

INLETKEEPER®

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

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

Summer Quarter 2014



Help Us Crowdfund Radiation Testing in Cook Inlet!

www.crowdrise.com/
cookinletkeeper

The Fukushima nuclear disaster has stirred up a lot of fear and misinformation, and we have received many calls from concerned Alaskans asking if our Cook Inlet fisheries are safe. The scientists at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute have found little to be concerned about, but there are currently no baseline radiation measurements in Cook Inlet and no agencies tasked with establishing a baseline. With your support, we will fund radiation testing in Cook Inlet to get the facts about Fukushima radiation. Each test costs \$600 and our goal is to fund a minimum of three. Thank you!

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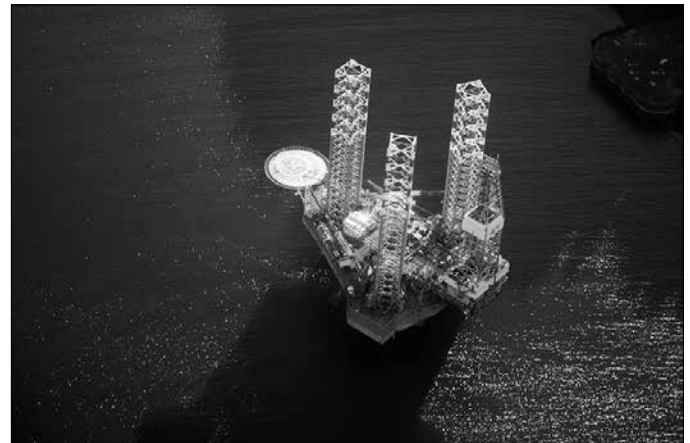


Cook Inletkeeper Predicted Buccaneer Bankruptcy *Free money from the State of Alaska did not build a better business*

It was no surprise when Buccaneer Energy filed for bankruptcy last month. In fact, Cook Inletkeeper predicted it back in January (see www.inletkeeper.org/blog/buccaneerbadexample).

When asked about Buccaneer's demise, Alaska Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Joe Balash called Buccaneer's difficulties "unfortunate," and said "[t]his is a consequence of an eager company that came in and saw all of the opportunity that Alaska generally and Cook Inlet in particular presented, and got itself overextended."

That's a nice way to put it. The fact is Buccaneer came into Cook Inlet with a high-risk plan to explore for oil and gas. Its stock was



Endeavor rig's stay in Cook Inlet has been heavily subsidized by the state.

trading for pennies, it had few capital assets and considerable debt, and its entire business model rested on the massive tax breaks and other subsidies available in Cook Inlet (Buccaneer's chairman famously told an industry conference

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Real-Time Temperature Data: Bookmark It!



Volunteers installed the real-time stations. Data are now streaming on our website.

The 2014 run of Chinook salmon into Cook Inlet salmon streams is a head scratcher. The Deshka River in upper Cook Inlet is having a great year and numbers are already well above the lower escapement goal of 13,000 fish based on weir counts by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Fishing restrictions have been repealed. Meanwhile, the Little Susitna River and Anchor River are closed to sport

fishing because numbers are so low. In order to understand all this regional variability, fisheries managers will need every piece of information available to them.

Cook Inletkeeper has stepped up to provide in-season information for weir operators, fisheries managers, and local fishers to increase our understanding of fish movement by serving up water temperature data online in real-time. To do this, we had to take a huge step forward in technology to bring Alaskans real-time temperature data on two of Cook Inlet's most valued king salmon systems: the Deshka and Anchor Rivers.

So bookmark this page: <http://inletkeeper.org/healthy-habitat/real-time-temperature-sites> and see how a drop in water temperature, caused by a significant rain event, is often followed by a big push of adult king salmon moving upstream to spawning beds.



Coal Strip Mine Proposals are a Bad Deal for Alaskans

New Inletkeeper Board member Willow King stands up for salmon habitat



Willow King knows that salmon hang in the delicate balance between common sense and political process.

With the debate over coal strip mine proposals in Southcentral Alaska heating up, it's worth taking a moment to look at all of the facts around coal mining. When one takes a step back, it becomes abundantly clear that proposed coal mines significantly threaten our way of life in Alaska while offering very little in return. Having been born and raised in Alaska, enjoying the many wonders of this great state would not have been possible without the clean water and air that our home boasts in such magnificent quantities.

In her recent op-ed making the case for mining coal in Alaska, the head of the Alaska Miners Association, Deantha Crocket, quickly glosses over a piece of information that is integral to this debate: Alaska already mines more coal than it can use. This means that 100 percent of the coal from any new coal mine would be shipped directly out of state to overseas markets, with no benefit to Alaska's energy market.

Taking a quick look at the proposed coal mines around the state demonstrates that coal companies want to profit from exporting coal overseas at the expense of Alaskans, not to mention the cost to creatures of the land and sea and their irreplaceable ecosystems. They hang precariously in the delicate balance between common sense and political process.

At the Chuitna River on the west side of Cook Inlet, the billionaire Hunt brothers from Texas propose mining directly through a wild salmon stream at PacRim Coal's proposed Chuitna Coal Project. If approved, this mine would fully remove 25 miles of salmon stream and discharge over 7 million gallons of mine waste into the Chuitna River system every day.

When Larry and Judy Heilman retired to a hand-built log home in the small community of Beluga near the mouth of the Chuitna River, they imagined their retirement would be spent hunting, fishing and gardening in this beautiful and quiet community.

When they learned an Outside company wanted to mine through the stream where they teach their grandchildren to fish, Judy and Larry joined other residents in founding the Chuitna Citizens Coalition, a group dedicated to protecting the Chuitna River from PacRim Coal's proposed coal mine. Today, Judy and Larry dedicate their time and energy working alongside others to raise awareness about the proposed mine and have generated thousands of petition signatures opposing mining through salmon streams. Unfortunately the state of Alaska time and again has refused to stand up for salmon habitat by protecting the Chuitna River.

The Chuitna Coal Project would set a terrible precedent as the first coal mine in the state's history to mine directly through a salmon stream. Setting such a precedent would leave salmon streams across the state at risk and threaten our state's \$5.8 billion fishing industry, which is responsible for an estimated 78,500 jobs.

We all want to create more jobs and economic prosperity for Alaskans. Unfortunately, proposals like the Chuitna Coal Project don't create jobs. Instead, they trade sustainable fishing and tourism jobs for unsustainable coal mining jobs, all while threatening our right as Alaskans to harvest wild salmon every year. In fact, a recent study from the Center for Economic Sustainability found that for every \$1 the Chuitna Coal Project would generate in jobs, taxes and royalties we stand to lose \$3-6 in environmental damage, reclamation costs and lost economic opportunity.

Judy and Larry are not the only ones having their lives disrupted by proposed coal mines. In the Matanuska Valley, residents are busy fighting 3 different coal mining proposals. Usibelli Coal Mine Inc.'s proposed Wishbone Hill Coal Mine would strip mine within a half mile of homes and put 96 coal trucks on already-congested Matanuska Valley roads every day – that's an average of one coal truck every 15 minutes.

On a blisteringly cold November day in 2011, over 200 people braved wind chills of 15 below to speak against the proposed Wishbone Hill mine at a public hearing held in the community of Sutton. Opponents of the mine outnumbered supporters two-to-one.

More recently, community members sent over 500 comments to the Department of Environmental Conservation opposing Usibelli Coal Mine Inc.'s air permit for the Wishbone Hill Coal Mine. Releasing toxic coal dust into the high winds in the Matanuska Valley would be a dirty and dangerous combination.

Residents across Southcentral Alaska are standing together to fight proposed coal strip mines that threaten our salmon, our communities and our way of life. While the Alaska Miners Association may benefit from tearing up Southcentral Alaska to send coal overseas, one thing remains clear: Alaskans would not.



New Ways to Give

We love to shop local, yet many large businesses and online warehouses are offering to contribute a percent of your purchase to your favorite charity. Shop through smile.amazon.com and 0.5% of your purchase can go to Cook Inletkeeper. Link us through your Fred Meyer card and they will send us a donation. More options are emerging every day. Check your favorite shops, and ask about their charity programs. These donations can add up to help protect your watershed.

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WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

Pollution Continues in Two Moose Creek

Since 2012 Cook Inletkeeper staff have documented illegal discharges of muddy water from a gravel pit into Two Moose Creek – an Anchor River tributary and important habitat for Kings, Silvers, Steelhead and Dolly Varden.

On June 6th we went to Two Moose Creek for the first time in 2014 and saw a frustratingly familiar scene - muddy water flowing into an otherwise clear and cool salmon stream. Inletkeeper sent yet another email, this time with video (<http://bit.ly/1sjuqxM>) of the continuing pollution, to the Commissioners of the Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Dept. of Fish and Game, and Lower Peninsula legislators. On June 12th ADEC Enforcement officials came to Anchor Point and we joined them for a site visit to Two Moose to collect samples. Our data matched theirs, and showed clear violation of state water quality standards.



Turbidity problems are not being addressed.

This discharge has continued for over two years. Are you as frustrated as we are about the slow response by our agencies to protect salmon habitat? Following our video, there's a little bit of movement. Help keep the pressure on for resolution! Write or call Larry Hartig (ADEC) (907.465.5066, larry.hartig@alaska.gov) or Cora Campbell (ADF&G) (907.465.4100, cora.campbell@alaska.gov) and tell them you care about salmon habitat and you want to see action for protecting it at Two Moose.



Cruise Ship Discharge



Cruise ship permit reverses vote of Alaskans

Cruise ships are large floating cities that discharge a broad range of toxic and conventional pollutants. In 2006, Alaskans voted to put basic controls on cruise industry dumping. But the cruise ship corporations worked with the Parnell Administration to roll back the public vote, and this summer, ADEC proposed a weak permit which would allow cruise ships to dump their wastes virtually anywhere – including dockside – throughout Alaska.

Inletkeeper submitted strong comments on the draft cruise ship permit, and we're working now to ensure the cruise ship companies don't pollute our fisheries.



Mark Your Calendar

Inletkeeper important summer dates - look for us!

- 7/4 Table at Mt. Marathon Race , 9am-6pm, Seward
- 7/10 Eat Salmon Save Salmon BBQ, 5:30pm-8:30pm, Valley of the Moon Park, Anchorage
- 7/12 Table at Funny River Festival, Soldotna
- 7/26-27 Dipnet Outreach, Kenai River
- 7/31 Splash Bash 6-8pm, Homer
- 8/1-3 Table at Salmonstock, Ninilchik
- 8/5 *Wild and Scenic Film Fest*, Homer (date may change)
- 8/7 *Wild and Scenic Film Fest*, Seward
- 8/8 *Wild and Scenic Film Fest*, Kenai River Center, Kenai
- 8/9 Six Mile Whitewater Festival, Hope
- 8/9 Table at Keanai Beer Fest, Soldotna
- 8/14 *Wild and Scenic Film Fest*, Bear Tooth, Anchorage
- 8/15-17 Table at Ninilchik State Fair
- 8/19 General Election VOTE!
- 8/23 Eat Salmon Save Salmon BBQ, Soldotna Creek Park, Soldotna
- 9/18 Movie: *Damnation*, 6pm, Homer Theater
- 9/20 Movie: *Damnation*, 6pm, Kenai River Center, Soldotna

Buccaneer Bankruptcy

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that Alaska is “about the closest thing you’re going to get to free money from a government in the world”).

In the course of its fiery trajectory across Cook Inlet, Buccaneer misled local communities, violated salmon protection laws, and failed to pay local businesses, among many other transgressions. If it had experienced a well blow-out or a large spill, our public dollars would have been spent to clean up the mess, because Buccaneer had little money and it had set up a series of limited liability corporations designed specifically to insulate the principals from exposure.

But we can’t blame Buccaneer for behaving the way it did. In fact, it’s to be expected. That’s because oil and gas corporations have an overriding fiduciary duty to their shareholders to maximize profits – with little allegiance to Alaskans. Buccaneer simply rolled the dice, hoping to ride big tax breaks and subsidies to an even bigger payday.


That’s why it’s so important to distinguish the private interest from the public interest, because while they sometimes overlap, they typically do not. In fact, they are often contrary interests.

The public interest reflects the needs of all Alaskans, including

current and future generations, in the things that matter most – sustainable jobs, clean water, healthy salmon, good schools, and breathable air, for example.

The Alaska Constitution is unique because it embraces the notion of Alaska as the “owner state,” where every Alaskan collectively owns our fish, game, water and mineral resources. This “owner state” concept in turn rests on the legal precepts of the Public Trust Doctrine, which dates back to ancient Roman times, and which holds our government in a trust position to manage our resources in the best interests of all Alaskans.

The Buccaneer experience reflects a classic case where Governor Parnell and our political leaders mistook the private interest for the public interest, and put Outside corporations and their unilateral drive for profits above everyday Alaskans.

Now, Inletkeeper is working to reform our permitting system to ensure Outside corporations embrace a social contract that recognizes their responsibilities and obligations to Alaskans and the fish and water resources that support us. For more info or to get involved, contact keeper@inletkeeper.org. 

Help Inletkeeper Crowdfund Radiation Testing

Build a baseline dataset of radiation levels in Cook Inlet

Three years after the catastrophic event at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant complex, Japanese officials are still struggling to contain Fukushima’s radiation, and Japan has installed bans on fishing and fish consumption in the vicinity of the facility. But further downstream – on the west coast of the U.S. and Alaska – some continue to raise concerns about possible contamination in fish and shellfish.

Cook Inletkeeper takes these concerns seriously, and we’ve fielded countless calls from Alaskans concerned about the safety of our seafood. Unfortunately, some alarmist web sites and blogs have fanned the flames of hysteria by publishing false and misleading information. For example, one image that went viral on the Internet portrayed a diagram of tsunami wave action generated by the March 2011 earthquake, but it was misrepresented as a diagram of radiation levels, with rays radiating throughout the Pacific Ocean to California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

Cook Inletkeeper has reviewed the scientific evidence on radiation contamination of fish from the West Coast and Alaska, and we have not found any evidence of a problem. According to experts in the field, the dilution factors are simply too great – despite the longevity of radiation – to impact our waters. But just to make sure, we’re teaming up with top experts at Woods Hole’s Center for Marine and Environmental Radiation (CMER) to collect water samples in Cook Inlet. This data will compliment sampling efforts now underway in fish tissues in the Gulf of



Will radiation released at Fukushima Daiichi impact Alaska waters? Without baseline data it will be difficult to say.

Alaska and elsewhere by the US Food & Drug Administration in conjunction with the State of Alaska.

The health and safety of Alaska seafood is vitally important. Alaskans consume more fish than any other state, and the marketability of our commercially-caught fish hinges on a fresh and wholesome product. That’s why we hope you’ll support our efforts to test water quality in Cook Inlet for radioactive isotopes. Donate: www.crowdrise.com/cookinletkeeper 