



## CLIMATE CHANGE: ALASKA ON THE FRONT LINES

CONTRIBUTED BY NANCY LORD, ACF TRUSTEE

In 2011, when I published my book *Early Warming: Crisis and Response in the Climate-changed North*, dramatic effects from climate change were readily apparent in Alaska. The polar regions then (and now) were warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. I wrote in my book, “What happens in the Arctic doesn’t stay in the Arctic.” The Arctic acts as the cooling system for the rest of the world; as it warms and ice and permafrost melt, the effects are felt everywhere in altered circulation and storm patterns.

At Alaska Conservation Foundation, we’ve been calling attention to the warming threat for years in our communications, convening and grantmaking. Two of the major campaigns we support have been aimed at directly helping to mitigate climate change—one to prevent the mining and export of Alaska’s coal and the other to protect the Tongass Forest, a storehouse of carbon as well as significant habitat for wildlife, fish and Alaskans. Through the Alaska Native Fund and in partnership with an Alaska Native Fund Steering Committee, ACF continues to support tribal efforts to protect the lands and resources upon which so many depend.

Most recently at ACF, board and staff elevated climate change as a major focus in our strategic planning and grantmaking, recognizing it as the overarching issue that affects everything within our mission of protecting “Alaska’s natural environment and the diverse cultures and ways of life it sustains.”



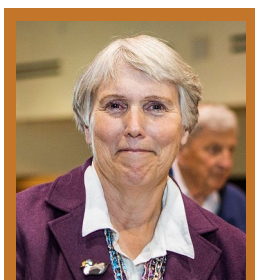
ERODING ARCTIC COASTLINE ©Pat Farrell and Caroline Van Hemert

This summer, five million acres of Alaska (an area larger than Connecticut) burned in wildfires—in what may be Alaska’s worst fire season ever. People living along the Matanuska River lost homes to floods caused by heavy rain coupled with the rapidly melting Matanuska Glacier. Salmon, apparently confused by warm ocean temperatures, were very late returning to Bristol Bay rivers, upsetting the usual fishing season and the lives of fishermen. Most recently I’ve witnessed salmon in creeks and streams dying before spawning—oxygen-starved in warm, low-water conditions. Arctic sea ice continues to retreat, depriving polar bears, seals, and walrus of habitat, and coastlines (where many of Alaska’s communities lie) continue to erode.

Now that the United States chairs the Arctic Council,

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## THANK YOU, ANN!



ANN ROTHE  
©Wayde Carroll

After announcing her planned retirement the prior spring, Ann Rothe’s last day as Executive Director at Alaska Conservation Foundation was on August 7, 2015. Staff honored her with a rousing game of croquet—our office sport.

A theme throughout Ann’s career has been one of seeing a need in the community and filling it. One of her greatest contributions

happened in the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill after which she helped create the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, a critical citizens’ group that continues, to this day, to monitor operations of the Trans Alaska Pipeline oil terminal at Valdez and oil tankers that pass through Prince William Sound. For ten years, she was Executive Director of Trustees for Alaska, a nonprofit

environmental law firm. She helped establish Cook Inlet-keeper, to protect Alaska’s Cook Inlet watershed. As a research consultant, Ann investigated and reported on a number of issues including environmental impacts of large-scale mining in Alaska and impacts of environmental toxins on human health in rural Alaska villages.

Ann had been with ACF for eight years, the last four as its Executive Director. She played a key role in the Bristol Bay protection campaign, ensured the Alaska Native Fund grantmaking program was successful in its initial years and developed many wonderful, sustaining relationships with our supporters and foundation partners from around the country. Ann says, “I’ve had a very rewarding career and I’ve been privileged to work with truly devoted and inspiring individuals throughout it.”

Cheers, Ann, for your 32 years of service and myriad contributions to Alaska’s conservation movement! Alaska is better because of your expertise and efforts.

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## LETTER *from the* EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



MICHAEL BARBER

Dear Friends,

It's an understatement to say it's been an exhilarating first month on the job as Alaska Conservation Foundation's new Executive Director.

President Obama was just in Anchorage attending the GLACIER summit of world leaders to talk about the impacts of climate change taking hold in Alaska. He then traveled to some of Alaska's most at risk regions, including Bristol Bay which he recently withdrew from offshore oil and gas leasing. He also visited the small, primarily Inupiat community of Kotzebue above the Arctic Circle, where he connected with residents and heard accounts of how

the rapidly changing environment is threatening their culture and ways of life. In advance of the President's trip, ACF worked with the White House to provide a comprehensive account of private and philanthropic efforts in Alaska to build resiliency to these impacts, including some great work that ACF is supporting.

In this 80th issue of our newsletter, we share with you some of the latest climate change related efforts around the state from our partners like Alaska Marine Conservation Council. We also introduce you to long-time supporters Kirk Hoessle and ACF Trustee Bill Leighty who are doing their part to raise awareness about what we can do to help mitigate the impacts of the warming climate on Alaska. We also recognize our departing Executive Director, Ann Rothe, who has embarked upon a much deserved retirement that she assures me will be spent enjoying Alaska while continuing to advocate on its behalf.

Alaska has been my family's home for four generations. Protecting it is personal for me, as I know it is for you, for our partners and thankfully for President Obama now as well. We thank him for bringing to the world's attention how urgent action is required to protect Alaska, and for the new commitments he announced to build our state's resilience. And we thank you for your continued support of our efforts to serve and support a movement of diverse voices needed to create a sustainable future for us all.

Sincerely,

Michael Barber, Executive Director

## MISSION

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

## VISION

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

### *Climate Change story continued from page 1*

a high-level intergovernmental forum for addressing Arctic issues, Alaska is at the forefront. Late last month President Obama traveled here to address a climate change conference and to bring climate change and Arctic issues to the world's attention. See our Executive Director Michael Barber's letter, about ACF's involvement with the President's visit. We were proud to have a role in showing the President (and the world) what's so special about Alaska as well as helping set the stage for climate action.

It would be easy to be discouraged by the state of our Earth today, but in this Dispatch we're highlighting stories to demonstrate resilience and possibility. I hope you'll join me in finding inspiration in the stories of how Alaskans, with support from ACF, are facing the climate change challenge in positive and creative ways.

# THE BIGGEST CLIMATE THREAT YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

CONTRIBUTED BY SAM WEIS, ALASKANS FOR ENERGY FREEDOM CAMPAIGN

Alaska is known for its pristine wilderness, indigenous cultures, abundant wildlife and prolific salmon streams, but it also holds a little known secret: As much as one-eighth of all of the coal on earth, an estimated 5.5 trillion tons, lies under the surface of The Last Frontier. With demand from Asian markets driving seven proposed coal mining and export proposals in Alaska, the coal industry has the state in its sights—and the global climate would be imperiled if these export projects become a reality.

Beyond opening the floodgates to massive amounts of untapped carbon, these proposed coal projects would wreak devastating impacts on Alaska's environment. The coal industry's proposals include drastic plans, such as mining directly through Alaska's iconic wild salmon streams and strip mining within 1/4 mile of a residential neighborhood.

Alaska Conservation Foundation holds a Field of Interest Fund for the Alaskans for Energy Freedom Campaign, which provides funding to campaign partners such as Cook Inletkeeper, Trustees for Alaska, Alaska Center for the Environment and others to fight to keep Alaska's coal in the ground. Success in this campaign will protect the earth's climate as well as the lands, waters and people of Alaska.

AEF's top priority is stopping the Chuitna Mine, where PacRim Coal proposes to mine directly through nearly 14 miles of salmon stream to export 300 million tons of coal over 25 years. If allowed to move forward, this proposal

would leave salmon streams across the state at risk by setting a terrible precedent as the first time a company has been allowed to mine directly through salmon habitat. Perhaps more concerning, this mining proposal would develop the infrastructure other coal companies need to access the 33-billion ton Susitna-Beluga coalfield. With two other coal companies holding active leases in the coalfield, allowing this project to move forward could open a Powder River Basin-sized coal export facility just across the Cook Inlet from Anchorage.

Over the last couple of years, AEF partners have identified and turned out thousands of Alaskans who oppose the Chuitna Mine. This effort reached its peak in 2015 when over 7,500 comments were delivered to Department of Natural Resources demanding the agency keep water in streams for salmon at the Chuitna River.

There may be a national public comment period on the proposed Chuitna Mine in 2016. Visit [www.savethechuitna.org](http://www.savethechuitna.org) to see the award winning film **Chuitna: More than Salmon on the Line** and learn how you can be ready to respond.



CHUITNA RIVER AND BLOCKS OF COAL ©Dave McCoy

## ALASKANS ADVOCATE FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Alaska Climate Action Network is a citizen-led effort seeking solutions to our climate crisis. They operate through *Tools for Change*, a program of long-time ACF partner Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. Alaska CAN! is advocating four specific actions from the U.S. government and Alaska leaders including a rapid transition to renewable energy and binding agreements at the upcoming 2015 UN Climate Conference. *Learn more and join their efforts at [www.alaskaclimateaction.org](http://www.alaskaclimateaction.org)!*

## CONGRATULATIONS 2015 CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS!

Alaska Conservation Foundation will celebrate the 2015 Conservation Achievement Award recipients at a luncheon on September 24, 2015 at Bridge Seafood in Anchorage. This year's honorees include: Helen Nienhueser of Anchorage (Lifetime Achievement), Becky Long of Talkeetna (Hunter Award), Marilyn Heiman of Seattle (Murie Award), Griffin Plush of Seward (Wilcher Award), Florian Schulz of Germany (Housberg Award), Laurel Devaney of Fairbanks (Dixon Award) and United Tribes of Bristol Bay of Dillingham (Pungowiyi Award).

To learn about their contributions to protecting Alaska's natural environment and the ways of life it sustains, visit [www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards/meet-2015-winners](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/achievement-awards/meet-2015-winners).



2015 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT HELEN NIENHUESER



# BUILDING OCEAN ACIDIFICATION AWARENESS IN ALASKA

CONTRIBUTED BY HANNAH HEIMBUCH, ALASKA MARINE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Alaska's coastline celebrates thriving ecosystems and vibrant coastal communities, but the North Pacific waters around Alaska are experiencing some of the highest rates of ocean acidification across the planet. For a number of reasons, Alaska's cold waters are already naturally more acidic, and as the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increases from the burning of fossil fuels, and the world's oceans absorb it, the pH of sea water decreases. This in turn reduces the key mineral that marine organisms need to form shells and skeletons.



KIOSK LAUNCH CEREMONY ©Bjorn Olson

In a study released earlier this year from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Alaska Fairbanks, scientists warn that Alaska's shellfish hatcheries are going to be among the first impacted, indicating they may have as few as 25 years before requiring major systems change to stay operational. Additionally, Pacific species like the tiny pteropod—a vital food source for whales, salmon, birds and other marine animals—are proving to be particularly sensitive to acidity changes which will create a ripple effect throughout the marine food web.

Alaska Marine Conservation Council is working diligently to address ocean acidification by teaming up with scientists, subsistence harvesters, fishermen and fishery managers to understand the impacts, address management challenges and seek solutions. In 2015, along with our partner Cook Inletkeeper, we began piloting a new outreach effort aimed at fishermen working in coastal Alaska whose livelihoods are going to be directly affected by these changes. We developed an outdoor kiosk that allows them to explore through video, images and text the causes of acidification, as well as the current and potential effects on Alaska's fisheries and ecosystems. The kiosk also provides an opportunity for them to become engaged with current advocacy and other efforts aimed at addressing ocean acidification. The first one was installed this past July in Homer, Alaska at the Coal Point Trading Company. It will eventually move to other coastal communities around Alaska to help increase awareness about and action on this important issue.

Thanks to continued support from our donors and foundation partners, ACF is able to fund effective groups like Alaska Marine Conservation Council and Cook Inletkeeper that are working on some of Alaska's most pressing conservation issues. To learn more about their efforts go to [www.akmarine.org](http://www.akmarine.org) and [www.inletkeeper.org](http://www.inletkeeper.org).

## CELEBRATING ACF'S PAST, PREPARING FOR OUR FUTURE

This past June, ACF and 200 of our closest friends, grantees and community partners celebrated our 35th Anniversary at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. It was an inspiring Who's Who of Alaska conservation representing both our history and our future. We were honored to have Jim Stratton, one of ACF's first staff members, emcee the evening for us. Jim did a wonderful job of weaving together ACF's history with the help of former trustees Jim Barnett, Ken Leghorn and AJ Grant. To see photos from our 35th Anniversary, find us on Facebook and click on the "Photos" tab.

ACF would like to extend an extra special thank you to our former trustees who traveled from around the country to be a part of the celebration as well as a historic convening of past and present trustees that followed in Homer. ACF is humbled and inspired by your continued dedication to the organization and Alaska. Thank you for sharing your valuable time and knowledge with us. Your combined insights will inform our next 35 years and for that, we're grateful.



35 YEARS OF ACF TRUSTEES ©Wayde Carroll

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS THAT HELPED MAKE OUR 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION POSSIBLE



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## MEET OUR GREATEST SUPPORTERS

*Learn what inspires some of our most dedicated supporters*

# WILD ALASKA: OUR GREATEST BUSINESS ASSET

CONTRIBUTED BY KIRK HOESSLE, ALASKA WILDLAND ADVENTURES

If you're involved in a business, each year your accountant produces a financial statement to evaluate it, which includes assets like cash in the bank. But for those of us involved in Alaska tourism—whether we lead small ecotourism expeditions or operate mega cruise ships—it misses our most important asset: Wild Alaska. At Alaska Wildland Adventures, we've always known that Alaska's wildness is what sets us apart from other destinations; it's responsible for attracting almost 2 million visitors that spend upwards of \$2 billion annually. Who would have thought that by setting aside public lands as forests, parks and refuges we'd be able to support a thriving alternative form of economic development to destructive resource extraction?

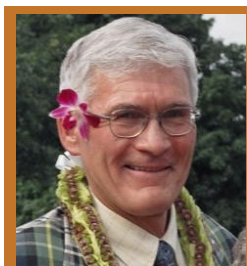
That's why AWA supports conservation efforts, and ACF. ACF has a long history of funding many worthy projects statewide, including in areas where we operate. In addition to providing our own financial and in-kind support directly, another way AWA is able to leverage support for ACF and our other local conservation groups is by serving as an ambassador. We encourage guests to our lodges to consider contributing \$2 for conservation, for each day of their vacation, to help protect for the future what they've been able to experience today. We in turn ensure these funds get deployed to our trusted conservation allies to carry out their important work to protect our most important asset of all—Wild Alaska.

*Please support the ecotourism businesses that support ACF and our partners. For more information about Alaska Wildland Adventures, visit [www.alaskawildland.com](http://www.alaskawildland.com).*



KIRK HOESSLE

## TRUSTEE, BILL LEIGHTY



BILL LEIGHTY

Chances are if you've been to an ACF event you've met long-time Trustee, Bill Leighty, as he greeted you with a genuine handshake and a business card. He attributes his hosting skills to his father, and ones he honed as the former owner of the Gold Creek Salmon Bake in Juneau.

It doesn't take long after meeting Bill to learn his interests and expertise revolve around renewables-source energy, and energy and materials conservation, as essentials for climate change mitigation. He's an electrical engineer who has written and presented extensively and fervently on both topics. He and his wife Nancy, aside from being directors of The Leighty Foundation, also own Alaska Applied Sciences, Inc., a renewable energy consulting business.

Bill joined the ACF board in 2007 because he wants future generations to be able to enjoy Alaska's natural magnificence and believes ACF is essential to its protection. "If we believe in managing 'for the seventh generation', we need to make extraordinary investments now in conservation, so that we don't regret failing to do so when we had the chance."

Bill has lived in Juneau for over 40 years. He and Nancy live in an earth-sheltered house and spend their free time hiking, biking and kayaking. If you're ever "passing through" Juneau, please let us know—Bill would like to meet you, shake your hand and thank you for supporting ACF.

*Learn more about our Trustees at [www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/board-directors](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/board-directors).*

## MEET THE STAFF

ACF's staff is a cohesive group of 13 individuals from diverse backgrounds who love Alaska. Here are some fun facts about our team!

9 .....  
ORIGINALLY FROM ALASKA  
.....  
24 YEARS  
AVERAGE THOSE OF US NOT ORIGINALLY  
FROM ALASKA HAVE LIVED HERE

100% .....  
COMMITTED TO ACF'S MISSION

Learn more about us at:

[www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/staff](http://www.alaskaconservation.org/foundation/staff)

## LEAVE A LEGACY

Planned giving is an especially meaningful way to help Alaska. There are a variety of ways you can do this to fit your goals. Whether you're considering making a planned gift today or in the future, we're here to assist you. Please contact Jen Harrington at (907) 276-1917 or at [jharrington@alaskaconservation.org](mailto:jharrington@alaskaconservation.org), or consult your financial advisor.

If you've already made a planned gift to ACF, please allow us to thank you for your forethought and generosity by recognizing you as a Denali Legacy Society member, an extraordinary group of individuals helping to ensure that ACF can carry out its mission for today and the future.

*Alaska Conservation Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your contribution may qualify for a tax deduction based on your individual circumstance. ACF's tax identification number is 92-0061466.*



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## HELP ACF ADVANCE SOLUTIONS TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON ALASKA



SNOWY OWL ON TUNDRA

©Tim Leach

# THANK YOU!