



Sierra Borealis

alaska report

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
DECEMBER 2012



It's Chapter Election Time: *Look for your ballots in the mail*

Alaska Chapter members: in mid-December, you should receive your Sierra Club election ballot in the mail, to vote for members of the executive committee of the Alaska Chapter, and perhaps also of your regional group. *Please vote.* If your household has a joint membership, both members may vote on the same ballot. Please see the candidate statements on this page and the next.

In addition to the election of candidates to the executive committees, there is also a ballot measure for members of the Juneau Group to change the name to the Tongass Group. This change would reflect the actual membership of the group, which encompasses all of Southeast Alaska, not just the city of Juneau. The Executive Committees of the Juneau Group and the Alaska Chapter recommend a "yes" vote.

-- Pamela Brodie, Chair
Sierra Club Alaska Chapter

Candidates for Alaska Chapter Executive Committee

(all Alaska members, vote for three):

Irene Alexakos:
(Haines)



Living off the grid in Haines. Thirty year member of Sierra Club. Current Secretary of Alaska Chapter and of Juneau Group. Past Chair of Alaska Chapter.

Mike O'Meara: (Homer)



I've been a Sierra Club member since 1968 and, upon moving to Anchorage from Los Angeles the following year, served on the first Alaska Chapter executive committee through the mid 1970s. Moving to the Kachemak Bay area in 1976 caused me to focus most of my energies on environmental struggles there. I participated in the Kachemak Bay Defense Fund effort to keep oil development out of the Bay, and I'm a founding member of the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, Alaska Marine Conservation Council, and Cook Inlet Keeper. After retiring from Homer's Pratt

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Russ Maddox: (Seward)



I have been on the Chapter Executive Committee since 2006 and look forward to serving another term. In 2004 I co-founded Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance to fight for conservation and environmental justice in Seward; by now RBCA is integral to the community and has enjoyed many successes. I still serve on the RBCA Board of Directors. I also serve on the Issues Policy Council of Alaska Conservation Alliance, a statewide forum in which I represent RBCA. My close ties with Sierra Club activism have grown significantly since 2005 when Sierra Club helped fend off the threat of a coal fired

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Candidates for Group Executive Committees

Juneau Group

(Southeast Alaska members, vote for three):

Kevin Hood:

John Muir is a hero of mine for his steadfast championing of the spiritual, esthetic and biocentric values of wild places and for his tireless efforts to defend our remnant wilderness from commodifying interests. I am a Lifetime member of the Sierra Club who strives to carry on in Muir's spirit. We must stand strong behind our environmental laws and not be afraid to challenge commercial entities who seek to subvert them. I also believe that wilderness holds value for all people regardless of their political stripes. Whether people hunt, fish, hike, camp, photograph, paint, admire, meditate, exert, reflect, bond or breathe, wilderness has something deeply rewarding for everyone. The key is to connect people to the land through trips, art, stories - means that appeal to the heart. My family and I live here in Southeast Alaska to cherish its wilderness values. If I am returned to the Executive Committee of the Juneau Group, I pledge to continue defending wild places, upholding environmental laws and touting the benefits of untrammeled landscapes. Thank you for considering me.

Layla Hughes:

I have been in Alaska for the past 10 years working as an environmental lawyer to protect Alaska from unsustainable resource extraction. I especially enjoy being a member of the Sierra Club Juneau Group executive committee because it enables me to focus on many of the issues that are important to us here in southeast Alaska, such as transportation and renewable energy. I also enjoy bringing my Arctic experience to the group to help them engage in important Alaska issues outside of our region. I would welcome the opportunity to continue to help the voice of the Club and its membership be heard by our policy makers.

Mark Rorick:

I have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1991 and became an activist in 1995. I am currently chair of the Sierra Club Juneau Group. My activism has been mainly focused on protecting the Tongass National Forest from logging and from environmentally destructive transportation projects such as the Juneau Road to Skagway and the Juneau to Douglas second crossing. I am very actively involved in campaigning to get all roadless areas in the Tongass protected under the national roadless rule and I will continue to do the same if elected.

Denali Group

(Fairbanks and Interior members, vote for three):

Nancy Kuhn:

I came to Alaska in 1975 because I wanted a place that was "clean" and where I could raise my children free from the pollution I had experienced in Germany where coal soot was pervasive. In my ignorance I thought Alaska was still free of industrial pollution. In 1981 I finally testified at the electrical utility meeting and was shocked to be not only ignored, but felt that I was alone in my distress at the medieval attitude toward pollution. I sat down and was a "good girl" and went home. Now, 30 years later, I have the courage to speak out and to be the activist I am meant to be. I want to align myself with others who have the same values as I. I want to learn to be a more effective voice for the environment and those inhabitants without a strong voice. I'd appreciate being part of the future, working with others who have stepped forward to lead.

Doug McIntosh:

I first came to Alaska in the 1960s and have watched as many things have changed. Some of those changes have been good for the state, however many of them have resulted in a deterioration of the environment. I care about Alaska's wilderness and environment and want to help protect these things. I appreciate the opportunity to do this with the Sierra Club.

Magali Vincent:

While growing up in the Southern French Alps, I spent summers hiking in the mountains and winters skiing. I loved the outdoors and spent one of my happiest summers working for a French national park. I later lived in Canada and now Alaska and love the wilderness and wildlife. Americans are so fortunate to have huge stretches of public land and I want to protect these areas. In 2002 I received the "Volunteer of the Year" award from the Northern Alaska Environmental Center.

Russ Maddox statement -- from page 1

power plant proposal in Seward. I seek the common ground in any campaign and try to broaden our base, as I see that people of all political persuasions share the core values of clean air, water, and wild lands. In 2011, I received the "Conservationist of the Year" award from Northern Alaska Environmental Center for working with the Fairbanks community to document coal waste disposal and pollution in Fairbanks and working with UAF student groups seeking to bring UAF beyond coal power.

Mike O'Meara statement -- from page 1

Museum in 2008, I found time to play a more active role in the Sierra Club again. With the world's unsustainable population grasping for dwindling energy and mineral resources, all of Alaska's remaining unspoiled lands and biological richness continue to be in jeopardy. Unless we make the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy soon, the whole human race is threatened. If elected to another term on the ExCom I'll do my best to help the Alaska Chapter grapple with these challenges. At the same time I believe that to be effective we need the enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and stamina of younger men and women and will seek ways to encourage their participation. ◆

America's Arctic – An overview for the year 2012

The ever-changing Arctic had a busy year in 2012, and still faces ever more challenges to come. Summer of 2012 saw the smallest amount of sea ice ever. Also during summer of 2012, Shell Oil brought two drill rigs into the Arctic Ocean; other shipping traffic increased as well, taking advantage of ice free waters. While the coastal seas were seeing so much potentially damaging activity, hope increased that onshore the public lands in the Arctic – both the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Western Arctic (NPR-A) -- might see the most protections in decades. Let's



Offshore: walrus and other marine wildlife at risk

take a step back to recap this busy year.

The Arctic Ocean is home to some of the most remarkable wildlife in the world. From the mighty polar bear to

the Pacific walrus, the wild creatures of the Arctic depend on the ice to hunt and can suffer devastatingly from the loss of sea ice cover. But Shell Oil and other companies view the reduced ice cover as a way to have more time to exploit Arctic waters. And yet, Shell lost out off the Arctic coast this past summer.

As summer approached, Shell had most of the required approvals to enter Arctic waters this year for its first drilling program in over 20 years. Final approval depended on multiple permits that Shell was late in complying with, including clean air permits. The saga of Shell's efforts to start drilling turned into a true farce:

First, the drill ship nearly ran aground in Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians on its way north. Next, it failed to meet the clean air standards required. Then, the ship damaged its oil spill containment dome during a test. It also had an oil spill response barge that was not sea worthy. Without this support barge, they could not do full-scale drilling, but Shell did get the go-ahead for limited drilling above oil bearing zones. However, no sooner permitted than Shell had to abandon operations within a day because of a massive ice floe approaching from the north. Then Shell had to have its drill ship catch fire while in port. We are not making this up: truth is stranger than fiction.

Overall, it was a terrible summer for Shell Oil. However, wildlife seemed to rejoice with an unusual occurrence of subarctic animals entering the Arctic including killer whales and humpback whales.

On land, 2012 saw a much different perspective. Both the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the National

Petroleum Reserve–Alaska (the Western Arctic) have been undergoing land management planning over the past two years. Both agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management) have produced draft plans with alternatives recommending protection from drilling for over 12 million acres. Final decisions are due soon.

Sierra Club activists optimistically look forward to a good outcome that would prevent development in the most important areas for wildlife—including caribou calving grounds, geese molting areas, and more. It has been a long road to get this far, but all along the way Sierra Club members and volunteers were first in making their voices heard to the managing agencies.

This year, Americans spoke out to protect the Arctic, and passionate Sierrans were standing at the front lines. Through the year we submitted innumerable comments to the Department of the Interior, called the White House thousands of times, and wrote hundreds of Facebook posts to the EPA. We have talked to so many decision makers. We activated our members across the country to hold more than 200 house parties to watch "Frozen Planet," the impressive wildlife DVD; then we met new activists at movie theaters for "To the Arctic," and finally we made a world record for the number of people dressed as polar bears to protect the Arctic!

We had a comment delivery to the White House with over 1 million people urging the president to protect the Arctic Ocean. We held Arctic vigils across the country to stand in solidarity with Alaskans on the North Slope.

In late November Sierra Club sponsored showings in several cities of the documentary "Chasing Ice", that follows acclaimed photographer James Balog and his Extreme Ice Survey, (EIS) via which he discovers dramatic, undeniable evidence of climate change. His beautiful, multi-year time-lapse videos show glaciers vanishing across the circumpolar Arctic, including Alaska.

Stay tuned for announcements for the anticipated new plans for the Refuge and Western Arctic Reserve. We will work hard to make sure the Arctic Ocean is not the stage for another drilling farce next summer. We will

advocate for what is best for Alaskans and Alaska—and for countless Americans who are awed by Alaska's wildness and by its wildlife richness. ♦

-- Lindsey Hajduk



photo: Dan Fitzman

Onshore in the Western Arctic, camping at the Kokolik River

Into Brown Bear Country by Will Troyer

Alaska wildlife biologist Will Troyer sums up more than three decades of his research and management of brown bears in this clearly written account that is amply illustrated with his own fine photos.

The author's credentials are impressive. From 1955 to 1963 he managed the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, one of the major brown bear refuges in Alaska, where he did pioneering research on brown bear behavior, including the first live-trapping and tagging of the animals. After a stint at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, he headed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service team that reviewed the refuges for potential addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Later he was chief wildlife biologist for the National Park Service, doing research primarily at Katmai National Park, a sanctuary with one of the densest population of brown bears in Alaska. After retiring in 1981, he guided photographers and bear viewers along Katmai's Shelikof Strait coastline.

Both veteran travelers and first-time visitors to brown bear country will benefit from his comprehensive coverage of all aspects of a brown bear's life. For example, he dismisses as myth the common notion that brown bears have poor eyesight:

While the antics of bears are fun to watch, bears are often difficult to approach because of their keen senses. Popular belief has it that brown bears have poor eyesight, but I disagree. I think people tend to measure their own sensory perception skills against those of all other creatures. Since we depend primarily on eyesight to distinguish distant objects, we measure an animal's vision against our own. On the other hand, we are astounded at many animals' ability to locate things by smell, because our sense of smell is relatively limited. I have often tried to approach a bear upwind through an open meadow, only to have it run from me when I was still several hundred yards away. I was sure it could not detect me by smell. Bears quickly become aware of moving objects at a great distance. Just try to approach a bear by boat along a lake shore. One soon finds that the animal can spot the moving boat on the water at extreme distances.....

One chapter is devoted to the history of the "Kodiak Bear-Cattle War," in which one battle in the late 1930s led to the establishment in 1941 of the 1,954,611-acre Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, with cattle grazing continuing on adjacent BLM lands. Rancher-bear skirmishes continued through the 40s and 50s, with ranchers pressing for agency predator control. They got what they wanted after Alaska entered the Union

in 1959 and assumed jurisdiction over of fish and wildlife.

In 1963 the ranchers lobbied Governor Bill Egan, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Sen. Ernest Gruening for a bear control program.

Troyer describes the scene that followed:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game responded by employing Dave Henley, a former rancher and World War II fighter pilot, to assist the ranchers in killing bears with the use of an aircraft. Henley mounted a .30 caliber M-1 semi-automatic rifle on top of a Piper Super Cub so that it would shoot above the propeller and be fired by an electronic device. Equipping the rifle with a Nydar optical sight, a scope used by the military in World War II, made it a very effective means of killing bears. Operating in as much secrecy as possible, Henley and his assistant, a volunteer, shot thirty-five bears from the air during the summer of 1963. The bears they killed were selected at random and often miles from any cattle.

Secrecy ended when some Kodiak bear guides gave photos of the plane to the press and national sportsmen's and conservation magazines. Although the resulting uproar brought to an end the aerial gunning, ADF&G shifted to ground-based bear reduction in the ranching areas by "lengthening the bear hunting season and encouraging hunting on or near the [grazing] leases." This effort continued until 1970, when the agency finally halted the program.

Troyer concludes his account by asking, "Will the brown bear survive the changes that have now been set in many regions of Alaska, or will it go the way of the grizzly in the western United States and the brown bear of Europe?" He's worried about the future of brown bears, given the effect of increasing Alaska human population and the resource extraction going on or planned in Alaska.

As part of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 Congress set aside millions of acres of critically important brown bear habitat: Admiralty Island National Monument and Wilderness; the expanded and largely wilderness Katmai National Park; Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve; Alaska Peninsula and

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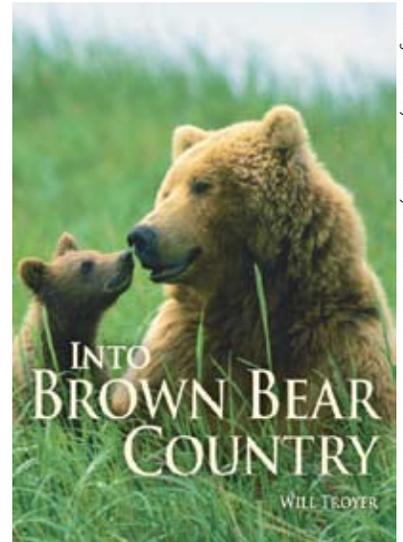


Image courtesy of University of Alaska Press

Kayaking Tsunami Cleanup in Prince William Sound

A special conservation and service outing

Prince William Sound is one of Alaska's premier kayaking destinations. This wild, remote, and beautiful sheltered coastline just south of Anchorage is a special gem among the crown jewels of wilderness experiences. A Sierra Club national outing in July 2013 offers a unique opportunity to participate in two events that are critically important to the preservation of this storied region.

First, massive amounts of debris from the Japan tsunami are headed to Prince William Sound. According to Chris Pallister of the nonprofit Gulf of Alaska Keeper Organization, "... this is the single greatest environmental pollution event that has ever hit the west coast of North America. . . It far exceeds the Santa Barbara or Exxon Valdez oil spills in gross tonnage and also geographic scope." While some light debris already arrived in 2012, the heavier, current-driven debris is expected in 2013. The magnitude of the 2013 cleanup task is unprecedented. Our trip will be part of this historic clean-up effort.

Second, as 2013 unrolls and brings us closer to



photo courtesy of Mark Luttrell

the big wilderness celebration year of 2014 -- 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act -- the Sierra Club and others in Alaska want to seek wilderness status for the huge College Fjord-Nellie Juan Wilderness Study Area surrounding Prince William Sound, part of the Chugach National Forest. Currently, the Chugach, arguably America's wildest and least roaded national forest, has *no* (zero) designated wilderness. The second part of this trip's service work is to assist the Forest Service in assessing wilderness characteristics of the area to help them as the agency starts to revise the land management plan for the Chugach National Forest.

"Assessing wilderness characteristics" is a formal requirement for agencies that manage our federal public lands as they review the condition of roadless lands. For the specific Congressionally-legislated WSA in Prince William Sound, the agency is mandated to manage the area in accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act. We'll learn more about how all this works and discuss why America's 1964 Wilderness Act is such a major cultural and environmental achievement. Some of our observations may actually become a part of Chugach's revised plan.

So while on the one hand this outing will help return Prince William Sound to its natural state -- at the same time it can help influence its future preservation as designated wilderness. And, the trip offers participants a true wilderness experience without heavy backpacks.

Paddling these waters is the perfect way to explore the sweeping mingled land and sea scapes of Prince William Sound. Our double kayaks are stable, quiet, and can go places other vessels cannot reach. The silent visitor may see wildlife like bald eagles, whales, seals, sea otters, and bears, just to name a few.

Trip leader Jan Lockie says, "The current trip plan--developed in cooperation with Forest Service staff--is to paddle and camp along the coast of Knight Island. Our group, plus kayaks

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Will Troyer book review

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Becharof National Wildlife Refuges. The Kodiak Refuge received statutory status but no wilderness. Almost all of Izembek Refuge was placed in the Wilderness System.

The author recognizes these protected areas as the key strongholds of the brown bears of Alaska, and ends his celebration of the brown bear, a creature he deeply admires and respects, with this call to arms:

I hope that Alaskans and other U.S. Citizens will demand that, in regions such as the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and Admiralty Island, the government protect wilderness resources so that brown bears can thrive in abundance. We must draw the battle lines now and not retreat. We can not let resource developers set the standards and still expect bears to survive in the world. Viewing remnants of these animal populations in zoos or fenced enclosures may be good enough for some people, but it is not good enough for me.

Brown bears and grizzlies are among the most majestic wild animals that live in North America. In Alaska, these giant bears symbolize the lofty mountains, smoking volcanoes, ancient glaciers, vast wilderness, and scenic grandeur that define the great state. If the bears disappear from these lands, then we as humans have seriously failed in our stewardship of this earth.

Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press 2005
8 x 10, 152 pp, color photos, bibliography, index
\$24.95. www.alaska.edu/uapress/ ◆

--Jack Hession

Huge Prince of Wales Island timber sale causes concern

and gear, will be transported by water taxi from Whittier to the first of two base camps. Once there we will be on our own until the water taxi picks us up at the end of the week. We have a general route in mind, however, weather, tides, and any safety considerations will dictate our movements.

"We aim to spend two to three nights at our first camp, paddling out each day to collect debris to be picked up later by USFS or other cleanup partner vessels. Midweek we will pack our gear into our kayaks and paddle to a second base camp farther along the Knight Island coastline to continue our work, paddling to locations near camp.

"The trip officially starts in Anchorage on the morning of Tuesday, July 2, and ends back in Anchorage on the evening of July 8. A pre-trip meeting on Monday, July 1 lets trip participants get acquainted and also solve any last-minute equipment challenges. We will depart early Tuesday morning from Anchorage for the two-hour drive to Whittier by charter bus. There we will pick up our kayaking equipment and load everything onto our charter boat for the ride out to Knight Island.

"Before beginning the paddling portion of the trip we will take time for kayak instructions and safety information about coastal paddling and cold water. We'll learn how to fit personal gear plus our group food and equipment into those tiny kayak hatches. Once oriented to our boats, weather permitting, we will set out for a "shakedown cruise" so we'll be ready for our first cleanup day. On July 8th, our water taxi will pick us up from the second camp and transport us to Whittier to board our charter bus back to Anchorage."

Jan Lockie has been visiting Alaska for over 15 years and has led several trips in Prince William Sound. However, this is a new itinerary for her. As she has not paddled these particular waters, she invites trip members to bring a spirit of adventure as leader and participants explore together.

Jan adds, "As U.S. Forest Service volunteers, we will begin our project with a comprehensive safety orientation. This will include very specific instructions as to what debris we will clean up and what we will leave alone, reporting its location to the USFS or other agencies for special handling." In the words of our agency liaison, "You will be assisting in a dirty job, no doubt, but also a rewarding and historic one."

Also on the trip's leadership team are assistant leader Rebecca Dameron and conservation officer Vicky Hoover.

Read about the trip at: <http://natdev.sierraclub.org/outingsdev/national/brochure/13019a.aspx> ◆

-- Jan Lockie and Vicky Hoover

The comment period just ended for a massive proposed timber sale on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska -- the Big Thorne Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Activists in the Juneau Group, and elsewhere in Southeast Alaska, have spent considerable effort in providing detailed comments and concerns regarding the project.

The Big Thorne DEIS proposes to harvest timber from approximately 5,000 acres on Prince of Wales Island south of Coffman Cove, around the community of Thorne Bay and out to the Control Lake area north of Klawock. The DEIS evaluates a no-action alternative and four action alternatives that would provide between 93 and 189 million board feet (MMBF) of timber available for harvest. Three of the five alternatives include over 2,000 acres of older young-growth treatments.

None of the alternatives include entry into inventoried roadless areas (IRAs). Issues addressed by the alternatives include: timber supply and economics; old-growth habitat land use designation; wildlife and subsistence use; and watershed effects. The agency's Proposed Action for the project is Alternative 2 -- a plan to log about 123 MMBF of timber on about 4,944 old-growth acres, construct 35 miles of temporary roads, and reconstruct 19 miles of National Forest System roads.

According to longtime Tongass activist Larry Edwards, with Greenpeace in Sitka, "This is by far the largest timber project proposal (both acres and mmbf) in about 20 years, at which time the Ketchikan Pulp Corporation mill was still logging under its 50-year contract.

"Although IRAs are not proposed to be logged, the island's ecosystem is in critical condition from many decades of intensive logging there on national forest, Native corporation, and other lands. This is an unconscionable project for an important island ecosystem that is being pushed to the limit. (Prince of Wales is the nation's third largest island, behind Hawaii and Kodiak.)

"Also relevant to concerns over this timber project is the fact that the US Fish and Wildlife Service is evaluating an ESA petition for the Alexander Archipelago wolf, which gives special focus to the isolated and genetically distinct population on Prince of Wales Island. Biologists have determined the island's wolf population has recently declined substantially, although the current population is yet to be determined. Deer habitat and the density of roads are issues of great importance to the viability of this population." ◆



Roads to Resources Update

We've been reporting on "Roads to Resources" proposals for quite a while now. These are mega-transportation projects throughout Alaska intended to aid industrial development and to be built (and funded) by the state. These projects do not have the best interests of Alaskans in mind, but rather aim to benefit corporations. These are major projects so their progress is slow-going, but here is a brief update on the three road proposals: Ambler Road, Umiat Road, and the Road to Nome.

The Ambler Road is in an early stage with many possible routes and options being studied, including those involving rail and coastal ports. The most likely route is a 220-mile long road connecting the Ambler Mining District to the Dalton Highway (at mile 135) for an estimated \$430 million. The project is undergoing environmental field studies, fish surveys, and more. The state hopes to complete the permitting process in the next three years to then begin construction, an ambitious timeline. Heavy opposition to the project comes from a community group formed for that purpose, called the Brooks Range Council.

The Road to Umiat is another mega-project that has received vehement opposition from local tribes and communities across the North Slope. (See *Sierra Borealis*, June 2011) This 100-mile road would connect the southwest border of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska at the Colville River to the Dalton Highway or the Spine Road south of Nuiqsut, probably costing over \$360 million. This project would cut across important caribou migration corridors and affect subsistence areas. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared for the road. Although delayed multiple times, a draft is now scheduled for early 2014. At the same time, a Comprehensive Health Impact Assessment is being written to address the public health concerns expressed by local communities on the road, subsequent development, and impacts to subsistence.

Finally, the Road to Nome has been shortened for the first phase of the project, referred to as the Tanana Road. Unlike the other projects, the Tanana community supports the construction of this road. It is also the only proposed road that connects a village to the main road system. (Umiat and the Ambler Mining District destinations are not inhabited villages.) This is just a 39-mile segment that will cost \$69 million to complete, and the state hopes to begin construction in summer 2013. The road will end on the south side of the Yukon River, so a ferry, a ferry port authority, and an ice road system would be required. ◆

-- Lindsey Hajduk

Victory Corps: Sierra Club and the 2012 Election

2012 was an election season like no other. No one could miss the tirade of news about the campaigns that infiltrated tv, radio, door knobs and telephones—and for good reason: there was so much at stake. More than \$6 billion was spent in the presidential election alone.

The Sierra Club took our involvement in these elections further than ever before. Not only did the Sierra Club make candidate and ballot endorsements across the country, as has become standard, but we sent our organizers to work exclusively on the elections in key states in what we call our "Victory Corps" campaign.

The Sierra Club had four main goals this election cycle: to re-elect the president and our champions, maintain a Senate pro-environment majority, defend our issues, and expand markets for renewable energy. Sierra Club sent 63 staff to work on 53 competitive races. Through our work, we engaged Sierra Club members and activists to take part in the candidates' campaigns. Through our grassroots presence we furthered our issues while developing champions. We did an enormous amount of work to talk to voters. Our organizers recruited 3,307 on-the-ground volunteers, engaged more than 9,000 online members, built 349 political team leaders, and met with 544 leaders across the country.



As important as Alaska is, politically it was not a swing state, so I found myself traveling to a swing state to help elect good candidates. I will be eternally grateful to Sierra Club member Heidi Plonski for housing me for four weeks in Las Vegas while I worked long hours in Nevada's congressional district

3. Sierra Club had four staff working in Nevada: Andy Bessler (AZ), Eliza Kretzmann (NM), Elspeth Cordua (NV), and me (AK). Though our candidate in NV03 did not receive a majority of the vote, good support work was done here and for Nevada's new Congressional district. Of Nevada's five federal races, Sierra Club endorsed in four, and we won two: Dina Titus (NV01) and Steven Horsford (NV04). For the Nevada state legislature, Sierra Club backed eight candidates for state senate with five winners, and endorsed 25 candidates for state assembly and won 23. Overall, we saw amazing success.

The highlight for me in serving in the Victory Corps was connecting with our amazing volunteers in the Club. Nevada has volunteers who put regularly put in 10 hour days, have their fingers on the pulse of Nevada politics, and made a huge impact on these races. Southern Nevada super volunteer Teresa Crawford knocked on over 4,000 doors this election cycle. Our very own Sierra Borealis editor Vicky Hoover traveled from California to Las Vegas to spend a week knocking on doors (sometimes with me!) and calling hundreds of Nevadans. The connections with our members made the 2012 election cycle all the more memorable. ◆

-- Lindsey Hajduk

Thanking Emily Fehrenbacher

Emily Fehrenbacher is leaving the Alaska staff position of Beyond Coal Organizer that she has had for more than four years. Emily leaves some big shoes (Xtra Tufts, most likely) to fill! Emily has worked tirelessly to stop coal mining in Alaska.

While we will surely miss Emily at the Club's Anchorage office, we are happy to say that she has taken a position to continue to work against coal and in her new capacity will be only a few blocks away. She will be the Field Director of the Coal SWAT Team for the Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE). Emily says, "This effort is a continuation of the Valley Summer Canvass program focusing on grassroots organizing for the coal campaigns in Alaska."

The last few years Emily worked tirelessly to stop coal mines in the Mat-Su Valley, and she has contributed so much to our Alaska office: from managing summer interns, to being deposed in lawsuits, to making innumerable phone calls, to lobbying in Juneau, to enduring endless borough meetings, to talking into bull horns at local events—it's impossible to list everything she has done

When I think of the first couple weeks I began working for the Sierra Club I remember going with Emily to a community meeting in the Valley. It was the first time that the community was going to hear about the negative aspects of a proposed coal mine that would border their

home properties and that had been portrayed as offering jobs. So Emily's was a wild position for anyone to be in. But I remember Emily calmly going over the situation, explaining some options, and making friends with the residents. This was the start of many crazy months to come, when Emily would pour her heart and soul into fighting this project alongside many good people. That's what makes Emily such an amazing organizer. When coal gets thrown in her face, she wipes it off and just keeps going.

For those of you who know Emily, you know her personality is going to be missed most. When you're stressed about an event, Emily will calm you down. When you need to laugh, just talk to Emily. When you're confused about a timeline, Emily will clear it up. When you need a cookie break, go along with Emily and you've got it!

So, goodbye, Emily, and hello. We want to keep on working with you to get Alaska beyond coal. ♦

-- Lindsey Hajduk



Sierra Borealis / alaska report

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