



# Sierra Borealis

## *alaska report*

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### Shell abandons plans to Drill in the Arctic Ocean this year Good news in time for 25th anniversary of Exxon-Valdez oil spill disaster

In great news for America's Arctic, Shell Oil has announced that it is abandoning plans to drill in the Chukchi Sea this year. The company had hoped to begin drilling during the summer of 2014, a move that would have jeopardized the area's delicate natural balance and the subsistence communities dependent on it.

The announcement comes as Alaskans prepare to mark the 25th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster: the oil tanker ran aground on Good Friday, March 24, 1989, and oil can still be found on Southcentral Alaska beaches. Oil spills in the Arctic would cause irreparable damage to the coastal ecosystem and be impossible to clean up.

The risks extend beyond a devastating oil spill. Drilling in the Arctic Ocean could release enough carbon pollution to negate efforts to fight global warming and dramatically alter our climate.

In the January 30 announcement, Shell officials cited as one of the reasons for their decision a January 22 ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that invalidated drilling leases in the Chukchi. In response to a legal challenge from the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, the court ruled that the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management had far underestimated the environmental risks drilling actually poses as it analyzed "only the best case scenario for environmental harm."

And while development proponents argue that Shell's decision not to drill in the Arctic results from "judicial overreach," a panel of three distinguished federal judges found that Shell's lease and the Bureau violated environmental laws and faulted the agency for downplaying the potential



Kittiwakes fly over the Chukchi Sea

© Florian Schulz / visionsofthewild.com

harm of development. Downplaying those risks does not make them go away.

Drilling in the Arctic is a dangerous and risky business-- for the environment, and for our climate. And it is risky for companies' bottom lines, as Shell's disastrous experience in 2012 demonstrated. Among the difficulties encountered by the company was the grounding of its Kulluk drillship, more than \$1 million in pollution fines, and the failure of its oil spill containment dome during testing. (see **Sierra Borealis**, Dec & March 2013, Sept. 2012.)

The Arctic Ocean is the last place we should be drilling for oil. America's Arctic seas are home to a unique plethora of wildlife, including the entire U.S. population of polar bears, and they serve as an important migration route for bowhead and beluga whales. They feature some of the most extreme and dangerous weather conditions on the planet, and they harbor

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## Shell abandons Arctic drilling plan -- from page 1

stores of carbon that, if released, would cause severe pollution and negate positive steps to fight the climate disruption crisis.

The threat of future Arctic Ocean drilling, by Shell or other companies, remains. The Obama administration needs to step in and do a full environmental assessment of current Arctic leases, not just accept false industry promises of safety and best case scenarios.

It's clear that we can't make the needed progress in fighting the climate crisis and also drill in the Arctic Ocean. An effective climate strategy will require the administration to cancel lease sales tentatively scheduled for 2016 and 2017. It's time for America to look beyond an 'all of the above' energy policy, and start taking advantage of available clean energy and smart transportation alternatives.

-- Dan Ritzman, Sierra Club Alaska Program Director  
(Adapted from Sierra Club "Lay of the Land")

### **The Ninth Circuit Decision remanding Lease Sale 193**

On January 22, the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that the Department of the Interior violated the law when it sold offshore oil and gas leases in the Chukchi Sea off the western Arctic coast of Alaska. The decision stems from a lawsuit filed by a coalition of Alaska Native and conservation groups made up of: the Native Village of Point Hope, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Oceana, Pacific Environment, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and World Wildlife Fund. Earthjustice, a non-profit law organization, represented the groups.

In response to the court decision, the organizations issued a joint statement:

"Today's ruling is a victory for the Arctic Ocean. The government has no business offering oil companies leases in the Chukchi Sea. The area is home to iconic species such as polar bear, bowhead whales, and walrus and to a vibrant indigenous subsistence culture. Drilling for oil puts at risk the region's wildlife and people, and it takes us off the path toward a clean energy future.

"For the second time, a court has found that the government ignored basic legal protections for our ocean resources in deciding to open the Chukchi Sea to offshore oil leasing. The Obama administration must now take seriously its obligation to re-think whether to allow risky industrial activities in the Chukchi Sea. As Shell's problems have clearly demonstrated, companies are not ready to drill in the Arctic Ocean."



The Chukchi Sea lease sale, Sale 193, was originally held in 2008 by the Bush administration. It offered nearly 30 million acres in the Chukchi Sea for oil drilling—an area larger than the size of Pennsylvania. Prior to the lease sale, there were no active oil leases in the sea. In 2010 The Federal District Court in Alaska determined that the original lease sale violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), one of the foundations of U.S. environmental law, because the Department of Interior had failed to address the widely recognized gaps in what is known about nearly every species in the Chukchi Sea. It required the agency to reconsider the decision. In October 2011, the Obama administration reaffirmed the lease sale, despite the acknowledged gaps in information. The District Court then upheld the Obama administration's affirmation of the lease sale. The environmental groups' appeal followed.

During 2013, even though it deferred actual drilling, Shell Oil took some action on its Alaska explorations. The company conducted marine surveys around its Chukchi leases, arranged for a contracted drill ship to replace the damaged Kulluk ship, and substantially revised its formal drilling plan.

---from Earthjustice news release  
(**remand:** to send back (a case) to another court or agency for further action. --Webster)

# National Park Service Proposes to Protect Bears, Wolves, and Coyotes in National Preserves

**Your comments are needed by March 23**

In response to various State of Alaska sport hunting regulations designed to substantially reduce the number of wolves, bears, and coyotes in several national preserves, the National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to amend the State's regulations by imposing temporary restrictions on certain hunting seasons and methods.

The restrictions are temporary in order to give the State Board of Game the opportunity to agree with the NPS and amend its own regulations accordingly. If the Board does not agree, the NPS can leave the restrictions in place indefinitely, or, preferably, begin the federal rule-making process for permanent federal regulations. Preserves subject to the restrictions are Aniakchak, Katmai, Denali, Gates of the Arctic, Lake Clark, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley Rivers. Alagnak Wild River would also be subject to the same restrictions.

## State's regulations

The State's current rules were adopted under Alaska's 1994 intensive management law--and over NPS objections; these rules include:

- hunting wolves during May 1-August 9 in five preserves: Katmai, Aniakchak, Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley Rivers, Gates of the Arctic. Tacked on to existing and August 10-April 30 seasons, this results in no closed season;
- hunting coyotes during May 1-August 9 in six preserves, the above five and Denali, which also establishes no closed season;
- baiting of brown bears at black bear bait stations in three national preserves--Wrangell-St. Elias, Denali, and Yukon-Charley Rivers, and
- allowing the use of artificial light to hunt black bears at den sites, including sows with cubs October 15- April 30 in Denali and Gates of the Arctic National Preserves.

## NPS's temporary restrictions

In January the NPS asked the Alaska Board of Game to amend the above regulations to exclude national preserve lands, noting that "over a number of years the [Board] has authorized several regulations that are intended to or may result in increased take of predator species to benefit prey species [moose, caribou, Dall sheep, and mountain goats] in game management units including national preserve lands."

At its January meeting in Kotzebue, the Board rejected the NPS's request. In February the NPS responded with the proposed restrictions intended to bring the Board's regulations into compliance with federal wildlife management standards required under ANILCA and NPS policy.

The restrictions, quoting from the NPS's public notice: --"Shortening the open season for wolves and coyotes. Under the proposed NPS rule, wolf and coyote hunting would be open from August 10 through April 30. This would prevent the taking of wolves and pups at den sites during the early summer when the animals are vulnerable and their

pelts are in poor condition.

--Prohibiting the use of bait for the taking of brown bears. The practice had been prohibited since Statehood until recently and is now the only such allowance in North America. The NPS is proposing to prohibit the practice to avoid public safety issues which can arise with bears conditioned to finding human food.

--Prohibiting the use of artificial light when taking black bear sows or cubs at den sites. This practice was opened to all resident hunting license holders in 2010."

The NPS's response to the Board of Game's war on the three "predator species" in national preserves is commendable. Our support can help strengthen the NPS to stand firm with its restrictions in the face of heavy opposition expected from the State and its supporters who are eager to see national preserves managed as game farms.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO- NOW:

To help protect wolves, brown/grizzly bears, black bears, and coyotes in the national preserves, attend a hearing, and/or send written comments:

- \*\*Support the proposed NPS temporary restrictions, and also urge the NPS to make them *permanent* in the event the State rejects the opportunity to comply with them in order to retain rule-making jurisdiction in the preserves.
- \*\*Urge the agency to ban baiting of brown/grizzly bears and black bears, as well as the use of artificial lights to hunt all black bears at and in their dens, not just sows and cubs.

Hearings were held in Fairbanks, Bettles, Eagle, Kotzebue, and Port Alsworth from March 10 to March 12: Remaining public hearings after that are listed below: (In certain locations, a toll-free number will be open for commenters to phone in to the hearing and make comments.

Comments on any of the proposed restrictions may be made at any of the venues. The dial-in number, available where noted below, is 888-921-5898; users will then dial in a passcode, 5499 349#, to be connected to the hearing. )

## Park & Date Hearing Location

**Denali National Preserve** : Denali Park: Thurs. March 13, 6:30-8 p.m. Murie Science and Learning Center

**Katmai National Preserve and Aniakchak National Preserve**: King Salmon: Thurs. March 13, 7-8:30 p.m. Bristol Bay Borough Assembly Chambers.

**Bering Land Bridge National Preserve** : Nome: Mon. March 17, 6-7:30 p.m., 214 Front St., Beringia Room. Dial-in available .

**Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve**: Copper Center: Mon. March 17, 4-5:30 p.m. Wrangell-St. Elias N.P. Visitor Center. Dial-in available.

**NPS Alaska Region**: Anchorage: Tues. March 18, 6:45-8:15 p.m. Russian Jack Springs Park Chalet. Dial-in available .

## Comments in writing:

mail to 240 W. 5th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501 or email to AKRO\_compendium@nps.gov. ❖

--Jack Hession

## Chugach National Forest: Planning update

Anyone who has taken part in a national forest planning process knows it takes quite some time. The current Chugach National Forest plan revision is no different. New developments since our last newsletter include some preliminary follow-up from last fall's public meetings (see *Sierra Borealis*, Sept. & Dec 2013) as well as a wilderness review process now formally underway. Last year's public hearings in the spring and winter brought different stakeholders together to identify "themes" denoting key topics crucial for the planning process to move forward. The selected themes are:

- Alaska Native Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Heritage
- Sustaining Biodiversity, Intact Ecosystems, and Connectivity for Global Ecological Processes
- Animals and Plants as Food and Resources
- Recreation Experiences
- Wood as Renewable Energy and Fuel Source
- Water Quantity and Quality
- Education and Research
- Socio-Economic/Community

These are the themes the Forest Service will focus on as it moves forward with its planning process. More on that process can be found on the "Updated Summary of Preliminary Assessment Findings." Another result from the meetings is a GIS map of areas of use in the forest.

The public meetings were a new approach to

compile information based on people's spatial experiences in the Forest. It will be another step to see how this information transfers into more specific recreational data for the next planning document, the "Draft Assessment."

The Chugach National Forest planning process has many components. An early one will be a Draft Assessment of current forest conditions, which should be released sometime this spring for public comment. (However, this announced release date has shifted quite a bit over the last few months.) When the Draft Assessment is finally released, probably late spring or summer, with the Wilderness review anticipated on top of that, we'll be sure to ask you to share your stories and participate and comment as the planning goes forward.

### Wilderness Review-- a wild feature

Another new development has been the formal start of the Wilderness Review process. As part of every forest planning process, there must be a wilderness review of the entire area. Since the last Chugach forest plan in 2002, there have been many changes to the wilderness-quality lands from increased snow machine use, access from the Whittier tunnel, and more.

The first phase of the Wilderness review is to inventory and evaluate the wilderness-quality lands. This should occur in the first half of 2014, and then an analysis and decision process can take place. The most significant result we would like to see at the end of the Wilderness Review process is a formal wilderness recommendation from the U.S. Forest Service for the Nellie Juan-College Fjord Wilderness Study Area. This huge, 2.1 million-acre legislated Wilderness Study Area (WSA), covering the majority of Prince William Sound, is a gem in the Chugach Forest and truly a place worth protecting for future generations.

A Forest Service recommendation for wilderness for all of the WSA would correct its flawed 2002 Wilderness Recommendation, which failed to recommend important parts of the WSA for wilderness. Particularly disturbing omissions were Knight Island, Glacier Island, Nellie Juan Lake, and the upper Columbia Glacier basin; these are valuable for their wilderness character and should be recommended as wilderness in the current Forest Plan Revision. And the new plan should reinforce the Forest Service's obligation to manage this area protectively *as wilderness* until Congress acts on the WSA. (See *Sierra Borealis*, Sept and Dec 2013.) Only Congress can designate wilderness, but agency recommendations are influential with Congress. ❖

-- Lindsey Hajduk



Recreating in Prince William Sound

photo: Jedediah Smith

## Pebble in Trouble -- *That rocks! environmentalists breathe a little easier*

Difficulties have multiplied for the proposed vast industrial gold and copper Pebble Mine in the Bristol Bay watershed, proposed to be one of the world's largest mines, located in the headwaters of the world's largest remaining red salmon fishery.

Sierra Club and environmentalists world-wide have vigorously opposed this massive gold mining plan from its earliest days, about ten years ago. Not only would it threaten a world-class commercial and sport fishery, but it would alter forever the traditional subsistence lifestyle practiced by the local Native communities and also endanger two nearby famed national parks – Katmai to the west, and Lake Clark, just east of the proposed site. And mine wastes would be stored behind a vast tailings pond with toxic leakage and never ending dangers of a total containment dam failure.

The most recent development was a February 28 announcement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that it is initiating a special process under the Clean Water Act to identify appropriate options to protect the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery in Bristol Bay, Alaska from the potentially destructive impacts of the proposed Pebble Mine. During this process, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cannot approve a permit for the mine.

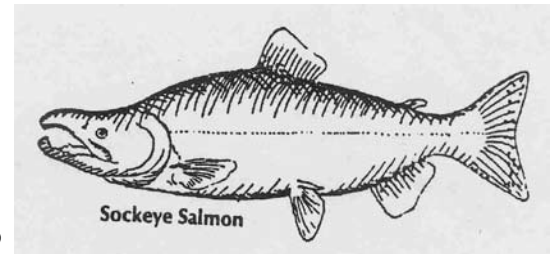
This action, requested by EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, reflects the unique nature of the Bristol Bay watershed as one of the world's last prolific wild salmon resources and the threat posed by the scope and scale of the Pebble mine project. It does not reflect an EPA policy change in mine permitting.

"Extensive scientific study has given us ample reason to believe that the Pebble Mine would likely have significant and irreversible negative impacts on the Bristol Bay watershed and its abundant salmon fisheries," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "It's why EPA is taking this step forward in our effort to ensure protection for the world's most productive salmon fishery from the risks it faces from what could be one of the largest open pit mines on earth. This [Clean Water Act Section 404c] process is not something the Agency does very often, but Bristol Bay is an extraordinary and unique resource." The EPA is basing its action on available information, including data collected as a part of the agency's Bristol Bay ecological risk assessment and mine plans submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

This end of February announcement follows the EPA's January release of the final Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment, outlining the serious risks of the industrial mining to salmon and Native Alaskan cultures. "Over three years, EPA compiled the best, most current science on the Bristol Bay watershed to understand how large-

scale mining could impact salmon and water in this unique area of unparalleled natural resources," said Dennis McLerran, Regional Administrator for EPA Region 10. "Our report concludes that large-scale mining poses risks to salmon and the tribal communities that have depended on them for thousands of years. The assessment is a technical resource for governments, tribes and the public as we consider how to address the challenges of large-scale mining and ecological protection in the Bristol Bay watershed."

The EPA had received more than one million public comments on its draft assessment, including hundreds of thousands through Sierra Club public education on the issue. Local Native organizations, fishing organizations and environmentalists have asked the EPA to use Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to initiate a process that could lead to the denial of federal permits necessary to the development of this large scale mine.



A few days after the release of the EPA Assessment, Alaska Senator Mark Begich (D), who faces a tough re-election fight this year, took a position in opposition to the mine, which was also opposed by his predecessor, Sen. Ted Stevens (R). Alaska's other senator, Lisa Murkowski (R), has not yet announced a position on the proposed mine.

Last September, mining giant Anglo American Corporation walked away from its 50 percent share of the "Pebble Partnership" mine ownership, taking a reported \$300 million loss on its investment. The principal remaining partner, Northern Dynasty, has had to suspend most of its operations and is now in the process of searching for a new partner with the financial resources to pursue the permitting and development process for the mine. Over the last year, Northern Dynasty stock has fallen 60 percent to about \$1.50/share. In December, Rio Tinto, one of the world's largest mining conglomerates, stated that it is considering dropping its 19 percent stake in Northern Dynasty.

Pebble has now hired a new chief executive officer notable for his Washington DC experience and connections, rather than for any mining or Alaskan experience. Thomas Collier was U.S. Interior Dept. chief of staff under the Clinton Administration. His priorities are finding a new partner for Northern Dynasty and obtaining federal and state permits for the mine to proceed, which would include preventing an EPA decision to deny permits. Outgoing Pebble CEO John Shively, notable for his long and high level Alaskan political experience, including serving as Commissioner of Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources under Gov. Tony Knowles, has moved to a part time Chairman of the Board position. ❖

..... -- Pamela Brodie

# Breaking News on the Tongass --

## "TLUMP" to be modified

The Forest Service has initiated a process to modify the Tongass Land Use Management Plan (TLUMP). TLUMP is the guiding force on what will go on in the Tongass National Forest for the next five to ten years. The stated purpose of this modification is to: "shift the forest from predominately old growth management to predominately young growth management in a way that is economically viable for the existing timber industry".

It sounds like a good idea to get out of old growth logging on the Tongass, but the agency's slow and logging-as-usual-filled manner of implementing the idea is not the vigorous action we expected from the Obama Administration. According to the details in the proposed plan amendment, the Forest Service wants to continue old growth logging at a large scale for ten to fifteen years on the false assumption that it will take that long to do the transition from old to second growth. The Forest Service plans numerous old growth sales at a rapid pace including the largest old growth sale since the era of the pulp mills, the Big Thorne timber sale. This sale is a 120 million-board-foot (mmbf) sale on Prince of Wales Island that could irreparably harm wolf and deer populations, and the whole ecosystem of the island.

Other old growth timber sales in the Forest Service's pipe line include Wrangell Island, Saddle Lakes, Navy, and Mitkof Island sales. These sales are not needed for a transition and are contrary to everything that the administration has said about protecting North America's great rainforest-- including carbon storage, resilient habitat in the face of climate change, protecting wildlands for future generations, and much more.

To facilitate the plan amendment/modification an advisory committee has been set up under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). It will consist of 15 members representing various interests. It will include government representatives, the timber industry, environment representatives, tribal entities, and commercial users. The intent of the committee is to corroborate on finding timber for the transition to second growth and to speed up that process in a way that is viable for the timber industry. FACA committees have often been unable to reach consensus.

### Time Lines

The results of the FACA committee should be out by the end of 2014. The TLUMP amendment will have to go through an environmental assessment process (NEPA). If things go smoothly a record of decision (ROD) could be out by the summer of 2016, just before the end of the Obama Administration. Links to relevant documents can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/R10/Tongass/TAC>.



The Big Thorne timber sale was put on hold due to wolf mortality concerns raised by the foremost wolf biologist working in the Tongass. (See *Sierra Borealis*, Dec 2013 & Dec 2012) A panel of nine biologists was to review the issues raised, a Wolf Task Force. The results of the panel review should be out any day, and then the sale could go forward. The problem with the task force is that a gag order has put on the biologists. The only notes from the task force allowed to be taken are on the votes, nothing about the discussion going on, complete silence. This gag order flies against the Obama administration's policy on public transparency and access to relevant documents on federal projects.

### Involvement

Several environment organizations are working together to influence the outcome of the Tongass Plan Modification, including big name groups such as the National Resource Defense Council, Earthjustice, Audubon, Trout Unlimited, the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and the Sierra Club. When the time comes for public input on the NEPA process, these organizations will be mobilizing their members to step in and make comments. ❖

--Mark Rorick, Juneau

Mark is a member of the Alaska Chapter Ex-Com and Chair of the Tongass Group; he has worked on Tongass timber sales and other issues since 1995.



## Red Light to Starboard: Recalling the Exxon Valdez Disaster.

*New book highlights national tragedy in time for 25th anniversary*

Green is for starboard (right); red is for port (left). That's classic nautical protocol. But, when a ship returns from the sea, the time-honored adage, "red, right, returning," also communicates a basic nautical concept. In the United States, red channel markers belong on the right, or starboard side as a ship heads toward shore. (But when the ship heads out from port to open waters the opposite is true: green always means starboard.) Anyone piloting an oil industry supertanker must be well aware of this protocol. Yet twenty-five years ago on March 24, 1989—despite clearly defined traffic lanes in Alaska's Prince William Sound and a vehement alarm sounded by the ship's lookout—the Exxon Valdez, heading out from the oil port Valdez into the open waters of Prince William Sound, plowed into Bligh Reef.

The final shipboard alert—"That light, sir, it's still on the starboard side. It should be to port, sir"—inspired the main title of the new book from Washington State University Press, *Red Light to Starboard: Recalling the Exxon Valdez Disaster*. The book points out how certain circumstances—including a long sequence of unheeded warnings—are common also to other accidents such as the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion and spill, the collapse of the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, and the nuclear reactor meltdown at Three Mile Island.

To help in understanding past failures, author Angela Day details the coziness between legislators and the oil industry and the regulatory and supervisory failures that gave rise to the 1989 spill as well as related court cases. She recounts the complex history and politics around oil development in Alaska. Her epilogue crystallizes lessons learned and changes enacted in the decades since 1989.

Day also illuminates the personal consequences experienced by many whose livelihoods depended upon Prince William Sound. As 14,000 gallons per minute of oil flowed from the Exxon Valdez, Bobby Day was readying his new fishing boat for a herring season that would never open. His story, woven through the text, gives voice to the 10,000 fishermen who struggled to hold Exxon accountable.

Author Angela Day is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington in Seattle. Her research evaluates when and under what conditions whistleblower protection laws have effectively increased safety. She resides in Snohomish, Washington. email: angmday@gmail.com

*Red Light to Starboard*, paperback, 6" x 9", 272 pp., \$19.95. Available through bookstores or direct from WSU Press (800-354-7360 or online at [wsupress.wsu.edu](http://wsupress.wsu.edu)). WSU Press is associated with Washington State University located in Pullman, Washington. ❖

-- from WSU Press release

## 25 Years of Prevention: Commemorating the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill: (1989 – 2014)

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council will lead hour-long presentations and discussion commemorating the 25th anniversary of the March 24, 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill throughout the month of March. The presentations will include history of the spill, changes that have occurred since the spill to help protect the environment and affected communities, and prevention work that will continue to be needed. Please contact Lisa Matlock at [lisa.matlock@pwsrccac.org](mailto:lisa.matlock@pwsrccac.org) about this schedule of events.

Flyers for the presentations are available on our website: <http://www.pwsrccac.org/announcements/25-years-exxon-valdez-oil-spill-events/>.

### Upcoming presentations:

- Thursday, March 13, 6 p.m. Pratt Museum in Homer, Presented by Lisa Matlock
- Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m. Kodiak Library, Presented by Steve Rothchild
- Friday, March 21, 7 p.m. PWS Community College in Glennallen, Presented by Mark Swanson
- Monday, March 24, 6-8 p.m. Loussac Library in Anchorage, Presented by Mark Swanson with a special exhibit by Alicia Zorzetto. ❖

## Jewell rejects proposed Izembek wilderness road

(A jewel of a Christmas present for wilderness advocates)

On December 23, 2103 (shortly after the previous issue of *Sierra Borealis* appeared) U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell rejected the proposal for a road linking King Cove with the airport in Cold Bay some 22 miles away, through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. As the Anchorage Daily News reported next day, "Secretary Jewell's decision puts an end for now to a contentious, years-long federal review of plans to put the road through the middle of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to serve King Cove's 950 residents."

The area in question in the remote Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, near the southwest end of the Alaska Peninsula, is almost entirely federal designated wilderness. To get around the law's prohibition of roads in wilderness, Alaska's Senators sought to remove this area from wilderness, via a land trade with the state. This would have been a alarming precedent for wilderness law throughout the nation.

The medical evacuation needs of residents of the small town of King Cove –given as rationale for the attack on wilderness-- had already been specifically dealt with by Congress previously, in funding a hydrofoil and additional ferry service. (See *Sierra Borealis*, March 2013, March 2012.) ❖



## Alaska spring events for the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act

### Anchorage area

In Anchorage this spring, Alaska Wild 50 has scheduled a series of events to engage wilderness advocates:

- **March 19 – 20:** The Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association (AWRTA)'s annual conference, at Alyeska Resort, will feature a panel on challenges

and opportunities with wilderness stewardship, with Bill Overbaugh (BLM), Tim Lydon, (FS), and Adrienne Lindholm (NPS). The keynote speaker is Doug Scott, retired Policy Director for PEW Campaign for American Wilderness and former conservation director of Sierra Club, speaking on the 50th anniversary (\$150 to attend the conference or \$250 to have a booth and attend.)

- **Second Tuesday of each month, through May:** the Alaska Society of Outdoor and Nature Photographers (<http://asonp.org/>) meets at 7 pm, at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, 121 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage. Free and open to the public.

- **March 27 - 30:** BLM will have a wilderness display at Great Alaska Sportsman Show (Sullivan and Ben Boeke Arenas, see <http://grealaskasportsmanshow.com/>).

- **April 15:** Wilderness forum at the Loussac Library, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Speakers include Jenny Hutchins (NOLS), Adrienne Lindholm, (NPS), Tim Lydon, (Forest Service), Princess Lucaj (Gwich'in Steering Committee). Mary Beth Holloman is coordinating the artists' forum; moderator is Charles Wohlforth. Presenters on wildlife, biology, and climate will speak for about 10 minutes each followed by questions from attendees.

- **April 21:** Nicole Whittington-Evans, The Wilderness Society, is working with an APU outdoor studies professor to present a short program on wilderness at APU from 6:30-8:30pm, with video clips of people describing why wilderness is important to them as well as the film *Arctic Dance*--about the Muries and their activities that helped lead to eventual passage of the Wilderness Act.

- **May 5 - 8:** The Carhart National Wilderness Leadership Training Center, based in Missoula, Montana, will put on an Anchorage wilderness training involving interpreters, public-affairs staff, communication specialists, wilderness managers, and non-agency partners and stakeholders; the main feature will be strategies for outreach around the wilderness anniversary to promote Alaska wilderness.

- **May 24:** A boat party is scheduled to tour Harriman Fjord. Interpretive speakers will discuss climate change in Prince William Sound, and related topics. Tickets are around \$100, but donations may bring that down. Alaska Geographic is helping with public outreach.

### Voices of the Wilderness

**Voices of the Wilderness**, a traveling art exhibit featuring works in various media from artists who have participated in Alaskan wilderness area residencies, is now on display at the Sitka National Historical Park—from March 7 to April 7.

As Americans across the country mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act and celebrate their wilderness heritage, Alaska joins with intense enthusiasm. In Alaska—the state with far more wilderness than any other—the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are collaborating with an array of conservation and education organizations on a series of events across the state. **Voices of the Wilderness** is a centerpiece of Alaska's 2014 commemoration for wilderness.

During 2014, after Sitka, the **Voices of the Wilderness** exhibit will also visit Ketchikan, Juneau, Fairbanks, Homer, Kenai and Anchorage. A First Friday reception is planned at each of the seven openings—with speakers, artists, local media, and slideshow presentations. Each month-long exhibit will also provide a focal point for other community celebrations of wilderness.

#### Exhibition Schedule for Voices of the Wilderness:

March 7-April 7: Sitka National Historical Park, Sitka

April 25-May 18: Tongass Historical Park, Ketchikan

June 6-June 27: The Canvas, Juneau

July 14-September 19: Alaska Public Lands Information Center at Morris Thompson Cultural Center, Fairbanks

October 3-22: ½ the exhibit at the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge at Islands & Ocean Visitor Center, Homer

October 3-22: ½ the exhibit at Kenai Visitor Center, Kenai

November 7-February 22, 2015: Anchorage Museum, Anchorage

The agencies and their partners view the **Voices of the Wilderness** exhibit as an innovative public outreach tool to connect Alaskans and their visitors to the many values of wilderness in Alaska. The wild lands being celebrated are critical to local economies, recreation, tourism, subsistence, cultural meaning, clean air, wildlife habitat, and more. Art and science are increasingly seen as tools to inform the public on ecological and lands issues.

**Voices of the Wilderness** is sponsored by the US Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Geographic, Sierra Club, Lynden Transport, Morris Thompson Cultural Center, Sitka National Historical Park, Tongass National Historical Museum, The Canvas, the Kenai Visitor's Center, Islands and Oceans Visitor Center and Anchorage Museum. The exhibit was also made possible with funding by Rasmuson Foundation through the Harper Arts Touring Fund and is administered, under contract, by the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Through the **Voices of the Wilderness** artist residency program, artists spend up to two weeks in one of Alaska's spectacular wilderness areas with a ranger participating

-- go to next page, bottom





## Fairbanks: schedule of Spring activities in celebration of the Wilderness Anniversary


### April

Tuesdays 8, 15, 22, 29 10:30-11:45 a.m. U-Park Building  
Osher Lifelong learning Institute  
"The Call of the Wild:" Roger Kaye, Fran Mauer, Bill Brodie and Frank Keim discuss various aspects of the Wilderness Act at these low-cost sessions. (Basic cost for 4-evening class, \$15 plus \$35 annual membership.) For information contact the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at 907-474-6607 or ,  
www.uaf.edu/olli/, UAF-OLLI@alaska.edu>

Sat. April 12: 7-9 p.m. Schaible Auditorium program, "Celebrate the Wild...in Wilderness." Featured speaker is long-time conservation leader, author and activist Brock

## Celebrate The Wild... In Wilderness!

50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act




**April 12, 2014**  
**7:00-9:00 P.M.**  
**Schaible Auditorium**  
**UAF**

*Featured Speaker*  
**Brock Evans**  
**Long-time conservation leader, author and activist!**

*"I've known Brock Evans as a leader among conservation activists through two generations and I look forward to his book teaching thousands of activists of all ages to carry the conservation movement forward with courage, wisdom and persistence!"*  
- Grammy Winning Songwriter, Carole King

**Following the presentation: Speak out!**  
We will provide an opportunity to present a brief statement of how you feel about the importance of Wilderness!  
This will be recorded for the archives.

For more information contact  
The Fairbanks Committee for 50th Anniversary of Wilderness Act  
479-0780




### Voices of the Wilderness -- from previous page

in stewardship duties, such as pulling invasive weeds, helping with wildlife research, cleaning up garbage and marine debris, and monitoring air quality. Through a variety of media, including poetry, sculpture, painting, photography, fiber arts and music, artists then translate how the wilderness has inspired them. ❖


-- contact Barbara Lydon

Wilderness Program, Glacier Ranger District  
Girdwood, AK; blydon@fs.fed.us (907) 754-2318



## Forever Wild

Celebrating Earth Day  
and the 50th Anniversary  
of the Wilderness Act



### Susan Grace

the Alaskan Troubadour


### And The Fairbanks Peace Choir

Join us for a special celebration  
of Alaskan Wilderness in joyful Song,  
Images and Poetry...For all ages!

**Tuesday, April 22, 2014**  
**7:00-9:00 PM**  
**At Pioneer Park Theater**

\$12.00 at the door  
\$6.00 Students, Seniors, Military

For more information contact: 479-0780  
The Fairbanks Committee for 50th Anniversary  
of the Wilderness Act



And The Fairbanks Peace Choir

Evans. currently president of the Endangered Species Coalition, and former Sierra Club conservation staff. The program will include songs and poetry and an opportunity for people to express their thoughts and feelings about Alaska's wild country. This program is free and open to the public. For more information contact: 479-0780.

Tuesday. April 22: 7-9 p.m. Pioneer Park Theater, "Forever Wild, Celebrating Earth Day and the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act." -- featuring Alaskan Troubadour Susan Grace and the Fairbanks Peace Choir. Songs, images and poetry for all ages. \$12.00 at the door and \$6.00 for Seniors, Students and the Military. For more information contact: 907-479-0780. And see above box.

Thurs. April 24: 6-8 p.m. Poetry Reading at Gulliver's Bookstore with Frank Keim. Free and open to the public.

### May

Tues., May 6: 7 p.m. Presentation at Beaver Sports by Tom Paragi. Free and open to the public.

We will also have interviews in the newspaper, radio, presentations in schools and more. ❖

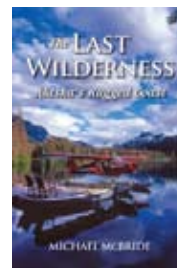
-- Andy Keller, Alaska Chapter 50th Anniversary  
Celebration Coordinator, Fairbanks  
amkeller@alaska.edu; 907-455-7083

# The Last Wilderness: Alaska's Rugged Coast, by Michael McBride

This autobiographical tale starting in the late 1960s describes Mike and Diane McBride's remarkable journey as they moved to a spit of land across Kachemak Bay from Homer, Alaska. Over the course of fifteen years of dedication and struggle, they raised a family and built the environmentally-conscious Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge. It has grown to be a high-profile eco-retreat for wealthy folks with a yen for wilderness with extra comfort. The publishers of The Guinness Book in America's Best 100 called the McBrides' business "America's best wilderness lodge." The lodge has been featured as role model for "appropriate tourism in a wilderness area" at Eco-Tourism International Environmental Summit Conferences. Thousands of students and teachers over 40 years have benefited from multi-day programs using the lodge facilities as a "living classroom." The McBrides' story conveys the beauty, joy, and dangers of Alaska and the people they came to know, and blends adventure, eco-travel and conservation.

Among conservation issues, McBride describes the 1976 sale of Kachemak Bay, one of the richest and most biologically diverse marine ecosystems on earth, to the oil industry. To prevent the Homer Spit from becoming an industrial site. Mike McBride was a plaintiff in a successful State Supreme Court lawsuit for \$25 million which

forced the State to buy back those leases. Subsequently Kachemak Bay became a Critical Habitat Area and America's largest National Estuarine Research Reserve, and Homer became a \$20 million national headquarters for the National Maritime Marine Refuge System. McBride is proud of that victory.



He is also proud to have hosted David Brower on his 80th birthday at the Wilderness Lodge. On that same day McBride became the first Lighthawk pilot in Alaska and flew Brower over the Kachemak Bay State Park to point out the clear-cut industrial logging being fought locally.

More recently, McBride helped bring the Lighthawk model of conservation flights to South Africa. There are now more than 125 volunteer pilots flying all across Africa.

**The Last Wilderness: Alaska's Rugged Coast.**

Hardcover with jacket : ISBN: 9781938486371; 256 pp ; \$27.95, contact Fulcrum Books. (800) 992-2908; Fax: (800) 726-7112. tp://www.fulcrum-books.com/ ❖

-- reviewed by Vicky Hoover

## Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

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➡ Please e-mail to us your own e-mail address. We will use it sparingly! Send your e-mail to chapter chair Pam Brodie [pbrodie@gci.net](mailto:pbrodie@gci.net). Include your name and mailing address or eight digit membership number for identification purposes.

Many thanks, Pam