, Liza braved the Alaska winter and returned to find a job here. Her position with Alaska Crossings' Wilderness Expeditions for Youth has her leading 49-day therapeutic wilderness trips for Alaskan youth dealing



Liza Mitchell leads a canoe trip.

with mental health issues. Liza is enjoying sharing Alaska's rugged beauty with young teens who gain confidence from the expeditions, and hopes to stay in Alaska indefinitely.

### Samarys Seguinot-Medina

When the Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) made Samarys an offer to work with them for a second summer she jumped at the chance. After finishing her doctorate at the University of Puerto Rico earlier this year, Samarys was ready to continue researching environmental health issues. Last summer's ACAT internship working at the Field Institute in Nome led her to this summer's work on the Breast Feeding Monitoring Project. She is excited about being back in Alaska and is considering writing an article about her 2009 internship experience. She plans to remain in Alaska for awhile.

### Jessica Pollock

Jessica returns to Alaska this summer as the Senior Naturalist at the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies (CACS). As an intern for CACS last summer she "loved working at the Peterson Bay Field Station and connecting the general public to a beautiful, magical place." This year she continues providing visitor education and is coordinating the Center's camp program.



Jessica Pollock finds a baby octopus.

### Theresa (Tre) Fiorino

After her graduation this spring, Tre received two exciting offers—take a fully funded PhD research assistantship or a job as the Alaska Representative for the Defenders of Wildlife. She decided to jumpstart her career in Alaska. In her new role she works on predator control issues and the conservation of wolves, bears, wolverines and other terrestrial wildlife. She reports that her job is "an opportunity to play a small role in preserving some of the last great U.S. wildlife populations, intact landscapes and ecosystems."

### Jenna Hertz

A recent graduate of the University of Michigan, Jenna was so inspired by her internship experience last summer she wrote her senior thesis on the proposed Rampart Dam (one of ACF co-founder Celia Hunter's first fights!) This summer she returns to the Northern Alaska Environmental Center (NAEC) where she is working as a coordinator tracking the issues for the Center. After the summer she hopes to get a grant to work on the Arctic program or continue her studies in environmental law and indigenous rights.

*Two not to miss:* Julia Beatty continues to map the Bering Sea at AMCC. Lexi Fish focuses on renewable energy in her position at the Sitka Conservation Society.

## Interns in the News!

### "Salmon Stream Monitoring part of Inletkeeper Mission"

By Michael Armstrong

June 23, 2010

On a sunny June day two weeks ago as fly fishermen peered down into the Anchor River searching for salmon, Sue Mauger, a stream ecologist with Cook Inletkeeper, also waded the swift waters. Mauger was on the hunt for something equally precious — at least to a scientist.

*Data. Good, solid scientific data.*

A month ago, Mauger had set out a sealed piece of black plastic pipe tied to a weight on the bottom of the stream. Finding the pipe, Mauger brought it to shore. She unscrewed a cap and pulled out a small scientific instrument about the size of a two-dollar stack of quarters.

Every 15 minutes year-round since 2002, that little data logger has been measuring stream temperatures, and every month Mauger or another Inletkeeper worker swaps out loggers. Back at the lab, the loggers are connected to computers and its information added to a developing information set that shows not just seasonal temperature changes, but stream temperature changes from year to year.

The Anchor River is one of 48 salmon streams in the Cook Inlet watershed being monitored under the direction of Inletkeeper as part of its Salmon Stream Monitoring Project. Cook Inletkeeper celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Although many know Inletkeeper for its environmental advocacy, Mauger's work shows another side of the Homer-based nonprofit organization: good solid research.

Since 1996, Inletkeeper began testing lower Kenai Peninsula creeks as part of its Citizens Environmental Monitoring Project, or CEMP. That program has expanded to 250 sites in the Cook Inlet watershed, an area about the size of Maine that goes north to the furthest reaches of the Susitna River and its tributaries.

While CEMP volunteers record information like dissolved oxygen, turbidity and bacteria, it misses another part of the picture. Are streams getting warmer? That's the question the Salmon Stream Monitoring Project looks at.

"There hasn't been a comprehensive effort to look at stream temperature," Mauger said. "That's why we embarked on this."

On the Anchor River survey, Mauger's assistant, Marcella Dent, helped her log the day's measurements. Dent is a University of Alaska Anchorage senior working on a bachelor of science in environment and society. This summer she's on loan to Inletkeeper under an internship program sponsored by the Alaska Conservation Foundation.

Since 2008, Inletkeeper has worked with other Cook Inlet organizations to do similar stream temperature monitoring. Although the Anchor River is monitored year round, most other sites are measured from June to September. The furthest north site is on the east fork of the Chulitna River north of Talkeetna.

As some scientists look at global climate change, others look at regional

effects. That's the important question in Alaska.

"People ask 'Are you seeing any effects of climate change?' I would argue 'Yes,'" Mauger said. "We're warmer now than in the past for water temperature."

One defect with the Salmon Stream Monitoring Project is its relatively short collection period.

"We're always collecting our baseline data too late," Mauger said.

However, Alaska has good air temperature information going back to the 1930s. Scientists can compare air and water temperature.

"Once I know that here in present time, I can use that relationship to see what water temperatures used to be," Mauger said. "I can backcast."

To better define that relationship, the Salmon Stream Monitoring Project also measures air temperature. Data logger thermometers also are hung in trees near the stream sites, with the loggers also swapped out monthly.

The big concern with water temperature is the effect of warming water on fish, especially salmon. Critical temperatures are 55.4, 59 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit. In the past 30 years, Cook Inlet streams have usually been cooler than 55.4 degrees. Recently, some streams have been 60 to 62 degrees in the warmer summer months of July and early August. At warmer temperatures, salmon eggs and fry start getting stressed.

"The stress in the watershed is enough it could have an impact on the productivity of the river system," Mauger said. Information on stream water temperatures will be used by policy planners. Land managers like boroughs and cities might use the information to protect streams — expanding vegetation set backs to provide cooling shade, for example, or focusing revegetation efforts in certain areas.

Monitoring rivers, keeping streams cool and protecting fish habitat all fits in with Inletkeeper's mission of protecting Cook Inlet's watershed and the life it sustains.

"We feel it's important we understand the health of our watersheds. It has a lot of impact on the health of our community," Mauger said. "In Alaska, climate change is a local problem."

All the information collected is public data, Mauger said, and is periodically made available in reports for review by other scientists and citizens. For information on Inletkeeper programs, visit its Web site at [www.inletkeeper.org](http://www.inletkeeper.org).

This article was reprinted with permission from the Homer News. To read it online, go to: [http://homernews.com/stories/062310/news\\_ssm.shtml](http://homernews.com/stories/062310/news_ssm.shtml)



ACF Intern Marcella Dent takes photos of the Anchor River during a field survey. Photo courtesy of Michael Armstrong, Homer News.

## Sitka Interns “Save the World - One Hot Tub at a Time!”



By Kelsey Skaggs

A few days after arriving in Alaska, I was surprised to find myself floating along Sitka Sound in a hot tub. The hot tub in question had floated onto an otherwise pristine beach on the Apple Islands, a popular place for boating and camping, where it sat leaking contaminants. I organized a cleanup trip in partnership with Coastal Footprint, a non-profit organization involved in beach cleanup. Along with several other Sitka Conservation Society interns, we set off to remove the hot tub from the beach. Although we planned to demolish the hot tub on-site and transport the pieces back to town to be disposed of properly, cutting up the hot tub with a chainsaw would have made a mess of tiny particles. So we got the hot tub into the ocean and towed it back to town—with two interns riding inside. This episode resulted in a new slogan for Sitka Conservation Society interns: “saving the world – one hot tub at a time.”

### ACF Workplace Partners



ACF Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) #: 12062

## Update on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

*The oil spill disaster that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico in mid-April, when the Deepwater Horizon exploded and sunk, has had a devastating impact on the Gulf communities. Alaskans, including some ACF grantees, are on the front lines aiding in clean up efforts and advising locals on how to get through this national environmental disaster. Here are a few efforts underway.*

### INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER

Four Alaska Native tribal members recently urged government leaders to keep what happened in the Gulf from happening in Alaska. For thousands of years their livelihoods have depended on the ocean and surrounding coastlines being healthy. Martha Falk, Tribal Council Treasurer for Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS), Earl Kingik, Inupiaq tribal member, Native Village of Point Hope, Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak, Inupiaq from Nuiqsut, Alaska and Verner Wilson, Central/Siberian Yu'pik from Dillingham visited the Gulf Spill Zone to see firsthand the destruction in both Louisiana and Alabama. Afterwards they headed to Washington, D.C. to meet with administration officials and participate in press briefings. The Alaska Wilderness League organized the trip and arranged for the meetings.

Another contingent of Alaskans, including Faith Gemmill of Resist- ing Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), Stanley Tom of Newtok, and Patience Faulkner of Cordova, Alaska traveled to the Gulf to meet with Indigenous communities impacted by the spill. The oil is bringing devastation to their marine environment and severely impacting their subsistence-based economies. They discussed issues related to human and environmental health concerns following the spill. Both groups share subsistence-based livelihoods

and cultures while living in fossil fuel driven economies. Now there is a new shared experience of how to live in the aftermath of two of the largest U.S environmental disasters. REDOIL and Gulf Coast Community Organizers sponsored the tour.

### ALASKA CITIZEN'S GROUP HELPS ON THE GULF SPILL

Shortly after crude oil began spewing into the Gulf of Mexico from BP's deep sea well, board and staff members of the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council (RCAC) traveled to the Gulf Coast to help communities there deal with the impacts of the spill. The Prince William Sound RCAC was formed in the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill to provide oversight of the Trans Alaska Pipeline terminal at Valdez, Alaska and the oil tankers that load at the terminal. Members of RCAC's board represent local communities that were directly affected by the spill, including commercial fishermen. ACF's Deputy Director Ann Rothe was one of the group's founders. The RCAC has also been helping Senators Mark Begich of Alaska and Bill Nelson of Florida draft legislation that would establish citizen oversight commissions for oil operations in the Gulf.

You can help!  
[www.saveourgulf.org](http://www.saveourgulf.org)

### SAVE OUR GULF CAMPAIGN

Save Our Gulf is an initiative by Waterkeeper Alliance, a national organization with member organizations including ACF grantees Prince William Soundkeeper and Cook Inletkeeper. The alliance was founded in 1999 by environmental attorney and activist Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and several veteran Waterkeepers. Its purpose is to patrol and protect over 100,000 miles of rivers, streams and coastlines around the world. Prince William Soundkeeper is assisting in raising money for the Gulf clean up efforts. For more information, go to: [www.saveourgulf.org](http://www.saveourgulf.org).



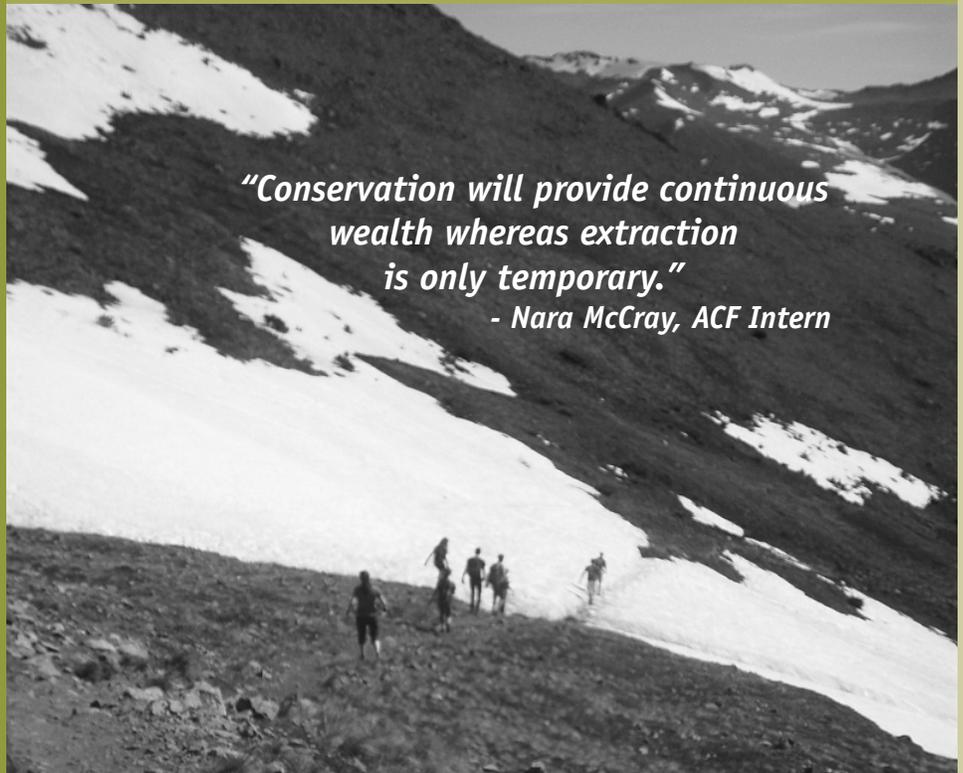
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*"Conservation will provide continuous  
wealth whereas extraction  
is only temporary."*

*- Nara McCray, ACF Intern*

**Together, we are advancing the  
conservation movement to protect Alaska!  
Thank you for your support.**