



alaska report

VOLUME 34 | NUMBER 3 | SEPTEMBER 2008

Clean Water defeat ratchets up Pebble Mine fight

Gold wins over fish? but fish ARE gold!

Clean water? Hell no! In their late August primary election, Alaskan voters repudiated the “Clean Water Initiative” on the state ballot, with a 57 percent “no” vote. The ballot measure aimed to prohibit large, new mines from dumping pollutants harmful to people or salmon into waters used by either. An \$8 million mining industry advertising and lobbying campaign “muddied the waters” sufficiently to convince many voters this was a bad idea. Governor Sarah Palin’s open, and many say illegal, last minute opposition to the measure probably pushed other voters to take the plunge and vote against their own interests.

The Clean Water Initiative was on the August ballot due to the efforts of Alaskans for Clean Water [<http://www.alaskacleanwater.org/about.html>], a coalition including commercial & sport fisherman, Alaska Natives, Native villages, lodge owners, hunters, and main-stream conservationists. The Renewable Resources Coalition provided funding for the campaign. The Sierra Club, like most conservation organizations, supported the Alaska Clean Waters Initiative.

Had it passed, the Clean Water Initiative would have

applied to projects across Alaska but it was clearly aimed at the massive proposed Pebble mine in south-

west Alaska. The Pebble site, just west of Lake Clark National Park and north of Katmai National Park, is estimated to contain 67 billion pounds of extractable copper, 82 million ounces of gold, and 4 billion pounds of molybdenum. That’s worth \$345-\$500 billion at present prices, *qualifying Pebble as the second-largest known deposit of its kind*. Recovering all this will require an immense project with both open-pit and underground operations. There would be at least one huge dam, giant tailings ponds, and a mill occupying some 15 square miles of now pristine land. A 100-mile road and pipeline would probably be built as well, to get ore to tidewater. (For background, see **alaska report**, Oct and Dec 05, Jun 06, May 07, March 08.)

The late former Governor Jay Hammond, who led opposition to Pebble until his death in summer 2005, stated that “Pebble would be more harmful to the environment than opening the Arctic Coastal Plain to oil development.”

Unfortunately for preserving the natural environment, Pebble lies at the headwaters of Alaska’s Kaktuli River and Upper Talarik Creek that feed into the Nushagak and Kvichak Rivers. These waters nurture a good part of the world’s largest salmon fishery – Alaska’s Bristol Bay. Last year commercial, sport, and subsistence fishermen harvested 32 million salmon here, and annual revenues for this renowned fishery often exceed \$110 million.

With defeat of the Clean Water Initiative “The Pebble Partnership” is moving ahead aggressively with exploration, project planning, and public relations. Major multinational mining corporations Anglo American PLC and Rio Tinto Limited have joined with Canadian firm Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. to form the partnership. There’s now more than enough economic (and political) muscle to develop the mine. Rio Tinto’s 2007 gross revenues were \$29.7 billion, and Anglo American PLC brought in \$35.7 billion. Incidentally,

--continued next page



Exploratory drilling on the proposed Pebble mine site

Pebble Mine update

--continued from page 1

both corporations have bad environmental and human rights records.

Unveiling of an actual mining plan is expected some time next year (2009), after which development permits can be submitted to the state. The goal of the defeated Clean Water Initiative was to reform Alaska's vague and lax mine permitting system. The Commissioner of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources has wide latitude in deciding what's permissible. In opposing the Clean Water Initiative, the Palin administration has already shown support for Pebble. It will be very difficult for citizens to challenge any questionable permitting decisions made by state agencies or, for that matter, any actions of mining companies. A 2007 Alaska Supreme Court decision upheld a state law (HB 145) exposing non-profit organizations and individuals to the risk of significant financial liability should they lose in state court. Few public interest litigants have resources to face such risk.

No question, Pebble is potentially "the pits" but there's much more to be concerned about. The fact that multinational mining companies such as Rio Tinto and Anglo American are willing to spend \$8 million to defeat a law that would have done no more than codify what they claim they will do anyhow (avoid polluting our waters), bodes ill for Alaska. Clearly, the recent, staggering increases in commodity prices have convinced these mining "majors" that extraction of many of Alaska's vast but remote mineral deposits is now economic. Pebble is just the beginning.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: This will be a huge, prolonged, expensive, and very heated battle. Alaska is full of valuable minerals, and an overpopulated world is starting to look to us to satisfy the rising expectations of billions of people. Alaskans seeking to defend their valuable Southwest fisheries and ecosystems from the Pebble threat are preparing for release of an actual Pebble project plan and the impending permitting process. We urge those outside to stay engaged -- keep abreast of developments, be willing to lobby state and federal officials and legislators. Send money to "front line" organizations when requested. Check the Renewable Resources Coalition website [<http://www.renewableresourcescoalition.org/>] and that of Alaskans for Clean Water for new information [<http://www.alaskacleanwater.org/about.html>]. The Cook Inletkeeper website [<http://www.inletkeeper.org/>] offers mining-related information and now carries a good explanation of the myth of a "rigorous" permitting process. Stay tuned for future alaska report updates. ♦

-- Mike O'Meara

(Mike O'Meara, a founding member of the Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter, now serves on the Conservation Committee. Mike lives on his homestead 14 miles northwest of Homer and has been actively involved in Alaskan oil & gas and mining issues since 1969. Because Homer, on the east side of Cook Inlet, is the city and deep water port closest to the Pebble prospect, it will face many impacts from any mining development there.)

Update: Tongass Management Plan: Administration meddling is no help

In its determination to put in place some last-minute sugar plums for corporate friends, as well as inflict further blows on America's natural environments, the Bush Administration, through a directive sent by Dept. of Agriculture Undersecretary and timber industry ally Mark Rey, added a twist to the new Tongass National Forest management plan.

The latest version of the Tongass National Forest's management plan had to clear one final hurdle before it could take effect. That was approval from Mark Rey. Rey gave the go-ahead last week, but with certain new conditions. Most call for Tongass managers to come up with timber sales that cost less to plan, cut and move..

While a Prince of Wales Island timber industry representative praised these new instructions as "a step in the right direction" to bring stability to the industry, a Southeast Alaska business group called the Southeast Conference continued its intent to sue the Forest Service, alleging that the new Tongass plan should make "more timber available faster, with fewer costs."

The Sierra Club opposes the new plan as putting millions of pristine acres in this ancient rainforest on the auction block to the timber industry, yet raising no revenue for the U.S. government. U.S. taxpayers themselves will have to pay to build the roads the timber companies demand to access the largest national forest in the country. (See **alaska report**, May '07.)

The changes Rey ordered are also being criticized by environmental groups as "a step backward for the Tongass."

Mark Rorick, chair of the Sierra Club's Juneau Group and longtime leader on Tongass issues, comments: "This is only one of Forest Service's attempts to ramp up a Tongass timber industry during the last months of a lame duck administration. Mr. Rey and the Tongass forest officials have also applied a regulation that allows the export of un-processed Tongass old growth trees to Asia, thus providing jobs for China and Japan instead of for Alaskans. And they have continued to use millions of dollars of taxpayer money to build logging roads in roadless areas to subsidize a failing and non competitive industry. It seems that there is nothing that this administration will not do to help out an industry that is an economic and environmental disaster." ♦



-- Nancy Behnken
"Still harbor"

Supreme Court Slashes Exxon Oil Spill fines

Nineteen years after the *Exxon Valdez* spilled an estimated 11 million gallons of North Slope crude oil into Prince William Sound, oiling Alaskan Gulf Coast beaches for hundreds of miles and killing wildlife over a vast area, a big U.S. Supreme Court decision about Exxon financial responsibility stunned Alaskan commercial fishermen, Native subsistence fishermen, and local communities. In June the court slashed Exxon's punitive damage award to Alaskans harmed by the disaster from \$2.5 billion to no more than \$507.5 million (of which Exxon will keep \$11 million due to a settlement with fish processors).

Fishermen and other plaintiffs have already received *compensatory* damages of \$287 million; this battle was over the amount of *punitive* damages, which started at a jury award in 1994 of \$5 billion, but which had been reduced on an appeal by Exxon to \$4 billion and then further to \$2.5 billion.

This is not the end of the legal wrangling. Alaskans have taken it for granted that whatever the settlement was, Exxon would have to pay nineteen years worth of interest, effectively doubling the amount they were due to receive. Exxon, however, now refuses to pay interest. Furthermore Exxon demands that the plaintiffs pay its legal bill, claiming it largely prevailed on the merits of the case.

The situation has turned out to be far more cruel than if the announced settlement had been small in the first place. The profitability of commercial salmon fishing happened to be at its peak at the time of the spill, but has fallen dramatically since -- mostly for reasons unrelated to the spill -- leaving fishermen in more difficult financial circumstances. Meanwhile, Prince William Sound herring fishing has been wiped out, almost certainly because of the spill. Many fishermen have, for all these years, pinned their hopes of a financial rescue on the expected punitive settlement.

The State of Alaska and the U.S. government had an entirely separate lawsuit against Exxon, which was settled out of court in 1991 for \$1.1 billion, to be paid out over a ten year period. At the time, the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter, and this writer in particular (then on staff) criticized then-Governor Wally Hickel and his attorney general Charlie Cole, as well as the George H.W. Bush administration, considering the settlement inadequate. I long ago came to regret my criticism as unfair, and it is now apparent that the state and federal government, in retrospect, made a prudent decision by settling out of court. This is particularly true because of the good use made of the settlement money, thanks in large part to Charlie Cole, working cooperatively with the Clinton Administration, and thanks as well to the grassroots organizing efforts of the Sierra Club. Approximately half the settlement amount was used to purchase more than 600,000 acres of spectacular wildlife habitat, and to preserve this land from



Sign in Homer, after Supreme Court decision, expresses community outrage

logging and other development in national and state parks, refuges and forests, leaving a lasting legacy of environmental protection. (See **alaska report**, Aug 99, Mar 98; most issues in 97, 96, 94, 93, 92; Dec 95, Dec 91.)

The fishermen, by contrast, have waited nineteen years only to have their hopes for monetary help and their claims for justice run hard aground on the reef of the U.S. Supreme Court. ♦

-- Pamela Brodie, Alaska Chapter chair

Oil Spill speaker touring in Lower 48

Longtime Cordova, Alaska, activist and biologist Dr. Riki Ott, who publicized Exxon's ongoing negligence and blame in the aftermath of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill disaster, will be in the San Francisco Bay Area mid-November, talking about her new book *Not One Drop—Betrayal and Courage in the Wake of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill*. (See **alaska report** Mar 05 for a review of her previous book, *Sounds truths and Corporate Myth*, pointing out the lingering damaging health effects of the spilled oil.) *

On November 15, 2008, Riki Ott will speak at 1 pm at the San Francisco Green Festival: San Francisco Concourse Exhibition Center, 635 8th St (at Brannan St), San Francisco CA.

On November 18, 2008 at 7:00 pm (hors d'oeuvres & beverages beginning at 6:30 pm), Riki Ott will address the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club at the Adobe Building, 157 Moffett Blvd, in Mountain View, CA.

For a detailed schedule of her book tours this fall and winter, in Washington, Southern California, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin, visit: www.chelseagreen.com/bookstore/item/not_one_drop_paperback/events/%20.

Wolves lose in Alaska election: *ballot initiative defeated*

A ballot measure, Proposition 2, on Alaska's August 26, 2008 primary election ballot sought to restrict private pilots from hunting and shooting wolves and grizzlies from aircraft. The Sierra-Club supported measure went down to defeat, unlike two similar initiatives which won easily in previous elections and had temporarily stopped predator control measures.

Sponsor Joel Bennett had this to say about the defeat of the measure: "Proposition #2 failed to pass on August 26, 2008, but with over 75,000 **yes** votes, the results say a lot about Alaskans' objections to the state's current open-ended predator control program. We believe that to succeed, wildlife and public resource management programs must enjoy broad public support. Alaska's program clearly does not. Unfortunately, this controversy will continue until a more reasonable predator control program is established."

Governor Sarah Palin's strong promotion of predator control measures featuring aerial shooting, plus her opposition to this ballot measure probably helped defeat the initiative. Recently, Palin had authorized a special bounty to serve as an incentive to aerial gunners to kill more wolves in the control areas.

Author Nick Jans, representing Alaskans For Wildlife, which sponsored Measure 2, said, "As the August 26 primary neared opponents of Ballot Measure 2 were up to their usual tricks: a poorly-aimed barrage of misinformation, distortion, and fear-mongering....the Alaska Outdoor Council [AOC]... was grasping at straws, huffing and puffing about ... the danger posed by wolves.... Never mind that there has never been one documented fatality caused by a wild wolf in the *entire* history of the state. And never mind that we actually support science-driven wildlife management, including predator control (even in helicopters) when necessary."

Said Jans, "Opposition arguments against the ballot measure had suggested that supporters were "Outside greens" imposing their will on Alaskans. "my two co-sponsors and I are...longtime Alaskans, with over a century of hunting, guiding, and subsistence living between us. Not only are we Alaskans, but so are the folks who've twice voted by large margins to limit aerial predator control—people from across the state, including thousands of rural residents who don't pay lip service to subsistence; they live it. I know, you've been told it was all wolf-hugging city-dwellers to blame, but check the voting record from the 1996 and 2000 elections. In 1996, 36 of Alaska's 40 districts, many of them rural, voted to curtail aerial wolf "control". In 2000, a long list of Native bush communities again voted the same way.

"...the Board of Game and the AOC [argued] that Alaska's predator control program is a model of scientific wildlife management. That comes as news to the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, the American Society of Mammalogists, plus an independent group of more than 120

scientists who have all formally critiqued the state's program over the past dozen years, and found it lacking.

As with the two previous ballot measures opposing aerial predator "control", the Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter vigorously worked for this year's ballot measure both through volunteer efforts and financial help.

Keeping the Arctic Refuge safe from Congress's drilling mania

Spurred by record-high prices for gasoline during this past summer of 2008, a mad dash to open new areas to oil and gas drilling—further fueled by the industry that would benefit—has grabbed attention nationwide. Big Oil has spread its message far and wide, telling us the only path to lower gas prices is through new drilling. They want us to allow permanent environmental destruction in the wild spaces we love in America for a few cents off a gallon in 20 years. This unreasoned and unreasoning drilling "mania" has assaulted Congress this September and has influenced all attempts to get an energy bill passed.

For the moment, the much-threatened coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been kept out of all attempts at an energy bill, an appropriations bill and other matters before Congress—which, as September draws to a close, is preparing to pack up and go home for electioneering. However, drilling advocates are looking at every single bill under discussion – no matter how unrelated – to try to tack on Arctic drilling, so it is important to remain alert to the last minute....

Big Oil has spread its message far and wide, telling us the only path to lower gas prices is through new drilling. They want us to allow permanent environmental destruction in the wild spaces in America for a few cents off a gallon in 20 years.

A call for Arctic drilling was also left out of the official Republican party "platform", in deference to the party's presidential candidate John McCain, who does not support opening the coastal plain to development. However, his choice of a running mate who openly calls for Arctic oil development, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, effectively negates his stated drilling opposition.

Americans want Clean Energy solutions

In response to the recent drilling push, the counter-⇒⇒

Alaska Wilderness Week report from Washington

"Politics, as usual," one Democratic legislative aide says to us, as we quiz her about the energy bills that would be introduced later in the week.

The week, you ask?

It is Wilderness Week, the five days or so in early September when volunteer activists from all over the US came to Washington, D.C. to defend the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Teshekpuk

House Natural Resources Committee chairman Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) receives an award at the Wilderness Week Congressional reception for his defense of America's wild lands



photo: Mark Stilp, Alaska Wilderness League

Lake in northern Alaska, and much of the American Outer Continental Shelf, from a big push by irresponsible oil companies and many of their allies in Congress to



Lorraine Peter, Gwich'in leader from Old Crow, Canada, and Frank Keim at Washington DC Wilderness Week

open new places to drilling. Almost 150 participants from all walks of life, including many Native Americans from northern Alaska and northern Canada, came to the nation's capital September 6 to 10, to express, politely, their outrage against the mistaken notion that more drilling for oil and gas is the only way for America to solve the problem of high gas and heating oil costs.

As an Alaskan, I accompanied volunteers from Maine, North Carolina and New York to their meetings with legislative staff of their states' members of Congress. And, together with participants from other states, we joined a rally on the Capitol lawn against "Big Oil" to counter a "drilling push" press conference by some industry advocates. We also enjoyed a reception hosted by the Canadian Embassy to thank Americans helping to preserve the habitat of the Porcupine Caribou herd, which spends about half the year in northwest Canada. During our last night in D.C. we attended a Congressional reception, which gave us the opportunity to applaud some of Congress's environmental leaders and to meet their staffs.

Everyone we met with thought there were other more creative solutions to this problem than drilling, including conservation, efficiency and alternative technologies, such as wind, solar, tidal, river and geothermal power, as well as many others.

Unfortunately these aides also felt that probably nothing at all would get done by Congress this session. "We'll be lucky to get a Continuing Resolution passed to fund the government through this November," they complained. "But the Arctic Refuge will probably be safe, at least for this year."

We were heartened by this sentiment, but we weren't about to sit back on our haunches and wait and see. Not by a long shot. We vowed to continue fighting this battle when we got home. Letters, emails, phone calls, faxes, editorials and letters to the editor are all important tools we can all use to try to keep these special American lands and waters safe from the clutches of big oil. ♦

The Arctic & Energy

-- from previous page

message from all who care about protecting the environment and guarding our special and protected areas in Alaska and off our coasts is simple and clear; wilderness week participants (see article, this page) **proclaimed this important message in Congressional offices, and the message needs to resound loudly, everywhere, often:**

Average Americans are being squeezed by high energy prices, while the oil companies are relentlessly taking advantage of them to push their drilling agenda. In fact, the only beneficiary of increased off-shore and Arctic drilling will be the oil companies – not the public. While regular American families are breaking the bank to fill their gas tanks, oil companies are celebrating billions of dollars in profits.

Offshore drilling won't lower gas prices today, tomorrow, or even significantly in a decade; it will simply bolster Big Oil's bottom line. A comprehensive clean and renewable energy plan will make America more energy independent, give consumers some relief at the pump, and lower the dangerous carbon emissions that are making global warming worse. Emphasizing public transit and interstate rail will give American families much needed transportation choices so they won't have to drive everywhere.

Do we want to move America forward to 21st century energy solutions, or do we simply want to help the oil companies? You know the answer; **Get the word out!** ♦

-- Vicky Hoover, (using Wilderness Week fact sheets)

-- Frank Keim, Fairbanks

Izembek Refuge and Wilderness in Peril

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge – that remote area in southwest Alaska (near the end of the Alaska Peninsula, about 600 miles from Anchorage) where the Alaska delegation has sought for more than ten years to build a road as a challenge to our national wilderness system -- is back in the news. Early this Congress (Dec '97) we reported on the new twist to the issue – their bill to mandate a land exchange with the state of Alaska, that would allow the small part of the refuge which they covet for a road to go to the state (and thus be taken out of designated wilderness, so that their road could be built.)

Sierra Club activists had hoped the bill—with its ominous precedent for wilderness nationwide—would die in committee, but a last-ditch maneuver by Alaska junior Senator Lisa Murkowski, as a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, put it back on the table. Senator Murkowski used procedural tactics to assure this bill got included in the Sept. 11 Committee mark up, and, since she had the vote of Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), the majority in the Committee failed to defeat the measure. Due in part to efforts by committee majority staff, the bill was amended in mark-up to require that a road could not automatically result from the land exchange; a full public involvement process according to NEPA (The National Environmental Policy Act) would first need to be followed. However, this minor procedural improvement would be unlikely to alter the final result—a road across wilderness. Sierra Club remains adamantly opposed. Along with other bills marked up on the same day, the Izembek bill was attached to the large omnibus package of lands bills – mostly good – that Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee chairman Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) has prepared.

Sierra Club will continue to work with our champions in Congress to oppose Izembek's continued inclusion in the omnibus public lands and wilderness bill that is to be taken up by a November "lame-duck" session of Congress.

Here are a few talking points for letters – for further information, contact Vicky Hoover, (415)977-5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org, or see **alaska reports**: of Jun 08, Dec 07, Dec, Sep 03, Dec, Sep, May 01, Nov, Jan 99, Oct 98, Sep 97.

***The land swap would sacrifice quality for quantity—206 acres of critical, internationally recognized wildlife habitat for 61,000 acres of proposed exchange land lacking comparable habitat for the important wildlife species of the Izembek Lagoons Complex.*

***A road through Wilderness is not compatible with the conservation, subsistence, and treaty-obligation purposes for which Congress established the Izembek Refuge.*

*** The globally significant wildlife values of Izembek National Wildlife Refuge should not be compromised. A road would pose serious threats to the vast waterfowl and shorebird populations, to the Alaska Peninsula caribou herd, wolves, and extremely high densities of brown bears.*

*** Taking lands out of Wilderness for a road would set a terrible precedent for America's National Wilderness Preservation System, which is intended to provide permanent protection.*

⇒ WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please contact your Senators now and urge them to do anything they can to have the Murkowski/Stevens Izembek land exchange/roads bill removed from the omnibus public lands measure. This bill is bad for Wilderness and bad for America; the road would cost a lot of money and is not needed, as the present hovercraft system for native community medical evacuation is working. *If this area can be taken out of wilderness for a development scheme, then no designated wilderness area in our country is safe from attack.*

Reach your Senators at the Capitol switchboard, (202)224-3121, or write them at their local state offices. ♦

Yukon Flats proposed land exchange delayed

The US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) is delaying a final decision on a proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge land exchange until fall of 2009 because of extra time needed to complete complex land appraisals required to assure that "the exchange is an equal value exchange".

Conservationists heard news of the delay with relief. Sierra Club and others oppose the proposed land exchange because it would facilitate oil and gas development in sensitive areas. The proposal is for Doyon, the Alaska Native Regional Corporation of Interior Alaska, to trade 150,000 acres of its holdings in the Refuge for the surface and subsurface estates of 110,000 acres of "core" upland refuge lands, plus rights to oil and gas in 97,000 additional contiguous acres. (See **alaska report**, March 2008.)

The original U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the land exchange proposal was out for public comment in early 2008 from February to May. The Service received more than 100,000 comments on the proposal. Sierra Club comments in opposition emphasized *incompatible development: harmful effects on subsistence, and impacts on proposed wilderness and on Beaver Creek designated wild river.* ♦



– Barry Herem ©1997

"Raven Rex"

Obituary: Wilderness Champion John F. Seiberling, 1919 -2008



Former Representative John F. Seiberling, (D-OH), who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1971 to 1987, died on August 2 at age 89.

Congressman Seiberling, along with the late Rep. Morris K. Udall (D-AZ) and the late Sen. Paul Tsongas (D-MA) led the successful effort in Congress to enact the Alaska National Interest Lands Act of 1980, (ANILCA), the largest public land conservation act in the nation's history. The Act provides permanent retention and protection in public ownership for 103 million acres of federal land in Alaska, and gives the same statutory protection to another 27 million acres of pre-Act national parks and wildlife refuges established by earlier executive orders that could be—and some were—modified at any time by the executive branch for resource extraction and other incompatible uses.

Seiberling realized what was at stake in Alaska when he visited on an inspection trip in 1973, soon after he became a member of the House Interior and Insular Affairs (now Natural Resources) Committee. At that time the Interior Department was studying the potential new parks, wild rivers, and refuges known as the "D-2" lands. (In Sec. 17 (d)(2) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, Congress directed an eight-year withdrawal from state land selections and extractive uses of 80 million acres of unreserved federal land for study and potential addition by Congress to the park, refuge, wild & scenic rivers, and national forest systems.)

From 1972 through 1976 Congress took no action aside from the introduction of bills by pro-D-2 members on behalf of the Alaska Coalition of conservation and other civic organizations. President Richard Nixon had opposed the D-2 withdrawals, and President Gerald Ford had shown little interest. With no support by these administrations, the bills languished in committee.

Rep. Seiberling's—and the nation's—big break came following the November 1976 election. Georgia conservationist governor

Jimmy Carter, who had endorsed the D-2 effort during his campaign for president, moved into the White House and began preparing his own recommendations to Congress. Rep. Udall, also a public lands champion and new chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, knew of Seiberling's intense interest in the Alaska lands issue and asked him to chair a new special subcommittee devoted exclusively to resolving the issue.

With only two sessions of Congress left before the D-2 withdrawals were due to expire—which would have left the D-2 lands exposed to potential state land selections,

the 1872 mining law, oil and gas leasing, roads, clear-cut logging and other extractive uses, Rep. Seiberling promptly held field hearings around the nation, including Alaska, and heard overwhelming public support for saving the D-2 lands. Much of this support was the result of all-out grassroots organizing by the Sierra Club and other Alaska Coalition groups. This citizens' response armed Udall, Seiberling, and President Carter with vital political capital as they approached the forthcoming struggle in Congress.

In Alaska, where opposition to the D-2 preservation effort was near-hysterical on the part of pro-development groups, the Sierra Club and the Coalition "got out the vote" at the hearings in Juneau, Fairbanks and Anchorage. Overall, it was a tie in Juneau and Anchorage, with a slight advantage for extractive interests in Fairbanks.

During the subsequent Interior Committee deliberations, Rep. Seiberling shaped H. R. 39 (Udall-Seiberling), while contending with a subcommittee (and full committee) dominated by pro-development western state members led by Rep. Don Young (R-AK) -- the same Rep. Young recently famous for his "bridges to nowhere" in Alaska. In 1979, the opponents had the votes in full committee to substitute a pro-development, anti-D-2 bill for H.R. 39. In response, Seiberling and Udall offered their bill in the floor debate in the full House, backed strongly by President Carter and the Alaska Coalition's national campaign for passage of their bill. Their stunning, massive victory set the standard for the subsequent Senate debate and final Act in 1980.

Rep. Seiberling also sponsored numerous other wilderness and public land protection acts in other states, including Cuyahoga National Park that secures a stretch of the Cuyahoga River as it flows past his home town of Akron. After the passage of the Act, he was diligent in opposing the anti-ANILCA policies of the Reagan-Watt administration.

Yet it is his successful Alaska campaign that is his outstanding, historic achievement. Americans who value the freedom of the public lands are deeply indebted to the gentleman from Ohio, the Honorable John F. Seiberling. ♦

-- Jack Hession

A biography of John Seiberling, entitled *A Passion for the Land: John F. Seiberling and the Environmental Movement*, by noted author and Sierra Club National Parks Committee member Daniel Nelson, of Akron, Ohio, will be published next year. (See alaska report, Mar 05 for a review of his book *Northern Landscapes: the Struggle for Wilderness Alaska*.)

"The grandson of the founder of Goodyear Tire and Rubber, John Seiberling chose to live as a public servant and conservationist, helping to draft more than 60 parks-related bills and helping to protect over 129 million acres of public lands -- including huge areas of Alaska wilderness. America needs more leaders like him."

-- Dave Scott, Columbus, Ohio
(Dave Scott has volunteered for Sierra Club in many roles, and now serves on the Mission Strategy Advisory Committee.)

Sierra Club Alaska Chapter & Groups Call for ExCom Candidates; election involvement

Now is the time, if you are a member of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club and are interested in running for the executive committee of the chapter or of any of its three groups, or if you would like to nominate someone else. The terms are two years, and half the executive committee members are elected each year. The deadline for submitting nominations, or for submitting petitions for changes to the by-laws, is Friday, October 24.

Please contact any member of the nominating committees:

Alaska Chapter: Pam Brodie, pbrodie@gci.net, (907)235-3855; Richard Hellard, rhellard@gci.net; or Pat Fort, cpfort@uaa.alaska.edu.

Knik Group (Anchorage and South Central Alaska): Pam Brodie, pbrodie@gci.net, (907)235-3855; Judith Stoll, judithinalaska@aol.com; Ethan Lynn, ethan.lynn@maxrudder.com.

Juneau Group (Southeast): Sara Chapell, schapell@aptalaska.net, 907-766-3204; Irene Alexakos, irenealexakos@yahoo.com; Richard Hellard, rhellard@gci.net.

Denali Group (Fairbanks and northern Alaska): Denali Group: Maryellen Oman, maryellen@sierraclubalaska.org, (907)276-4068.

The Nominating Committees will submit their choices from among the nominated candidates on Friday, October 31. Anyone not chosen who still wishes to run can qualify by submitting petitions signed by 15 Chapter mem-

bers by Friday, November 14. The ExCom will appoint an Election Committee by Tuesday, November 11. Ballots will be mailed Friday, December 5. Ballots will be counted by the election committee Tuesday, January 6, 2009. (This notice conforms with chapter and group by-laws.)

In the meantime, please heed the following plea from our Chapter's political committee:

-- Pamela Brodie, Alaska Chapter chair

Dear Sierra Club members and fellow Alaskans,

*Now, more than ever, is the **time to vote**.* Alaska and the nation have had inadequate and backward-thinking leadership for far too long, and it is time for a change. Through the upcoming elections, we have a solid chance at making a positive difference for our environment and our future.

The Sierra Club Political Committee is busy learning all we can about candidates and their stance on environmental issues. Possible endorsements are on the way, and that information will go out to all Alaska Chapter members when available. If you have questions or wish to help, please do not hesitate to contact us.

-- Ethan Lynn, Chair, Alaska Chapter Political Committee, ethan.lynn@maxrudder.com. (907) 306-4138.

*Now, more than ever, is the **time to vote**.*

alaska report

alaska report is the newsletter of the Sierra Club Alaska Task Force, encouraging advocacy on Alaska federal lands issues, particularly as they pertain to the passage and implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

Sierra Club

85 Second Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3456
(415) 977-5500

Edgar Wayburn, M.D., Chairman, Alaska Task Force
Vicky Hoover, Editor

Sierra Club Alaska Field Office

333 West 4th Ave., Suite 307
Anchorage, AK 99501-2341
(907) 276-4048

Trish Rolfe, Alaska Senior Regional Representative
Maryellen Oman, Program Assistant

Sierra Club Washington Office

408 C Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 547-1141

Athan Manuel, Director, Public Lands Team
Myke Bybee, Washington representative



ACTION NEEDED

PEBBLE MINE	P.1-2
IZEMBEK ROAD BILL !	P. 6
ELECTIONS	P. 8

ALSO INSIDE:

TONGASS UPDATE	P. 2
EXXON & SUPREME COURT	P. 3
ARCTIC & ENERGY	P. 4-5
WILDERNESS WEEK	P. 5
JOHN SEIBERLING	P. 7

SEPTEMBER 2008