



# Sierra Borealis

## *alaska report*



SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER  
SEPTEMBER 2014

### Pebble Mine: EPA Decision Draws Near

#### Comment Deadline September 19

The fate of the proposed Pebble Mine may be decided soon by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with the final phase of public comments ending September 19. In a seldom used process allowed under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the EPA has proposed restrictions on mining in the Bristol Bay watershed. These restrictions would be likely to block development of what was expected to be the largest open pit mine in North America. The Pebble prospect for a gold/copper/molybdenum mine is located upstream of Bristol Bay, home of the world's greatest remaining red salmon run.

After extensive study, the EPA issued a comprehensive report in January, finding that the proposed Pebble mine would probably have devastating environmental impacts on the Bay and its salmon fishery. After this latest round of comments on its proposed restrictions, the agency will decide whether to adopt them.

Meanwhile, the Pebble Partnership, with support from the State of Alaska, is fighting the EPA process in court.

The mine has been the cause of major controversy in Alaska and beyond for some ten years, as it is opposed by local Alaska Native organizations, commercial and sport fishermen, and environmentalists, including Sierra Club. (See *Sierra Borealis*, June and March 2014, June 2013, and earlier.) The mine has lost financial support recently, with major investors Anglo American and Rio Tinto withdrawing from the Pebble Partnership, leaving only the relatively small Northern Dynasty Company still seeking to construct the mine. Pebble has promised for the last six years that it would apply for permits the

following year but so far has failed to do so. Alaska's process for permitting mines was changed under the administration of Governor Frank Murkowski (2002-06) to make it much easier for mines to get permits. Most mine opponents fear that once the state permitting process starts, there would no longer be any chance of stopping it from inside Alaska. Considering the international importance of Bristol Bay, action by EPA to stop the mine is both appropriate and necessary. More information is available at the EPA website, <http://www2.epa.gov/bristolbay>.

The world was reminded of the danger of such mines with the devastating impacts on British Columbia's Fraser River from the collapse in early August of the tailings dam at the Mount Polley mine. That failed containment dam was designed by the same firm hired by the Pebble Partnership to design its containment dams. ❖

-- by Pamela Brodie



Detail of one of the striking works of art in *Voices of the Wilderness*, the 50th anniversary Wilderness art show travelling through Alaska. This is from Linda Beach's "Threading Through the Gravel Bars, East Fork of the Toklat".

## Alaska Chapter and Group Elections Ahead



The Sierra Club has the largest, most effective grassroots activist network of any conservation organization in the nation. Sierra Club policy and priorities are set by its active volunteers, in democratic processes. Every year, local leaders are elected by the members.

Would you like to help decide Sierra Club policy? Elections will soon be held for positions on the Executive Committees of the Alaska Chapter and the regional groups within the Alaska Chapter. Simply voting in the elections lets you help decide policy indirectly, but how about going a step farther and running for office yourself? Or nominating someone else? If you are a Sierra Club member and would like to run, or would like to nominate another member who is willing to run, please contact the chair of the Chapter Nominating Committee for the 2015-16 term: Patrick Fort, [cpfort@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:cpfort@uaa.alaska.edu).

Executive Committee terms are two years, and the terms are staggered so that half the committee is elected each year. (In addition to its six elected members, the Alaska Chapter ExCom includes a liaison from each of the three regional groups and its delegate to the Sierra Club Council of Club Leaders, *ex officio*, if that person is not already on the ExCom.

The three regional groups of the Alaska Chapter are the Tongass Group representing Southeast Alaska, the Knik Group representing Anchorage and Southcentral, and the Denali Group representing Fairbanks and Interior Alaska.

The deadline to submit names to the Nominating Committee chair is **Monday, October 13, 2014**. The Nominating Committee will report the names of nominees to the Executive Committees on Monday, October 27. Members who wish to run but are not nominated may run if they submit to the nominating committee a petition to run signed by fifteen (15) members of the appropriate Chapter or Group. The deadline for candidate petitions is Monday, November 10. This is also the deadline to submit ballot issue petitions.

The Chapter Executive Committee will appoint an Election Committee at its regular teleconference meeting on Monday, November 24; no candidates may serve on the Election Committee. Ballots will be printed and mailed on Friday, December 5. Marked ballots must be received at the Sierra Club office in Anchorage by Monday, January 12, 2015, and will be counted by the Election Committee starting at 5 pm. (This notice and schedule are in compliance with Sierra Club bylaws.) ❖

-- by Pamela Brodie, Chapter chair

## Chuitna "Day of Action" for Salmon Events statewide oppose Chuitna Mine

In Anchorage on August 23, more than 40 people came to Take Back our Salmon: A Chuitna Day of Action Event. Guests visited education booths, painted a mural depicting the Chuitna watershed, watched as Alaska Native wood carver Drew Michael created a salmon, listened to Alaska singer-songwriter Hannah Yoter perform bluegrass from coal-country West Virginia, and joined in a group photo. A highlight was the special appearance by Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center's porcupine, Snickers.

It wasn't just Anchorage. On that day, volunteers statewide participated in a "Day of Action" to celebrate Chuitna salmon and spread awareness about the proposed Chuitna coal mine. Volunteers hosted events such as salmon stream clean ups, photo petitions on campus and at the State Fair, and a creative arts festival. Alaskans came together from places such as Palmer, Juneau, and Sitka to stand up for Alaska's natural resources we all depend on and in particular to bring attention to a huge threat to salmon today -- the proposed Chuitna Coal Strip Mine. This proposed coal export mine, 40 miles west of Anchorage, would be the first mine in US to *remove salmon streams*, (totally dewatering and mining through them, with no possible restoration)--setting dangerous precedent.

### ➔ **What you can do**

Take action to protect salmon streams from strip mines by sending Administrator McLerran a note here: <http://bit.ly/WBSHlc>. ❖

-- Laura Comer



Saharra McKee, University of Alaska Anchorage sophomore, participating in Chuitna Day of Action on UAA campus.

Photo: Laura Comer

# NPS moves to protect national preserves from damaging State hunting and trapping regulations

## Please support new regulations proposed

In response to the Alaska Board of Game's hunting and trapping regulations as applied to the national preserves, the National Park Service (NPS) earlier this year adopted temporary bans on hunting black bears, including sows with cubs, with artificial light at den sites; killing brown bears using dog food, bacon, doughnuts, etc.; and killing wolves and coyotes during the denning season (see *Sierra Borealis* March 2014).

On September 4 the agency issued proposed regulations that would permanently prohibit these practices as incompatible with congressional and agency policy governing wildlife management in the national preserves. The State's rules aim to reduce the numbers of predators, mainly wolves and bears, in an effort to increase numbers of moose, caribou, and Dall sheep sought by sport hunters.

Permanent regulations are necessary says the NPS because the Board has refused to exempt the national preserves from its incompatible regulations:

"While the NPS prefers a state solution to these conflicts, the [State] has been mostly unwilling to accommodate the different management directives for NPS areas. In the last 10 years, the NPS has objected to more than 50 proposals to liberalize predator harvest in areas that included National Preserves and each time the BOG has been unwilling to exclude National Preserves from state regulations designed to manipulate predator/prey dynamics for human consumptive use goals."

Had these requests been accommodated, the proposed rule would not be necessary.

Baiting black bears under state regulations is not part of the proposed NPS regulations, but the agency

invites comments on whether baiting should continue to be allowed, and whether hunters should continue to use dogs to hunt the bears.

There are other appropriate provisions in the proposed regulations, but the most important are those intended to protect the preserves from the incompatible and damaging Board of Game rules. Fair chase hunters support the NPS's regulations.

The state administration and its supporters can be expected to strenuously oppose the NPS's proposed regulations, as will the more extreme pro-predator control sport hunting groups.

This is why strong support for the NPS's proposed regulations from Sierra Club members, other environmental groups and the public is critically important.

### ➡ What you can do

Let the Park Service know that you strongly support its effort to free the national preserve from incompatible state rules. And urge the agency to rule out black bear baiting and the use of dogs to hunt the bears.

Comments can be sent through **December 3, 2014**. Submit comments, identified by Regulation Identification Number (RIN) 1024-AE21, via:

- Federal Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail or hand deliver to: National Park Service, Regional Director, Alaska Regional Office, 240 West 5th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501.

For the NPS's proposed regulation go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=NPS-2014-0004-0001>

An accompanying Environmental Assessment is found at <http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov>. ❖

-- Jack Hession

Flyer for the Fairbanks September 24 event at the Noel Wien Library to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act—a Travelogue from 2013 of Fairbanks area adventurers' travels for a month through the Arctic Refuge from the Upper Sheenjak river to Kaktovik. See p. 10 for Wilderness 50 events in Juneau and elsewhere in Alaska.



### ➡ Let us e-mail to you!

Sierra Borealis/Alaska Report is published quarterly in electronic version by the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter and can be found on the Chapter website: <http://www.alaska.sierraclub.org/> (click on newsletters). We also mail the September issue to our members for whom we do not have e-mail addresses, as our bylaws require we notify members each fall of our upcoming elections.

We are eager to have the e-mail addresses of more of our members, so we can contact you directly when a new issue of *Sierra Borealis* is posted on the website. To help us save paper and postage, **please send your e-mail address to Chapter chair Pam Brodie, [pbrodie@gci.net](mailto:pbrodie@gci.net)**. Include your name and mail address and 8-digit member number from the mailing label for identification.

Thanks, Pam

# Challenge to the Big Thorne Timber Sale

On August 22, the Sierra Club joined the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, the National Resource Defense Council, the Alaska Wilderness League and other groups in challenging the proposed Big Thorne Timber Sale in the federal District Court of Alaska. All told, 12 major environmental groups and businesses are fighting the sale.

This timber sale project for Southeast Alaska's Prince of Wales Island is the largest clear-cutting project in Alaska's Tongass National Forest in the last 20 years and flies in the face of the Forest Service's promise to transition quickly away from old-growth logging to second growth.

The Tongass National Forest is one of the few old-growth temperate rainforests in the world and this country's largest national forest. Its trees, some nearly 1,000 years old, provide vital habitat for Sitka black-tailed deer, bears, salmon, goshawks, and the Alexander Archipelago wolf. The Tongass ranks as one of the biggest carbon storage forests in North America primarily because of its remaining old growth.

The Big Thorne Project is located on the north-central portion of Prince of Wales Island, which has already been extensively logged. The proposed sale would cut most of the best remaining winter habitat for deer, which are the prey for the Alexander Archipelago wolf, recently identified by the Fish and Wildlife Service as a species that may warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species.

The sale, which proposes construction of more than 46 miles of new roads and reconstruction of more than 36 miles of existing roads, also threatens to reduce hunting opportunities for the many subsistence hunters living in the area. The Forest Service found that the sale could "result in a significant restriction of subsistence uses of deer, due to potential effects on abundance, distribution, and competition."

The population of wolves on Prince of Wales Island has declined substantially since the mid-1990s, and it is possible that only a handful remain in the Big Thorne Project area. The individual packs on POW are genetically distinct, and therefore certain genetic traits can be lost if individual packs are wiped out.

The lawsuit was brought after an appeal to the Forest Service to reconsider its decision was unsuccessful.

The Service initially issued a decision to hold the Big Thorne Timber Sale last summer. Sierra Club and other groups appealed this decision to the agency, supported by testimony by the nation's pre-eminent expert on the Alexander Archipelago wolf, Dr. David Person, who emphasized that the Big Thorne timber sale "represents the final straw that will break the back of the sustainable wolf-deer-predator-prey ecological community on Prince of Wales Island, and consequently the viability of the wolf

population on the island may be jeopardized." (See *Sierra Borealis*, June 2014 and earlier).

In response, the USFS ordered an additional review by the Inter-agency Wolf Task Force to re-evaluate the threats to the wolf from logging and to consider whether changes in

the sale or in hunting regulations were necessary.

In the review, the Interagency Task Force was split, with three of the six members recommending that until better estimates of the populations of the wolves and deer existed, any action that can reduce the level of risk should be considered, including conservation of deer habitat, such as old growth forest.

In August of this year, the Forest Supervisor released a Supplemental Information Report that reaffirmed the timber sale, ignoring the expert opinions of Dr. Person and the concerns of half the Task Force, and contravening the standards for deer habitat, road density, and old growth set out in the Tongass Land Management Plan.

The Forest Service asserts that despite the degradation of deer habitat and resulting effects on the wolf population, wolves will repopulate the area from other areas of Prince of Wales Island, notwithstanding the fact that these areas are small, fragmented, and do not provide good wolf habitat.

The USFS defends these assumptions despite the fact that it has insufficient information to estimate the current wolf population, and therefore insufficient data to assure the wolf population will survive.

What's more, the underlying rationale for the sale is flawed, because the sale is based on inaccurate calculation of the market demand for Tongass timber. The quantity of trees offered for timber sales should be based on market demand, and the agency based its decision to hold the Big Thorne sale on a study that greatly over-exaggerated the demand for Tongass timber, due to a failure to foresee the collapse in the housing market and associated world-wide demand for wood products.

Based on the inaccurate demand forecasts, the USFS set a goal of providing 429 million board feet (mmbf) of timber under contract in 2013, which is more than 20 times the actual volume that was logged in 2012, and 315 mmbf more than the Forest Service had under contract as of April 2013.

In fact, the sale is completely unnecessary. In the three years preceding the Big Thorne decision, timber sale purchasers cut an average of 30 mmbf/year. Given there was already 114 mmbf under contract in April 2013, there is more than enough timber available for the next three years. ❖



-- by Layla Hughes



## Elections Matter -- Looking ahead to November 2014

When I'm asked what I would do if I wasn't an environmentalist hugging trees and caribou, I tell folks that I would be a high school civics teacher. The greatest lesson that I have learned in two decades of work for the wild places in Alaska is that people matter and votes matter.

As we near the 2014 Congressional election it is important to keep that lesson in mind. With stories in the news about money in politics and a dysfunctional Congress it would be easy to become cynical and not to vote. But we can't let that happen.

Time and time again the fate of precious wild lands has come down to votes cast by one or two legislators-- who ultimately heed their constituents.

In 2012, billionaires spent big to try to buy their way into the White House and Congress. The Koch Brothers invested \$400 million of their own money. Fossil fuel interests spent more than \$296 million on advertising between September 1 and Election Day. Their attack ads promised cheap power from dirty energy but didn't talk about the land, air, and water affected. But we told the clean energy truth, and voters listened.

We worked closely with Obama for America and recruited more than 12,000 members to join Environment-

alists for Obama, to take part in "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) shifts on Election Day, and to make more than 30,000 phone calls in the final two weeks before the election. This people power helped defeat the money power.

How did we do it? One of the most influential forces in the 2012 election was the grassroots activist. The Sierra Club's strength is in its grassroots organizing power. Online or on the ground, we returned power to the people.

We need to do it again. We need to get engaged in local, state and national efforts to ensure that environmental leaders are in office and are there for us to cast key votes to protect our wild lands and to move America to a clean energy future.

Please help the people power win again in 2014. Volunteer. Vote. Spread the word. ❖

-- Dan Ritzman



Yellow-billed loon © Gary Lyon 1999

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## New Judicial Panel to rehear Conservationists' appeal of Tongass exemption from the "Roadless Rule"

At end of August, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit announced that it would rehear a case challenging the Tongass National Forest exemption from the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, a landmark conservation measure adopted by the Clinton administration early in 2001 to protect nearly 60 million acres of wild national forests and grasslands around the nation from new road building and logging.

In 2009 a diverse coalition of Alaska Native, tourism industry, and environmental organizations, represented by attorneys from Earthjustice and the Natural Resources Defense Council, challenged the Bush Administration's 2003 rule that "temporarily" exempted Southeast Alaska's Tongass from the Roadless Rule. The Tongass, at 16 million acres, is by far the country's largest national forest. In 2011, a federal judge in Alaska ruled in the coalition's favor, vacating the Tongass exemption and reinstating the Roadless Rule's application to the Tongass. The State of Alaska then appealed this decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, where a 3-judge panel earlier this year reversed the Alaska judge's opinion by a 2-1 split vote. But that Ninth Circuit Court earlier opinion is rendered ineffective by the new order granting the rehearing.

The court has scheduled oral arguments to be presented before an 11-judge panel in Pasadena, California, the week of Dec. 15, 2014.

Attorneys from Earthjustice and the Natural Resources Defense Council represent the following groups in the case: Organized Village of Kake, The Boat Company, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, Natural Resources Defense Council, Tongass Conservation Society, Greenpeace, Wrangell Resource Council, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Cascadia Wildlands, and Sierra Club.

Earthjustice attorney Tom Waldo stated: "Today's court order is great news for Southeast Alaska and for all those who visit this spectacular place. The remaining wild and undeveloped parts of the Tongass are important wildlife habitat and vital to local residents for hunting, fishing, recreation, and tourism, the driving forces of the local economy. The grant of rehearing ensures that those places will remain protected pending court review and provides a welcome opportunity for review of the prior decision." ❖

-- from an Earthjustice press release

# Glacier Bay National Park to allow subsistence gull egg collecting by an Alaska Native tribe

On July 25 President Barack Obama signed into law the Huna Tlingit Traditional Gull Egg Use Act. It authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to let members of the Hoonah Indian Association<sup>1</sup> collect eggs of glaucous-winged gulls twice a year at up to five locations in Glacier Bay National Park under the subsistence provisions of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Until July, Glacier Bay had been one of only four national parks in Alaska completely closed to the consumption of wildlife, the others being Katmai, Denali (old Mt. McKinley core), and Kenai Fjords. In ANILCA Congress emphasized the importance of Glacier Bay as a wildlife sanctuary. Glacier Bay, Gates of the Arctic, Denali, and Katmai are identified "as large sanctuaries where fish and wildlife may roam freely, developing their social structures, and evolving over long periods of time as nearly as possible without the changes that extensive human use would cause." Senate Report 96-413, p. 137.

Nearly thirty-four years after passage of ANILCA, Glacier Bay has lost its crucial sanctuary status.

Opposed by Sierra Club, this unfortunate legislation, sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK), and co-sponsored by Sen. Mark

gathering.

Under the new law the Secretary is required to prepare an annual egg "harvest" (sic) plan with schedules, locations, "...and any additional terms and conditions that the Secretary determines to be necessary for the harvesting of eggs of glaucous-winged gulls in the park, based on an annual harvest plan to be prepared by the Secretary **and** the Hoonah Indian Association" (emphasis added). Co-management of a park resource is unprecedented in the national park system.

The bill was approved despite the existence of traditional Huna Tlingit gull egg collecting sites outside the park boundary but in the tribe's traditional territory. In a statement to the House Natural Resources Committee, the Association acknowledged that its members can legally collect glaucous-winged gull eggs at traditional collecting sites outside the park. Referring to a U.S Fish and Wildlife Service regulation governing the collection of eggs at these non-park sites, the Association noted that the regulation authorizes:

"...the permanent residents of Hoonah to collect the eggs of glaucous-winged gulls from 15 May-30 June in a designated harvest area on national forest lands in Icy Strait and Cross Sound, including Middle Pass Rock near the Inian Islands, Table Rock in Cross Sound, and other traditional locations on the coast of Yakobi Island.

Harvesting in the USFWS designated areas has permitted Huna Tlingits to continue to collect gull eggs for personal consumption but compare (sic) unfavorably to Glacier Bay in terms of the cost and time to access, distance, weather" (emphasis added).

The Association's claim that the non-park traditional sites compare unfavorably to the sites in the park is dubious. Park staff re-affirmed the feasibility of Middle Pass Rock, which is closer to Hoonah than the closest traditional site in the park. Table Rock in Cross Sound, also known as Bird Rock, is approximately the same distance from Hoonah as the closest park site is from Hoonah. The staff did not visit Table Rock and the other traditional sites in Cross Sound. (See **Sierra Borealis**, June and Sept, 2013.)

That adverse weather hinders access to the Cross Sound traditional collecting sites is also misleading; the May-June gull nesting season when collecting is possible occurs during mostly calm weather, and the fact that these are traditional sites indicates that weather was historically not an obstacle.

## NPS supports opening Glacier Bay to subsistence

Park staff had the support of the NPS at the Alaska regional and national levels. Under NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis, current Alaska policy favors Alaska Native interests. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, an enthusiastic supporter and defender of national parks, could have easily derailed the NPS's radical departure from

-- go to next page (7) bottom



"Tlingit canoe" © Barbara Lavallee

Begich (D-AK), passed Congress with no recorded votes, ending more than a decade-long campaign by the cultural anthropologists and managers at the park to open the park to egg collecting.

Allowing this subsistence practice sets an undesirable precedent that could lead other tribes to press Congress for subsistence privileges in the parks near them. Tribes could deploy the Association's argument that prior to the establishment of the parks many of the areas were used and occupied by the tribes, therefore Congress should now open them to the traditional activities. In the case of Glacier Bay this process begins with gull egg

<sup>1</sup> Hoonah Indian Association is a federally recognized tribe in the community of Hoonah on Chicagof Island across Icy Strait from the park. According to the Association's website, Hoonah is the largest Tlingit village in [southeast] Alaska with about 75% of its 850 residents of "Native heritage." 2010 U.S. Census has the population at 760 residents including 399 Alaska Natives.

## A fond farewell to the Sierra Club

Dan, Ritzman, Sierra Club's Alaska staff director, says: "Over the past nearly five years, Lindsey Hajduk has been a strong and vibrant voice advocating for Sierra Club on behalf of Alaska's wild lands. We will miss her at the Sierra Club as she moves on to her new role focused on the western Arctic. Here's Lindsey's own note to all her Sierra Club Alaska friends:"

I've joked about calling the Sierra Club office my "home" for the past few years, but at times it really did seem like home. For the past four and a half years I have been a Sierra Club staff representative for Alaska--and that has often required some long nights at the office! It has been a transformative and inspiring experience for me, and I am proud of the work we accomplished in that time. I say "we" because none of it could have happened without people like you.

At the core of my work at the Sierra Club has been to engage with our members and supporters From the North Slope of Alaska to Ocean City, NJ, to Maui, HI, and more, in the "Our Wild America" campaign to protect Alaska's public lands. I have worked with Americans from across the country to protect America's Arctic. That work has taken on many forms: gathering thousands of postcards, supporting volunteer-hosted house parties, coordinating dozens of polar bear dance parties, moving a glacier in front of the White House, and much, much more.

Through it all, I have worked with a talented Sierra Club Arctic Team, dedicated volunteers, and passionate advocates. I could not be more grateful for the experiences I've had and the people I've met. Together, we have had some amazing conservation victories. It's not every day that you see 11 million acres protected for conservation, but that's exactly what we did in the Western Arctic.

Still, there are more conservation victories to be won. We have worked to keep Shell Oil's dangerous offshore drilling out of the Arctic Ocean, and we have to continue that fight. Shell has again proposed drilling in summer of 2015, and it will be up to all of us to protect the wildlife and rich cultures that depend on the ocean.

The crown jewel of the Arctic Refuge is its coastal



photo: Vicky Hoover

Lindsey at work in the Sierra Club's Anchorage office, 2013

plain--where millions of birds migrate every year, where the Porcupine caribou go to calve their young, and where polar bears den each year. September 3rd, 2014 is the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, and the best celebration for this special landmark would be to designate this iconic landscape as Wilderness to protect it once and for all for future generations.

I know the Sierra Club will continue to work hard to reach these goals, and I intend to be right there with you. August 1st was my last day on staff at the Anchorage office, but the Sierra Club has helped me find my home in Alaska and I'm not going away so easily. I will continue on as a dedicated Sierra Club volunteer and continue to advocate for a better environment, community, and state. There is still so much to do. ❖

-- Lindsey Hajduk [lhajduk@gmail.com](mailto:lhajduk@gmail.com)

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### Glacier Bay gull egg collecting -- from page 6

its primary mandate to afford complete protection for wildlife.

Another factor in the Glacier Bay fiasco was Murkowski's and Young's unsubstantiated claim that conservation organizations supported their bill. Murkowski stated: "This bill is widely supported throughout the environmental and conservation communities, as well as the Alaska Native community" (Congressional Record-Senate p. S330). But not the Sierra Club, which testified in opposition to her bill.

This claim of conservationist support for the bill led Rep. Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), ranking minority member of the Natural Resources Committee and a leader of pro-conservation members of the House, to support it.

For the White House the bill was an opportunity to help Sen. Mark Begich retain his seat against a well-funded opponent in one of the six Senate contests that will determine which party will control the Senate in the next Congress. Begich, an ardent supporter of Alaska Native interests, is counting primarily on the Native vote to boost him into his second term. He now brings home some bacon (and eggs) for his Hoonah supporters and pleases the Native community. ❖

-- Jack Hession

## Mike Brune visits the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

I returned from the Arctic [end of June], and the beauty and peacefulness that I experienced there still occupy my dreams. Sure, the grizzly we encountered in our camp the first night has a starring role, but mostly it's the grandeur and sublime tranquility that were so captivating.

I knew the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was big, but I didn't really comprehend how big until we flew into it. For miles and miles and miles on end, we passed over one mountain, broad valley, and watershed after another. Such an expanse of untouched wilderness was inspiring, humbling, and breathtaking all at once.

**Could there be any better way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act than to explore (in my case, for the first time) the most completely wild place in the United States?** If you want to be as far as possible from any human trail, road, or settlement, then this is where you come. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge encompasses more than 19.6 million acres, of which eight million are designated as federally protected wilderness.

It's not called a wildlife refuge for nothing, either. Animals ranging from shrews to grizzlies call it home. Every year, the Porcupine caribou migrate 1,500 miles to their calving grounds on the coastal plain by the Arctic Ocean. It may be the greatest wildlife spectacle in North America.

There must have been a thousand caribou in the grassy valley where our plane set us down. After exploring in the valley under the midnight sun, we spent the rest of the week rafting down the Aichilik River, winding up at the shore of the Arctic Ocean. Along the way, with the Brooks Range looming at our backs, we saw golden eagles, tundra swans, long-tailed jaegers, and even snowy owls watching.

What kept going through my mind was how many times we've come close to losing the fight to keep oil companies from invading the coastal plain. It's been a near thing too many times. Yet, we've kept the drills at bay -- and by "we," I mean the millions of Americans who contacted their representatives, and otherwise helped keep oil out.

When at last we reached the shore of the Arctic Ocean, where we'd hoped to venture onto the frozen sea, instead, only a few isolated small icebergs [were] offshore -- a reminder that the climate in Alaska is warming more rapidly than anywhere else in North America. A decade ago, sea ice would definitely have extended to the shore.

Our visit to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge ended at the Inupiat village of Kaktovik (pop. 293). None of the local people I talked to were in favor of drilling. Their main concern was to ensure they could continue to do subsistence hunting to provide for themselves. None of them wanted the oil industry to move into the Refuge.

Could that happen in the Arctic Refuge? Yes, as long as there's still money to be made from selling oil, as long as the status of the coastal plain remains in limbo. The current U.S. House of Representatives would happily turn the coastal plain into a Chevron parking lot. We can never let that happen. So until the coastal plain is truly protected

once and for all, we all need to keep up the fight. Join the millions who've helped to keep this wilderness wild: Ask the Obama administration to do all it can to establish a lasting legacy by protecting the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. ❖

-- Mike Brune, *Sierra Club Executive Director*

(from Mike Brune's blog about his first ever visit to the Arctic.) To read more, go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/michael-brune/2014/07/look-what-you-did>.



Mike Brune, Rue Mapp and companions in the Arctic Refuge

photo: Micah Baird

### Guest blog--by Rue Mapp Founder and CEO, Outdoor Afro



photo: Micah Baird

Just over two months ago, I unpacked my waterproof bag filled with all the essential gear required to stay dry on a spectrum of warm to cool in an Alaska summer on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Quite frankly, I am still unpacking that experience: I am sorting out just what it meant to spend nearly a week in one of the wildest places in the world, and most especially in the context of the work I do leading and inspiring Outdoor Afros around the country to engage with nature.

The Sierra Club invited music composer, author, and DJ Spooky (née Paul Miller), Michael Brune, Sierra Club Director, and myself. We were led by a team that included Dan Ritzman, who heads the club's Alaska Region. Our friends and families had admonished us to "be careful", but they did not know that what was coming was the gift the experience gave in helping us understand what it means to be human in relation to the wild.

The first afternoon in the Mollie Beattie Wilderness area, we had a bear in camp. Yes, a grizzly. And yes, it was frightening. There were no physical barriers between our group and this creature. For what seemed like several minutes, it curiously observed us then, following a sudden whiff of northern air, disappeared without fanfare into the distant Brooks Range.

I realize now that experience was not about the bear, or our fear of it, but rather the awareness of our humanity in its presence -- in its wild. No, we were not at the top of the food chain. We continued to see many creatures-- countless caribou, several "life" birds, tenacious mosquitoes, all in an ever changing climate that cared not that we were there or if we were comfortable. This wild would continue to roll on and thrive without regard for its human passengers.

The wilderness as I experienced it in the arctic is a system of immeasurable strength and resiliency. It was an honor, as a human, to get out of an illusion of control and to know a type of dependence, and fragility only found in the remote wild. And I know I am better for it. ❖

-- Rue Mapp

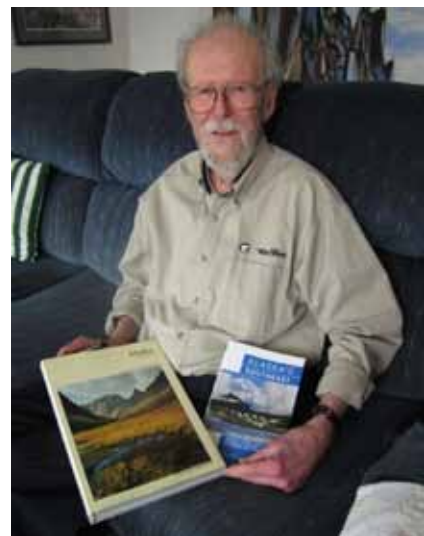


## Meeting Mike Miller, longtime Alaska environmental leader

When I began working for Sierra Club on Alaska issues in the mid-1980s, the book that was handed me and which served to introduce Alaska to me was the 1974 *Alaska, the Great Land* by Mike Miller and Peggy Wayburn. Since my job was being assistant to Ed Wayburn, chair of the Club's Alaska Task Force, and longtime Club leader on Alaska campaigns, I knew his wife Peggy, author and environmental leader in her own right, but the other author, Miller was only a name for me.

And so it continued until this June, when on my latest visit to Juneau, my hostess Sharron Lobaugh, artist and longtime environmental advocate, told me she planned that day to drop in on her old friends Mike and Marilyn Miller, and invited me to join. When she revealed that this was THE Miller of Miller and Wayburn I leaped up, excited at the chance at last to meet this historic old-timer of Alaska's environmental history. Sharron called ahead to warn Mike that the editor of *Sierra Borealis* hoped to talk to him about past recollections.

Mike and Marilyn greeted us hospitably and soon Mike began reminiscing. In the mid-1960s there were a number of separate small environmentally-focused groups in Southeast Alaska, such as the Audubon Society, of which Marilyn was the first local president, and the Territorial Sportsmen, but the



first big issue that drew them together was the battle to save the Juneau wetlands. For this effort, several individual groups coalesced into the Steller Society, together with local folks such as the Lobaughs, Dick Myren, Carl Lane, Kay and Joe Greenough, and William Dunn. Mike, who served for many years on the Juneau City and Borough Assembly, helped get this body to push for acquisition of Juneau wetlands. Thanks to his work, a crucial 11-acre parcel was preserved.

After serving on the Juneau Assembly, Mike went on to represent Juneau in the state House of Representatives. For a dozen years or so, he was a solid vote for conservation in the state legislature. For several terms, he was House majority leader. When Congressman John Seiberling came to Alaska to hold field hearings on the proposed Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Mike was the only elected official to support ANILCA at the Juneau hearing. Mike got a big round of applause from the local Juneau audience for his positive stance. He was also the only member of the House to vote against a legislative resolution to oppose ANILCA.

But how did he come to be an author with Peggy Wayburn? It was Cliff Lobaugh who connected him with

## Coal Export Facility Victory for Seward

In a very short and direct decision, the Ninth Circuit federal court has just ruled that Aurora Energy Services LLC and Alaska Railroad Corporation violate the Clean Water Act by allowing the Seward Coal Export Facility to dump coal into beautiful Resurrection Bay. This coal facility is jointly operated by Alaska Railroad Corporation and Aurora Energy Services, a subsidiary of Usibelli. Coal at this export facility sits uncovered in 1,000 foot stockpiles allowing dust to fall into the water and to cover snow piles which are plowed directly into the bay. Whole coal chunks fall from the conveyor belt as it is loaded onto ships. Coal coats nearby fishing vessels and local neighborhoods with dust and debris. The air and water pollution impact the health of residents and visitors of Seward.

The lawsuit was brought in December 2009 by Alaska Community Action on Toxics and the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club. This recent ruling states that the stormwater permit does not cover coal pollution and sent the case back to federal court for further proceedings.

The Sept. 4 press release announcing the victory quotes Russ Maddox, a longtime Seward resident and Sierra Club volunteer, "This coal export facility has been spewing pollution into Resurrection Bay for many, many years. Today's court decision that the facility's permit prohibits those discharges is expected to force this facility, at long last, to clean up its act and install modern pollution controls to make the air safer for Seward residents to breathe and prevent further harm to the bay." Maddox contributed significantly to the citizen action by documenting and reporting violations at the Seward Coal Loading Facility for years. (See *Sierra Borealis* June 2012, Sept 2011, March 2010).

Seward is a small fishing town of 3,000 in Southcentral Alaska, and bringing these issues to light has been a contentious decade-long fight for a small group of passionate volunteers led by Sierra Club activist Russ Maddox. ❖

-- Laura Comer

Ed (then Sierra Club president) and Peggy Wayburn. The Wayburns first came to Juneau in 1967 to meet with local environmentalists and invite them to join the Sierra Club. Mike had begun a literary avocation with a story in the national magazine *Redbook*, a fictional account "Kid at the Stick" of a boy who, when flying with his dad as pilot, had quickly to take over the controls when the father passed out. A national TV network had broadcast this exciting story, which brought Mike Miller local fame. He also wrote extensively for the Fodor travel guides, for which his main Alaska book was *Off the Beaten Path*. These writing experiences brought him to the Wayburns' side.

In 2008, Mike was the editor for the 11th edition of the Globe-Pequot book *Alaska Southeast*. The earlier editions (starting in 1983) were put together by Sarah Eppenbach, and Mike had helped with fact-checking for those, but the 11th version was his own project. ❖

--Vicky Hoover

## Wilderness Act 50th Anniversary celebrations continue in Alaska

Kevin Hood, USFS, reports from Juneau: Now that summer is winding down, celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act are resuming with upcoming free events in Juneau:

**Saturday, September 27, 2014, 7-9 pm**

### Wild Shots in The Backroom at The Silverbow Inn

You are invited to the Silverbow Backroom to share with the audience favorite photos and stories from wilderness trips. I will set up a dropbox or email account for you to submit photos digitally beforehand and then create a slideshow that will be shown on Saturday evening 9/27. As your photo comes up on the screen you may take a minute or two to tell the story behind it. The idea is to use the old slideshow feel to re-create wilderness campfire camaraderie and storytelling.

**First Friday October 3, 2014 - 7-9 pm**

### Expedition Arguk, in The Backroom at The Silverbow Inn

In summer 2013, Expedition Arguk walked and packrafted 300 miles across the North Slope of Alaska, to help educate people about the beauty, drama, and importance of the changing arctic. Their adventure has been featured in National Geographic, the Atlantic, and more. Join Expedition Arguk members Brett Woebler and Chelsea Ward-Waller for a talk presented by Expedition Arguk and the U.S. Forest Service.

**September and October 2014 -- Wilderness Art display**

### The Backroom at The Silverbow Inn

During September and October, we display artwork generated in local wilderness areas -- poems, paintings and photos created by

created by artists who participated in Voices of the Wilderness artists' residencies in the Tracy Arm – Ford's Terror and Chuck River wilderness areas, as well as local wilderness photography from Southeast Alaska Conservation Council wilderness stewardship associates.



**In Fairbanks, September 24:**

Don't miss the thrilling Arctic Refuge travelogue on Sept 24, starting at 6 pm at the Noel Wien library; see event flyer on p. 3.

**In Kenai AND Homer, October 3 - 22: one half of the Voices of the Wilderness show at each Homer's Islands and Oceans Visitor Center and at the Kenai Visitor Center. Don't miss it!**

**And in Anchorage: November 21** at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, downtown Anchorage: *Voices of the Wilderness* opens -- and remains on display till Feb. 8, 2015. ❖

Voices of the Wilderness art show, Juneau: Sharron Lobaugh admires the show's largest work--M.K. MacNaughton's "Lunch break with Copter Peak"--in the Noatak Wilderness.



## Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

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### Featured in this issue:

Pebble EPA decision	p. 1
Chapter election	p. 2
Chuitna Day of Action	p. 2
NPS to protect preserves	p. 3
Big Thorne sale challenge	p. 4
Congressional election	p. 5
Tongass exemption rehearing	p. 5
Glacier Bay egg collecting	p. 6
Lindsey Hajduk farewell	p. 7
Brune & Mapp's Arctic blogs	p. 8
Mike Miller recollections	p. 9
Seward coal lawsuit victory	p. 9
Wilderness 50th events	p. 10