On October 17, 2008, the National Marine Fisheries Service designated the Cook Inlet Beluga whale as "endangered" under the federal Endangered Species Act. Inletkeeper has been working to protect the Cook Inlet beluga whale for more than a decade, and the listing came in response to a petition filed by Trustees for Alaska on behalf of lead petitioner Cook Inletkeeper and other groups and individuals.

"This is a long awaited triumph of science over politics," said Bob Shavelson, Cook Inletkeeper. "Now, we need all stakeholders to come together to fund the research needed to understand why the Cook Inlet beluga whale population has failed to recover."

Under the listing, NMFS will now be required to identify the whale’s critical habitat, and activities affecting that habitat will require consultation with NMFS. Despite rhetoric from whale protection opponents, ESA listings do not hamper responsible development. In fact, statistics compiled since the enactment of the ESA all establish that the federal agency consultation process does very little to block projects. In 1992, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that only twenty-three of 18,211 projects would jeopardize a listed species and had no reasonable alternative. Other reports have posted similar findings.

Between 1987 and 1995, only an estimated 600 jeopardy or adverse modification findings were made in consultations on 186,000 projects. This is less than one-half a percent. Though only anecdotal data, the Fish & Wildlife Service stated that in fiscal year 1999, 12,000 informal consultations took place. Of the eighty-three formal consultations conducted in that year, only one resulted in an opinion that a species would be in jeopardy. More recently, the Fish & Wildlife Service reported that from 1998 to 2000, only 420 projects resulted in a “jeopardy” opinion out of more than 300,000 consultations.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been a member of Cook Inletkeeper for the past decade, and he’s made several trips to Homer and Anchorage to speak in support of Inletkeeper’s work. Of the many pressing issues he’s confronted in Cook Inlet, none has resonated more with Bobby than the toxic dumping by oil and gas corporations into Cook Inlet’s rich and productive fisheries.

In August, Inletkeeper and the Waterkeeper Alliance released a letter from Bobby Kennedy, Jr. to Chevron CEO David O’Reilly, calling on the Chevron Corporation to stop dumping toxic oil and gas wastes in Cook Inlet. Kennedy’s letter came in response to correspondence from Chevron after Mr. Kennedy and Mr. O’Reilly debated energy issues on Larry King Live in July. The Cook Inlet toxic dumping debate provides an important perspective on offshore oil and gas development as Congress debates ways to address our nations energy security.
Dear Friends of Cook Inlet —

The national election has definitely brought the opportunity for change to a nation facing monumental challenges. But with the cries of “drill, baby, drill” and “mine, baby, mine” echoing throughout campaign rallies, what real changes can we expect in Alaska? The short answer is: not much, unless we work hard to define the future we want. This national election has taught us that negative stereotypes about the “real America” and the “other” America have given way to a more inclusive perspective that rejects the old paradigms of left vs. right, liberal vs. conservative and Republican vs. Democrat. That’s because the standard of living we’ve grown accustomed to in America has been slipping away, with the gap between rich and poor ever-widening, jobs moving overseas under the rubric of “free trade,” and salaries failing to keep pace with increasing energy, food, health care and basic living costs. Tough times and failed policies do not discriminate based on party affiliation or political ideology. If nothing else, this election has shown that regardless of our ideological stripes, we’re all Americans and we face epic challenges that only broad-based action and support can redress. In Alaska, however, we remain mired in an extractive resource economy dominated by powerful corporate interests; an economy where our “develop at all costs” mentality often trumps the very values we Alaskans hold dear: clean water, healthy families, lasting jobs and abundant fish and wildlife. But as climate change continues to unfold at our doorstep – and as Outside corporations move to develop our expansive coal and oil resources – it’s never been more clear that we have an unprecedented opportunity – and an obligation - to create enduring jobs by establishing Alaska as a worldwide leader in clean energy innovation and production. Because as the past few months have taught us, business as usual is unacceptable if we want to hand our kids a planet where salmon are plentiful, where jobs and health care and education are basic rights, not privileges, and where the public interest overrides the corporate interest.

Yours for Cook Inlet,

Bob Shavelson
Executive Director

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Thus, the vast majority of projects entering the consultation process are resolved informally with a determination that no listed species will be impacted, and responsible development can occur in conjunction with a listing decision. Furthermore, even in the extremely rare instances when a project as proposed is terminated, nothing in the ESA prevents project proponents from re-configuring their projects so as to ameliorate ESA problems and then reapplying for relevant permits.

The beluga whale has long been ignored in management and permitting decisions on oil and gas, sewage, port expansion and related projects. Cook Inletkeeper recognizes the Cook Inlet beluga whale as a vital strand in the ecological fabric that makes up the Cook Inlet ecosystem, and this ecosystem supports the economic and natural vitality of Southcentral Alaska. As a result, Inletkeeper will continue to play a leading role fighting to protect the whale and its habitat from irresponsible development.

For more information, contact Bob at 907.235.4068 x22 or bob@inletkeeper.org.
In his letter, Mr. Kennedy notes that Chevron dumps billions of gallons of toxic oil and gas wastes into Cook Inlet’s rich coastal fisheries each year. Chevron could properly treat these wastes by re-injecting them back into the formation, but the corporation – which reported net profits over $14 billion in the first nine months of 2008 – has balked due to high costs.

Mr. Kennedy is the Chairman of the Board of the Waterkeeper Alliance (www.waterkeeper.org); Cook Inletkeeper is a long standing member of the Waterkeeper Alliance. See www.inletkeeper.org for more info.
Coal

Bush Administration Coal Rule Threatens Alaska Salmon Streams

Last minute rollback a gift for corporate donors in coal industry

In a last minute gift to “King Coal,” the lame duck Bush administration recently finalized rules that lift a longstanding ban on coal mining within 100 feet of streams and waterbodies. Called the Stream Buffer Zone Rule, this Reagan-era rule had prohibited disturbances to sensitive riparian areas if water quality and water quantity impacts would occur. Under the new rule, federal bureaucrats now have discretion to determine whether riparian safeguards are “practicable.” Inletkeeper submitted comments on behalf of Alaskan groups to the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement (OSMRE), noting the need for increased precautions due to the stress-inducing effects of climate change on fish habitat, and asking them to block the rule change. Tens of thousands of other citizens nationally submitted comments opposing the rule, but the Bush Administration ignored concerns about water quality and fish habitat, and finalized the rule in Fall 2008.

While the new rule was largely developed to assist coal corporations utilizing mountain top removal practices in the Appalachia region, it will have a nationwide application, and as a result, it will put Alaska salmon streams in the cross hairs of intensive strip mine activities. The most imminent threat posed by this new rule lies on the west side of Cook Inlet, where Outside investors want to develop the Chuitna coal strip mine, which would mine through 11 miles of salmon stream in order to produce coal for Asian markets. This will be the first project in the history of Alaska where a mine would be permitted to develop through a salmon stream, so the statewide precedent for this project cannot be higher. Inletkeeper will now be working with national groups to ask the Obama Administration to undo this flagrant gift to the coal industry. For more information, contact Inletkeeper’s Coal Organizer, Dennis Gann, in Anchorage at 907.929.9371 or dennis@inletkeeper.org.

The Bush Administration’s new stream buffer rule will allow coal corporations to mine through salmon streams in Alaska – such as tributaries to the Chuitna River, pictured here, near the proposed Chuitna coal strip mine on the West Side of Cook Inlet.

Upper Cook Inlet Fisheries & the Chuitna Coal Strip Mine

Will the Kenai Borough & the State take us backwards to more coal?

As Alaska grapples with its energy future, it makes little sense to destroy our fisheries and our Alaska way of life simply so Outside investors can make a buck sending coal to Asia. If you care about the future of Cook Inlet fisheries, contact Dennis Gann, Inletkeeper Coal Organizer, at dennis@inletkeeper.org or 907.929.9371. We need your help to defeat this short-sighted project, and to put Cook Inlet on the path to clean, renewable energy and the lasting jobs it will produce.

Asian demand for fossil fuels continues to drag the proposed Chuitna coal strip mine on the west side of Cook Inlet forward. This ill-conceived strip mine just 45 miles from Anchorage near the communities of Beluga and Tyonek is in the advanced permitting stage according to Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Texas investors Dick Bass and Herbert Hunt, through their Delaware Corporation, PacRim Coal, are seeking to strip millions of tons of coal per year from the Chuitna River watershed.

The Chuitna River and its tributaries support all 5 species of wild Pacific salmon, Dolly Varden, and trout. The watershed also provides important habitat for bears, moose, and other game animals that local residents rely on for subsistence, sport, commercial and personal use hunting and fishing.

The first phase of development will strip away 5,000 acres, including 11 miles of Middle Creek, a salmon rearing and spawning tributary to the Chuitna River. In addition to directly mining through a healthy salmon stream, a dangerous precedent that Alaska has never allowed before, PacRim will dump an average of 7 million gallons a day of mine waste and run-off into the Chuitna River and its tributaries. Finally, the mine’s export facility will directly impact set net fishing sights, including construction of a 2 mile long dock that will impair important salmon migration corridors.

In short, this mine will impact – and in many cases destroy - the vital water quality and habitat that supports countless Upper Inlet salmon.

If state and federal agencies permit the first phase of this massive coal strip mine, PacRim’s considerable investment in infrastructure will invariably lead to mining on adjacent coal leases. A total of 60 square miles of rich wildlife habitat supporting all 5 species of wild Pacific salmon, Dolly Varden, trout, bears, moose, and other game animals providing food and recreation for generations to come, will be lost to coal mining to support Asian economies.

This past spring the Alaska Legislature established the Cook Inlet Salmon Task Force to study low salmon runs in the Mat-Su Valley, a concern for Mat-Su area fishermen for many years. The reasons for low returns in the past can be debated, but it’s a given that the development of the Chuitna coal mine and its associated infrastructure will have adverse impacts on salmon returning to the northern district.

As Alaska grapples with its energy future, it makes little sense to destroy our fisheries and our Alaska way of life simply so Outside investors can make a buck sending coal to Asia. If you care about the future of Cook Inlet fisheries, contact Dennis Gann, Inletkeeper Coal Organizer, at dennis@inletkeeper.org or 907.929.9371. We need your help to defeat this short-sighted project, and to put Cook Inlet on the path to clean, renewable energy and the lasting jobs it will produce.

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Volatile fossil fuel markets and high rural fuel prices are making energy a key priority for the Alaska Legislature when it reconvenes in Juneau in January 2009, and Cook Inletkeeper is working with a variety of groups to ensure our elected officials reject dirty coal and embrace the long term jobs and clean power that renewable energy promises.

In late 2007, Inletkeeper played a key role creating the Alaska Coal Working Group (ACWG), a coalition of 25 Alaskan groups and Tribes formed with the common vision of a clean energy future for the health of Alaska’s people, communities and the environment. Alaska possesses roughly half of the nation’s coal reserves and coal is a notoriously dirty fuel, producing toxic mercury, destroying fish and game habitat, and generating nearly twice the greenhouse gases of other fossil fuels. As a result, the ACWG recognizes that keeping Alaska coal in the ground and moving Alaska forward toward clean renewable energies is the best path for a healthy environment, strong local economies, and a secure energy future.

Recent volatile energy prices have renewed interest in coal fired power plants and facilities, in particular, coal-to-liquids (CTL) projects. CTL plants cook coal in a Fischer-Tropsch process that results in liquid fuels. The ACWG is closely monitoring a 20,000-40,000 barrel per day coal-to-liquids plant proposed by the Fairbanks Economic Development Commission, ostensibly to meet local transportation and heating needs. A similar CTL facility has been proposed adjacent to the Chuitna coal strip mine in Cook Inlet. But there are only two operating CTL plants in the world (in South Africa), and CTL plants face extremely high capital costs; for example, the Fairbanks CTL plant is estimated at $2-$6.4 billion and would not provide cheaper fuel to area residents – that’s because international markets dictate fuel costs. So, even in South Africa, where 30% of their transportation fuels are derived from the coal, fuel is still more expensive than in Fairbanks. Furthermore, CTL will aggravate climate change through massive emissions of greenhouse gases, and technologies to capture and sequester CO2 remain in their infancy. So stay tuned for action alerts and visit our web page www.inletkeeper.org to see how you can weigh in with your local elected officials.

Despite the promise of “clean coal”, the state has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on the Healy “Clean Coal” Plant, which remains idle more than a decade after its construction. The proposed coal-to-liquids (CTL) facility near Fairbanks faces similar cost and technology hurdles.

### Renewable Energy Updates

When a landslide knocked out Juneau’s power lines last winter, local residents and businesses were forced to rely on back-up power from expensive diesel generators. In response to the shock from skyrocketing fuel prices, Juneau reduced its energy consumption more than 30% in just a few short months. That’s because energy conservation and energy efficiency are the “low hanging fruit” when it comes to securing our energy future – and lowering your fuel bills! The Alaska Housing Finance Corporation has established a number of loan and grant programs aimed at helping Alaskans weatherize their homes, conduct energy audits and more. For more information, see www.ahfc.state.ak.us/energy/weatherization_rebates.cfm

Yet while conservation and efficiency are vital aspects in curtailing our energy consumption, the writing is on the wall – from rapid global warming to declining oil and gas reserves – that we increasingly need to produce power from clean, renewable sources that will provide long term jobs and stable economic development. In Cook Inlet alone, we possess world-class renewable energy supplies, and last year, the state passed legislation to help fund renewable energy projects. In Cook Inlet, some of the more advanced projects include:

**Mt. Spurr Geothermal Development:** In Fall 2008, the state received bids on all 16 tracks offered for geothermal leases on Mt. Spurr, 75 miles west of Anchorage. Geothermal energy has long been used to heat and power municipalities from San Francisco to Iceland, and Anchorage is well-positioned to tap into geothermal sources. Ormat Technologies Inc., one of the world’s largest developers of geothermal power plants, was the largest bidder. For the State of Alaska geothermal energy info, see www.dog.dnr.state.ak.us/oil/products/publications/geothermal/geothermal.html#salesdocs

**Chakachamna Hydropower Facility:** Pribilof Islands-based TDX Power, a Native-owned firm with experience with other renewable energy projects in Alaska, is proposing a lake tap hydro project at Chakachamna Lake that could provide 300 megawatts to the railbelt. While this project would not include a dam to increase the “head” needed to generate power, it would transfer instream flows from one watershed to another. As a result, Inletkeeper is working with TDX to understand impacts to fisheries, including ways to mitigate impacts to salmon. For more info: www.tdxpower.com

**Fire Island Wind Project:** In 2008, the State of Alaska approved $25 million to fund a submarine electrical cable from Fire Island to Anchorage to support a wind turbine complex capable of producing 30-50 MW of energy. Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) and California-based wind energy company enXco Inc. are moving forward with plans to develop this wind energy project as phase one of a potential 100 MW wind project at Fire Island. See www.ciri.com/content/company/FireIsland.aspx

**Knik Arm Tidal Power:** Cook Inlet boasts the second highest tides in North America, and Ocean Renewable Power is planning a prototype tidal energy project in Cook Inlet at Port Mackenzie. While the company will need to address impacts to the Cook Inlet beluga whale, it's preliminary designs suggest it would cause no more impact than existing ship traffic and facilities in the area. For more information, see www.oceanrenewablepower.com
On Halloween 2008, the federal EPA foisted some witchcraft on Alaskans by granting the Alaska Department of Environmental Conversation (ADEC) the legal authority to implement and enforce the permitting provisions of the Clean Water Act (also called the “National Pollution Discharge Elimination System” or “NPDES”). While Inletkeeper would prefer to see NPDES permitting and enforcement functions administered by state rather federal officials, it objects to this new delegation of authority because it reflects the biased and unbalanced approach embraced by former Governor Frank Murkowski and his ADEC Commissioner Ernesta Ballard. For example, the stakeholder team convened to draw up the new rules consisted solely of entities possessing pollution discharges permits; Native Tribes, fishermen and other Alaskans who rely on clean water were denied access to the decisionmaking table.

Additionally, the new state-run program raises serious concerns that Alaskans will no longer have realistic opportunities to challenge weak pollution permits. That’s because federal rules protect citizens from exorbitant legal fees in permit challenges; state of Alaska rules, on the other hand, follow a “loser pays” formula – which means any Alaskan brave enough to stand up and challenge an oil industry permit might get slapped with massive legal bills from industry lawyers.

Finally, the new state-run program strips Native Alaskan Tribes of the government-to-government consultations Tribes always enjoyed with the EPA; now, Tribes will be relegated to a notice and comment system that often undermines Tribal participation. “Native Tribes have a huge stake in permitting decisions that affect our water quality and our subsistence foods,” said Inletkeeper Boardmember Tom Evans of the Native Village of Nanwalek in Lower Cook Inlet. “Now, instead of deliberate and thoughtful discussions about protecting our subsistence resources, the state can just churn out these pollution permits without taking our comments seriously.”

Inletkeeper is now working with its counsel at Trustees for Alaska to consider a challenge to the NPDES delegation decision. To see ADEC’s NPDES web site, go to: www.dec.state.ak.us/water/npdes/APDES Application.htm.

Djuna Mascall, Matthew Nelson and Mathew Wendell are professional kayak instructors from Puget Sound who embarked on an amazing paddle around the Kenai Peninsula this past summer. Aside from completing this awesome journey, they wanted to elevate the environmental issues they encountered, and they generously solicited donations to support Inletkeeper’s work in fighting the proposed Chuitna coal strip mine on the west side of Cook Inlet. We truly appreciate this wonderful support, and thank Djuna, Matt and Matt for helping us pursue this important work. See their web site and check out their blog of the journey at: www.bodyboatblade.com

Inletkeeper Member Spotlight – Kayakers Extraordinaire Djuna, Matt & Matt

Matthew Wendell, Djuna Mascall and Mathew Nelson during their paddle around the Kenai Peninsula this summer.

“Now, instead of deliberate and thoughtful discussions about protecting our subsistence resources, the state can just churn out these pollution permits without taking our comments seriously.”

Inletkeeper Boardmember & Nanwalek Tribal Council Member Tom Evans and wife Ann.
I had a unique opportunity this summer to join a team of researchers over in Iliamna to document the presence of salmon in headwater streams in Bristol Bay. We spent six days traveling by helicopter to sites in the upper reaches of the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers – a region where proposed mining heightens the need for more complete information about salmon habitat.

Our research team documented juvenile coho salmon in 18 of the 33 surveyed locations as well as juvenile coho and chinook salmon together in 2 additional streams. The effort, which was funded by The Nature Conservancy, resulted in 28 miles of streams being nominated to the State’s Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC). Streams listed in the AWC have greater protection as developers must submit plans and specifications to Alaska Department of Fish & Game and receive written approval in the form of a Fish Habitat Permit prior to beginning work.

With the failure of the Clean Water Initiative (ballot measure 4) in August, this effort to document fish habitat is one of the few means of protecting Bristol Bay fisheries threatened by large-scale mining projects. I applaud Dr. Carol Ann Woody with the Center for Science in Public Policy and The Nature Conservancy for spearheading this important work which will hopefully continue over the next few years.

Stream Temperature Monitoring Now in 48 Salmon Streams
Partnering effort spans entire Cook Inlet watershed

Cook Inletkeeper collected stream temperature data on 48 salmon streams this summer - with a little help from our friends. This is the first year of the Stream Temperature Monitoring Network, which is designed to collect consistent, comparable temperature data in salmon streams across Cook Inlet. We are building a network of partners as the framework for a sustainable, long-term monitoring program that will provide fisheries managers and land-use planners the necessary data to identify which streams are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The Stream Temperature Monitoring Network allows us to work with monitoring partners in all corners of the watershed including the Mat-Su Basin, Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage Bowl and the west side of Cook Inlet. In the Talkeetna area, Jeff and Gay Davis with the Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute deployed temperature loggers as far north as the East Fork of the Chuitna River, just 30 miles from the Denali Highway. Brianne Atchearn with the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District worked throughout the Wasilla and Palmer area, Scott Wolfe with The Wildlifers maintained our most easterly site on Jim Creek, while Kate Malloy and Greg Collins from the Anchorage Waterways Council placed loggers in downtown Anchorage. To the west, we worked with Judy and Larry Heilman on Theodore Creek, as well as Jessica Standifer of the Native Village of Tyonek on the Chuitna River. Jennifer McCord and her Kenai Watershed Forum field crew deployed numerous data loggers across the Kenai Peninsula. Cook Inletkeeper’s Sue Mauger and Tala Woodward worked with Michael and Norman Opheim in Seldovia and Board Member Tom Evans in Nanwalek to place loggers on the south side of Kachemak Bay.

In addition, staff from Alaska Department of Fish & Game, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided field support on a number of sites. We greatly appreciate our partners help this summer and look forward to long-term partnerships to keep the Network active for years to come.

This winter Inletkeeper will generate regional maps to illustrate salmon stream temperature patterns across the Inlet. We hope to provide the knowledge and data needed to prioritize sites for future research, protection and restoration actions. Our goal is to ensure the biological resilience of salmon streams to a changing climate by protecting and restoring salmon habitat for the long-term health of Cook Inlet salmon streams. See www.inletkeeper.org for more information about Cook Inletkeeper’s salmon stream monitoring program.

Inletkeeper Joins Research Team in Bristol Bay Headwaters
28 miles of streams nominated to State’s Anadromous Waters Catalog

I had a unique opportunity this summer to join a team of researchers over in Iliamna to document the presence of salmon in headwater streams in Bristol Bay. We spent six days traveling by helicopter to sites in the upper reaches of the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers – a region where proposed mining heightens the need for more complete information about salmon habitat.

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This summer Cook Inletkeeper was pleased to host Erik B. Strong and Tala Woodward as part of the Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF) intern program. The ACF Internship Program offers students planning a career in conservation the opportunity to develop practical job skills in a challenging and fun environment, and provides groups like Inletkeeper with talented and cost-effective support to carry out their work.

Erik worked in the Anchorage office where he quickly became involved in a number of Alaska Coal Working Group issues including researching mercury emissions, monitoring the status of the Clean Air Mercury rule, and developing outreach materials on Carbon Capture & Sequestration. Erik has moved on to graduate studies at University of Michigan.

Tala was instrumental in all that we accomplished this summer in our beach and stream monitoring programs. She heads off for a new adventure in the Philippines this winter and then on to graduate school next year. (See more on Tala's experiences on page 10.)

Thanks to Tala, Erik, and the Alaska Conservation Foundation for this great program and offering Cook Inletkeeper the opportunity to host these fine, young conservationists. We hope they'll come back to stay!

Alaska Conservation Foundation Interns

Cook Inletkeeper reaps benefits of outstanding talent

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Splash Bash Recap

On July 29th, Cook Inletkeeper celebrated its 11th annual Splash Bash Volunteer and Member Appreciation Party! Although it was an unusually wet summer, the clouds graciously parted for the event, and we all enjoyed a sunny summer evening at Bishop's Beach, chowing down on halibut and chocolate cake. A big thank you goes out to: Alaskan Handi-Crafts, Bald Mountain Air, Bear Creek Winery, Blackberry Bog, Boardwalk Fish and Chips, Central Charters, Dock-N-Depot Bed and Breakfast, Duggan’s Galley, Forget-Me-Not Flowers and Gifts, Fresh Sourdough Express Bakery, The Fish Connection, The Grog Shop, High Tide Arts, Homer Bookstore, Homer Brewery, Homer Jeans, Kachemak Bay Seafoods, Kiana Bed and Breakfast, Lazy M Leather, North Wind Gifts, Ocean View RV Park, Ring of Fire Meadery, Salty Dog Saloon, Salty Girls, Starvin Marvin’s, and White Earth Tile. Due to their generous contributions, we were able to honor all volunteers present at the Splash Bash. Special recognition went to Frank Vondersaar, who submitted the highest number of datasheets this year, Jim Levin, who volunteered the most number of hours, and Scott Miller, who was second in place for both of these categories. We also said goodbye to Bree Murphy, who has been a dedicated volunteer but left Homer in August to go back to school. The band Work in Progress kept up a string of lively tunes to back the festivities. All in all, it was yet another fun-filled event. The continued support and generosity of community businesses, and the time contributed by volunteers, is what makes our program so successful, and makes Homer a great place to live. Many thanks!
Well-Water Testing – Kick-Off at the Homer Health Fair

According to the CDC, between 1999 and 2000, contaminated private well water contributed to 26% of illnesses attributed to drinking water. Well water can become contaminated if contaminants from the soil surface percolate downwards and enter groundwater systems. In Alaska, 90% of private drinking water supplies come from groundwater. It is the responsibility of private well water owners to ensure that their water is safe to drink because private water sources are not adequately protected by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. As part of our mission to “protect Alaska’s Cook Inlet and the life it sustains,” Cook Inletkeeper is pleased to serve as a resource about drinking water health concerns for residents of Alaska’s lower Cook Inlet. On November 8th, Cook Inletkeeper’s booth at the Homer Rotary Health Fair provided attendees with information about common drinking water contaminants (such as iron, nitrates, bacteria, lead, and arsenic). Cook Inletkeeper also kicked off a local well-water testing program—offering 40 attendees of the health fair a discounted well-water test through our partnership with Analytica, a water testing lab in Anchorage. With the support of the Alaska Community Foundation, we were able to cover the full cost of the Well-Safe I test kit, which tests for arsenic, coliforms, and nitrates. Five people chose to upgrade to the Well-Safe II test, which also examines water hardness, iron, manganese and the Langelier Index (which looks at several parameters to determine whether water has a tendency to be corrosive or leave mineral deposits). Fifteen people chose to upgrade to the Well-Safe III test, which in addition to all the parameters examined in the Well Safe I and II tests, tests for lead, copper, and sodium. Cook Inletkeeper’s monitoring coordinators met with our well-water testing participants to discuss the testing process, and send their water samples to Analytica. Once participants receive their results, we will be holding a second meeting to ensure that they understand the results and associated implications. Inletkeeper hopes to continue and build upon this effort to allow additional residents around the Cook Inlet watershed to participate. For additional information, contact Rachel at rachel@inletkeeper.org.

Volunteer Spotlight: Neil and Kyra Wagner

Known around town as the “Sustainable Homer Lady”, you may have spotted Kyra Wagner at the Farmer’s Market. You may have noticed that her partner in crime, Neil Wagner, was a co-author for the City of Homer’s Climate Action Plan. Then it should come as no surprise this pair has also been involved in Inletkeeper’s water-quality monitoring project since December 2002! Neil and Kyra monitor Beaver Creek site AR-1090. When they first started monitoring Beaver Creek, they lived up on Bald Mountain, which is just a short way away from the site. They’ve lived in town for 4 years now, but continue to drive out there on monitoring days. When asked what they liked most about monitoring, Kyra replied “it’s such a great excuse to get outside! In the winter, we’ll drive up on Saturday, spend the day skiing and snowshoeing, spend the night in a cabin with some hot chocolate and then monitor our site on the way out on Sunday.” Additionally, they’ve enjoyed watching a beaver build a dam at their site. Until about two years ago, Neil and Kyra’s site was a bioassessment site, but since the beaver dammed it up, it has been too deep to collect insects. Neil explained that he spent about 25 years on Bald Mountain, and remembers both when there were many beavers in the area, and when trappers showed up and the populations declined. They are pleased that this beaver has stuck around, even if it flooded their monitoring site. Thanks so much, Neil and Kyra, for all your hard work!
I came to Homer to work with Cook Inletkeeper for a 12 week summer internship through the Alaska Conservation Foundation in May. Well, the days have gotten progressively shorter, Beluga Lake has frozen over, a new president has been elected, and I’m still here! After some staff changes, I temporarily took over the role of the CEMP Volunteer Coordinator and extended my stay here until the end of November. Although I was unsure of how that change would alter my experience at Cook Inletkeeper, and what it would be like to stay in Alaska past the summer season, I’ve been amazed at how many people I’ve met and how many incredible experiences I’ve had in such a short time. I discovered that one of the many advantages of working in a close-knit community, with a small but vibrant organization like Cook Inletkeeper, was being able to wear several different hats. And serving as the CEMP Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator was a great way to get to know the community quickly. While planning our annual Splash Bash over the summer, I met many of Homer’s local business owners, who generously made contributions to the event. I was on the radio on both KWAVE and KBBI as part of outreach efforts for the Homer Rotary Health Fair. I helped out with a natural resources class at the Homer High School, teaching students how we use aquatic insects to monitor stream water quality. Some of my favorite field days were spent checking on our data logger in Fox Creek – first enjoying the scenic drive out East End road, then hiking down the steep switchbacks to the head of the Bay. But aside from all these adventures, one thing that is going to stick with me most about my time here is having been able to get to know our volunteers.

As the volunteer monitoring coordinator, I was supposed to be a resource for our volunteers. However, (at the risk of sounding extraordinarily cliché) I felt that in a lot of ways, they had a lot more to offer me than I did them. I was impressed by the level of commitment our volunteers exhibited – many have been monitoring streams for us for over 5 years, year-round! This summer, I had no difficulty finding volunteers willing to meet me on the Homer Spit at 6 am to assist with beach bacteria monitoring. The level of participation Homer residents display in their community has really impressed me, and even more so after discovering that most people are involved in multiple organizations. This community has a lot to offer, and I’m going to miss being a part of it. Hopefully I will see you all again in the not-so-distant future!

Some Parting Words from Tala Woodward
Inletkeeper’s “Interim” CEMP Volunteer Coordinator

I came to Homer to work with Cook Inletkeeper for a 12 week summer internship through the Alaska Conservation Foundation in May. Well, the days have gotten progressively shorter, Beluga Lake has frozen over, a new president has been elected, and I’m still here! After some staff changes, I temporarily took over the role of the CEMP Volunteer Coordinator and extended my stay here until the end of November. Although I was unsure of how that change would alter my experience at Cook Inletkeeper, and what it would be like to stay in Alaska past the summer season, I’ve been amazed at how many people I’ve met and how many incredible experiences I’ve had in such a short time. I discovered that one of the many advantages of working in a close-knit community, with a small but vibrant organization like Cook Inletkeeper, was being able to wear several different hats. And serving as the CEMP Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator was a great way to get to know the community quickly. While planning our annual Splash Bash over the summer, I met many of Homer’s local business owners, who generously made contributions to the event. I was on the radio on both KWAVE and KBBI as part of outreach efforts for the Homer Rotary Health Fair. I helped out with a natural resources class at the Homer High School, teaching students how we use aquatic insects to monitor stream water quality. Some of my favorite field days were spent checking on our data logger in Fox Creek – first enjoying the scenic drive out East End road, then hiking down the steep switchbacks to the head of the Bay. But aside from all these adventures, one thing that is going to stick with me most about my time here is having been able to get to know our volunteers.

As the volunteer monitoring coordinator, I was supposed to be a resource for our volunteers. However, (at the risk of sounding extraordinarily cliché) I felt that in a lot of ways, they had a lot more to offer me than I did them. I was impressed by the level of commitment our volunteers exhibited – many have been monitoring streams for us for over 5 years, year-round! This summer, I had no difficulty finding volunteers willing to meet me on the Homer Spit at 6 am to assist with beach bacteria monitoring. The level of participation Homer residents display in their community has really impressed me, and even more so after discovering that most people are involved in multiple organizations. This community has a lot to offer, and I’m going to miss being a part of it. Hopefully I will see you all again in the not-so-distant future!

And Some Welcoming Words from Rachel Lord
Inletkeeper’s New CEMP Volunteer Coordinator!

Originally from Maine, I moved to Alaska in 2005 for my MS degree at University of Alaska, Fairbanks in Wildlife Biology. I have a BA in Biology & Spanish from Mount Holyoke College, and spent several years working as a field biologist before returning to school. I worked for the 2008 halibut season for the International Pacific Halibut Commission, and am excited to begin a new position as the coordinator of Cook Inletkeeper’s Citizen Environmental Monitoring Program. As the volunteer coordinator I will be training citizens to monitor local waterbodies, overseeing a new initiative to gauge bacteria levels on Homer’s public beaches, and helping local citizens identify drinking water and related concerns. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you would like to join CEMP as a volunteer or have any ideas for Inletkeeper’s volunteer program: rachel@inletkeeper.org, 907-235-4068 x 29.
This Fall, the Alaska Department of Revenue selected Cook Inletkeeper as eligible for the new PFD Charitable Contributions Program. The goal of the PFD Charitable Contributions Program is to increase the number of people who give to Alaska nonprofits, as well as the total amount of charitable dollars that are donated. The program became law in July and allows Alaskans who file online for their PFD to easily donate all or part of the PFD to eligible charitable, educational and nonprofit organizations.

A team made up of the Alaska Giving Coalition, The Foraker Group, United Way of Anchorage, the Rasmuson Foundation, and many other organizations is helping the state implement the program. The group implementing the program is carrying out a public information campaign this fall to help Alaskans learn how they can participate in the process. More information is available at www.forakerfoundation.org/index.cfm?section=PFD&pg=News including a list of most commonly asked questions about the program. If Internet access is not available, people may call 1-877-785-GIFT (4438) for information. Contact Inletkeeper’s Development Director Mike Allen at michael@inletkeeper.org or 907.235.4068 x27 if you have any questions.

Homer Beach Monitoring Update

If you had been out on the Homer Spit this summer at the crack of dawn, you might have seen Cook Inletkeeper staff and volunteers in the ocean collecting samples for our latest monitoring program – Monitoring Bacteria on Homer’s Public Beaches. This program is part of Alaska DEC’s Beach Environmental Assessment & Coastal Health (BEACH) Grant Program, a pilot effort to evaluate the possible risks to recreational beach users in the state. Once a week in July and August, volunteers Mary Lentfer, Lani Raymond and Dave Harnum met our volunteer monitoring coordinator at Mariner’s Park and Land’s End just as the sun was rising in order to collect water samples that had to be shipped to Anchorage by 7 am! These water samples were tested for coliforms and enterococci – bacteria that serve as indicators for the presence of other pathogenic bacteria. Pathogenic bacteria are often associated with fecal waste (human or animal), and can cause stomach aches, diarrhea, and ear, eye, and skin infections. There is a risk of contracting these types of illnesses by coming into contact with (swimming, wading, etc) or swallowing water contaminated by these pathogens. Although on a national level infectious diseases caused by microbial organisms in recreational waters are rising, we were pleased to discover that no bacterial exceedences were detected in Homer’s recreational waters this summer.

We hope to continue this program next summer and expand the sampling effort to include Bishop’s Beach, another popular recreational beach in Homer. A huge thank you to Mary, Lani and Dave, who so generously gave up their early morning hours for this effort!

PFD Contributions to Cook Inletkeeper Made Easier

Cook Inletkeeper knows we cannot pursue our ambitious mission without the generous assistance of our members, major donors, business supporters, private foundations and public agencies. With over 800 dues-paying members, we list everyone individually in our summer newsletter. But for now, you know who you are, and in the meantime, we’d also like to thank our larger private foundation funders:

Alaska Community Foundation: Elmer and Ruth Schwantes Fund • Alaska Conservation Foundation
Bannerman Foundation • Ben and Jerry’s Foundation • Bullitt Foundation • Collins Alaska Charitable Trust
Endurance Fund • Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation • Fund for Wild Nature
Foley/Frischkorn Wildlife & Conservation Fund • Harder Foundation • Homer Foundation and City of Homer
Jiji Foundation • Lawrence Foundation • Leighty Foundation
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True North Foundation • Unitarian Universalist Funding Program • US Environmental Protection Agency
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Thanks to Cook Inletkeeper’s Members & Supporters

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Cook Inletkeeper
P.O. Box 3269
Homer, Alaska 99603

Join Cook Inletkeeper at www.inletkeeper.org

WE NEED YOUR EYES & EARS ON COOK INLET!
JOIN COOK INLETKEEPER & HELP PROTECT WATER QUALITY

YES! I want Cook Inletkeeper to continue its important work to protect the Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains! Please accept my tax deductible contribution in the amount of:

☐ $25 Student/Senior  ☐ $50 Individual  ☐ $75 Family  ☐ $100 Patron  ☐ $250 Founder
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I would like to volunteer for:

☐ Events/Booths  ☐ Graphics/Photography  ☐ Mailings/Flyers
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