



Sierra Borealis

alaska report

SIERRA CLUB ALASKA CHAPTER
SEPTEMBER 2011



Speak up *NOW* for Arctic Coastal Plain Wilderness

Your Comments needed

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has just released a draft revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is an important milestone in that USFWS is formally considering a Wilderness designation for the Refuge's Coastal Plain – the biological heart of this remote northeast Alaska area that has become our nation's wilderness icon.

The Arctic Refuge is most precious for its unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values, not its development potential. Year after year Big Oil and their friends in Congress have fought to open the coastal plain to dirty and risky drilling, but Alaskans know that will not solve

our nation's energy crisis. Oil and gas drilling would only harm wildlife and wilderness, and once this wilderness is destroyed it's gone forever.

Alaska Chapter chair Pam Brodie points out the historic opportunity which this agency document offers to **finally protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development**: "We've worked for many, many years for this moment: to permanently protect the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness. Over the years, Sierra Club activists around the nation have been fighting to protect the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, and now is our chance to succeed. The new Arctic CCP has an alternative recommending wilderness for the coastal plain: This is the highest protection we can ask for.

"Now is our chance to finally protect this magical place. We ask Sierra Club members to comment to the US Fish and Wildlife Service so we can protect our nation's finest wilderness in the Arctic Refuge. We have until **November 15th** to send comments and gain support.

You can find more information about the CCP on [our website at http://alaska.sierraclub.org/](http://alaska.sierraclub.org/). Please let me know if you have questions or need more information. You can also contact our Arctic Organizer Lindsey Hajduk for more information at Lindsey.Hajduk@sierraclub.org, and read her blog about her recent trip to the Arctic Refuge."

Write your comment to USFWS!

-- continued page 2



photo: Phyllis Mains

Musk Oxen in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

✉ What you Can Do:

Send a comment to USFWS urging it to recommend a wilderness designation for the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain to protect it from oil and gas development. If you have visited the Refuge – mention this and describe your impressions briefly.

Submit your comment (see suggested language below):

By email to ArcticRefugeCCP@fws.gov

- By mail to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic NWR - Sharon Seim
101 12th Ave., Rm 236
Fairbanks AK 99701
- By fax to 907-456-0428



photo: Ken Madsen

✉ SUGGESTED language -- please personalize it yourself:

Subject: Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Designate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Coastal Plain as wilderness

Dear US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe,

I urge you to recommend a wilderness designation for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in -- order to protect permanently America's greatest wild treasure from oil and gas development.

Already warming of the Arctic is threatening the region and its wildlife, so it is vital to defend the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, its coastal plain. By protecting the Refuge we ensure critical habitat for caribou, polar bears, grizzly bears, musk oxen, Dall sheep, wolves, wolverines, and birds from all 50 states.

We cannot hand this wildlife refuge over to Big Oil. Drilling in the Arctic Refuge will not lower today's gas prices or solve our energy crisis; it would only prolong it. Any oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge will disrupt and harm the fragile ecosystem and wildlife the USFWS is mandated to protect.

I support Alternative C for recommending a wilderness designation for the coastal plain. This alternative is critical to keep this wildlife and wilderness icon protected for this and future generations.

Sincerely,

XXXX XXXXXXXX

(Include your full mail address.)

Thank you for taking action to protect this special place. To find our more information and to stay in touch please visit www.chillthedrills.org or 'like' us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/chillthedrills. ♦

Midnight Wilderness:

Journeys in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

New, updated Edition of a Classic

Foreword by Margaret E. Murie

With a new afterword by author Debbie S. Miller

A new edition is out of *Midnight Wilderness*, Fairbanks author **Debbie S. Miller's** passionate and vivid account of one of the world's remaining greatest natural treasures, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. For more than 20 years, this now classic book has informed and inspired readers. The Sierra Club originally published the book in 1989. A paperback version appeared subsequently, but now, for the first time we have an update bringing the ongoing issue and the crucial value for the future of this remote ecosystem into the 21st century.

The new afterword by the author explains the challenges still facing the refuge in the twenty-first century, and how we might preserve it for generations to come. (Also see related article pp1-2 on the current agency plan that could include a wilderness recommendation for the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.)



Debbie Miller backpacks in the Arctic Refuge

Debbie S Miller has lived in northern Alaska for nearly forty years, and she has worked for two decades to protect the Arctic Refuge from industrial development. Her writings and photography have been published in various newspapers, magazines, and books, such as *Seasons of Life and Land* and *Arctic Wings: Birds of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge*. Debbie is also the author of many award-winning books for children. She lives in Fairbanks, Alaska with her husband, Dennis, a wildlife survey pilot. Visit www.debbiemilleralaska.com for more.

The book is available through

The Mountaineers Books

www.mountaineersbooks.org;

or emilyw@mountaineersbooks.org ♦

Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan -

Comment deadline Oct. 31

On August 1, 2011, the National Park Service released its long-awaited *Draft Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*. This plan is the first major proposed change to park road management since the 1997 *Entrance Area and Road Corridor DCP*, and the first time NPS has proposed to end the seasonal vehicle limit of 10,512, a key management principle established in the park's 1986 *General Management Plan*. NPS is accepting comments on the draft *Vehicle Management Plan* through October 31-- just extended from September 30.

The most significant actions proposed are:

- **Rescind the 10,512 seasonal vehicle limit** on the Denali park road that has been a guidepost for management decisions since 1986 and a regulation since 2000. This limit would be replaced by a system of **adaptive management** guided by visitor experience and resource quality indicators.
- **Provide the Superintendent with more flexibility to allocate** between tour, transit and other **services**. Give Transit priority.
- **Offer a new "economy tour"** distinct from both present transit service and "premium tour" opportunities. New turnaround points for tour buses are considered with a potential "long" tour.
- **One alternative changes management zoning of the park road** between Eielson Visitor Center and Wonder Lake to keep it more remote and less used than the road from Savage to Eielson.

The Alaska Chapter is working with Denali Citizens Council, which has reviewed the plan carefully and offers useful points from your comments:

- ** **Affordability of the transit system must be preserved** -NPS should assure visitors an affordable park visit that highlights Denali's unique wilderness and wildlife values. Affordability needs to be defined; NPS should spell out clearly what it considers to be affordable for basic access into the park. The more affordable options for transport into the park should be widely advertised.
- ** **The importance of a limit cannot be over-stressed** - NPS should not eliminate the current vehicle limit until the adaptive management protocol has been run for some years and shown to give valid data.
- ** **Not all indicators and standards in the plan are strong** -Although some of the indicators of resource health in the plan are clearly measurable, others are vague and potentially subjective. The plan should state clear thresholds of resource degradation that would trigger traffic reductions. The plan should consider the capacity of the park road to accept increased traffic.
- ** **Funding and NPS capacity to run this program remain in question** -Although NPS has stated that this adaptive management program will be funded with concessionaire franchise fees and contractual obligations, its ultimate cost could weaken the park's resource stewardship priorities.
- ** **Some monitoring activities of the plan could have unwarranted impacts** - For example, the use of collaring to examine park animal activities in relation to the road has been proposed. This approach, although useful for some forms of research, brings with it inherent impacts to the wildlife.

What You Can Do:

Send a comment to the National Park Service by October 31:

email: DENA_planning@nps.gov

Address written comments to:

Denali Park Planning

Denali National Park and Preserve

PO Box 9

Denali Park, Alaska 99755

There is also a comment form to submit on the NPS website at: <http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/index.cfm>. ♦



Update

Update on S. 1063--

a bill to open Glacier Bay National Park to gull egg gathering by members of the Huna Tlingit Tribe of Southeast Alaska Natives.

In July, the bill by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) was the subject of a hearing in the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks. Jack Hession, a member of the Chapter Executive Committee, testified for the Sierra Club in opposition to the bill. A full Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee vote on the bill has not been scheduled as this issue goes to press. Sierra Club opposes S 1063. (For background, see *Sierra Borealis*, June 2011 and Dec 2010).



Denali, the "Great One"

photo: Alan Carlton

-- by Pamela Brodie

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

Would you like to help decide Sierra Club policy? Elections will soon be held for positions on the Executive Committees of the Alaska Chapter and the regional groups within the Alaska Chapter. If you are a Sierra Club member and would like to run, or would like to nominate another member who is willing to run, please contact a member of the chapter Nominating Committee. (Chapter Nominating Committee members will forward nominees for Group Executive Committee to appropriate Group nominating committees.)

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

The three regional groups are the Juneau Group representing Southeast Alaska, the Knik Group representing Anchorage and south central, and the Denali Group representing Fairbanks and Interior Alaska.



⇒ **Alaska Chapter Nominating Committee members:**

Irene Alexakos, irenealexakos@yahoo.com;

Patrick Fort, cpfort@uaa.alaska.edu.

Mark Rorick, mprorick@alaska.net

The deadline to submit names to the Nominating Committee is Tuesday, October 11. The Nominating Committees will report the names of nominees to the Executive Committees on Tuesday, October 18. Members who wish to run for office but are not nominated by a nominating committee may run if they submit to the committee a petition to run signed by fifteen (15) members of the chapter or appropriate group. The deadline for candidate petitions is Tuesday, November 1. This is also the deadline to submit ballot issue petitions.

The chapter Executive Committee will appoint an Election Committee at its regular teleconference meeting on Tuesday, November 15; no candidates may serve on the Election Committee. Ballots will be printed and mailed Friday, December 2. Marked ballots must be received at the Sierra Club office in Anchorage by Tuesday, January 3, and will be counted by the election committee starting at 5 p.m. (This notice and schedule are in compliance with Sierra Club bylaws.) ◆

It is characteristic of Mary that she was in Washington DC in mid-June as part of a Sierra Club team lobbying members of Congress for increased wild lands protection just a few days before she died of complications from ovarian cancer. Throughout her treatment, she continued to be fully engaged with the issues she felt so passionately about. Mary was active for years in the Sierra Club both locally and nationally. At the national level, she served as Council of Chapter Leaders chair and as a member of the Diversity Council.

Her partner, Paul Laverty wrote, "Mary spent her entire life working as a champion of social justice causes (especially for women, children and minorities and against the death penalty) and for the protection of the environment. Mary proudly wore the labels of feminist and environmentalist and was not shy about pointing out that these were noble terms to defend. Most of Mary's professional life was spent working in the nonprofit industry where she knew she would never become rich monetarily. Mary's reward was knowing that she stood up for those who did not have a voice in the larger discussion, and that she improved the community she lived in."

"Mary refused to let a diagnosis of cancer slow her down at work or diminish her love of travel. Mary's oncologist said that she was amazed and impressed with how long Mary continued to live her normal life. Mary refused to let cancer rule her life. The strength, determination and integrity Mary exhibited in her life was marveled by many and matched by few."

Mary's dedication is a beacon for the multitude of activists she leaves behind. Her unflagging spirit in the face of tremendous odds should urge each of us to become even more engaged, more determined, more willing to stand tall for what we believe.

Mary would expect this. ◆

-- Peg Tileston

Remembering Belle Dawson

The Sierra Club Alaska Chapter lost a great friend this summer. Belle Dawson, long time Alaskan and one of the founding members of the Knik Group, passed away in June 2011 at 89 years old. Many of us will remember her as one of our greatest volunteers. Belle worked many tables and helped with many campaigns in whatever ways she could over many years. She regularly attended Sierra Club meetings and events until her physical health declined and she was no longer able. She will be remembered for her infectious smile and happy positive attitude. Belle was a talented wildlife artist, and her art is found in many of our homes as well as on the walls of the Sierra club office in Anchorage. She loved to dance, she loved people, and she loved to protect our wildlands. ◆

-- Paul Forman

Seward: sullied by Alaska's Coal Rush – tourist Mecca no more?

With increased global demand for Alaska's coal, exports from our state have skyrocketed and plans are in the works to develop more coal mines and build more coal export facilities.

Seward currently has Alaska's only export facility and is certainly feeling the impacts of the increased traffic, and not in a good way. In 2010 more than 975,000 tons of coal was moved through Seward to ports in Chile and Korea, and that record is predicted to be surpassed in 2011 with nearly 1.25 million tons.

Seward as a legendary tourist and fishing Mecca is being sullied by this dirty industry. Local leaders do not seem to comprehend how this increased coal activity is affecting our quality of life and attraction to tourists.

This summer's increased activities brought new issues to light—beyond the ongoing coal dust problems. Seward now faces more complaints which range from longer and more frequent waiting at the Railroad crossings to excessive noise from the off-loading of coal from trains and loading of ships disturbing campers and residents who call the small boat harbor home.

By now everyone should know that "clean" coal is a dirty lie

Before the coal rush began, residents of Seward always knew when coal trains and coal ships were in town because the noise and vibrations interrupted our relative peace and quiet. Now we are more likely to notice when no ships and trains are being loaded due to the now infrequent silence.

The Alaska Railroad has put into place several key changes to increase the coal exported through Seward: to haul longer trains over the passes, it has doubled up on the number of engines used; to expand Seward's coal storage area, it is filling in wetlands; to accommodate larger coal ships, it has dredged adjacent to the Railroad dock; and to move more coal faster between the trains and ships, it has beefed up the conveyors in Seward. Unfortunately they have not exerted nearly the same effort to eliminate the chronic coal dust that plagues Seward.

Coal dust complaints have been a regular occurrence in the winters when conditions tend to get dry and windy. (See *Sierra Borealis*, March 2011) The Railroad and facility operators have yet to develop any effective containment for the chronic coal dust blowing from the huge coal stockpiles. Improvements will be put to the test this winter when dry and windy periods are common, and coal dust lands on snow and ice for all to see. Until the facility utilizes sprinklers on the coal stockpiles and installs baghouse ventilation systems on the conveyors (as the facility was designed to have but does not) this unnecessary risk to public health and the environment will continue and

likely increase as long as the coal rush may last. Knowing the facility is operating with fewer pollution controls than when it was built -- yet moving twice the volume of coal -- should be a concern to all.

Other proposals to expand Alaska coal production

There are proposals to develop new coal strip mines near Palmer (see *Sierra Borealis*, June 2011) and new rail and an export facility on Cook Inlet to export that coal. These mines would be a mere stone's throw from dozens of residences where trucks would haul coal through subdivisions and past schools. The mine company and borough claim that it will be a zero emissions operation. The residents know that there is no such thing. By now everyone should know that "clean" coal is a dirty lie. There is also a proposal for what could be the first coal strip mine that would be permitted to actually mine through 11 miles of a vibrant salmon stream on the west side of Cook Inlet.

The proposed Chuitna Mine could export an additional 11 million tons annually if permitted. Coal would be transported on an 8-mile long elevated conveyor between the communities of Beluga and Tyonek to a proposed man-made island dock two miles out in Cook Inlet. As many as 100 coal ships could be loaded there annually. The developers of this mine claim there would be no impacts to habitat that cannot be mitigated and no risks to public health worthy of concern.

As unbelievable as these projects sound they all seem to be gaining traction with the regulators and politicians.

In Alaska we know all too well the disastrous consequences that can be caused by greedy corporations blindly focused on short term profits. It is our responsibility to preserve our sustainable fisheries and healthy communities and ecosystems for future generations to enjoy. ♦

-- Russ Maddox, Seward

Online news and communications

➡ Please help the Sierra Club conserve paper and save postal costs by moving more of its communications online.

Check the Alaska Chapter's website <http://alaska.sierraclub.org/> for environmental news, background on issues, action alerts and newsletters. In March and June, our Chapter newsletter, *Sierra Borealis*, is published electronically *only*. Our September and December issues, containing election notices, are still printed and mailed to members for whom we do not have an email address.

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

Thanks so much for your help!

Pam

Admiralty Island --a monumental canoe experience

Admiralty Island National Monument is a very special feature of Southeast Alaska. Admiralty is one of the four largest islands in Southeast, and is one of the "ABC" islands (along with Baranof and Chichagof.) Admiralty and Misty Fjords are the only national monuments in Alaska managed by the U.S. Forest Service. And almost the entire national monument is designated wilderness. Mansfield Peninsula on north Admiralty and some lands owned by the Angoon and Sitka Native corporations are not in the monument.

There's another notable fact about Admiralty – its protection was the dominating interest of long time Juneau activist Cliff Lobaugh, for whose Celebration of Life fellow activist Jack Hession and I came to Juneau. (see p. 7) With Cliff's dedication to protecting Admiralty in mind, it was especially fitting that before the June 25 memorial event, we had a wonderful opportunity to enjoy Admiralty Island by canoe. Canoes and general logistical support for this nine-day venture were provided by fellow Sierra Club activists and friends Irene Alexakos--a member of the Chapter Excomm-- and her husband Ben Kirkpatrick.

Yes, it was a nine-day cross-Admiralty canoe trip, but we actually spent more time portaging gear between the lakes than on the water in the two canoes. The portaging was the strenuous part of the trip; there were four portages, two shorter ones of half a mile and a mile and half, approximately, and two longer ones, two and a half, and three miles respectively. Each portage involved at least two and for some, three, trips back and forth to carry gear– and of course the canoes themselves. Ben undertook to do most of the canoe carrying.



Paddling on Admiralty

tent camping; one night was spent in a small three-walled shelter. From this lake on to Beaver and Hasselborg Lakes, then portaging over to Guerin Lake and Lake Davidson. The time spent on the water was always the relaxing reward for load lugging. We glided quietly past lily pads and scanned the treetops for bald eagles. Saw many eagles--Admiralty may have 5,000 of them, and the island is even more famous for its concentrations of an estimated 1,600 brown bears. Ben spotted a brownie the evening of our arrival, and during our portages, bear "calling cards" on the trails let us know we were within Kootznoowoo--the Tlingit word for "fortress of the bears".

The first portage was from our landing place by launch in Mole Harbor on the east side of Admiralty, nearly three miles over to Lake Alexander; at Lake Alexander, there was a Forest Service cabin. We mostly did

The last big portage, down to near Salt Lake, was the hardest, as many blow-downs forced us to climb through or under or over complex tangles of downed trunks and branches, often detouring a long way around. At the Salt Lake falls, a rocky rapid at low tide, we waited for the flood tide before paddling on. Farther on, where the channel narrows, the ebb tide created a rapid with whirlpools that briefly took both canoes for exciting rides.

Finally, we visited Admiralty's Native community of Angoon. Highlight of our visit was meeting with the Angoon Tribal Council— which we had contacted prior to our trip. (During the campaign for the Alaska Lands bill the people of Angoon,



The Angoon Tribal Council

cooperating closely with the Sierra Club, urged Congress to put Admiralty in the Wilderness System as the best way to protect their subsistence resources.)

Welcoming us, they told us about current island issues, most importantly the proposed expansion of the Greens Creek Mine's tailings disposal area which they fear will lead to increased pollution of waters vital to their subsistence fishing. Greens Creek gold and copper mine on the west coast of Admiralty, north of Angoon, is in a non-wilderness part of the monument and pre-existed the monument. An Environmental Impact Statement is due out soon from the Forest Service that will offer alternatives for dealing with the tailings.

The Forest Service's apparent willingness to grant permission for this tailings expansion alarms Angoon. Sierra Club is concerned that allowing the tailings disposition to encroach on a wilderness area could be illegal. By chance, next morning, several Forest Service representatives were coming to meet with them on this subject, and we were invited also—after we spent our last night camping on a scenic beach near Angoon.

The Council also told us of their desire to find funding to expand tourist access to their community; one idea was to build a hiking-biking trail just north of town; they also hoped for a new community center.

The Forest Service meeting in the morning featured a presentation by monument managers on the Greens Creek issue and on the agency's effort to promote jobs for the villagers. The meeting absorbed us till we had to catch our ferry for Juneau. ♦

-- Vicky Hoover

Cliff Lobaugh: celebrating his life and conservation achievements

On a sunny late June afternoon, about 250 of his friends and admirers gathered outdoors at the Jensen Olson Arboretum in Juneau to honor the late Dr. Cliff Lobaugh, veterinarian, master gardener, and Sierra Club conservation leader. Vicky Hoover, Wilderness Committee Chair (and Sierra Borealis editor) represented the national Sierra Club, and I spoke on behalf of the Alaska Chapter. As Vicky commented, "Most all of Juneau's environmental community seemed to be there!" Participants included Mike Miller, former state legislator from Juneau.

In addition to recalling good times on trips with Cliff, speakers highlighted his long campaign to give 100-mile long Admiralty Island permanent protection. Home to the densest concentration of brown bears in Alaska, Admiralty's old growth forest was long coveted by the timber industry and the foresters of the U.S. Forest Service. In the late 1960s the agency made the island's remarkably intact forests the centerpiece of a huge timber sale--the largest in the agency's history--to U.S. Plywood-Champion Paper, Inc.

In response Cliff and a tiny band of Juneau conservationists, including Sierra Club members, formed the Steller Society to stop the sale. They alerted the Sierra Club and other national conservation organizations to the threat. During their initial Alaska visit in 1967, Sierra Club President Ed Wayburn and his wife Peggy met with Cliff and Sharron



Jack Hession recalls Cliff Lobaugh at the Celebration of Life while Bruce Baker, master of ceremonies looks on.

(Vicky Hoover photo)

Lobaugh and Sierra Club and Steller Society members. Alarmed that the Forest Service would sacrifice what was clearly an island of immense national significance, Ed Wayburn urged the Sierra Club to sue the agency.

The Steller Society, to gain strength from a national organization, joined the Sierra Club in the subsequent lawsuit, and became the Juneau Group of the Alaska Chapter. After a lengthy federal court battle, the corporation backed out of the sale. Admiralty was temporarily out of danger.

As the battle shifted from the courts to Congress, Cliff, then Juneau Group Conservation Committee Chair, traveled to Washington D.C. and lobbied for passage of H.R. 39, the Udall-

Seiberling Alaska lands bill backed by the Sierra Club and the entire national conservation community.

From this period on, Sharron and Cliff hosted regular gatherings of Alaska Chapter and national Sierra Club leaders and other conservation leaders at their beautiful Auke Bay home and their cabin on Admiralty, which together became "campaign central" for the Admiralty effort. Their guests came away dedicated to saving Admiralty, West Chicagof Island, and other threatened areas of the Tongass.

Cliff was also a member of the Juneau business community, the majority of whose members supported logging Admiralty. When they brought their pets and animals to Cliff's clinic, they became captive clientele; Cliff was Juneau's only vet, and he used the opportunity to enlighten the boosters about the importance of keeping the island in its natural state.

His dream was finally realized when the Alaska National Interest Lands Act of 1980 made most of Admiralty Island a National Monument and the Kootznoowoo (Fortress of the Bears) Wilderness. He was disappointed that the Mansfield Peninsula at the northern end of the island was excluded from the monument, but its eventual addition remains a Sierra Club goal.

In recent years Cliff proposed that the Monument become a sanctuary for the brown bears of the island. The Forest Service manages a small "no-hunting area" at Pack Creek on Admiralty for bear viewing, but once outside the area the bears can be hunted, including by guided trophy bear hunters under state of Alaska sport hunting regulations. This has led to management problems, but that is another story.

The day after the celebration, the Lobaugh family hosted a boat trip to their Admiralty Island property, with a picnic in the woods outside their cabin, including a ceremonial walk to Cliff's famous vegetable garden, to scatter his ashes there. ♦

-- Jack Hession



(Bruce Baker photo)

Celebrants at the Lobaugh family Admiralty Island celebration proceed to Cliff's garden, with musical accompaniment

Alaskan joins 350 Solutions in Washington DC and Cancun, Mexico

On October 27, 2010, I flew to Chicago to join a group of young people bicycling across country to Washington, DC. They were filming a documentary about local solutions to climate change.

Katherine Ball, the leader, and her friend Alec Neal had started from Portland, Oregon, in mid-August. Malkolm Boothroyd, the youngest at 18, joined the group in Montana after riding from Skagway, Alaska. I knew him from flying him and his parents, Ken Madsen and Wendy Boothroyd, in the Arctic Refuge. In Minneapolis, MN, Paul Thompson joined to support the group with his Toyota Prius. Katherine and Alec are in their mid-twenties, Paul and I well seasoned.

Our cycling from Chicago to DC went well, and our mid-November arrival in DC was joyful. Lobbying members of Congress, for me, was not. Some Republican members are still in denial climate change is happening; effective legislation was dead. A reminder from my first sojourn as Peace Rider helped: the journey is more important than the destination.

From there we traveled to Miami, then flew to Cancun, Mexico to attend climate talks beginning in late November. Paul manned a "350 Solutions Revolution" booth at the site of the political talks. Malkolm was there as a Canadian youth delegate, working with other youth to have their concerns put into the final accords. They stayed in Cancun.

Katherine, Alec and I volunteered at Klimaforum 10,

the people's climate summit held at Clube el Rey -- far from Cancun. We camped nearby in a beautiful jungle clearing.

Gabriel, a Mayan elder, and his helpers kept a sacred fire going for the duration. Before sunrise he would blow on a conch shell summoning

us to rise and gather round the fire to greet the sun.

It was energizing working together and making new friends. Good things are happening. Senegal has embraced eco-villages and is creating thousands of new ones.

The final Cancun accords were disappointing. They do nothing to break our addiction to fossil fuels.

Afterwards, Katherine, Alec and Paul flew back to the States. Malkolm joined his parents in Baja before returning to their Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, home. I biked south as far as Costa Rica before continuing on by bus to visit a friend in Panama and flew home to Alaska on 1 March. ♦

-- Don Ross, Fairbanks

(Note: Don, as "Peace Rider", has cycled cross-country--in winter--to emphasize the urgent need to reduce global warming emissions.)



Cycling to Washington, DC, Lincoln Memorial

Sierra Borealis / alaska report

is the newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Sierra Club

Sierra Club Alaska: 907-276-4108

750 W 2nd Ave Ste 100, Anchorage, AK 99501

Alaska Chapter mail address:

P.O. Box 103441, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-2429

Chapter Directory

Chair: Pamela Brodie, Homer: pbrodie@gci.net

Vice chair: Mike O'Meara, Homer: mikeo@horizonsatellite.com

Secretary: Irene Alexakos, Haines: irenealexakos@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Patrick Fort, Eagle River: cpfort@uaa.alaska.edu

Conservation chair: Richard Hellard, Juneau: rhellard@gci.net

Other Executive Committee members:

Jack Hession, Anchorage: jack.m.hession@gmail.com

Andy Keller, Fairbanks: ftamk@uaf.edu

Russ Maddox, Seward: russmaddox@yahoo.com

Mark Rorick, Juneau: mprorick@alaska.net

Webmaster: William Taygan: william@taygan.com

(Newsletter editor: Vicky Hoover: vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org)

Alaska Field Office:

Dan Ritzman, Alaska Program Director, 206-378-0114,

dan.ritzman@apps.sierraclub.org

Emily Fehrenbacher, Associate Regional Representative, Coal campaign; 907-276-4060 emily.fehrenbacher@sierraclub.org

Lindsey Hajduk, Associate Field Organizer: 907-276-4088

lindsey.hajduk@sierraclub.org



Featured in this issue

ACTION NEEDED

- ARCTIC WILDERNESS P. 1-2
- DENALI ROAD P. 3
- CHAPTER ELECTIONS P. 4

ALSO

- MIDNIGHT WILDERNESS P. 2
- OBITUARIES P. 4
- SEWARD AND COAL P. 5
- ADMIRALTY PADDLE P. 6
- LOBAUGH CELEBRATION P. 7
- 350 IN CUNCUN P. 8