

INLETKEEPER®

...PROTECTING THE COOK INLET WATERSHED & THE LIFE IT SUSTAINS

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Summer Quarter 2017



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Cook Inlet Fisheries in Crosshairs for Oil & Gas Development *State & Feds have heads in the sand on climate change*

This past June, the federal government leased more than 76,000 acres of Lower Cook Inlet's rich fisheries for expanded oil and gas exploration and development.

Aside from the fact oil and gas pollution and infrastructure would forever mar the thriving fishing and tourism economies of the Lower Inlet, the lease sale reflects a stunning denial about our changing climate, and ignores the decline of oil and gas in global markets.

"If our politicians wanted to create jobs and prosperity for Alaskans, they would be looking forward and leasing Lower Cook Inlet for tidal and wind and geothermal power," said Inletkeeper Bob Shavelson. "Instead, we're going backwards, with the hope that through sheer force of will and ignorance we can derail global market

forces and stop the world's inevitable march toward clean, renewable energy."

The winning (and only) bidder on the tracts – Hilcorp – already owns most of the oil and gas assets in Cook Inlet, and because Alaska has one of the lowest overall tax burdens in the world, Hilcorp is doubling-down by pushing into the frontier waters of Lower Cook Inlet.

Although there has been virtually no oil and gas activity in Lower Cook Inlet for the past two decades, it was the site of considerable industry interest in the 1970's and 1980's, when the federal government let numerous leases and oil companies drilled several offshore wells. None of those wells, however, proved economically viable, and combined with the treacherous operating conditions in Lower Cook Inlet



In the face of climate change, oil & gas leases move forward.

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Floating the Deshka for Answers

By late May, eager anglers head to the Deshka River to hook a Chinook! Most leave from the boat launch at Deshka Landing near Willow and head downstream on the Susitna River to get to the mouth of the largest Chinook salmon producer in upper Cook Inlet. But, unlike recent years on the Deshka, Chinook salmon numbers in 2017 are on track to come in below the minimum escapement goal of 13,000 fish. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has shut down the sport-fishing season early

to allow all king salmon entering the lower Deshka River upstream to spawn.

This May, we too headed to the Deshka but we started at the top end of the watershed near Trapper Creek. We loaded up canoes and floated more than 70 miles downstream deploying 120 temperature loggers along the way. Working with staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we are investigating which tributaries to the Deshka – Trapper Creek, Moose Creek, Krotok Creek, Chujik Creek - are bringing in warmer or

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A Message from the Executive Director

Carly Wier



When my husband and I first met, we found we had a mutual goal to get to Alaska. We'd each done our own research and had our own visions of what we wanted to see and do and experience in Alaska. So, in the summer of 2000, I took a leave of absence from working at a nonprofit organization focused on promoting resource conservation in the high country of Colorado, and we packed up our minivan and headed North to work in Seward for the summer.

I look back at the photo album (made of real photos, developed from rolls of film!) and see my younger self in love. Sure, in love with the man next to me in many of the photos. But definitely in love with the landscape that was somehow already in my soul. That summer, we hiked and camped and fished the Kenai Peninsula every spare second we had. We became that common story you hear all the time of people who came up to Alaska for a short summer job and found they really couldn't leave. Not for long, anyway.

At the end of that summer, we went back to Colorado, and I continued to do the work that is also part of my soul – organizing for social change. I was fortunate to work for an organization and a team that succeeded in making big changes in our local mountain community. Together, we built a state of the art recycling and composting facility, created local building codes that facilitated sustainable building practices and energy conservation, and launched community gardens, an energy audit program, and community solar farms.

While I'm really proud of that work, I was also watching the impacts of climate change around me and wanted to do more. Our winters in Colorado were getting shorter, and felt like a wound that you couldn't heal. Snow in the Colorado mountains is like fish in Alaska. It connects us all and it drives a huge part of the economy. Like the first salmon runs, people wait anxiously for the first big snow fall. People in the Colorado mountains talk about the big years of deep powder like people in Alaska talk about the big seasons of fish.

And no matter how many phone calls we made to decision-makers, aluminum cans we recycled or energy audits we did, it felt like there was nothing we could do to stop our beloved home from melting.

So I found myself called back to Alaska. There are many places "on the front lines of climate change." And Alaska is one of them. It is also a place where change can happen fast, where perspectives on what is possible are not so limited by hundreds of years of development, and where people have deep connections to place.

My husband often reminds me that I am lucky to feel like I have a calling in life. And I feel so lucky to do the work I am called to do at Cook Inletkeeper, an organization that has a strong foundation and a vision to push for change. Rooted in the heart of Alaska, in Cook Inlet, the work we do reverberates through the state, and the nation and even the world.

Now, more than ever, while the world seems upside down, we have the chance to make big adjustments to our systems and structures. And there is no better lab for this work than Cook Inlet.



A Message from the Inletkeeper

Bob Shavelson

In December 1995, I drove over the hill into Homer, and a group of amazing Alaskans hired me to be the Executive Director of Cook Inletkeeper. Since then, it's been a wild ride – with some wonderful victories for our public commons, and at other times, some debilitating gut punches, as giant corporations and dark money politics subverted our democracy. Through it all, I've felt lucky and proud to do the work I do, and to work with the countless people and groups who support equal justice and a livable planet. Running a nonprofit, however, involves a lot of fundraising and administration and personnel management, and after 22 years those things started to gnaw at me. So, after Inletkeeper celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2015, I started to think about transitioning out of the Executive Director role, to focus more on what I consider my strengths – issues and advocacy.



Leadership transitions are never easy, and we hit a few bumps in the road, but on January 1, the Inletkeeper Board handed the reigns of our organization over to Carly Weir – a seasoned nonprofit manager and organizer who worked with us for the past 5 years on coal issues. We did not make grand announcements when the transition occurred, because we wanted to make sure it would take. Now, more than 7 months in, it's safe to say things are running smoothly, and Carly is here to stay as our new Executive Director. And I could not be happier – Carly combines brains and passion with strong interpersonal skills and a positive outlook, and it's plain to all of us she's a perfect fit for Cook Inletkeeper (if you have not met Carly yet, stop by the Homer office anytime, or catch her at Salmonfest the first weekend in August). As for me, I'm not going anywhere. I'll just keep looking for chinks in the system, and keep working with you to make Cook Inlet a place we'll be proud to hand off to the next generation.



Cook Inlet Energy to Pollute Habitat

After bankruptcy and fines, new drilling coming

Tennessee-based Miller Energy – parent company of Cook Inlet Energy (CIE) – declared bankruptcy in 2015, after the federal Securities and Exchange Commission fined it \$5 million for overvaluing its stock price by \$400 million in 2010. The company emerged as Glacier Oil & Gas with help from two New York City private equity firms, and CIE remained its subsidiary. Earlier this year, the Alaska Oil & Gas Conservation Commission fined CIE \$446,000 for safety violations designed to prevent drilling well blow-outs. Now, CIE wants to drill a new prospect called “Sabre” in shallow water just above the West Foreland, in Beluga whale habitat. CIE recently applied for a Clean Water Act permit to dump drilling muds and cuttings – which in addition to toxic heavy metals include biocides, anti-scaling agents and other components that harm fish and whales. The technology exists to reinject these wastes, or barge them to a landfill, but it's cheaper to use Cook Inlet's public waters as a dumping ground. Inletkeeper is working with its lawyers at Trustees for Alaska to oppose this unnecessary subsidy, and to press oil and gas companies – and the Outside hedge fund money behind them – to act responsibly.



Trump Administration

Making salmon protection harder in Alaska

The Trump Administration has made no qualms that it plans to dismantle the regulatory safeguards that protect our marine environment and our fish habitat, and it's established an impressive array of corporate lawyers in various “anti-regulatory” teams to dismantle the basic safety nets around the food we eat and the water drink. In one recent example, the federal Army Corps of Engineers has issued a public notice that fails to require Harvest Pipeline Co. – a subsidiary of Hilcorp Energy – to mitigate the damage caused by destroying wetlands that support salmon on the west side of Cook Inlet. Among other reasons cited for failing to protect wetlands, the public notice states “these types of wetlands are extensive in and around the project area.” But this notion flies in the face of the “no net loss of wetlands” policy which previously drove wetlands decision-making, and it leads us down the slippery slope of allowing more and more wetlands destruction. Inletkeeper recognizes wetlands as vital habitat for juvenile salmon, and we'll be pushing back on the Trump Administration – in court if necessary – to ensure we do not unravel the basic protections that support our salmon culture and economy.



Kenai Peninsula Food Hub Expands to Anchorage

Growing opportunities for Alaskans to buy and sell local food products

The Kenai Peninsula Food Hub, already operating in Seldovia, Homer and Soldotna, is growing to include Anchorage beginning July 8th, offering an online market for Alaska Grown produce, seafood, shellfish, flowers, crafts, and more, direct from local producers to a weekly pick-up location in Spenard.

“Purchasing local products, increases our region’s food security,” says Operations Manager, Robbi Mixon. “Food hubs open up a new opportunity for producers, at any scale, to sell directly to buyers and institutions who seek local products, but may not typically shop at farmers markets or farm stands.”

The 2-year old online marketplace, with over 650 active customers on the Kenai Peninsula, opens to Anchorage on



July 8th with a weekly pick-up location at the Church of Love on Thursdays, 4-8pm in Spenard. Another local business, Arctic Harvest Deliveries, has partnered with the food hub to operate the Anchorage branch.

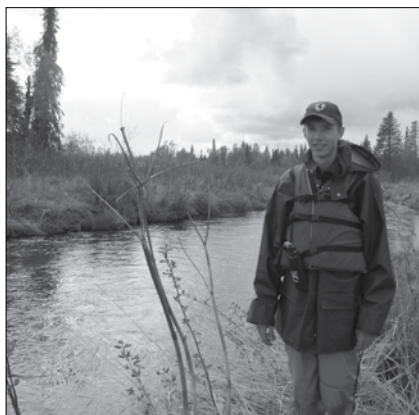
“Our shared marketing and infrastructure for local farms can increase sales, reduce waste, and decrease the environmental costs of importing from outside of Alaska,” says Mixon. “If we want food security, we’ll need to encourage strong local production. 95% of Alaska’s food is currently imported.”

To begin shopping or building your digital storefront, simply visit AnchorageFoodHub.org, and sign-up for an account under “Shop the Marketplace.”



Floating the Deshka

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Cook Inletkeeper member Dylan Bruce joined our Science Director in May for a week-long canoe trip deploying temperature loggers throughout the Deshka River watershed.

colder water and how that contributes to the overall temperature profile of the main channel. We are interested because the Deshka River is among the warmest of Cook Inlet salmon streams and expected to get warmer as our climate warms.

Over the next few years, we will build a comprehensive picture of water tempera-

ture on the Deshka to guide land conservation and fishery management. We aim to identify cold-water refugia used by adult and juvenile salmon to avoid stressful high summer temperatures as well as identify areas that are warm making fish particularly sensitive to disturbances.

We are packing now for our next float trip down the Deshka. Through the haze of our head nets, we will hope to see the start of a strong pulse of Coho salmon adults moving upstream.



Oil & Gas Leases

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and the lack of infrastructure to bring product to market, industry interest waned.

Now, however, Hilcorp will undoubtedly conduct seismic exploration work in Lower Cook Inlet in the coming months and years. A growing body of scientific research shows the massive underwater percussions from seismic explosions harm whales and fish – and even the tiny plankton at the bottom of the food chain that support all life in Cook Inlet.

It’s also important to recognize that in lease sale 149 in 1995, the federal government estimated a 72% chance of a major oil spill if oil and gas development ensued in the unforgiving waters of Lower Cook Inlet.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our state and federal governments’ unending push for more fossil fuel development flies in the face of a sustainable future in Cook Inlet. Over the past 200 years, oil and gas have created enormous wealth in our society, and raised the standard of living across the world. But their cost is incalculable, and today, we know without question that our fossil fuel addiction is killing the very planet that supports us. Toward that end, Inletkeeper will continue to oppose all new oil and gas development until the state and federal governments embrace meaningful plans to reverse greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change.

