

INLETKEEPER

PROTECTING THE COOK INLET WATERSHED & THE LIFE IT SUSTAINS



As Inletkeeper Turns 30

WE TAKE A LOOK BEHIND... AND AHEAD.

Since Inletkeeper's creation 30 years ago, the world has changed dramatically—glaciers thaw and retreat, salmon runs balance on a knife's edge between human needs and the pressures of industrializing their habitats, and our public lands face renewed threats from our own government. Thanks to your support, Inletkeeper has evolved, grown, and continues to be a force for protecting Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu and the life it sustains. From pushing the threshold of salmon science, to protecting Lower Cook Inlet from oil drilling threats, we at Inletkeeper are proud to serve alongside our communities in the place we call home.

The Inletkeeper team



Federal Government Silences Cook Inlet Voices on Lease Sale 258

Development of Lower Cook Inlet's federal oil and gas leases could proceed without allowing public comment—an action that may affect fisheries, tribes, and established commercial businesses...

In 2022, BOEM approved Lease Sale 258 without fully considering climate impacts, alternatives, or the risks to Cook Inlet's fragile ecosystem. Inletkeeper, alongside community and national partners, challenged the approval in court—and won in 2024. The court agreed that BOEM had violated the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), ordered the agency to go back and conduct a supplemental environmental impact statement, and suspended Hilcorp's lease while the review was underway.

That lawsuit was a major victory for the rule of law, for science, and for Cook Inlet communities. But now, BOEM is cutting the public out of the very process the court ordered, as a result of the weakened National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) regulations.

BOEM is now preparing the supplemental environmental review, but plans to finalize the review by the end of the year without releasing a draft for public comment, without holding public hearings, and without giving community members, tribes, and stakeholders any chance to weigh in.

That decision is unacceptable. It reverses BOEM's earlier commitment to transparency, and undermines the very purpose of NEPA. Cutting the public out of the process is more than a procedural shortcut. It shuts Alaskans out of decisions made in their own backyard. It sets a dangerous precedent, and it puts Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu at risk.

Since it was first established in 1970, NEPA has given people a voice in the federal decisions that shape their communities. It requires agencies to study the environmental consequences of major projects and to invite the public into the process, ensuring that those most affected aren't silenced when powerful industries come knocking.

Public participation is not a box to check—it is the heart of NEPA, and the American process of decision making. **Community members bring local knowledge, scientific research, and perspectives that agencies too often miss.** Time and again, public input has reshaped or stopped dangerous projects before irreparable harm was done.

What's happening in Cook Inlet is part of a national trend. The Council on Environmental Quality, which oversees NEPA, has steadily weakened its rules, encouraging agencies to do less analysis, move faster, and involve fewer members of the public. The result, as we clearly see here, will be communities sidelined, science minimized, ill-advised projects fast-tracked, and irreparable harm done.

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WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

One thing must remain absolutely clear: agencies like BOEM still have the discretion to engage the public and take climate and environmental justice seriously. They are simply choosing not to.

Cook Inlet communities deserve better. They deserve to know what is at stake, to ask hard questions of their decision makers, and to have their voices heard before decisions are made that could change their home forever. To deny Cook Inlet communities the chance to weigh in is to silence the very people most immediately affected, and places decisions about our home in the hands of Washington bureaucrats and giant corporations.

We urge BOEM not lower their standards of review but use their discretion to take the time and input required to properly vet this project. Inletkeeper will fight to ensure that Cook Inlet communities are informed, not sidelined. The answer to past mistakes is not to make future ones in secret.



Canaries of the Sea: Take Action to Protect Belugas from Mining Impacts

Beluga whales are called the “canaries of the sea” for their whistling, chirping calls. But recently, their songs have gone quiet. Sadly, Cook Inlet belugas also fit a darker idiom: the canary in the coal mine. It’s said there once were so many of them that their surfacing pods looked like miles of whitecaps across the inlet. The population has declined from about 1,400 whales in the 1970s and 1980s, to approximately 331 today. Even after subsistence hunting ended in 2006, the population failed to rebound—and in fact, continued to shrink. Today, new projects led by AKLNG and Contango Ore threaten to deal the final blow to the last of these endangered whales.

What is harming these marine canaries? It isn’t one specific thing. It’s the cumulative impacts of marine traffic noise, human pollution, and human waste crowding into their habitat. In short: the industrialization of our inlet.

Pollution from poorly controlled industrial and urban discharge degrades the environment for belugas and the food chains they depend on. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), compounds found in crude oil, have been detected in intestinal tissues sampled from Cook Inlet belugas. Their guts also showed similar levels of PAH contamination to those of belugas from Canada’s

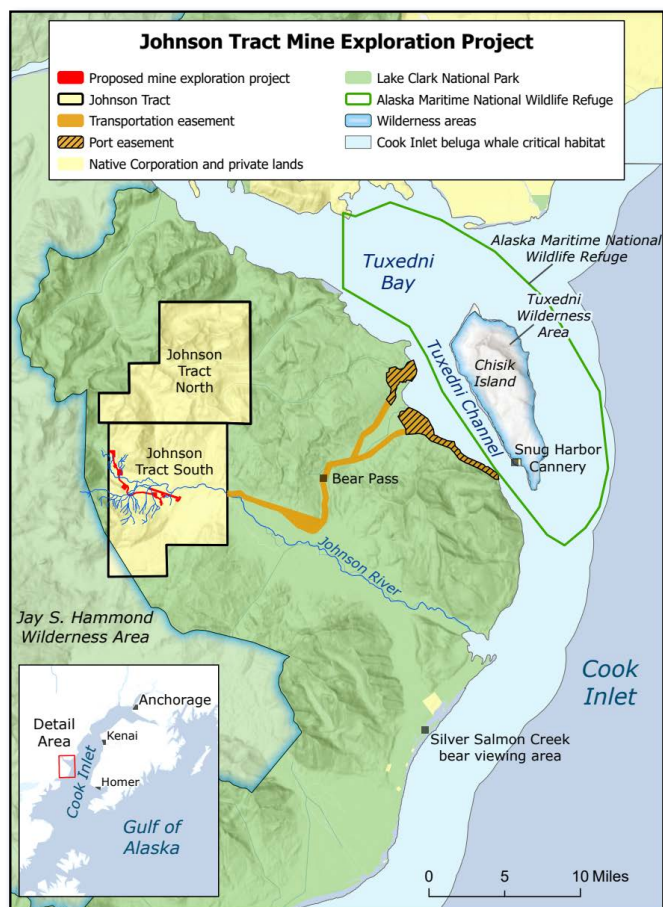
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industrialized St. Lawrence estuary, where PAHs were correlated with high rates of intestinal cancer among the whales.

Belugas navigate and perceive the world using sound, and are extremely sensitive to human-caused noise, which can disrupt feeding activity and mask vital communication between whales, such as predator alarms or a mother's call to her calf. Human-generated noise is considered one of the most significant threats to Cook Inlet belugas' recovery and survival.

Johnson Tract Mine map by the Center for Biological Diversity. Tuxedni Bay is the focus of Inletkeeper's petition to create a Beluga whale protection zone in Cook Inlet.



In this death by a thousand cuts, Cook Inlet beluga habitat is already overburdened, and more development is on the way. The AKLNG Project proposes to build an underwater pipeline in the upper Inlet, right in the middle of belugas' summer feeding grounds in the Susitna Delta. Hilcorp has applied for a new 5-year incidental take permit for oil & gas activities—permits that allow beluga harassment and are almost always granted. Pile driving, dredging, and tugboat operations will add more industrial noise. Despite the mounting impacts of these stressors, the permitting process considers each project individually rather than examining cumulative impacts.

A recent NOAA acoustic study shed light on Cook Inlet beluga activity from September 1 to May 15, a season that was poorly understood. It found that, during this time, belugas congregate in Tuxedni Bay in the same density as their well-known summer feeding habitat in the Susitna Delta. **Researchers identified Tuxedni Bay as the only known fall and winter foraging ground for Cook Inlet belugas.** Study co-author Verana Gill said, "In this case, maintaining the status quo may be all that is needed to protect this relatively pristine habitat and keep Cook Inlet belugas on the road to recovery."

Yet, if CIRI and Contango Ore have their way, the peaceful status quo of Tuxedni Bay will soon be replaced by a highly active industrial port. The proposed Johnson Tract gold mine would be located on CIRI land within Lake Clark National Park. Tuxedni Bay would host the port to export year-round ore shipments, infringing on one of the belugas' last quiet refuges, and their winter feeding grounds.

Is it worth it? Each cut of new industrialization could be the death blow to belugas. We cannot justify trading critical beluga whale habitat for a gold project that serves no broad public benefit.

Inletkeeper is asking the National Marine Fisheries Service to take its own research to heart and designate Tuxedni Bay a beluga protection zone, barring industrial activity. But our federal institutions need public backing to make doing the right thing easier.

Raise your voice to keep these marine canaries singing in our Inlet.
Sign our petition to protect belugas in Tuxedni Bay today: www.protectcookinlet.org



Unexpected Life in Unmapped Waters by David Knight

They say fish live in beautiful places, and as an avid fisherman, I've waded in what I consider the most beautiful waters in the world here in the Cook Inlet watershed. I've chased every species of salmon that call these special waters home. However, after teaming up with the Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) for Salmon Habitat Mapping field days—a program designed to engage volunteers in documenting local, unmapped salmon habitats as part of Inletkeeper's Local Solutions series—I can now say that fish also live in unexpected places.

During one of the mapping field days in August, one of our young volunteers captured a surprise: a *Dallia pectoralis*, or Alaska Blackfish; native to Alaska but considered invasive on the Kenai Peninsula. A sharp-eyed 6-year-old volunteer spotted the hardy Alaskan fish on the bank of a small, bog-like tributary. It went unnoticed by all the other volunteers because it was tossed from the minnow trap, which appeared to the adult eye to contain only an orange sludge-like mud. The discovery sent a wave of excitement through the team of volunteers. **It wasn't the species we were hoping to find, but it showed that even in the unlikelyst of environments, fish can be found.** That day, in the most unassuming stream, we didn't just find a unique aquatic vertebrate—we found connection and a shared passion to protect Cook Inlet's life-sustaining habitats.

Inletkeeper's collaboration with KWF brought together nearly 40 volunteers over the summer for four Salmon Habitat Mapping field days. **Together, our teams identified overlooked waters, learning about salmon habitat mapping and participating in hands-on work to identify and document unmapped bodies of water. Their efforts contribute to increasing the number of streams and rivers protected by the State's Anadromous Waters Catalog.**

Inletkeeper's Salmon Solution program depends on strong, diverse volunteer-based collaboration. We invite our local community members, both young and old, to be a part of bringing this initiative to life. Our work empowers our communities through engagement, education, and training, while striving toward a goal of connecting to place and becoming active stewards of the watershed. **Protecting salmon requires more than policy—it requires people to connect with a place, and to take action on its behalf.**

Looking ahead, Inletkeeper will host monthly gatherings at the Community Action Studio in Soldotna, in preparation for next year's scaled-up Salmon Habitat Solution work. Join us to learn more about the solution and how you can be part of safeguarding salmon habitat for generations to come.



Volunteers helped Inletkeeper and the Kenai Watershed Forum during Salmon Habitat Mapping field days over the summer.



Ed Bailey and his wife Nina Faust established the Kachemak Bay Conservation Center.

Kachemak Bay Conservation Center: The Community Legacy of Ed Bailey and Nina Faust

Thirty years ago, Cook Inletkeeper was born to defend clean water and wild salmon. Today, we have finally gained a home of our own. **The Kachemak Bay Conservation Center (KBCC)—our longtime location—is now officially ours. Nestled in the trees off Ben Walters Lane, and frequented by moose, cranes, and the occasional curious bear, the Center has been a hub of conservation work for more than two decades.**

The story of the KBCC begins in 2001, when biologist Ed Bailey—inspired by the camaraderie and exchange of collaborative ideas he found at the Alaska Center for the Environment in Anchorage—envisioned a similar space for Homer. **Together with his wife, educator and conservationist Nina Faust, Ed set out to create a building that would be both a functional office and a living model of sustainable design.** The result was a conservation haven in Homer—a shared home for organizations like Cook Inletkeeper and the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, dedicated to “preserving the ecological integrity of Kachemak Bay.”

From the start, the building embodied this vision. It earned a five-star energy rating, showcasing renewable energy and efficient design features that were ahead of their time in Homer. The first set of solar panels—installed in 2001—were *the first ever installed in Homer*. The Center also featured radiant floor heating, ultra-efficient lighting, recycled plastic decking, cellulose concrete siding, and even a double-hulled oil tank to prevent leaks. It wasn't just an office; it was an example of what was possible.

Over the years, Nina continued to serve as steward of the building, ensuring that Ed's vision lived on. When the original solar panels reached the end of their lifespan, she replaced them through the Solarize the Kenai campaign, led by Inletkeeper. Thanks to her, a new solar array now powers the Center, generating the energy needed to sustain its daily operations.

This year, Nina entrusted us with the building she and Ed poured their time and heart into. We accept this gift with deep gratitude, and with the promise to carry their legacy forward. Their lifelong commitment to conservation—whether through building a home for local environmental organizations, leading advocacy efforts, or protecting land and wildlife at Inspiration Ridge Preserve—continues to ripple through our community.

Owning this building is more than a milestone for Inletkeeper—it is an investment in the future. The KBCC has been a gathering place where ideas are born, strategies are organized, and friendships are forged. As we confront the challenges of the next 30 years the KBCC will remain a space for collaboration, teaching, and learning.

As we celebrate this moment, we honor Ed and Nina—and everyone who has walked through the KBCC doors to fight for Cook Inlet. This is your home, too. Your support keeps the lights on (literally) and fuels the grassroots action our watershed needs.

If you'd like to help sustain the KBCC and Inletkeeper's next 30 years, please consider becoming a monthly donor today.

And next time you're in Homer? Stop by. The coffee's on, the stories are flowing, and the door to your conservation home is always open.



A Legacy of Resistance and Hope: 30 Years of Defending Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu



Vessel christening event in Homer in 1998. Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu Tribes brought local water (bottles on the table), and we held a "mixing of the waters" ceremony to honor the fact that all our waters are connected.

In the early 1990s, while Alaska and the world were still reeling from the Exxon Valdez oil spill, federal regulators discovered something shocking in Cook Inlet: **oil and gas corporations had committed more than 4,200 violations of the Clean Water Act.** Rather than face crushing penalties in court, oil companies agreed to a settlement that included three years of funding to launch a watchdog group dedicated to protecting the Inlet.

As a result, a small group of Alaskans came together with a simple but powerful idea: our waters, our fisheries, and our communities are too precious to sacrifice to corporate polluters. Out of that conviction, Cook Inletkeeper was born. Today, as we mark our 30th anniversary, the challenges facing Cook Inlet are perhaps more urgent than ever—but so too is the spirit of grassroots resistance, and deep love of place that first brought this movement to life.

TOGETHER, WE'VE BUILT AND GROWN...



1996 Inletkeeper organized more than 500 people to meet with Alaska's Governor Knowles, leading to the reduction of a proposed 2 million-acre offshore oil and gas lease sale to actual leasing of just 2,000 acres.



1997 Established Alaska's first agency-approved, citizen-based water quality monitoring program. Trained over 500 volunteers to collect scientifically defensible data to guide better resource management.



1998 Teamed with Tribal plaintiffs to force the EPA to conduct the first-ever studies on oil industry pollutants in traditional Native subsistence foods in Cook Inlet.



2001 Released the first-ever technical critique of Cook Inlet pipelines, leading to new rules and oversight policies that have reduced spills and leaks over 90%.



2003 Launched first stream temperature monitoring effort in Alaska to study effects of climate change on wild salmon.

2006 Secured "Most Endangered Rivers" status for Chuitna River, threatened by massive coal strip mine development, and elevated coal as primary issue in Alaskan conservation community.



2007 Secured endangered species listing process for beleaguered Cook Inlet belugas.

2009 Worked alongside local municipalities and harbor masters to kick off Alaska's first Clean Harbors Certification Project.



From the start, Inletkeeper's mission has been clear: to protect the Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains. That mission is rooted not just in environmental values but in a deep belief that water, lands, and communities are invaluable—gifts we must protect for current and future generations.

As we mark 30 years, Inletkeeper remains committed to the same core mission: protecting the watershed and the life it sustains.

What started as a handful of Alaskans saying “enough is enough,” has expanded into a network of individuals, businesses, and partner organizations that stretches across our watershed. It will be with renewed resolve, and the resilient community networks we have formed, that we can continue ensuring that our home waters and communities thrive. **Every member, every volunteer, every supporter makes the movement stronger. Thank you for your continued support.**



In its first three decades, Inletkeeper has protected Cook Inlet through grassroots advocacy, science, and storytelling.



2011 Expanded Homer's annual Electronic Recycling program to Port Graham, Nanwalek, Seldovia, Ninilchik, and coordinated support for Soldotna and Seward. Since 2006 this program has diverted 635,363lbs of waste from our landfills.



2015 Launched the Alaska Food Hub, an online marketplace for 100% locally grown, harvested and made products to create greater community and low-carbon resilience through a strong local food economy.



2017 Published the first regional study of stream temperatures in non-glacial salmon streams across Cook Inlet, assessing impacts from land-use and climate change.



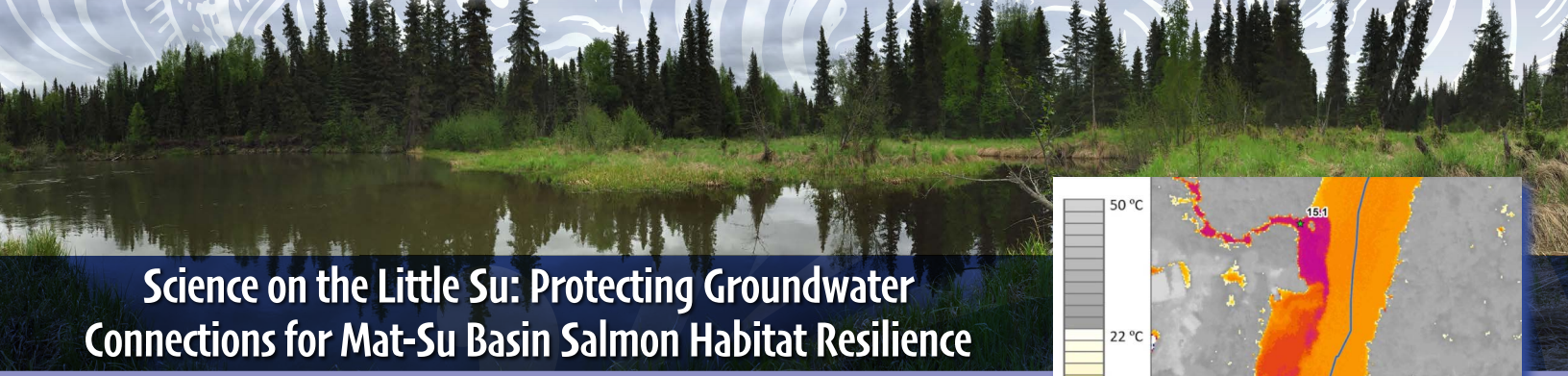
2019 Supported and led community action through Drawdown Climate Action Series to find inclusive, scalable, meaningful, and Alaskan solutions to our climate crisis.



2021 Prevailed in a federal lawsuit to force EPA to update outdated rules on the science around using dispersants for oil spills under the Clean Water Act.



Today Inletkeeper is working harder than ever to defend Tikahtnu as threats to salmon, belugas, and clean water grow more severe. From fighting massive mining projects to mapping anadromous waterways and reducing toxic waste, we are putting science at the center of decision-making and advocacy. Yet the stakes have never been higher: without bold, local action, industry and weak regulators will turn Cook Inlet into an industrial corridor at the expense of the fish, wildlife, and people who depend on it.



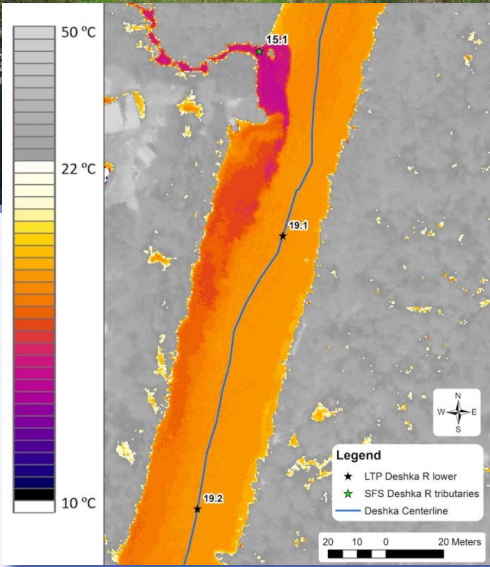
Science on the Little Su: Protecting Groundwater Connections for Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Resilience

Thanks to your support, Inletkeeper will be launching a new science project on the Little Susitna River in summer 2026. The Little Susitna has been identified by regional partners as a top priority watershed for managing salmon habitats and as one of the most productive salmon fisheries in the Mat-Su region. **The Little Susitna supports Chinook and Coho runs that are central to local economies, subsistence traditions, and the health of our watershed. But it is also one of the warmest rivers in the basin, and rising summer stream temperatures are creating real challenges for migrating salmon.**

This coming summer, Inletkeeper will conduct aerial thermal imaging along 25 miles of the lower Little Susitna to identify hidden groundwater inflows—cool-water refuges that salmon use to rest and recover during their upstream migration. **By mapping these critical cold spots, we can help ensure that healthy habitat is protected; guiding conservation efforts in the face of climate change and increasing development pressure.**

The project builds on earlier thermal imagery collected in the Big Lake and Deshka River watersheds, expanding our understanding of where groundwater and surface water interact to sustain fish. The resulting high-resolution maps will be made publicly available and shared with partners including Alaska Department of Fish & Game, the Mat-Su Borough, and local land trusts. These tools will inform land-use planning, outreach to landowners, and conservation strategies designed to keep cold, clean water flowing where salmon need it most.

This is the type of work your generosity makes possible. By investing in science today, you are helping build the knowledge and partnerships needed to safeguard salmon habitat for generations to come. As Inletkeeper continues to champion science-based solutions, we are grateful for your role in helping us attain the match to make this research—and the future it protects—possible.



Deshka River Thermal Imagery



Homer Drawdown: A SOLUTION FOR THE FUTURE

The climate crisis is here—and Homer is getting ready. Homer Drawdown brings our community together to create impactful local climate action, but what that specific action is, is up to you! If you are in the Homer area, we invite you to join our next phase—you will help decide our **community's next project**, inspired by the proven strategies outlined in the book *Project Drawdown*. From renewable energy to food systems to zero waste, the choice is in our hands. Sign up for our email list at inletkeeper.org/act and stay tuned for an upcoming calendar of meetings!

How can we collectively organize to address climate change in our own communities?
Get inspired by the climate solutions presented in drawdown.org:





"Government Efficiency"

Gov. Mike Dunleavy published Administrative Order 360 in early August to reduce "administrative and economic burdens associated with regulatory compliance." But the order is more likely to slow down rather than speed up decisions we need for sustainable energy, as well as weakening protections for the ecosystems Alaskans depend on. It requires the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation, and Department of Fish and Game to include a "provision for automatic approval if deadlines are not met" in all permits. **In plain language: if agencies miss a deadline, permits are rubber-stamped without review. Merit, expertise, and public input are thrown out the window in favor of arbitrary timelines—a loophole that makes it far easier for harmful projects to move forward unchecked.**

The order also sets the vague and hard-to-measure goal for all agencies to "reduce the number of regulatory requirements by 15 percent by December 31, 2026, and 25 percent (cumulative) by December 31, 2027," and designate a staff person to make quarterly reports on progress. This is busy work, but the truly counterproductive part of Order 360 requires state agencies to have "all anticipated rulemaking actions" pre-approved by the Governor's office before the start of every fiscal year.

To see how the Order cuts the legs off important decisions, look no further than the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA), the agency that ensures utility customers get a fair deal with the monopolies that provide their electricity, gas, and other services. **The order is already obstructing the RCA's writing of rules for utilities to set up community solar programs.** Community solar, approved by the legislature in 2024, lets Alaskans get the benefits of home solar without owning panels by subscribing to solar installations outside their property. Utilities, prospective solar developers, and Alaskans who could be taking advantage of this arrangement to hedge against rising electricity costs are waiting on the rules to be written before making deals and investments. The RCA has been considering various draft rules since late 2024, but now progress is delayed while commissioners wait to learn whether the Governor's office will grant a waiver from the order, or whether they'll need to get his approval to continue working on community solar rules.

If the RCA now has to anticipate everything they'll be making rules about a year in advance in order to get the governor's permission... well, many words come to mind, but "efficiency" isn't one of them. Likewise for every other agency charged with responding to novel problems and emerging opportunities. The order lets the state default on its responsibility to protect ecosystems while hindering it from actions that could benefit them.

Tell your legislators you'd like them to stand up against this bad idea by seeking legislative oversight over orders with wide-reaching consequences.



You Are INLETKEEPER

For 30 years, Inletkeeper has stood with you—defending clean water, healthy salmon, and thriving communities in Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu. **As we celebrate three decades of work, we also face renewed threats** from all too familiar forces. Oil and gas expansion, fast-tracked extractive projects, and broken systems continue to put profits above people and place. We all know what's at stake, but we also know what's possible when our community stands united.

Our values are rooted in place, and our strength comes from the community that shows up for the lands and waters where they live, work, and play year after year.

This year, **Patagonia is standing with us too—offering a \$10,000 match for all donations made before December 31.** Your gift today goes twice as far to power science, advocacy, and outreach across our watershed.

With your support, we'll carry forward the next 30 years of protecting Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu.

Your contribution, which can be made today at www.inletkeeper.org/donate or by sending a check in the enclosed envelope, will go a long way to help us continue this work.



SHOP BONFIRE FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Looking for a holiday gift that gives back? Be sure to shop Inletkeeper's online store for cozy gear that shows your love for Alaska's clean water and wild salmon. Every purchase directly supports our mission to protect Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu and the life it sustains. Browse designs, pick out gifts for friends and family, and know that your holiday shopping is making a difference!

Shop now: bonfire.com/store/inletkeeper

Donlin's Long Shadow over the Kuskokwim



DEFENDING THE WEST SU *Next Steps*

Stay vigilant: the State's disingenuous segmentation of the proposed West Susitna Industrial Access Road is an underhanded trick to minimize the proposed 100+ mile road's impact on paper. The effect is that there are three separate public processes to engage with—making it that much easier for one to slip through the cracks. Keep tracking Cook Inletkeeper and the Defend the West Su campaign to ensure you're weighing in on the Korb Mining, Department of Transportation, and Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority Clean Water Act permits throughout this fall and winter. When these public comment opportunities arise, one message we need everyone to keep repeating is, **"these projects should not be considered separately."** They are all part of a larger effort. To protect Alaskans' lands and Waters, we need a rigorous impacts analysis of the entire road corridor and the mining district it will spur.

To stay tuned for updates, or join our efforts, sign up for our newsletter at inletkeeper.org/act.



Communities on the Kuskokwim celebrated reaching their escapement goals for all returning species of salmon this year—a much-needed uptick that lifted fishing closures, giving rise to fruitful fish camps and filling bellies and hearts. On the Kuskokwim, a healthy river means healthy people. The lifeforce of Mother Kuskokwim has sustained Indigenous communities for time immemorial.

Yet, with one large earthquake, major flooding event, or engineering mishap, the proposed Donlin Mine could cause irreparable damage to the Kuskokwim watershed and this way of life. If constructed, the Donlin Mine would be the largest pure gold mine in the world. But it's not just gold that Donlin would produce. **It's a colossal amount of toxic waste—at least 175,000 Olympic swimming pools' worth of tailings contaminated with heavy metals like arsenic, mercury, lead, and zinc, and lethal chemicals such as cyanide. All this would be contained by a massive tailings dam, 471 feet high and 5,800 feet long.** This dam would need to hold for perpetuity, in a remote and seismically active region. Donlin's original tailings dam assessment fell short of industry and public safety standards, increasing the risk of failure. Spill and earthquake risks, groundwater contamination, and safer containment alternatives such as dry stacking were not adequately considered. **Though studies have shown that the rate of serious tailings dam failures is increasing, Donlin's original Environmental Impact Analysis tried to downplay that risk.**

Fortunately, following a lawsuit brought by six Yukon-Kuskokwim tribal governments, in June a federal judge in the U.S. District Court in Alaska ordered the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Land Management to complete a Supplemental Environmental Impact Analysis (EIS) to better study the realistic possibility of a catastrophic spill and its impacts on water, salmon, human health, and food security.

The Supplemental EIS must re-examine these issues with independent science and a robust public process before permitting moves forward. **The fight isn't over, but this intermediate win should provide an opportunity for tribes and people to raise our voices again.** When the study is finalized, legal action to "modify, reaffirm, or rescind" prior permitting and project authorizations will follow. We hope this study concludes what we already know—Donlin Mine is not worth the risk. Inletkeeper stands with Kuskokwim tribes in this fight, and public support ensures we can keep challenging risky projects like Donlin. Together, we can defend salmon—a resource more precious than gold.





The Planet Burners Come for Tikahtnu

When the environment's protectors ally themselves with its looters, it falls to local people and local institutions to defend the waters and ecosystems on which we depend. With the Trump administration's Environmental Protection Agency bowing to fossil fuel interests, Cook Inlet | Tikahtnu is on the chopping block. This is our home, not a sacrifice zone. Tikahtnu is not a dumping ground for industry. **Oil and gas corporations are raking in private profits while turning our public waters into sewers**—and the Big Beautiful Bill hands them the keys to pollute even more. Hilcorp, the region's largest oil and gas operator, continues to treat it as one, despite raking in record profits in 2024. All while paying zero state income tax.

Unlike every other region in the U.S., platforms in the Inlet are not required to recycle their wastewater. Instead, they rely on "mixing zones"—loopholes that allow them to discharge toxic production waste, laced with heavy metals, pretending tides and currents dilute it. This outdated "dilution is the solution to pollution" mentality subverts the Clean Water Act and turns our public waters into private sewers. Billions of gallons of toxic waste pour into the Inlet each year, poisoning beluga whale habitat and fish that Alaskans depend on for their food and livelihood.

Upper Cook Inlet already bears the scars of decades of fossil fuel extraction, but the next wave of projects threatens to push fragile ecosystems to the brink of collapse. The proposed AK LNG project would pipe North Slope gas to Nikiski for export, cutting under Tikahtnu with subsea trenching and pile driving just 17 miles from the Susitna Delta, a vital summer feeding ground for nearly the entire population of endangered Cook Inlet belugas. On the eastern shore, the gas would feed a liquefaction plant and export terminal, adding LNG tankers and shipping traffic to waters already noisy enough to exceed beluga harassment thresholds on a near-daily basis. If completed, **AK LNG could increase vessel traffic in Tikahtnu by 42–75%**, further threatening these whales and the communities connected to them.

What lessons learned from protecting Lower Cook Inlet should we pass on to our children? Lower Cook Inlet has so far been spared from the industrialization seen further north. In 1976, Alaskan outcry pressured the AK Legislature to buy back oil and gas leases in Kachemak Bay, setting a precedent for protecting local waters. Thanks to persistent opposition and shaky industry economics, the region has remained platform-free for almost 50 years, fueling a thriving tourism economy that generates millions of dollars annually for Southcentral Alaska.

Today, relentless lobbying has paid off for the fossil fuel industry. Not only is Lease Sale 258 moving forward without public comment, the **Big Beautiful Bill mandates lease sales in Lower Cook Inlet waters in 2026, 2027, 2028, 2030, 2031, and 2032**. Previously excluded critical beluga habitat zones are now available for leasing, stripping away the few remaining safeguards. Oil & gas from Lower Cook Inlet would take years to develop—far too late to address any short-term energy concerns. **The truth is simple: drilling more gas here is not a solution. It is a false narrative that jeopardizes our future, all for fleeting profit.**

Every oil spill begins with a lease sale. Every rig, every tanker, every trench brings us closer to the day Tikahtnu is transformed from a vibrant, life-sustaining watershed into an industrial sacrifice zone. But this fight is not over. We have stopped ill-conceived projects before, and with your voice and action, we can do it again! Join Inletkeeper in saying no to the industrialization of our watershed and yes to a thriving, sustainable future for Tikahtnu.



INLETKEEPER

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Alaska Wildland Adventures Inc.....	Girdwood	Reel AK.....	Wasilla
Central Peninsula Hospital	Soldotna	River City Books.....	Soldotna
Coal Point Seafood	Homer	Silver Salmon Creek Lodge.....	Lake Clark National Park
Country Liquor	Kenai	Snug Harbor Outpost	Chisik Island
Homer Real Estate	Homer	South Peninsula Hospital	Homer
Homer's Jeans.....	Homer	Sustainable Wares.....	Homer
Jay Brant General Contractors	Homer	The Alibi Bar & Cafe.....	Homer
Juneberry Lodge.....	Homer	The Goods Sustainable Grocery	Soldotna
Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge.....	Homer	Tom Hughes Graphic Design	Anchorage
Kachemak Kelp	Homer	TOTE Maritime Alaska.....	Anchorage
Loopy Lupine Distribution	Homer	Two Sisters Bakery	Homer
Lucy's Market.....	Soldotna	Ulmer's Drug and Hardware.....	Homer
Mako's Water Taxi	Homer	Weaver Brothers	Anchorage
Mermaid Imports & Designs.....	Anchorage		

Become a Cook Inletkeeper Partner and let your customers know that clean water and healthy salmon matter to you and your business. Large or small, every effort to help protect Alaska's bounty has a cumulative effect on our lives and lives of our children. Inletkeeper can use support of all kinds. It takes all manner of goods and services to support activities across the watershed. To become a business partner today visit inletkeeper.org/act/business-supporter or call Loren Barrett at 907-235-4086 ext. 23.