



Sierra Borealis *alaska report*

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
MARCH 2020



Arctic drilling loses two more big investors JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo drop the Arctic

On February 24, JPMorgan Chase announced that they will no longer fund Arctic Alaska oil drilling. As the largest bank in the U.S. and the biggest funder of oil and gas globally and in the Arctic, Morgan Chase sends a strong signal to the industry by this decision. The new sustainability policy described by Morgan Chase commits \$200 billion to United Nations' sustainable development goals and precludes any backing for new Arctic oil development.

On March 2, Wells Fargo announced its own new policy against investments in Arctic oil and gas drilling and became the third major U.S. bank to withdraw from such unpopular and anti-environmental investment projects.

These actions followed months of pressure from Alaska Native leaders, some members of Congress, and wilderness, climate, and human rights activists, who all made it clear: *funding exploitation of sacred public lands is bad business*. For the Gwich'in people of Northeast Alaska and northwest Canada,



photo: from Sierra Club 'Hitched'

Gwich'in leaders send a powerful message

protecting their traditional way of life that depends on the health of the Porcupine caribou herd –which calves each summer in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a matter of basic human rights. The Gwich'in

people call the Refuge the «Sacred Place Where Life Begins» because their culture, traditions, and community are deeply tied to the Coastal Plain--biological heart of the Refuge.

Morgan Chase's February 24 announcement followed that in December of Goldman Sachs, which was the first major U.S. bank to drop financing for Arctic drilling.

Although the Trump administration has granted official permission -- continued page 2

⇒ *You are invited!*
to the next general meeting of Sierra Club Alaska Chapter, in Anchorage.

WHEN: March 25, 7 pm

WHERE: at ARC (Arctic Rec Center)
4855 Arctic Blvd. south of Tudor Road.

SPEAKER: Shawn Lyons from the Alaska Hut Association.

For Sierra Club members and interested public

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Banks withdraw from Arctic funding -- from page 1

to open the Arctic Coastal Plain to drilling, oil companies can't begin to operate there without major investments from banks. We're making an urgent push to force all the major banks to pull their funding. And it is working. This drilling is already seen as a risky investment. Now that JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, and Goldman Sachs have cut off funding for Big Polluters, we have the momentum to shut down this project for good — especially if other big financial institutions such as Bank of America also learn from customers and from the concerned public **that it's unacceptable to fund drilling in the Arctic Refuge** and that we won't stand by while they disregard Indigenous rights and destroy a priceless wild ecosystem.

Any drilling in the Arctic Refuge would release even more carbon pollution and would cause immense ecological damage to this intact environment that is a true national treasure. A vital ecosystem that supports the trans-boundary Porcupine caribou herd, wolves, imperiled polar bears, and nearly 200 species of birds, the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is already being severely impacted by climate change.

Without this complex ecosystem and the species they depend on, **the Gwich'in people's way of life would be irreversibly threatened.** We must do more to accelerate our transition to a clean energy economy and halt the Trump administration's «drill baby drill» agenda, with its backward looking focus on fossil fuels.

Under Morgan Chase's new policy, announced as part of its broader efforts to promote clean-energy consumption, the bank is also halting loans, capital markets and advisory services to companies that draw most of their revenues from coal mining.

➡ WHAT YOU CAN DO:

JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, and Wells Fargo understand drilling in the Arctic Refuge would be a toxic investment and too big of a financial risk to take. Please help pressure other big U.S. banks to follow their lead.

Send a message to banks who haven't yet taken action! Tell Wells Fargo, CitiBank, Bank of America, and Morgan Stanley to reject funding oil and gas development in the Arctic--or find themselves left behind in a twenty-first century world steadily moving away from fossil fuels. ❖

How Arctic exploration threatens polar bears—a new study

On February 27, Alaska wildlife advocates celebrated "International Polar Bear Day", to bring attention to the challenges polar bears face in a warming Arctic. It was a good occasion to point out the way that polar bear science has taken on increasing significance, as studies show how the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is more important than ever to bears during the sensitive denning and birthing season. The more we learn, the clearer it becomes: to protect polar bears, we must protect the Arctic Refuge.

(NOTE: The English word "Arctic" originates from the Greek *αρκτος* "árktos" meaning Great Bear, for the constellation Ursa Major (or the Big Dipper). An integral connection! A healthy Arctic includes a healthy bear population.)

A new study casts doubt on the effectiveness of what is sometimes considered a state-of-the-art tool to help industry avoid injuring or disturbing polar bears by detecting their dens in the snow. Using industry reports of forward-looking infrared (FLIR) surveys from 2004 to 2016 and comparing them with on-the-ground documentation of dens across the North Slope, the researchers found that the infra red rays could not detect body warmth of a polar bear in very deep dens. Only 45 percent of the 33 dens were located by the FLIR cameras, according to the *New York Times* of Feb. 27, 2020.

Pregnant polar bears dig dens in the snow late in the year and emerge with their cubs the following spring. Undetected dens could be disturbed or even crushed during a seismic survey, in which large trucks traverse the land in a grid pattern, accompanied by movable supply depots and camps for workers..

During the same week, the *Washington Post* also highlighted the inability to find polar bear dens, in its article, "Arctic drilling operators can't accurately pinpoint polar bear dens—which means they can't avoid destroying them." The article emphasized the serious consequence as development activity such as seismic testing and road building could chase females with new young away from dens--long before cubs are strong enough to survive the rigors of life on Arctic terrain. The animals could also be crushed or buried alive.

The new study, published Feb. 27 in the journal *Plos One*, was led by Tom Smith, a wildlife ecologist at Brigham Young University in Utah and also a scientific adviser to Polar Bears International, a conservation group that helped fund the study. The oil industry, said Dr. Smith, "needs to acknowledge that even with the best search conditions, you're going to miss bears." ❖

-- based on information from Northern Alaska Environmental Center



polar bear in winter in the Arctic

New 2020 Alaska Chapter Executive Committee Introduction from Chapter Chair Heather Jesse

photo: from Heather Jesse



Heather Jesse enjoys kayaking at Eklutna Lake, just outside of Anchorage

In January I was elected to serve as your Chapter Chair, and I am honored and excited to continue the work of my Sierra Club predecessors as a leader of conservation efforts in Alaska. I want to take a moment to say thank you to all of you for your continued support of our Chapter work and the Sierra Club

mission - to explore,

enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth.

As a life-long Alaskan—born in Anchorage, I understand that we live in one of the last truly wild places. It is the great mountain backdrops, the breathtaking vistas, and the elegance of the wildlife we find all around us that has cultivated in me a deep respect and admiration for the natural wonders of this magnificent state. Growing up in Alaska inspired an appreciation of the environment, but earning my education and starting my young adult life here instilled the need and urgency to act on those feelings and take an active role in pursuing justice for our wetlands, tundra, mountain ranges, coastal plains, and the many animals that rely on us to safeguard their ecosystems.

Entering into 2020, we face steep uphill battles to protect our nature and wildlife, to avoid damaging encroachments on nature by the coal and oil industries, and to preserve the subsistence lifestyles of many Alaskans. These efforts are increasingly challenging as Alaska ramps up for yet another year of state budget and program reductions. This year, emboldened by the strength of the Alaskan people in the face of this adversity, I am more determined than ever to bring about change in my community through the work of the Sierra Club. In 2019 Alaskans across the state proved that by banding together and supporting one another, we could make our voices heard by the Dunleavy and Trump administrations-- whose blatant denial of climate change promotes devastating policies that prioritize resource development over the conservation of nature. It won't be easy, but I know I can count on all of you to help us fight for the conservation and preservation of our home in the coming years.

As Chair of the Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter, my

priorities for the next two years are to increase the number of active Chapter members, to build support for efforts outside of the Anchorage bowl, and to make our Executive Committee more accessible to those members who do wish to engage at a higher level. These goals are modest but will help to strengthen our existing network of allies and supporters. By coming together, we can promote change at the local and state levels and assure that the viewpoints of conservationists are heard by government representatives.

I've spent the last few months settling into my position and learning about the many efforts that the Alaska Chapter is engaged in, and needless to say I am overwhelmed. I am in awe of the continuous hard work and dedication of our volunteers and the multitude of conservation campaigns and lawsuits that they undertake and continue to support. As I've learned more about our Chapter and my role, it has become clear to me that we are lucky to represent one of the most important Chapters of the Sierra Club. Not only is ours the largest state, but we have by far the most public lands and wilderness—and the most rapacious exploiters of these values.

We are on the frontline of the battle to preserve the severely endangered Arctic coastal plain and the many creatures who call it home. We must continue to defend Alaska's Arctic, its waters, and marine species that face ongoing threats of overfishing, contamination, and pollution. We hold the responsibility to protect our national parks and wildlife refuges from the harm posed by oil drilling, coal mining, and the state's aggressive predator control policies currently in place.

The nation needs to hear that many Alaskans care strongly about preserving our precious environment and needs to be able to look to us to lead the charge against environmental injustice. We can't let them down. I hope that you will do your part to support the Sierra Club and our mission--not just in your volunteer efforts, but in your everyday life as Alaskans. Together we can ensure a sustainable future for the home which we love. ❖

Here are the members serving with me on the Alaska Chapter Executive Committee for 2020:

Continuing members:

Hope Meyn -- vice chair
Susan Hansen, conservation chair
Yasuhiro Ozuru - assistant treasurer
Toshihide Hamazaki - webmaster

New members:

Taylor Asher -- secretary
Alyssa Schaefer -- outing chair

-- Heather Jesse

Alaska Chapter positions available – *can you help?*

Looking for a way to help out your local Sierra Club Chapter? Interested in becoming more active in your desire to promote conservation in our great state of Alaska? Apply to be a member of the Alaska Chapter's Executive Committee! Help to plan and create positive change in your community by applying for one of the positions listed below.

The Alaska Chapter seeks a Compliance Officer

The Election Law Compliance Officer to the Chapter will be responsible for advising members of the Executive Committee about how to conduct political activities in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of the State of Alaska and local election laws, as well as Sierra Club policies and restrictions.

The Compliance Officer serves as an integral member of the Executive Committee and is essential for the chapter to undertake any local or state political activities. As the Compliance Officer, you will be expected to attend one ExCom meeting per month, either in person or via tele- or videoconference. The Compliance Officer will work closely with the Political Chair and all ExCom members to oversee Alaska Chapter political statements and actions and will ensure that the political campaign activities of the chapter adhere to all applicable state and local election regulation and reporting requirements, including the laws and regulations pertaining to direct and in-kind contribution limits, public and member communications, and fundraising restrictions. As the Sierra Club is one of the oldest conservation organizations in the United States, most local and state laws are thoroughly covered in the orientation materials for this position. The Compliance Officer will not need to memorize all regulations and requirements but will be responsible for understanding when these regulations apply to Sierra Club activities.

A successful Compliance Officer will respectfully explain to Club members all appropriate Sierra Club policies and Club-related restrictions as stated in the Sierra Club Political Committee Compliance Guidelines and other related resources.



You will be expected to maintain good communications with the Chapter Chair, executive committee, and staff regarding pertinent political campaign activities and before leaving this position, to train a replacement. The Compliance Officer is responsible for continuing to maintain a permanent file of campaign reports and correspondence, and pass the file on to your successor.

The Alaska Chapter ExCom and Sierra Club National Support Staff will be there to help you navigate your new responsibilities—every step of the way! If you are interested in serving on the Executive Committee as Compliance Officer, please see the full position posting at sierraclub.org/alaska.

To apply for this volunteer position, please send an email to alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org!

The Alaska Chapter seeks a Fundraising Chair

Do you enjoy meeting new people and going to social events? Do you have the ability to interact effectively and pleasantly with the public, volunteers, staff, and other organizations? If you enjoy motivating and interacting with volunteers, then you may be a good fit for our Fundraising Chair position! It offers a great way to move into Sierra Club leadership..

The Fundraising Chair will develop and implement an annual chapter fundraising program, based on conservation and budget goals. To realize these goals, the Chair will create a planning calendar for fundraising events and activities by working with the Chapter Chair and ExCom.

The Fundraising Chair will have strong organizational skills, will enjoy event planning, and is expected to attend a Sierra Club Fundraising Webinar Training and one monthly Executive Committee meeting. The Fundraising Chair will serve as the contact for member inquiries and responses regarding fundraising activities and events and will work with the ExCom to design fundraising events throughout Alaska that are manageable for our Chapter and can be held annually.

A successful Chapter Fundraising Chair will create a budget for fundraising events and will manage volunteer needs and timelines, will negotiate event space, catering, auction items or performers, etc. Responsibilities include planning events and activities for fundraising; sending invitations and letters when needed; scheduling fundraising donation ads, event ads, planned giving ads, and merchandise sales ads.

You will be expected to maintain good communications with the Chapter Chair, executive committee, and staff and, before leaving office, to train a replacement. The Fundraising Chair is responsible for maintaining a permanent file of Chapter historical data and procedures for fundraising programs.

If you think you may be interested in this position, please visit clubvolunteer.org for the full position posting. To apply for this volunteer position, send an email to alaska.chapter@sierraclub.org. ❖

-- Heather Jesse, Chapter chair

Alaska Chapter hosts meeting with state representative Andy Josephson

The Sierra Club Alaska Chapter got a chance to meet with State Representative Andy Josephson on Sunday, February 23. Andy Josephson represents district 17, in East and Midtown Anchorage, and is the state legislature's only representative strongly advocating for environmental protection. The February meeting was a rare opportunity to meet Andy in person; we mainly have heard from him by phone conference as he is often in Juneau when the State Legislature is in session.

Eleven Chapter members came to talk with Andy at the meeting at the Arctic Recreation Center in Anchorage—even though he could not give us much advance notice of when he would be in Anchorage to meet with us.

During the meeting Andy described some of the bills he has sponsored in the past in the Alaska State House and also gave us details of resolutions and bills he is currently sponsoring. Andy regretted that he has lost some of his allies in the Alaska State House in the election of 2018.

People asked Andy how we could help him further his pro-environment agenda, and he gave us some suggestions:

1. keep track of bills (to find out if a bill is stuck in committee, go to **AKleg.gov** basis, with the number of the resolution or bill.
2. Contact your representative regularly and explain why you support or oppose a bill.
3. Write Op-eds and Letters-to-the-Editor to your newspaper expressing your concerns.
4. Support candidates for the Alaska State House and

Senate who have strong Conservation values--candidates who value conservation and renewable energy in Alaska.

Some initiatives sponsored by Representative Andy Josephson:
** HR 12 aimed to create a House Special Committee on Climate Change for the 31st Legislature. The special committee would have discussed climate policy, heard or created pertinent bills, engaged in fact finding, etc. After hearings were held on HR 12, House leadership turned the resolution down.

** HB 105 sought to protect wolves along the Stampede Trail (Wolf Townships--state land within the boundary of Denali National Park & Preserve) by restoring the earlier buffer zone prohibiting killing and trapping of wolves along Stampede Trail. The State Board of Game removed the buffer in 2011. The State Senate resource committee chair Senator Cathy Giessel (R-Anchorage) did not allow a committee vote on the bill.

** HB 150 aimed to change the composition of the Alaska State Board of Game so that one member of the seven-member board would be a non-consumptive user of wildlife: a scientist, a wildlife viewer, or from the tourism industry which promotes watchable wildlife. Currently all BOG members are consumptive users--hunters, trappers, hunting guides, who represent about 14 percent of Alaskans. The majority of Alaskans are not represented by the BOG. HB 150 did not make it out of the House.

For more information on bills sponsored by Andy Josephson, go to the Alaska State Legislative website: <http://w3.akleg.gov/index.php>. Click on the House link. Or, go to Andy Josephson and click on his photo and then click on bills. ❖

-- Susan Hansen

Two of America's most endangered rivers: Alaska's *Chilkat and Stikine*

Americans Rivers, the country's largest national advocacy organization for free-flowing rivers, each year draws attention to the most crucial threats to rivers through its list of America's Most Endangered Rivers.

In the latest listing, for 2019, Southeast Alaska's Chilkat and Stikine Rivers appear as # 6 and #10 on a list of ten rivers. Both of these rivers are bi-national—with their

sources in Canada's British Columbia, and both face ominous threats related to toxic mine wastes.

For the Chilkat, a proposed mine will put livelihoods, indigenous culture and salmon at risk. Every year, hundreds of thousands of salmon swim from the Pacific Ocean into Alaska's Chilkat River to spawn. Local tribes and other communities depend upon the river and salmon. A proposed copper-zinc mine could change this forever, polluting the river with toxic acid mine drainage. Federal and state agencies are failing to protect the Chilkat, and the local community, with Alaska Clean Water Advocacy, is trying to resist. The last hope is to convince the project's corporate investor, DOWA, to back out of this mine to preserve the health of the Chilkat. About 80 kilometres long, the Chilkat flows south from the

Canadian Coast Range's Takshanuk Mountains to Chilkat Inlet and ultimately Lynn Canal near Juneau. At the confluence of the Chilkat and Tsirku Rivers 18 miles north of Haines is the world's largest-known concentration of bald eagles, in the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve—a state critical habitat area.

The Stikine River, with its clean water, fish and wildlife, is the lifeblood of local communities, including tribes who have called the area home for thousands of years. The river and its fisheries, water quality and indigenous cultures are threatened by toxic pol-

lution from current and proposed mining projects. The Stikine has its source high in the mountains of the Spatsizi Plateau

Provincial Wilderness of British Columbia, before it flows into Alaska to the town of Wrangell. The Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission is urging the International Joint Commission of the U.S. and Canada to protect the human rights of the tribes and others who rely upon a healthy river and to stop these mines from polluting the Stikine with harmful mining waste. See <https://endangeredrivers.americanrivers.org/> ❖



Some great hikes in the Anchorage vicinity

Ideas for good all-season hikes

Whether you go out on a Sierra Club hike, or go with a different group, or just a few friends, here are some fine locations to enjoy—both north and south of Anchorage!

Bird Creek Valley Trails

Bird Creek Valley is located about 20 minutes south of Anchorage (near mile marker 100) and offers great trails for hiking, biking or skiing. Whether you have a few hours or a few days, the trails are enjoyable as they meander along Bird Creek through a quiet valley full of huge, rain forest size trees. Or you can hike up to the top of high peaks with spectacular views, including Penguin Peak or Bird Ridge. If you want to access more remote areas, head for Bird Pass, located ten miles from the Bird Creek trailhead. During the past couple of winters this area has received lots of snow, and we happily broke trail through powder snow that was



photo: Andy Romang

Bird Creek winter hiking

sometimes almost up to our knees.

The first four miles of the main trail are wide and well-defined, as all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are allowed. The grade is a very gradual uphill, making this an easy hike. One option is to ski about three miles to a wide meadow area we call the avalanche site, as slides frequently happen here and have taken out some trees. At mile four you come across gates that block access for motorized vehicles. This is a good place to eat and turn around, as from this point on the trail becomes narrow and full of vegetation and downed trees. We used to easily access the base of Bird Pass, but now the downed trees and undergrowth make trail finding difficult. Some friends and I used to spend a lot of time back here doing trail clearing, but all the downed trees became too challenging. Around mile seven there is a ford site with a rope to help make the creek crossing safer.

On our first backcountry ski touring trip on this trail this winter we were extremely happy to discover a bridge had been built at the first creek crossing. This is wonderful as the creek doesn't always freeze over and you can get wet feet crossing the cold, running water, or take a detour which adds nearly two miles to your day. So - a BIG thank goes out to the folks who built the bridge. It was probably rangers with the Chugach State Park. Bring bear spray as there are numerous bears in this valley. If you go in summer, it's best to be in a good-sized group--say, at least half a dozen.

Eagle River Valley Trails

Another wonderful place to explore is the Eagle River Valley about 20 miles north of Anchorage. This is another area you can easily hike for a few hours or spend a few days. The valley provides wilderness access to glaciers and numerous high peaks that offer spectacular views for those who have the skills and energy to climb high. Or you can consider a long, challenging hike up and over Crow Pass that ends up near Girdwood. This long hike involves a sketchy river crossing.

Hikes typically start at the Eagle River Nature Center. From here, trails go to different viewpoints like Rapids Camp, Echo Bend, the Perch and Heritage Falls. If you want to spend a night or two you can camp out, or, the Nature Center has cabins and yurts you can rent. These overnight options are easy to access and are less than four miles from the Nature Center. Wood is provided so you can stay warm and dry and still enjoy the backcountry. I like going out there during a full moon to hike or ski with the silvery glow of the full moon highlighting the sheer mountains that border the valley.

Parts of this trail are easy, but some areas are moderately difficult and involve crossing creeks and/or the main river. You can hike or ski on these trails, or on the river when it is frozen enough, but motorized vehicles and bicycles are not allowed. People paddle rafts and canoes down the river, pulling out of the water before an area known as the Rapids, which is very challenging.

For more information, go to www.ernc.org.

Due to bear concerns at Eagle River, one of the main, popular trails gets shut down every summer. ❖

-- Amy Murphy

Echo Bend on Eagle River in winter



photo: Amy Murphy

Join us at Kincaid Beach for a sunset hike

March Outing: Kincaid Beach Hike at Sunset Sunday, March 15: 6 pm

Park in the Chalet parking lot in Kincaid Park and meet the group in front of the Chalet. We will hike a short way along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail down to a short offshoot trail that will take us to the sandy beach. The hike to the beach is about 1.5 miles one-way (3 miles total). We can meander along the beach for as far as we'd like and then head back. This is one of my favorite spots in Anchorage, with beautiful mountain

views (if the weather cooperates.)

The sun sets at 8 pm around this time so with luck we should get some beautiful lighting. The hike will take 1-3 hours depending on how long the group wants to meander. We will hike at a speed that is comfortable for the entire group. Please plan accordingly by bringing water, snacks, rain gear, and dressing in layers. Feel free to bring a friend, everyone is welcome!

Please contact Alyssa, the Outings Leader at alyssaschaef@gmail.com or 215-237-2785 if you are interested in carpooling, or have any other questions about either of these hikes.

Report from December Outing: In December, the Sierra Club Alaska Chapter hosted a fun outing where we collected natural wreath-making materials (spruce boughs, pine cones, etc.) near Bartlett High School in Anchorage and made our own holiday wreaths. Check out the photos! ❖



Christmas 2019 outing--photos by Christin Swearingen

BOARD OF GAME March 6 -14 meeting announcement

The Alaska Board of Game (BOG) is meeting in Fairbanks on March 6-14, at Pike's Waterfront Lodge located at 1850 Hoselton Drive. The proposals to the BOG at the Fairbanks meeting cover Game unit 20 (Interior and Eastern Arctic Region).

There are a number of proposals regarding moose open season, and lengthening of trapping season of wolverine so it matches the lynx season of trapping in a certain area. This meeting includes proposal 152--- a National Park Service proposal to reduce the open season on hunting and trapping of wolves along the Stampede Corridor. While Proposal 152 is a step in the right direction, we believe it does not go far enough to protect wolves. We prefer a year-round ban on trapping that includes other predators like lynx and bears as well as wolves.

What you can do:

Come in person to the meetings. Register to submit a comment by coming in-person and signing up.

Review proposals! www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo

Write comments! "Written comments from individuals or groups will be accepted on specific proposals for the meeting up until the time the proposal is deliberated. During the meeting, written comments limited in length to 10 pages single sided (or five pages double sided) may be submitted by hand at any time if 20 copies are provided. Individuals not attending the meeting can submit comments by fax to (907)465-6094. Comments can also be sent electronically using the online form found at Alaska Board of Game: dfg.bog.comments@alaska.gov".

Live stream the meetings! Go to: www.boardofgame.adfg.alaska.gov ❖

-- from Christin Swearingen and Susan Hansen

Two 2020 Sierra Club National Outings feature Prince William Sound

Every year, the Sierra Club's National Outings Program, that offers some 350 or so trips around the country – and internationally, sends about a dozen or more trips to Alaska. These trips vary from strenuous backpacks to leisurely boat cruises, van trips—and dog mushing. From time to time, **sierra borealis** has included mini-reports from a national outing—for example, see “Western Alaska Outing marks partnership with NPS” in **sierra borealis** Sept 2019, or “Fall, Foliage, and Berries”, also in the Western Arctic, in Sept 2018.

In 2020, 17 national outings head to Alaska. And your **sierra borealis** editor is signed up to be a participant on one of them – the second of two cruises in Prince William Sound. (The first one is in May.) Don't be surprised if you hear more about this September 1 to 8 trip in the next few issues of this newsletter.

Sierra borealis has featured Prince William Sound in numerous articles over the years. The area became notorious in 1989, when the Exxon Valdez ran aground on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, devastating coastal regions and marine and other wildlife. More recently, because Prince William Sound is at the heart of Alaska's Chugach National Forest, which has gone through a long process toward adopting a new management plan, we have urged comments to push the draft plan to more protective provisions. Prince William Sound contains America's largest legislated Wilderness Study Area, the

Nellie Juan-College Fjord WSA, which deserves to become designated wilderness. But—so far, the Chugach—unlike its larger sister forest, the Tongass, has NO designated wilderness at all.



Prince William Sound kayaking, 2013

This concern, as well as other major Alaska conservation issues that get national attention, such as proposed Arctic Refuge drilling (see article on pp 1-2) and a proposed massive Pebble Mine, will be discussed and studied on the September trip—led by Florida-based outing leader Patrick Nichols, who has a 40-year background as a wilderness enthusiast and wilderness educator.

Although the trip begins and ends in Anchorage, six days and five nights will be spent exploring the inlets and bays of the 2.1 million-acre WSA on the 12-passenger M/V “Discovery”, with Captain Dean Rand, a longtime advocate for protecting the wild values of Prince



William Sound. Depending on weather, nearly every day will have either a kayaking activity or shore walk to observe glaciers, or the rich bird and seal life near the base of glaciers. While cruising between the islands of the Sound, sometimes through narrow passages, all on board will be on the watch for passing whales, otters, dolphins, and other wildlife. ❖

-- Vicky Hoover

Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

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