

INLETKEEPER®

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

www.inletkeeper.org Headquarters: 907.235.4068

Spring Quarter 2015



Thanks to All Who Pledged Through Pick.Click.Give

Our latest pledges are in and we're feeling your Loyalaska Love! Inletkeeper is in the top 40 (of 538 participating non-profits statewide). Thank You! If you didn't get to the Pick.Click.Give. step of filing your PFD, or if you need to wait for summer income to roll in before deciding how much to donate, the deadline to add a charitable donation through Pick.Click.Give. is August 31.

www.pickclickgive.org

You can always click and give online:

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...because you love Cook Inlet

Loyalaska
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Does Alaska Really Have a World-Class Resource Management System?



The State has closed all razor clamming on the east side of Cook Inlet.

“Alaska has the best resource management system in the world.” If you’ve been here a while, you’ve heard that statement in some form or another. But in Cook Inlet, it’s increasingly hard to believe we’re managing our resources in a sustainable fashion. In the 1970’s, Kachemak Bay was thick with shrimp, king and tanner crab, but those populations crashed and have never come back. While oceanic regime shifts – specifically, temperature – probably played a leading role moving Kachemak Bay from a habitat more conducive for fin fish (e.g., halibut, cod) than shellfish, the harvest pressure just before the shrimp and crab populations crashed was significant. The Cook Inlet Beluga whale is another good example. In the 1980’s, biologists estimated the population to be around 1300 animals; today, the Beluga is listed as threatened under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

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Cold Water is a Hot Topic

Salmon need cold water to thrive. At Cook Inletkeeper, we are developing strategies to help keep streams on the lower Kenai Peninsula as cold as possible even as our summers get warmer, our winters become snowless, and more people move to the area. One of these strategies includes identifying parcels with distinct groundwater connections that bring cold water into main stream channels and then providing that information to Kachemak Heritage Land Trust – a local organization with 25 years of experience working with private land owners. Based on this effort, the Land Trust has now acquired or is in active discussions with landowners of key salmon habitat on 12 parcels which could result in conservation of up to 400 acres. Other strategies include working with land managers to protect and reconnect cold-water inflows. For example, we are working with State Parks to display educational material about salmon habitat and the importance of cold water within the Ninilchik River State

Recreational Area as they rebuild a foot bridge to prevent foot traffic from degrading a cold water source. Making cold water a hot topic for conversation is a critical first step in translating the science of salmon and climate change into a precautionary approach to land management in Cook Inlet.



Inletkeeper staff confirms the presence of a cold water inflow identified through aerial thermal imagery.



Spills Happen – Do You Know What to Do?

A Hint: Never use soaps!

Spring is here and many of us are excited to be launching our boats and kicking off another fun boating season around Cook Inlet! If you run an engine, you deal with oil, gas, antifreeze and possibly other petroleum products such as hydraulic oil. Spills can be large and scary, but they can also be small drips and leaks. Spills of all sizes happen – here are some tips to protect clean water, healthy salmon, and our backyard while boating!

NEVER disperse sheens with soap! Although you can't see the sheen any longer, you've just created a much worse environmental problem. Soaps bind with oils and create a toxic sludge that drops off the surface and into the water. We know that even small concentrations of oils are bad for fish and other life. Soaps increase the problem, and are considered by the Coast Guard to be an active "covering up" of a spill – a fineable offense of up to \$2,000 for a recreational boater. An accidental spill of less than 55 gallons is likely a warning, and if fined it will be much lower than that, so stay away from the soaps!

If you have a spill, locate the source and stop it. Keep up with maintenance to reduce chronic leaks and drips. Use absorbent pads. Secure oil absorbent booms in your bilge – by securing them you ensure they won't foul pumps, they can hold up to 1.5 quarts of oil, and they're an easy way to prevent oily discharges from your bilge! Use oil absorbents to clean up small spills.

Finally, always report spills to the AK Dept. of Environmental Conservation, the National Response Center, and to the harbormaster's office (if applicable). It may seem scary to call these numbers, but the folks on the other end are truly there to help, and to track and protect the environment from spills around the state and the country.

During 2015 we'll distribute 250 spill response signs at boater access points around the state. For more clean boating information: <http://inletkeeper.org/clean-water/clean-boating>.



**DO YOUR PART
REPORT SPILLS!**

Say **NO** to soaps. They are **TOXIC**. Soaps put oil and fuel into the water and hurt fish, shellfish, and other aquatic life.

**STOP THE SOURCE
REPORT THE SPILL-
IT'S THE LAW!**

ADEC SPILL REPORTING
800-478-9300

**USCG NATIONAL
RESPONSE CENTER**
800-424-8802

In the harbor,
call the Harbormaster

State Receives Over 7500 Public Comments on Chuitna



Judy and Lawrence Heilman deliver public comments to DNR for the instream flow reservation application.

Thank you for helping keep water in the salmon streams of the Chuitna River! The Alaska Department of Natural Resources received over 7500 comments in support of Chuitna Citizens Coalition's water reservation application during the 45-day public comment period.

DNR has 180 days to make a decision to keep water in streams for fish or give 100% of the water to PacRim so they can dig up the streams and mine the coal underneath. During this 180 period, we need continuous support flowing to Governor Walker to stick to his "fish first policy" by choosing water for salmon, not coal. So please continue sending letters of support to Governor Walker bill.walker@alaska.gov as well as submitting letters to the editor to your local paper.

For this precedent-setting decision between salmon and coal, it is vital for Alaskans to have a voice in what kind of future we want for our water, our resources, and our State.



Alaska LNG Plant EIS



Conceptual drawing of proposed LNG export facility in Cook Inlet. Source: Alaska LNG

On March 4 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed Alaska LNG project that runs from the North Slope to a proposed export terminal in Nikiski. The NOI opens a nine-month “scoping” period during which FERC asks the public and government agencies to comment on the scope of issues that the environmental impact statement will address. Now is

the time to submit comments! Written or verbal comments can be submitted to FERC until December 4, 2015. In-person meetings will also be held in your area to allow the public to voice their concerns. Read more about the project and how to comment here: www.arcticgas.gov/alaska-lng-project and www.arcticgas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2015-3-4-FERC-NOI-on-Alaska-LNG.pdf



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WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

Alaska's World Class Management System?

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With latest counts showing around 340 whales, the Cook Inlet Beluga population continues to teeter on the edge of no return. King salmon are another resource we've watched decline significantly, and while the Cook Inlet “fish wars” result in endless finger pointing from the various user groups, the fact remains we're repeating the very same mistakes made in the Lower 48 by failing to protect our in-river habitat. Finally, a discussion about Cook Inlet resource management would not be complete without talking about clams. Until a few years ago, the limit for hardshell clams (i.e., butters and steamers) in Kachemak Bay was 1700 clams. Then, in 2011, after populations collapsed, the state reduced the bag limit to 70 clams. In 2014, I went to the head of Kachemak Bay, which once supported a commercial clam fishery, and with three people digging for an hour, we found 4

clams. Equally concerning is the plight of Cook Inlet's east side razor clam fishery. Despite thousands of people hitting the flats during big low tides for decades, the state was slow to reduce the bag limit once clam numbers and clam size started to decline. Now, in 2015, the state has announced there will be no razor clamming on the east side of Cook Inlet for the foreseeable future (on the west side around Tuxedni Bay, the state has set no limit on razor clams, despite the fact harvest pressure is increasing). Resource and habitat management are complex endeavors, and they're infused with a variety of social, economic and political pressures. Yet today, as more people compete for fewer resources, we're not seeing a commitment from our leaders – either through increased budgets or personnel - to take care of the things that make Alaska such an incredible place to live, work and play.



Did You Know that 95% of Food in Alaska is Imported?

In April, Inletkeeper hosted ‘How Does Your Garden Grow?’ We talked about our connections to the watershed, water quality, the quality of our home-grown food, and how growing and supporting local products is a pro-active step to combat climate change. We then stepped into the lab to do some basic soil tests. The local food movement depends on long-term responsible land management, with engaged communities working towards healthy and functioning watersheds for clean water and healthy food – including salmon and veggies! Inletkeeper is excited to be helping with this effort. If



you missed the workshop and want to see more, the presentation is on our website: inletkeeper.org/clean-water/local-food.



Alaskans Need to Ask: What Are Our Values?

Our legislative session just closed, and in its wake, we're staring at massive cuts to schools, roads, emergency responders, habitat protection and many other essential services we expect from our government. We're told these cuts are necessary to "live within our means" during a time of low oil and gas prices, yet under our current tax regime, we're literally paying the richest corporations on the planet hundreds of millions of dollars each year to take our fossil fuel wealth. So, the problem isn't Alaska's financial wherewithal, but rather, our priorities in how we allocate our money. As one politician famously put it "Don't tell me what you value; show me your budget and I'll tell you what you value." So, in Alaska today, it's pretty clear from our state budget that we value corporate profits over our kids, our schools, our roads and our habitat. This problem is especially disturbing when we recognize the larger trends driving it. In the so-called Gilded Age during the late 1800's, corporations came of age after the turmoil of the Civil War, and amassed enormous wealth and power. This concentration of wealth and the increasing speculation that drove it resulted in the 1929 Stock Market Crash and the Great Depression, which provided the platform for President Roosevelt's "New Deal" to redistribute the nation's wealth back down to the middle and lower classes. Since the New Deal, however, corporations have waged a relentless battle to capture and neuter our governments, and to shift the balance of wealth from the public to the private sector. This effort has resulted in numerous legal and policy changes over the past 75 years, none more sweeping than the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 ruling in *Citizens United*. There, the Court reaffirmed

that corporations are persons (this concept arose from the infamous *Southern Pacific Railroad* case in 1886, where the Court twisted the 14th Amendment – which was designed to provide basic rights to newly-freed slaves – to find corporations were "persons" and therefore afforded the rights and protections of our Constitution); the *Citizens United* Court then reaffirmed the notion that money is "speech" (another pro-corporate concept from another Supreme Court case in 1976 called *Buckley v. Valeo*), and so, because corporations are people and money is speech, corporations have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited sums to influence political elections. Recall the last U.S. Senate Race in Alaska where the billionaire Koch Brothers dumped tens of millions of dollars into Alaska for robo-calls, mailers and TV ads.

Now, the Koch Brothers are spending more money to influence the Anchorage Mayoral race, and they recently announced – for the first time in U.S. history - they will raise and spend more money on the 2016 presidential election than the two major political parties. Not surprisingly, the Koch Brothers – whose wealth derives largely from oil and gas interests - have been leaders in funding climate change denier propaganda. And their agenda is clear: starve government, foster resentment and fear, and amidst all the chaos created, transfer public wealth and power to the private sector. However, the private interest, by definition, is not the public interest. That's why Alaskans need to take a hard look at the choices we're seeing in Juneau, and join together in a collective vision that elevates our values – our kids, our communities, and our environment - in fiscal and other decisions.



Join Inletkeeper for Upcoming Events

Celebrate with us, volunteer with us! These are a few of our upcoming events. Check Facebook for new events throughout the summer:

- May 1-3** Kenai Sport Rec & Trade Show, Kenai
- May 6** Kids Booth at "Salmon Celebration Day," Johnson Lake, Kasilof
- May 7-10** Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, Homer
- May 8, 9** Wild Mountains Bright Water Music Concert, Homer
- May 14-17** Kenai Peninsula Birding Festival, Kenai
- June 12-14** Kenai River Festival Education Booth, Soldotna
- June 21** Mouth to Mouth Wild Run & Ride
- June 4** Mt. Marathon, Seward
- June 26-28** Dipnet Outreach Canvass
- July 31-8/2** Salmonfest, Ninilchik



This Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of

Colleen Ryan

Friends and family remember her passion for Cook Inlet.

In deep appreciation for her legacy gift.

