

INLETKEEPER®

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

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Spring Quarter 2014



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More Habitat Rollbacks Threaten Alaskan Salmon

The myth of rigorous permitting continues



Special Habitats were created by and for Alaskans.

Alaska once boasted the best fish and game management program in the world but no more. Today, we are seeing dangerous rollbacks that threaten our Alaskan way of life, because Alaskans are increasingly cut out of decisions

affecting our publicly-owned natural resources. Alaska has a unique Constitution; our founders reviewed all the other constitutions in the Lower 48, and decided to make Alaska an "owner state." As a result, Article 8 of the Alaska Constitution makes every man, woman and child the collective owner of our fish, game and water resources. So, we all have a right to use these resources responsibly, and we have a corresponding obligation to protect them for current and future generations. Unfortunately, current trends are

stripping away the rights of Alaskans to participate meaningfully in natural resource decisions. For example, Alaska is now the only coastal state in the nation without a Coastal Management Program, despite the fact we have

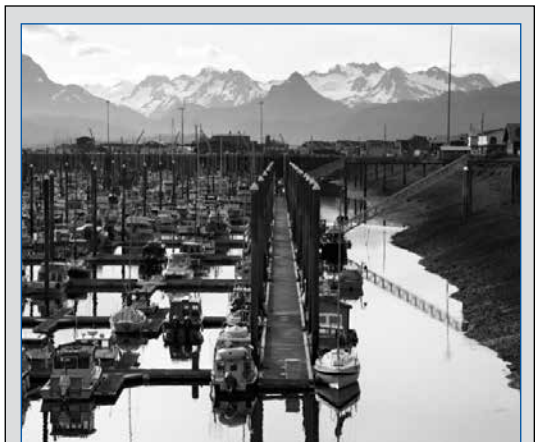
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Dockwalker Volunteers Needed

Spring is here and we're excited about another boating season! Cook Inletkeeper is looking for volunteers to spend time in the sun at the Homer Harbor, talking with boaters about pollution prevention and offering tools to help protect Kachemak Bay while boating.

As a Dockwalker volunteer, you'll hand out clean boating kits to boaters at the harbor and talk to boaters about resources available for the best clean boating practices. We've handed out hundreds of these kits at boat and sport shows, and we're excited to work with YOU to take them to the docks!

Join us for training and become an expert on clean and green boating. No experience necessary, and the time commitment is flexible – you can head out to the harbor for as little or as much time as you'd like! You'll help protect Kachemak Bay, and help others to do the same!



Volunteer Training

May 1, 2014 5-7PM

Cook Inletkeeper Office, Homer
rachel@inletkeeper.org or 235-4068 x29
www.inletkeeper.org



Boardmember Tom Evans from Nanwalek
Coal hurts our ocean and everyone who relies on it

I live in a remote coastal village in Lower Cook Inlet, and my family and my community depends on the ocean for food. Whether it's collecting bidarkis off the rocks, clams from the beaches or halibut from deeper waters, we rely on a healthy ocean to sustain us.

Today, however, we're seeing rapid changes in our oceans, and one of the most alarming problems is ocean acidification. As we pump more and more carbon into our atmosphere, our oceans absorb more carbon, and it's turning our oceans more acidic.

This acidification is now threatening our shellfish, because acidic conditions make it harder for animals to build shells using calcium. Equally important, acidification threatens many of the tiniest plankton at the bottom of the food chain, because they too rely on calcium to build their tiny bodies. As a people residing at the top of the food chain – who rely on fish that rely on plankton – ocean acidification is a direct threat to my family, my community and most Alaskans.

That's why I'm dismayed to see legislators such as Senators Pete Kelly, Cathy Giessel and others pushing to build huge, new coal fired power plants across our state. Coal produces vastly more carbon emissions than natural gas and cleaner renewable technologies, and it's a leading contributor to ocean acidification.

But facts and science apparently don't factor into play in some Juneau offices. For example, Pete Kelly said publicly he wants to spend our public dollars on a report to build coal plants that would intentionally violate federal clean air laws and – here's the kicker – never get turned on until the apocalypse comes. You can't make this stuff up.

Now, Senator Giessel is holding hearings in her Senate Resources Committee to cheerlead for more coal development, and regular Alaskans are not allowed to testify.



Tom Evans worries that Senator's Kelly and Giesel have their heads in the sand.

She's even posted bogus "science" online that's paid for by corporations like Exxon and other big polluters. Alaskans understand that corporations have special influence over our affairs, but people like Senator Giessel should not be allowed to strip away our rights as Alaskans to testify about our oceans.

But coal's not just a threat to our oceans. In Upper Cook Inlet, the Chuitna coal strip mine would be the first project in Alaska history to mine down through 25 miles of salmon streams. This would set a horrible precedent, putting dirty coal above wild salmon, just so a couple Texas billionaires can ship Alaska coal to China.

Last year, Governor Parnell killed the state task force that was exploring ocean acidification and related issues. There was no public notice and no public discussion. This is the same trend we see with House Bill 77, which strips Alaskans of many of our rights to participate in government decisions. Once again, the politicians and the corporations that support them do not want regular Alaskans to speak out on issues that affect our everyday lives.

There's an old Native proverb that says "you can't wake a person who is pretending to be asleep." I don't think I can wake Governor Parnell or Senator Giessel to the dangers that coal poses to our oceans. But I think we should have an open and honest debate about these issues. Because if we don't, our oceans will soon stop sustaining us.

New Newsletter Format

Half our members do not receive our email updates (and the rest of us have overflowing inboxes). With so much going on, we want to be sure you are in the loop and receive our updates. So we're switching to a shorter more frequent quarterly newsletter. If you're already up to speed on the issues, share this with a friend. You can use the attached envelope to send your thoughts, ideas and concerns, or pass it on and help us build our membership. Thanks!

INLETKEEPER is published by Cook Inletkeeper, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains. Subscriptions are mailed free to members and are available to others upon request. To become a member, or for more information, contact:

Cook Inletkeeper HEADQUARTERS
 P.O. Box 3269, Homer, Alaska 99603
 3734 Ben Walters Lane

ph: (907) 235-4068
 fx: (907) 235-4069

www.inletkeeper.org
 keeper@inletkeeper.org

STAFF

- Bob Shavelson
Executive Director & Inletkeeper
- Eric Booton
Alaska Coal Organizer
- Kaitlyn Vadla
Alaska Coal Organizer
- Sue Mauger
Science Director
- Will Schlein
Information Technology Specialist
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Development & Office Coordinator
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Outreach & Monitoring Coordinator

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WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

Cold Water “Stepping Stones” Research Expanding to Mat-Su

On June 21, 2002, Cook Inletkeeper put out its first water temperature logger on the Anchor River. We did not know then what an integral part of our work those loggers would become. Your support and interest in understanding the connections between healthy salmon populations, stream temperatures and our changing climate has propelled Cook Inletkeeper into a leadership role across the state in the interface between wild salmon and climate change.

In 2014, we will revise our temperature monitoring protocol we developed in 2008 and update it based on our years of experience to create a state-wide protocol for stream and lake monitoring. By establishing core standards and practices, we will facilitate the collection of comparable data across the state by Alaskans working within different agencies and organizations.

We will also take lessons learned from our regional study in 48 Cook Inlet streams and apply them to Bristol Bay watersheds. As we work with new Bristol Bay partners, communities and Tribes to deploy temperature loggers this summer, we will share our message about the importance of habitat protection and the threat our fossil fuel dependency poses for the health of our salmon.



Cook Inletkeeper recently hosted a meeting of local researchers to identify key salmon habitat on the Anchor River using innovative tools like thermal infrared imagery.

But our important work in Cook Inlet will always be at the heart of what we do. While we continue our long-term monitoring, we also strive to be innovative and open to new technology. We are now using thermal infrared imagery to identify “cold-water stepping stones” or places where groundwater connections are strongest and can provide salmon with refuge from warming conditions. This summer we will expand this work into the Mat-Su basin. And next month we will start streaming real-time temperature data on the Anchor and Deshka Rivers. Building on 12 years of success, your support allows us to continue leading the way to a future of healthy salmon habitat in a changing climate.

You Have Inspired Us!

Less than a year as development coordinator, and I’m amazed by the generosity of Cook Inletkeeper members. Our end-of-year appeal had a response rate a full 50% over any previous year! As the envelopes poured in, staff members relished the task of sorting the mail, seeing names they recognized, feeling deeply appreciated and validated.

Much of the work we do is behind the scenes. My own behind the scenes role includes maintaining our membership database. I’ll admit I’ve done battle with it, ranted at it, and walked away from it in a huff more than a few times. One of the things I did not expect was how our database has come alive for me. I am struck by how precious are the lives that it tracks. You’ve sent requests to add and change names and addresses as you move, as



your kids grow up and move out, as you join (or separate) with others, or as your family loses a loved one. The fabric of so many lives is spread before me in my database update sessions, the changes are both raw and sad and full and happy. I’ve found myself getting more than a little emotional changing the status of people I have not even met, may never get to meet. And through it all, you’re keeping us in your loop, sharing what you can with us. Donations large and small are equally touching as you carve out a piece of your lives to protect our watershed and the lives it sustains.

So send me your changes! The database isn’t perfect but it’s the best tool we have to connect with you – help me keep it alive! And help me beat it into shape when it’s misbehaving. Contact 907-235-4068 x27 or margo@inletkeeper.org.

Thank You for Rising up to Oppose HB 77

Your voice made the difference



Fairbanks. Homer. Kodiak. Kenai. Nome. Bethel. Ketchikan. The voices came in from all over the state to testify on House Bill 77. On April 3, we learned House Bill 77 had died, at least this legislative session.

When Governor Parnell introduced HB 77 last January, it rushed through the Alaska House with little scrutiny. But once you learned how HB 77 would cut Alaskans out of decisions impacting our fish, game and water resources, you rose up, and the bill stalled in the Senate.

Then, over the summer and fall, and into this year's legislative session, you and other Alaskans refused to be silenced. The opposition to HB 77 flowed like a tsunami from across the state, from fisherman and property owners and hunters and Native Alaskans and conservationists. You jammed phone lines and mail slots and inboxes, with a loud and clear message our politicians could not ignore.

Senator Peter Miccichi deserves special praise. We disagree with him on many issues, but on HB 77, he stood up against strong political pressure to fight for a more open and transparent process, and for protecting water quality and salmon habitat. Take a minute to send him a quick note. senator.peter.micciche@akleg.gov



Habitat Rollbacks Threaten Alaskan Salmon

Continued from page 1

more miles of coastline than all the Lower 48 states combined. This program provided local Alaskans with a meaningful seat at the table for coastal resource decisions, and it provided a "one stop" permitting process that created efficiencies for citizens and developers alike. But the Alaska Coastal Management Program fell to political pressures from various interests who did not want Alaskans to have a real voice in decisions affecting our local communities, resources and economies.

We are seeing similar trends in our resource permitting programs, where "general permits" authorizing development activities across a broad geographic range, are increasingly the norm. But Alaskans never know what specific projects will be permitted under the general permits. And when individual projects arise under a general permit, there is no public notice or opportunity to comment, so Alaskans are left in the dark.

Today, our state government makes thousands of important natural resource decisions each year and Alaskans have no idea until the damage is done. For example, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issues over 4000 permits a year for activities that impact important fish habitat. Similarly, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources issues water use permits – often for 10,000 gallons a day or more – from local streams and aquifers without public notice and comment.

Finally, the state is making it harder for Alaskans to challenge bad or illegal government decisions. The right to appeal grievances is a bedrock principle in our constitutional law. Yet according to the state, only a corporation – and not a living, breathing Alaskan – can challenge a bad decision affecting one of our designated critical habitat areas. Politicians are also working



Public notice is our right if projects will harm salmon habitat.

to raise the bar on who can appeal a government decision, with new laws proposed to require a direct financial or physical harm before anyone could participate in a challenge. And if Alaskans challenge a government decision and lose, the state can punish you by seeking large attorney fees awards, just as it did when it sought over \$1 million from Bella Hammond and Vic Fisher over their Pebble challenge.

Resource development in Alaska requires a delicate balance. As we grow as a state, and as fishing and hunting pressures increase, the stresses on our precious land, air and water resources will only increase. We need only look to the Lower 48 – where short-sighted development has all but destroyed once-vibrant fisheries – to know we're repeating the mistakes made elsewhere. The consequences will be the same here if we do not ensure Alaskans have a role in shaping local resource decisions.

