

INLETKEEPER®

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

www.inletkeeper.org Headquarters: (907) 235-4068

Fall Quarter 2014



Pick.Click.Give for Cook Inlet

Pick.Click.Give. allows Alaskans to share their Permanent Fund Dividend with causes they care about. Thanks to all our members who gave to Cook Inletkeeper through Pick.Click.Give. this year. You represent a quarter of our membership! For more info on sharing your 2015 PFD with us:

www.pickclickgive.org

Didn't get to participate this year? You can still click and give through our online donation form:

inletkeeper.org/donate

...because you love Cook Inlet

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Should We Spend \$5.2 Billion to Dam the Mighty Susitna?

Bad for salmon, bad for Alaskans.

In 2011, the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) began to investigate the feasibility of building the nation's second largest hydroelectric dam - dubbed the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project - in the heart of the Susitna River Valley. This 735-foot tall dam would sit 184 miles upstream from the Susitna River mouth, and 87 river miles north of the town of Talkeetna, located in a valley canyon at Deadman Creek along an active fault line. The dam would be accompanied by an 8,000-foot long runway, a 42-mile long reservoir that would flood moose and caribou migration corridors, and numerous access roads, transmission lines and gravel pits. This project's initial pricetag was \$5.2 billion, and to date our legislature has poured nearly \$200 million into the project. As part of the Federal Energy



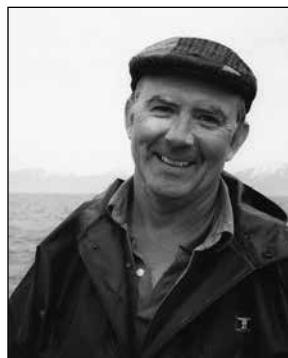
The Susitna River is an amazing Alaska natural resource at risk.

Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing process, AEA is now conducting studies that focus on fisheries, wildlife, hydrology, geology

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Cook Inlet Deserves Basic Navigational Safeguards

Inletkeeper member Frank Mullen



Mullen: A tug should be escorting every oil tanker in Cook Inlet.

Crude oil tankers and non crude fuel barges transit Cook Inlet all year round, and no one is prepared for a "worse case" scenario oil spill in Cook Inlet.

Subsequent to the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, laws have been written, organizations created, and 25 years worth of meetings and stacks of paper and studies have gathered on shelves.

Are we "readier for a spill" than we were in 1989? Yes. But not much readier. Here is the scenario that we are NOT ready for: A

fully laden oil tanker is transiting Cook Inlet, destination Nikiski. It is a dark and stormy night. A 20-foot flood tide and a Southwest 30 wind blowing steadily. Somewhere abeam of the south end of Kalgin Island, the tanker loses power at 2 a.m. Maydays are transmitted, phones ring, men and women in pickup trucks drive to command centers and spill staging areas.

But, nothing can be done to prevent the forces of nature from driving the tanker onto "The Sisters" rocks at Clam Gulch by 4 a.m. Or the beach at Humpy Point or Kalifornsky. The tanker is damaged and a big oil spill occurs.

There is only one method available to prevent this accident: A tug boat with adequate horsepower should be escorting the tanker. Every time. Every trip up and down the inlet, winter or summer.

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2014: A Year in Review
Your support this year is helping to protect Cook Inlet

Goals

For 19 years, Inletkeeper has worked to pursue a vision that includes clean water, lasting jobs, abundant fish and wildlife, renewable energy and strong local economies. Our mission, goals and objectives recognize climate change as the most pressing threat posed to Cook Inlet’s natural resources and the people they support. We are pursuing the following overarching organizational goals:

1. Organize and activate a growing base of support for clean water and healthy fish habitat;
2. Promote the shift away from fossil fuels to renewable energy;
3. Conduct research, education and monitoring to connect people to the natural systems that support strong local economies; and
4. Build a sustainable and healthy organization with the capacity to achieve its vision for Alaska’s Cook Inlet watershed.

Membership

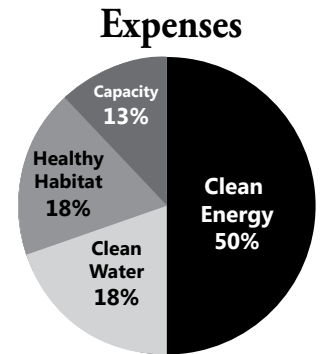
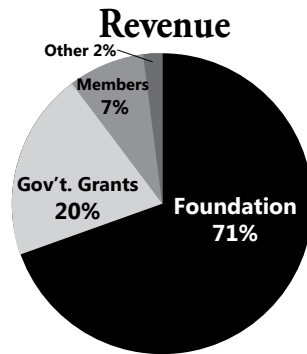
Our members and supporters are a strong and vocal core of Cook Inletkeeper, and in 2014, Inletkeeper’s membership numbers jumped 50% - so we must be doing something right! Over 2000 of you have participated in the protection of Cook Inlet by either volunteering, responding to calls to action, or donating cash or in-kind support. The majority of you are Alaskan, with a small but equally appreciated subset of members from outside. A quarter of you gave through the Permanent Fund’s Pick.Click.Give. program. We also have an enthusiastic group of over 2000 subscribers to our Keeper News email updates, and over 2,094 of you have liked us on Facebook.

Our working board gained two new members this summer - Willow King from Kasilof and Peter Mjos from Anchorage. We’re very excited to add their unique perspectives to the mix. If you see them at one of our events, introduce yourself, and share your ideas for protecting the Cook Inlet watershed.



Inletkeeper staff are now in Talkeetna, Anchorage, Kenai and Homer.

We’ve also made great strides in outreach throughout the watershed, thanks to a wider distribution of our staff. In addition to our Anchorage staff person, we’ve now added staff in Kenai and Talkeetna. Look for us at local events in your area. If you live in a more remote community and would like to host an event to learn more about activities underway to protect the watershed, give us a call!



We are on target to meet our 2014 budget projections of \$816,958 for revenue and expenses. We expect new challenges in 2015 with reductions in foundation support, and a resulting reduced ability to organize around important issues. Your individual support will be critical in keeping the pressure on as our state agencies continue to roll-back vital habitat protections.

Impact

Throughout its history, Inletkeeper has learned one important truism: wild salmon define who we are as Alaskans, and nothing connects us across social, political or economic divides like fresh, healthy salmon. That’s why so much of our work - from organizing and education, to field research and advocacy - rests on the inherent value of salmon to the Alaskan way of life. A few program highlights from the year:

Clean Energy

- Played important role organizing Alaskans to stop HB77.
- Established top-notch legal and technical team, and hired new organizers in Anchorage and Kenai in anticipation of 2014 Chuitna coal mine permitting.
- Set an important precedent by pressing the state to process an instream flow reservation to keep water in a salmon stream slated for coal mining.

Clean Water

- With the help of an army of volunteers, successfully established baseline water quality datasets completing 18 years of CEMP.
- Added staff in Talkeetna to expand our clean boating outreach program.
- Spearheaded a statewide Task Force (2014-2015) to prevent and mitigate the environmental damage of Abandoned & Derelict Vessels on Alaska’s coasts and rivers.

Healthy Habitat

- Lead effort to establish Statewide minimum standards for data collection to be used by anyone collecting stream temperature data in the state.
- Two real-time temperature monitoring sites established and available on the web.
- Expanded work with thermal imagery to identify cold water stepping stones for salmon into the Mat-Su Basin.
- Spear headed effort to stop rollbacks to Alaska’s special habitat areas (see akghabitat.com).

Capacity

- Maintained a balanced budget.
- Worked to encourage foundations to include wild salmon in discussions on food security and sustainability.

Envelopes Please!

We're working hard to build our membership. You can see when your last donation was made by looking at your address on the front of your newsletter envelope. If you are all up to date, please help us share your love for Cook Inlet by passing the enclosed membership envelope on to like minded friends. You can also use the envelope to write back to us: send us advice, gather names for a petition, send an interesting article for our wall, or tell us why you love Cook Inlet!

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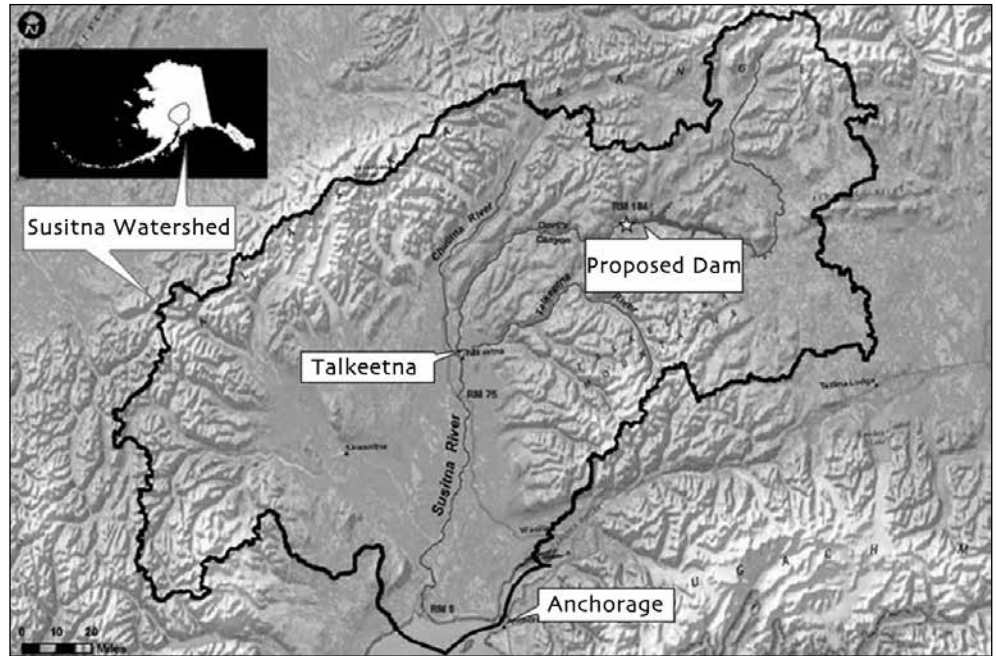
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WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

Damming the Susitna

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A dam would invert flow, with reductions in the summer and increases in winter, impacting salmon habitat.

and economics, to name a few. After the studies a formal license will be filed with FERC in 2016, and dam construction is slated to begin in 2017. Large projects such as these often run over budget, and could end up costing taxpayers billions more for a dam that is unnecessary, based on projected energy demands, and that would severely impact fisheries, wildlife and subsistence users.

Estimated energy production of the dam is 300 megawatts, with an installed capacity of 600 megawatts. In comparison, the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River in Washington, which is similar in size, produces an average of 2500 megawatts with an installed capacity of 6800 megawatts. The remote location, size, and infrastructure required to build the Susitna-Watana dam diminishes the dollar for dollar return on the expenditures versus energy production, and makes little economic sense, especially as Alaska eyes growing budget deficits in the years to come.

The dam would subscribe to a “load following” protocol that would spill the most water from the reservoir through the turbines during the winter months when energy needs are the greatest, and flow would be severely reduced during the summer. By doing so, the flow regime of the Susitna River would be turned on its head, with drastically low flows in the summer,

analogous to current fall flows, and high winter flows that would impair ice formation and prevent much of the river from freezing. These fundamental changes to salmon and wildlife habitat in the heart of the Cook Inlet watershed would devastate the people who rely on commercial, recreational and subsistence hunting and fishing for their livelihoods. That’s why Inletkeeper didn’t need to wait for more studies to formally oppose the project in 2012 (see <http://inletkeeper.org/resources/contents/susitnawatanaresolution>).

Recently, in the shadow of Susitna-Watana, a new proposal to dam the Talkeetna River came to light. Owners of a private Pacific Northwest power company secured a preliminary permit from FERC to explore possibilities for the dam, yet they have little to no working knowledge of the area or its residents’ opinions. In fact, the Talkeetna River is protected from damming under a Department of Natural Resources Susitna Basin Recreation Management Plan. These ill-conceived ideas cost millions of our tax dollars, and threaten our most valuable renewable resources, yet they fail to provide any serious solutions to the energy needs of rural Alaskans. Inletkeeper will continue to track these issues and let our members know when comment periods and action alerts come up. You can also learn more by visiting the Susitna River Coalition webpage at: www.susitnarivercoalition.org.

Abandoned and Derelict Vessels Task Force

By 2025, a new report estimates there will be more than 3,000 large vessels in Alaska more than 45 years old. Through the Alaska Clean Harbors program, Cook Inletkeeper is spearheading an exciting statewide Task Force looking at preventing and addressing Abandoned & Derelict Vessels (ADV). Working with over 10 local, state and federal agencies, Inletkeeper is facilitating the development of a new joint agency vessel of concern reporting form, an online database of ADV, and a report highlighting areas for improvement and proposing a statewide ADV Program to better protect coastal and riverine environments. For more information: <http://alaskacleanharbors.org/resources/harbor-management/derelict-vessels/>



Sunken abandoned vessels can cost the state millions and harm our fish habitats.

Cook Inlet Needs Tug Escorts!

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The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA '90) created Citizen Advisory Councils fashioned after a similar system that was in place in Sullom Voe, Scotland. The idea was to provide monitoring and oversight of the industry with a stated goal of oil spill prevention. Congress (in the Act) warned of complacency.

In my view, complacency has arrived, and it is a strong force to behold.

There is a Cook Inlet Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) in place, created by OPA '90, and whose job it is to provide oversight and prevention, so that the Exxon Valdez scenario will never happen again. They have not done their job, because they have avoided the tanker escort issue. They should be advocating for this method of prevention, as we as citizens should be.

In their recent "risk assessment" it is recognized that "self arrest" or anchoring a stricken tanker is not only dicey but an improbable solution.

There are no vessels of opportunity in Cook Inlet with adequate horsepower for the job. Tractor tugs in Prince William

Sound, 24 hours away, would be of no use. CIRCAC has a study on its shelf (the Dickson Report, available on its website) that was done in 1993 that clearly states that anchoring a stricken tanker is not a reliable option and that tug escorts are recommended.

Why is this blatant oversight allowed to exist? In a word, money. Tractor tugs are expensive, and the industry is unwilling to discuss this option seriously. The Cook Inlet Citizens Advisory Council is dominated by its funding interests, has demonstrated that it is more of a lapdog than a watchdog, and the regulators that sit at the table are spineless. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Coast Guard are partners in the complacency because they don't insist on tanker escorts. If protection of Cook Inlet coastlines from windrows of oily goo from Chickaloon to Nanwalek and beyond is the goal, our regulators and citizen council are in the process of failing at their jobs, because the chronic risk of an oil tanker losing power on a dark and stormy night is allowed to continue.

CIRCAC recently commissioned a study with regard to risk assessment of oil transportation in Cook Inlet. Go to www.circac.org, and take a look.

In the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez, there was untold amounts of wailing and gnashing of teeth as the multi-year disaster damaged a thousand miles of beaches. This could easily happen again.

Envision an oil plastered Kachemak Bay, oiled beaches up and down Cook Inlet, Snug Harbor, Kamishak, Kodiak.

Municipalities up and down the Inlet and Kodiak should be sponsoring resolutions asking for tug escorts. The public needs to come out from behind the shroud of complacency and demand tug escorts. If this doesn't occur, the dead birds and otters and post spill wailing and gnashing of teeth are a potential outcome.

Inletkeeper member Frank Mullen is a lifelong Alaskan and Cook Inlet fisherman. He served three terms on the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly.



Seabulk Pride 2006 - Does beaching count as successful self arrest?

