

## LAND CLASSIFICATION AND PLANNING IN DENALI BOROUGH

### PLANNING COMMISSION FOCUSED ON CLASSIFYING BOROUGH LANDS

by Julia Potter

The Denali Borough was incorporated in 1990, exercising the powers of Home Rule to provide for local government. According to the borough charter, there are certain requirements of the borough, one being the formation of a planning commission. Prior to the establishment of the planning commission, the assembly acted in that capacity, although they did establish a Land Use Planning Committee in 1993 to perform background work for the commission. In 2004, the assembly established a separate planning commission by ordinance to perform the functions of planning, platting and zoning for the borough. These responsibilities include preparing a comprehensive plan, a zoning ordinance, and a subdivision ordinance, preparing the official map of the borough (including reference to zoning and other applicable restrictions), and recommending municipal land entitlement selections.



Denali Borough Planning Commission members (L to R) Julia Potter, Patricia Griggs, Steve Jones, Anne Capistrant, Sid Michaels, Linda Chatfield and Bill Mitchell at a recent planning commission meeting. *DCC photo*

Other tasks have been assigned the planning commission by the assembly, one of which is classifying borough-owned lands. Per Denali Borough Code 4.25.020, all Borough-owned lands must be classified prior to any action being taken that affects the land. Given the duties of the planning commission as stated above, classifying is one of the first steps of the planning process.

#### What is classifying land?

Classifying land is a process whereby lands are categorized for a use or purpose. The original ordinance passed in 2002 regarding classification states the overall purpose of classifying lands “. . . is to effectively manage lands owned

*by the Denali Borough to meet a variety of community needs. The classification system designates the most appropriate use of the land and thereby provides for the promotion of orderly development of borough communities; financial returns for the operation of borough government and services; management of the borough’s natural resources; the retention of borough land for health, education and safety needs; and land and resources for wildlife habitat, scenic value, recreational needs and historic value.”*

For Denali Borough’s planning commission, the first step toward classifying land is to compose, or in this case revise the ordinance listing the classification categories. The

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## FROM THE BOARD

Spring is in full swing around Denali! I have struggled to find time to write for the newsletter as the long days, great snow and anxious dogs provide endless excuses and opportunities to get outside, away from the computer.

Most of the time, the trail takes me west, along the Stampede Trail. Sometimes, the dogs will drag Bridget and me out into the National Park. Often we just run out along the Savage River and turn around. The big views of the Outer Range and the Alaska Range from Eightmile Lake remind me what a beautiful place it is that I live in.

The license to explore for gas around Healy that the State has issued to Usibelli Coal Mine has been on my mind a lot lately. DCC's showing of "Gasland" was eye-opening for me, and it left me feeling a little frightened and overwhelmed. Visions of drill rigs, roads and compressor stations, and settling ponds float through my head as I bounce down the trail. The movie exposes some of the scary effects gas extraction has had in different parts of the country. With almost all Healy area homes in the license area, the possible impacts on air, water, noise, and property values for local residents loom.

The hydraulic fracturing process often used to extract gas, "fracking," has been in the news a lot lately. "Gasland" makes the point that fluids used in fracking for gas aren't subject to the Clean Water Act. The State of Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation is understaffed and backlogged, which raises the question of whether or not the State is ready and equipped to monitor gas development in residential areas, like where many of us live in the Healy Basin. Right now, property owners bear the burden of testing their water quality and proving any impacts, should changes occur.

Like many, I believe that humans' burning of fossil fuels over the last several hundred years is changing the climate and the environment. Reversing this trend will take many sacrifices and involve many hard decisions, but is a process we need to start. Natural gas burns cleaner than oil and coal, and emits fewer greenhouse gases; certainly it is a better option for our future than other fossil fuels. I am willing to make sacrifices for cleaner energy, paying more to invest in new infrastructure.

Still, the choices are hard. The post-earthquake radiation fallout in Japan is reminding us of the dangers of nuclear power. Damming the Susitna could provide huge amounts of energy, but at what cost to that watershed? Capturing the wind near Ferry for electricity seems like a step in the right direction, but has its own impacts and will be just one piece of the puzzle.

So, what is a reasonable sacrifice? Voices of local residents need to be part of the answer to that question. Here, the gas license area encompasses almost all potential areas for residential development in the area and includes important habitat for Denali's and the world's species. In the Preliminary Best Interest Finding from 2005, the State wrote "The revenue stream to the state from the proposed exploration license and any downstream production is not expected to significantly impact the overall oil and gas revenue of the state of Alaska. The best interests of local residents is therefore of critical importance to the best interest decision." I don't feel that the State recognized these concerns--voiced by many in this community--in its Final Best Interest Finding, so I am glad that DCC is appealing the decision to issue the license as written.

Standard industry practices have left residents unhappy across the country, and I would like the State to ensure that mistakes made in other parts of the state and country, aren't repeated here. Within the vast license area, it seems reasonable to eliminate the limited residential and most ecologically sensitive lands from exploration and development. DCC has taken on the challenge to ensure that development of the State's resources is done responsibly, safely, and in a way that protects the sensitive environment we live in and keeps the area a great and beautiful place to live. We as local residents know what areas and resources are important to protect, and I don't see how that can happen if what we as local residents have to say isn't respected.

I am proud to work with an organization that is committed to being vigilant throughout this process. This work takes time and money from volunteers and donors. Your continued support for DCC and our Gas Legal Fund is critical to our seeing this through.

Of course, this isn't the only issue that DCC is working on. I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting on May 24, where you will have a chance to catch up with our board and other members, and hear all about what DCC has been up to. ☘

*Jared Zimmerman*



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

# FROM THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER by Julia Potter

The arrival of spring is a welcome delight. Snow buntings, redpolls and chickadees are frequently spotted. Ravens and magpies are looking for last fall's tidbits now revealed as the snow begins to melt. Time to enjoy the longer, sunlit days with hiking, skiing, sledding or just sitting in the warmth of the sun - a favorite past-time for my dog Scoobie. Well, for me too.



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

Spring is also a sure sign that hectic summer days will soon be upon us, probably before we know it. While we all seem to be extra busy during the coming summer months, many just don't have the time to stay focused on the issues in the community or within the park, to volunteer time or to attend important public meetings. And with the warmer weather, friends returning for another season and all of the other activities going on I can understand the lack of participation.

So before the summer season gets too heated up join the DCC community of friends and neighbors for a relaxed evening. Make plans to attend DCC's annual membership meeting on May 24. It will be a great opportunity to meet the board and staff and discuss the various issues going on in the Denali area. It's also a great opportunity to enjoy delicious desserts! Tempting, isn't it? Enjoy your spring - hope to see you May 24! ☘

## THANK YOU

### NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

#### MAJOR DONORS

- Anne Beaulaurier
- Brock Family Fund
- Henry Braun
- Barbara Brease
- IBM Corporation
- David Laughton
- Bob Shavelson

#### TUNDRA

- Cliff Eames
- Joan Frankevich
- Gabrielle & Kirk Hoessle
- David McKinley
- Robin Richardson & Bob Tourtelot
- Sonya & Craig Schmidt

#### SUMMIT

- Paula Earp & Matt Irinaga
- John Neville

#### TAIGA

- Emily Becker & Dan Ruthrauff
- Karine Dane
- Karen Deatherage
- Nan Eagleson
- Molly McKinley
- Brian Napier
- Hugh Rose
- Ruth Scott



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

## DCC FACEBOOK CHALLENGE

You can be a participant in DCC's on-line community and help DCC raise funds at the same time.

Long-time DCC member Gloria Oswald has generously offered to give \$1 to DCC for each new person who "Likes" DCC on Facebook between now and our annual meeting, up to 150 people. As of this writing, DCC has 62 people who "Like" our Facebook page, so we are aiming for a total of 212 "Likes" by May 24.

Please help us get the maximum benefit from this challenge. If you are on Facebook, visit our page and let us know you "Like" us. Then, contact your friends on Facebook who have a Denali connection and get them to participate too. This is the power of social media – the word can spread quickly and exponentially.

That is the same power we hope to harness in support of DCC's activism in the future. If the Egyptian government can be overthrown using social media, we figure that we should be able to have at least a little influence on federal and state land management. We appreciate the funds we receive from this challenge, but even more so we appreciate the strength that comes from connecting people who care about Denali.

Plus, this is a great opportunity for you to tap into information DCC puts on Facebook that never reaches our newsletter, and often not even our website. And you can participate – we welcome your comments, suggestions, and concerns via Facebook. Be a part of the DCC community, and help us protect what is special about Denali. ☘

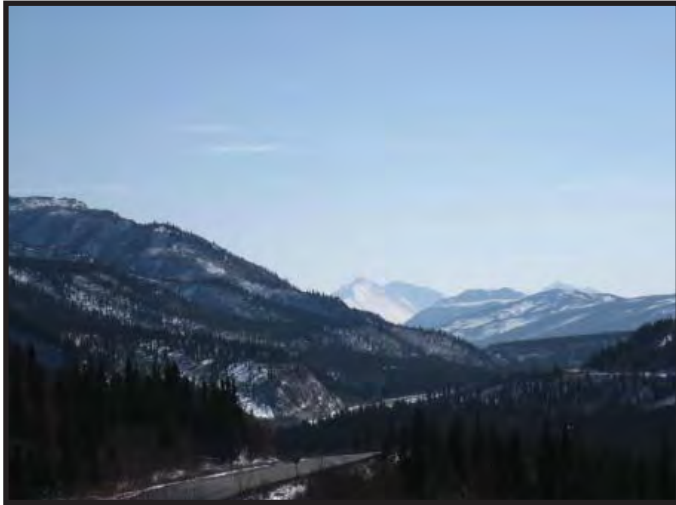
## PLANNING IN DENALI BOROUGH *continued from page 1*

planning commission has been working to amend the current classification categories. Once the land classifications are updated, the planning commission can then move on to actually classifying borough-owned property - essentially making decisions about which property should be used for what purposes. The classification ordinance requires public consultation for these decisions. The borough administration is also required to develop a management plan for each parcel of borough land, which is guided by the classification.

### The Next Frontier: Subdivision and Zoning

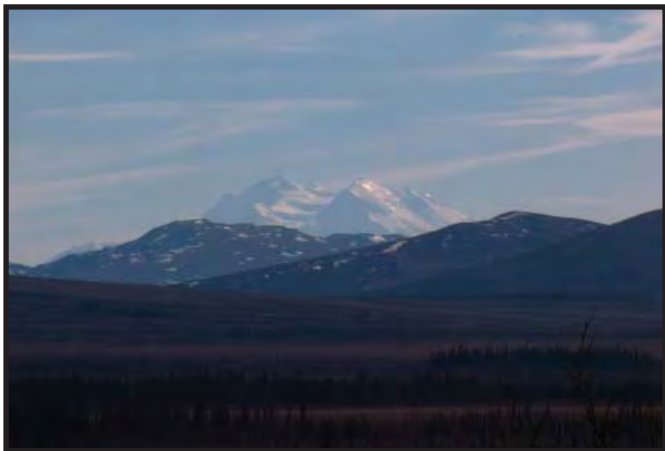
Besides managing borough-owned land, the planning commission has responsibility for setting the rules for property subdivision and zoning.

There is a subdivision chapter (9.10) in the borough code to provide for subdividing and platting land within the Denali Borough. This chapter describes the “technical” procedures for sub-dividing land and for platting (mapping or delineating a tract or parcel of land). The planning commission has been working on revising the current subdivision chapter for several years. Until the classification categories are in place, this has been placed on hold.



Classifying borough owned land is one tool to maintain the quality of life residents treasure, such as scenic views. The views shown here at Dragonfly Creek along the Parks Highway (above) or the view of Denali as seen from Eightmile Lake on the Stampede Trail (below) are state lands which borough classifying would not impact.

*DCC photos*



There is also a zoning chapter for land planning –Chapter 9.15. It states that all land within Denali Borough is zoned unrestricted unless provided by ordinance. The borough landfill is zoned as commercial/industrial. As the borough grows economically and the population increases, zoning will surely be addressed. Zoning is an integral part of land management and planning. It is also generally misunderstood. Many see zoning as restricting what a property owner may or may not do; others see it as a planning method to control what happens where, and to reduce the probability of land use conflicts. As an example: most communities separate areas for residential use and heavy industrial use. It doesn't make sense to locate a home next door to a manufacturing plant, for instance. Or, placing a vehicle junk yard and crushing facility in the middle of a residential subdivision. Those uses are not really compatible. Having a park in the middle of a residential subdivision would be considered a more compatible use.

### Why all this planning?

Nothing remains the same by chance. Over the years residents appearing at assembly meetings and other local community gatherings have stated they would like Denali Borough to remain the same. They know change is inevitable. They want to retain the same quality of life – recreation out their backdoor, unspoiled scenic vistas, small communities and relatively little development. They fear zoning. So why all

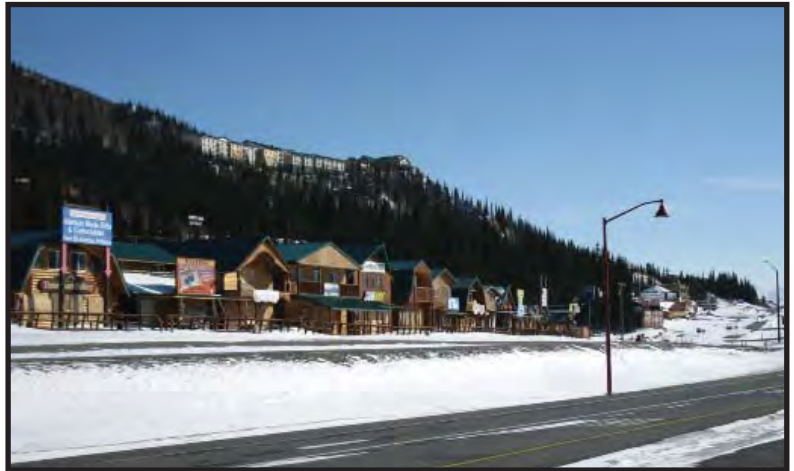
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PLANNING IN DENALI BOROUGH *continued from previous page*

this planning? Planning is the tool that allows the residents of Denali Borough to control what happens and where. With careful planning, development can be a positive thing. The quality of life we enjoy (and what brings others here) can be retained. But it takes planning. It also takes residents voicing their opinions to the planning commission and the assembly. And it takes organizations like Denali Citizens Council to keep residents informed about what's going on within the borough and to encourage them to attend meetings, make comments on important planning issues and be a part of the planning process.

If you would like to be a part of the planning process, live in Denali Borough and have an interest in participating on the planning commission there are currently two seats open. Long-time Commissioner John Miner decided not to seek reappointment when his term expired in January 2011. Commissioner Linda Chatfield recently resigned to pursue other activities. Both seats are for the West Central District (Healy). For more information on the planning commission or to obtain an application visit the Denali Borough website at [www.denaliborough.govoffice.com](http://www.denaliborough.govoffice.com) or contact Mayor Talerico via email: [dave@denaliborough.com](mailto:dave@denaliborough.com)

The planning commission meets the third Tuesday of each month at the Tri-Valley Community Center, Healy. at 6:15 p.m. Meeting agendas are available on the borough website. ☼



Planning tools can be used to recommend building styles, appropriate signage and other features of commercial development to retain the character of an area, rather than letting things just happen. Though the example shown here is not borough-owned land subject to borough classification, the Nenana Canyon area just outside the Denali National Park entrance (shown above and below) has a mix of styles, sign clutter and other features that can detract from the landscape rather than complement the surroundings. *DCC photos*



**YOU'RE INVITED**

TO

**DENALI CITIZENS COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING**

TUESDAY MAY 24, 2011  
7:00 P.M.

AT THE SHELDON CENTER, DENALI EDUCATION CENTER, M.P. 231 PARKS HIGHWAY

JOIN THE DCC BOARD AND STAFF AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING FOR LIVELY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT DENALI AREA ISSUES

# THANK YOU FOR NOT FRACKING

## DCC'S GAS ORGANIZER TALKS ABOUT HEALY GAS EXPLORATION

by Molly McKinley

March 12, 2011, a beautiful March afternoon spent ski-joring with five friends and six dogs and the spectacular backdrop of Denali National Park. While out skiing in the Stampede Corridor, we saw caribou tracks, snowshoe hare tracks, quaint cabins, redpolls, and a few gravitational mishaps resulting in snow-covered friends. What we did not see was any gas wells, natural gas compressor stations, or pipelines - and that is how a lot of other people and I who care about the Denali area would like to keep it.

### The Big Picture

Recent chapters of the Healy Gas Exploration saga include issuance of a Final Best Interest Finding on June 28, 2010 granting an exploration license to Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc. This license permits the Usibelli Corporation to explore for gas using test wells and seismic testing on 208,000 acres, including in and around the town of Healy, the town of Ferry, and other residential areas such as Lignite Road and the Stampede Corridor. In issuing the finding that it did, the State of Alaska chose not to opt for a smaller license area or more protective measures for private property, winter wildlife habitat, or other concerns raised by area residents. DCC filed an appeal, aggrieved by the shortcomings in the State's "Best Interest Finding" process.

Although the appeal is administrative in nature, the real issue is that exploration for and development of coalbed methane is bad news. No one disputes that fossil fuel consumption is part of our daily lives, but that doesn't mean that such products should be extracted from every square inch of this planet. It is prudent and reasonable to keep gas development out of people's yards and out of lands valued as resources for other reasons (e.g. agriculture, critical wildlife habitat). With the havoc that hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," operations are wreaking on drinking water wells, air quality, human health, and community well-being from Pennsylvania to Wyoming, those of us who care about this area are wise to say: "Thank you for not fracking," not on sensitive lands, not in our neighborhoods.

This is a national issue with serious impacts, and it is at hand for Alaskans now as well. Actions on our part can play a role in shaping state precedents for this type of gas exploitation. Industrial gas fields with roads and pipelines covering the landscape are not appropriate uses of certain areas, including lands west of the Nenana River and residential areas in the current Healy Gas License.

### Organizing

Against the backdrop of DCC's appeal, it is important for those of us concerned about this license to keep the conversation alive, to educate ourselves about gas development, and to get our voices heard. That's where I come in. As the Gas Organizer, I have been building a database of interested per-



A gas well in Kenai. Not seeing gas wells, natural gas compressor stations, or pipelines is something most people who care about Denali prefer. *Photo courtesy of Molly McKinley*

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HEALY GAS EXPLORATION *continued from previous page*

sons, sending occasional emails with updates and actions to take either with the State of Alaska or with respect to your property if you live within the license area. I've also developed a few "Fact Sheets." These include a "how-to" sheet on filing for your water rights, an informational sheet about coalbed methane extraction and the problems known to accompany it, and am working on a document outlining landowners' rights respective to the subsurface rights held by the State of Alaska. This sheet also offers landowners tips for negotiations with gas companies seeking to develop on their land. I've also been a familiar face at assembly and planning commission meetings in the Denali Borough. Finally, I've been organizing house parties, giving neighbors a chance to come together and discuss their concerns about gas while filing for water rights and enjoying some tasty treats.



Molly McKinley, DCC's Gas Organizer, hiking along Panguingue Creek with her dog Carlo.  
*Photo courtesy of Molly McKinley*

I feel a bit like I'm back in academia, filling my brain with new knowledge and learning about the details of this gas licensing on a local level while studying up on natural gas news nationwide. Please help me put this new knowledge to work and give me a call or email me if you'd like to get on our mailing list, host a house party, or just learn more. Also, visit our webpage, where you'll find links to the fact sheets described earlier and to sign our petition. AND, if you have not done so, please write to DNR commissioner Dan Sullivan with your concerns about gas development around Healy.

**The Organizer**

I've been fording Denali's glacial rivers and fielding questions about my last name since I arrived for my one summer in Denali in 2005. My story rings similar to many – and now, 6 years later, I've worked for the Park Service each summer with recent winters spent working

at ski resorts in Alaska. I completed a masters' degree at the University of Montana in 2007, where the bulk of my research looked at toxins in traditional foods in Alaska (Yes, our blueberries do contain trace amounts of DDT. I still eat them in copious, mouth-staining quantities).

Ten years ago, I was a caseworker in eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. There, the environmental damage from mountain-top removal mining is startling. I was stunned by the stark realities of the deadened streams, black lung disease, and the fact that the municipal water supply in my town had been contaminated by a coal slurry spill. Alaska stands in contrast to my experience in Appalachia, but as I pay increasing attention, I realize that avoiding these calamities requires vigilance and wisdom. This need to pay attention is why I'm working for DCC and why I hope you keep paying attention too. ☘

For more information about the Healy Gas Exploration License, water rights, coalbed methane extraction and other topics related to the exploration license, contact Molly at 907-683-3396 or via email Molly@denalicitizens.org. Also be sure to check out Denali Citizens Council's website at www.denalicitizens.org.



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*



# SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION TAKE CENTER STAGE AT WINTERFEST XI

by Cass Ray

Science, conservation, and winter in the subarctic played large and well-deserved roles in the eleventh annual Winterfest recently co-hosted by Denali National Park and Preserve. “Learning to Listen: The Subarctic Soundscape,” “My Boxing Match with an Avalanche: How to Avoid a Knockout with Mother Nature,” and “It’s Cold Here: How Do Plants Survive the Winter?” were among the many programs featured during Winterfest the last week in February. Among the other programs and activities, offered in the park and at Tri-Valley School, the community library, and two community centers, were “Like Nothing Else in the World: Mountaineering in Denali,” “Digging in the Snow: Basic Avalanche Safety,” “Sharing the Adventure of a Lifetime,” author and photographer Tom Walker’s debut of his firsthand account of an expedition to the Bering Sea, and “A Different Time and Place: An Historical Reminiscence” with artist and Denali pioneer Ree Nancarrow. Winterfesters also got a first look at Alaska Geographic’s new video, “America’s Wildest Refuge: Discovering the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

Celebrants of all things winter in the subarctic were encouraged to take part in an avalanche rescue beacon interactive course and a “What Winter Means” writing activity, as well as to learn to build snow shelters and to enhance their winter survival skills and be safer in the winter backcountry. Participants also were invited to learn more about the winter adaptations of wildlife and to join a ranger on a hike with the theme, “Walk with Those who Came Before: In the Footprints of Early Denalians.” Saturday’s final activity in the park gave everyone a chance to get out on the park road, with the third annual “Beyond the Aufeis or Bust!” family fun run/walk/bike/ski/skijor/snowshoe. The finale for Winterfest XI featured the showing, at the community library in Healy, of the exquisite and inspiring documentary, “Arctic Dance: The Mardy Murie Story.” Among the partners joining the park in sponsoring Winterfest were the Denali Borough, Denali Chamber of Commerce, Denali Borough School District, Alaska Geographic, Denali Education Center, and Princess Tours. Playing key roles in Winterfest were DCC board members Jared Zimmerman, Anne Beaulaurier, Hannah Ragland, and Erica Watson. ☿



Winterfest brings out ice carvers (at left), excites kids with dog sled rides (above) and of course it's not winter without frozen whiskers, as seen on our board member Jared Zimmerman (at right).  
*Photos courtesy of NPS*



# EVA CREEK WIND FARM APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY GVEA BOARD

by Cass Ray

The board of directors of Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) has voted unanimously to pursue construction of a wind farm near Eva Creek, about twelve miles north of Healy and near Ferry, but the owner of a private wind farm bypassed by GVEA's decision is reported to be filing a formal objection to that decision. When GVEA's board voted in late February to pursue its own wind-power generation project near Eva Creek, it left behind two similar projects it had been considering, one near Delta Junction and the other near Anchorage.

It is the owner of that wind project near Delta Junction who plans to ask the Regulatory Commission of Alaska to halt GVEA's pursuit of the Eva Creek project, the Fairbanks *Daily News-Miner* reported in early March. He also was said to be requesting independent evaluations of the three wind projects GVEA had considered. It is reported that the Eva Creek wind farm would be the most extensive wind-power project in the state.



GVEA simulated photo of the Eva Creek project. *Photo courtesy of GVEA*

Brian Newton, GVEA president and chief executive officer, was reported as commenting, "We thought we went into excruciating detail to show what the numbers are, so we are a little dumbfounded by [the threat of a protest]." Contributing his own colorful comment on GVEA's decision, the owner of the wind farm near Delta Junction was quoted, "If your only problem is that you want to own it, buy me out. Don't throw me to the side of the road like trash."

Newton has said construction of the \$90 million Eva Creek project could be completed by September 2012—"provided there are no permitting or construction delays." GVEA's unanimous decision to pursue the Eva Creek project came six weeks after the Denali Borough Assembly's unanimous vote supporting construction of the wind farm. The resolution approved by the borough assembly also called on the state to assist GVEA with land rights and permitting.

## GVEA Continues Pursuing Restart of Healy Coal Plant #2

Newton also recently reported GVEA has asked legislators "for their continued support" for restarting the long-mothballed Healy Coal Plant #2. That restart would rely upon an air quality permit issued eighteen years ago. The coal-fired power plant is only a few miles from the Class I airshed enjoyed by Denali National Park and Preserve. GVEA resubmitted that permit to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after the EPA balked at following the lead of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and signing off on GVEA's contention that the proposed restart necessitates jumping no new regulatory hurdles.

DCC and other environmental groups throughout the state have insisted that the long-mothballed plant should undergo a major review of its pollution control technology, that GVEA should pursue new, updated permits, and

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## GVEA PROJECTS *continued from previous page*

that the plant should operate only under the strictest, most specific, up-to-date requirements of the federal Clean Air Act. In the more than ten years that the plant has been in warm shut-down, regulatory changes have occurred, global climate change has become a significant issue facing Alaska and the world, and public concerns about this facility have multiplied, it has been noted by environmental attorneys. ❧

# STUDY EXAMINES CLIMATE AND HEALTH OF DENALI COMMUNITIES

by Erica Watson



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

On February 22nd, a small group of local residents met in the cafeteria at Tri-Valley School to discuss climate change with Susan Reyes, a UAF sociologist. The group consisted of educators, NPS employees, and, perhaps most surprisingly, Keith Walters from Usibelli Coal Mine, who is serving as a local contact person for this study. Dr. Reyes made it clear that she didn't want to discuss the causes of climate change, or argue about whether or not changes can or should be stopped or reversed; she was interested in observations of change, and in brainstorming what effects those changes might have on human health. The topic, and the questions she asked, assumed that we could all agree that climate change is indeed happening.

This study, appropriately titled "Health Effects of Climate Change," is a collaborative effort between Dr. Reyes, another sociologist, Tanaya Sudbury, and anthropologist David Driscoll, both from UAA. Researchers chose three study areas around the state, including a community in Southeast Alaska, the community of Kivalina, a coastal village which has seen dramatic and well-publicized effects of climate change related coastal erosion, and ours, which stretches from Anderson to Cantwell. The purpose of this meeting was to gather people's observations and experiences of climate change, which will help researchers decide what questions will result in the most meaningful answers. Eventually, participants will be asked to fill out a survey once a month, recording their observations. "It's our job to make connections between what you're seeing and health risk," Reyes said.

Dr. Reyes has worked on similar studies in Northern Canada, and said the inspiration for this work first came from observations of Canadian bees. "Bees are new arrivals in many of these Northern communities," she said. Kids there had never seen them before, and because of their unfamiliarity, tried to catch them. They suffered the consequences, which may be obvious to many of us, but not to kids who were used to living in a world without stinging insects. This got her thinking about other ecological factors which are impacting human health, directly and indirectly. Some examples she cited drew heavily from sociological statistics, which, for example, make connections between unemployment and alcoholism. Dr. Reyes asked participants to think about jobs and industries which are dependent on certain weather conditions. Participants cited river guides, who may be out of work when water levels are too low to run, or the railroad, whose operations could be stopped by rockslides or avalanches on the tracks, events which could become more frequent in a wetter, snowier climate. People who are unemployed against their will are statistically more likely to abuse alcohol or other drugs, Reyes said, which affects both physical and mental health.

Other examples were more direct. For example, breathing wildfire smoke for prolonged periods has negative health effects, and if climate trends shift towards hotter, drier summers, wildfire incidents and severity would be likely to increase. Most of the observations and anecdotes shared at the meeting would probably not be surprising to long-term residents of the Denali area, but thinking of these changes in terms of our own health and decision-making allowed participants to make connections to our environment in ways we might otherwise overlook.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH *continued from previous page*

Studies like this, which collect individual and community observations of climate change, are being conducted around the world, perhaps most notably in small, rural communities, where people's daily experiences are more directly tied to their natural environment. Such studies often attempt to give voice to groups which are under-represented in the environmental policy decisions which impact the way we eat, recreate, travel, and work. As we talked about the changes occurring here, I remembered the statements made by a man I met in Himalayan India named Sonam Jorgyes two years ago. Sonam is the director of the Ladakh Ecological Development Group in Leh, India, and he spoke about the importance of understanding climate change in order to better adapt. Like Dr. Reyes, he stressed understanding and adapting over labeling change as "good" or "bad;" understanding and engaging with the way climatic conditions are changing allow people whose health and livelihoods are shaped by those conditions to be more empowered in choosing how to live with the changes. Though our communities and environments are of course quite different, it was an interesting reminder of the parallel stories of climate change from around the world.

Dr. Reyes and her colleagues are still interested in recruiting more study participants in the Denali area. She can be reached at [slrenes@alaska.edu](mailto:slrenes@alaska.edu). The next meeting of participants is tentatively scheduled for the week of April 18. ☘

## FRIENDS OF STAMPEDE LEARN ABOUT CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARDS

by Hannah Ragland

Friends of Stampede met in late February with Tom Paragi, a Fairbanks resident who served two terms on the Citizens Advisory Board to the Division of State Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Tom explained the role of a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), an important feature of the proposed Stampede State Recreation Area (SRA). These volunteer boards are located in different regions of the state, and in some cases focus on a specific site. The Fairbanks CAB covers a range of sites, including Chena State Recreation Area, and Tok and Delta Junction area sites. The Stampede SRA bills would create a local CAB that would work with the region's superintendent.



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

CABs are especially critical in a newly designated area, such as the proposed Stampede SRA, as a management plan is being drafted and the current conditions are assessed. Tom explained that the recommendations made by a CAB are always given full consideration, and are generally adopted. Once a Management Plan is drafted, the CAB continues to advise on management (trail maintenance, development, etc.), and provides an opportunity for the public to remain involved.

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation in Fairbanks is currently looking to fill several seats on its CAB. Many Denali Borough residents use the sites included in this region for activities ranging from recreation to hunting. Tom recommended that a Denali Borough resident on the Fairbanks-area CAB would gain experience in the process and could provide local expertise in the future. To find out how to apply, see the Division's news release at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/curevnts.htm>.

Bills to create a Stampede State Recreation Area (SB 60 and HB 113) were introduced this session and HB 113 was heard in House Resources. The two-year legislative session breaks after April 17<sup>th</sup> and will resume next January. Wherever a bill stands at the end of this year, it will pick up again in January. Friends is happy to see at least one committee hearing this year for the House version of the bill. Please take a moment to write a letter of support, and to sign our petition, if you have not already. Visit the Friends of Stampede website for easy links to both (<http://stampedefriends.wordpress.com/>). ☘

# TRI-VALLEY STUDENT EMILY BREASE MAKES IMPACT IN JUNEAU WITH ALASKA YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

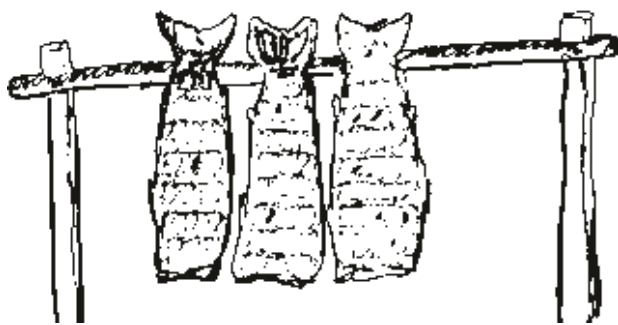
Each year Denali Citizens Council sponsors a Denali Borough student to attend the Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) Civics and Conservation Summit held in Juneau. AYEAs, as its name implies, calls Alaska youths to action concerning conservation issues and provides a great opportunity for them to meet with legislators and become involved in the legislative process. This year Tri-Valley student Emily Brease attended the summit. Below is a short letter from Emily to DCC about her experience. She just might be a future state Representative. . .

Hello!

Wow! Alaska Youth for Environmental Action was awesome! I will send you a full report later, but I just wanted to send a quick letter expressing my extreme gratitude and excitement. While in Juneau, I focused on (and testified for) a bill regarding toxins (specifically, polybrominated diphenyl ethers), promoting salmon (to go against large scale mining), and of course fracking! I had meetings with Representative Guttenberg, Senator Thomas, Senator Olson, Representative Foster, Representative Kawasaki, Senator French, Senator Coghill, Senator Wielechowski, Senator Holmes and Representative Miller (along with many other informal meetings with other senators, representatives, and the governor!).

Representative Miller emailed me right after our meeting and asked me if he could borrow "Gasland"! Representative Miller, my fellow AYEAs participants (and friends) from Fairbanks, and I are going to set up a "Gasland" showing in Fairbanks.

I also worked with Senator Wielechowski, sponsor of the Senate toxics bill (there was another bill of the same topic in the House, sponsored by Representative Holms, which I testified for). On the last day, Senator Wielechowski offered me an internship! It would only be for about a week, because I am in high school and they don't have internships for high schoolers (if I can end up doing it, I would be the first high school intern in the Capitol building!).



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*



Emily Brease with Senator Bill Wielechowski (D-Anchorage) during the AYEAs Civics and Conservation Summit in Juneau. Senator Wielechowski was selected by AYEAs youth as one of the Legislators of the Year. Alaska Youth for Environmental Action offers Legislator of the Year awards annually to representatives and senators who have shown leadership in advocating for issues important to AYEAs teens. *Photo courtesy of Emily Brease*

I learned a lot about current environmental issues, and how to advocate for the protection of the earth. It was exciting to be introduced in the House floor session. Representative Guttenberg introduced me saying, "And this is the girl who is going to take my job..."

I met amazing people with the same interests, made great friends and connections. I have found my passion, and I cannot wait to go again! Thank you very much DCC!!!!

Emily Brease

## THE SCIENCE OF COMPOSTING IN DENALI

by Julia Potter

Did you know that 236 million tons of waste are created each year in the United States? Or that only 72 million tons of waste are recycled or composted each year? I know that our country produces a lot of garbage but, I had no idea just how much is created or how little of that amount is recycled. Two seventh grade students at Tri-Valley School in Healy know all the facts when it comes to trash and recycling or composting.

Stony and B.J. Yanuchi have been experimenting with how packaging made from corn plastic composts in Alaska. During the summer of 2009, Stony and B.J. began composting packaging in their hot bin system for the 2010 Denali Borough Science Fair. They did find out that plastic packaging made from corn will compost (see Mar-Apr 2010 *DCC News*). They discovered that bags and clear plastic containers made with corn were fully composted within 30 to 50 days. To verify their findings from the summer of 2009, the students again composted packaging made from corn over the summer of 2010. They researched the various types of packaging made from corn, obtained samples and began composting. By October there was no visible sign of plastic. This is good news considering that packaging and containers constitute 32 percent of the waste (or garbage) consumers create each year. The added bonus: six cubic yards of clean compost for the family garden.

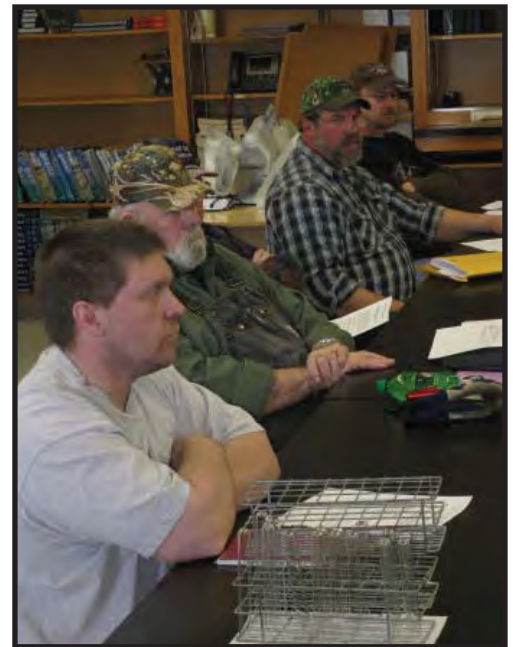
As with all good science experiments, Stony and B. J. will continue composting this summer to record their findings for a third year. In light of their continuing efforts toward conservation, Stony and B.J. were awarded DCC's annual science fair designation of Best Project: Conservation. Congratulations!

## DCC BOARD MEMBERS ATTEND FISH & GAME MEETING



At the April 4 meeting of the Middle Nenana Fish & Game Advisory Committee at Tri-Valley School in Healy, three of the four members of the committee's audience were members of the DCC board and DCC's gas organizer. Above left, Nan Eagleson, a DCC board member who also serves on the Advisory Committee, Molly McKinley, DCC's gas organizer, and Hannah Ragland, DCC board member, listen to discussion by members of the committee, some of whom are pictured at right. In her comments to the committee, Ragland reviewed the history of the proposal for a Stampede State Recreation Area (SRA) and provided an update on activities of the Friends of Stampede. Noting Rep. David Guttenberg's office would like for a hunter or trapper to testify at the hearing on the House bill establishing the SRA, Ragland pointed out that the Senate and House bills that would establish the Stampede SRA are identical, which may mean the path to eventual passage of the proposal could be smoothed. McKinley introduced herself and her role as DCC's gas organizer and invited members of the Advisory Committee to take active roles on that issue and to get in touch with her with their questions or concerns.

*DCC photos*



## BRIEF NEWS & VIEWS

### DCC ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MAY 24 – NEW DAY, NEW FOCUS

Save the date – the DCC Annual Membership Meeting will be Tuesday evening, **May 24, 7:00pm, at the Sheldon Center.**

As long-time attendees to the annual membership meeting know, this date is quite a bit earlier than we usually hold the annual meeting. The board wants to shift the focus of the meeting to provide an opportunity for members to socialize and catch up after the winter and before the summer season is fully frantic. Equally important, we want to fill members in about the key issues DCC is following, and give plenty of opportunity for discussion. So, in another departure from our usual format, we will not be having a guest speaker – except for you! Please plan on attending and being a part of the conversation.

Non-members are welcome at this meeting. Bring along someone you think might be interested in joining, or who is just interested in listening to a lively discussion about Denali area issues. This will be a great opportunity for local employees who interact with visitors to update their knowledge about what's going on with park policy, wildlife protection, gateway community development, the Stampede State Recreation Area, Healy gas, and more.

Finally, we will be announcing the results of the election for DCC board of directors. Meet the folks who have volunteered their time and energy to make sure DCC stays energetic and effective. ☘

### YET MORE WEBSITE TIPS AND TRICKS

**Sign Petitions** – Not so much a tip or trick, but it is worth being aware that if there are any important petitions to be signed related to any DCC issues, we will be displaying links to them on the DCC homepage. Letters are always better – and we do provide a lot of opportunities to write letters – but if you can't find time, then signing a petition is an excellent way to show your support for DCC's causes.

For a petition to make an impression, we need lots of signatures when we show them to elected representatives and agency officials. So take the time **RIGHT NOW** to go to the DCC home page, look for petitions in the bottom left, and sign them all. Right now we have links to three petitions:

- 1) support designation of the Stampede State Recreation Area
- 2) oppose the final finding for Healy Basin Gas Exploration, and
- 3) support of designation for the Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge.

The last isn't a DCC issue, but we are supporting our friends over at the Tangle Lakes and the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, who also support us. Plus, the Tangle Lakes is an incredible place, worthy of protection and facing serious threats.

**Archives** – Looking for an old article, newsletter, or alert? The DCC website offers several features for looking back. All of them are found in the right-hand column of the Denali News page, down below “Denali in the Media” and “NPS Press Releases.”

- 1) First, there is a Search box that enables you to type in a word or phrase to bring up a list of results. We've tried to tag our stories with keywords you would likely use.
- 2) Do you remember about what month the post appeared? You can do a search of the archives by month to see a list of posts that appeared in each time period.
- 3) Perhaps most useful, DCC has categorized all our posts by type of post and general subject. The list of those categories appears at the bottom of the right-hand column. Just pick the category of your interest, and a complete list of posts should appear.

Have fun searching – let us know how it goes. ☘

## BRIEF NEWS & VIEWS

### PROTECTION SOUGHT FOR TANGLE LAKES

In addition to the Stampede State Recreation Area, there is another effort to establish a new protected area that could affect wildlife and visitation in the Denali region. Across the Denali Highway, a group of organizations including the Copper Country Alliance, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Fairbanks Paddlers, and Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers are seeking the establishment of a Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge. The proposal is a response to mining exploration in this sensitive area. Legislation for the refuge has not yet been introduced, but the group is collecting signatures on a letter to Alaska legislators.

For background information, check out the background document on the Northern Alaska Environmental Center's website at <http://northern.org/programs/clean-water-mines/hardrock-mines-in-interior-and-arctic-alaska/tangle-lakes-man-project/click-here-to-save-tangle-lakes>, or the Save Tangle Lakes website at <http://www.savetanglelakes.org/SaveTangleLakes/>. ☞

### EXPLORATION LICENSE FOR UNDERGROUND COAL GASIFICATION AWARDED

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) has awarded an exploration license to the Australian company Linc Energy to explore for underground coal gasification resources on some of its lands around Cook Inlet and Healy, Anderson, and Nenana. As its name suggests, underground coal gasification is a chemical process of producing gas from coal while it is still in the ground, then siphoning the gas off for refining and use via a well. The process has been known for decades, but the expense has discouraged development until recently, as prices for conventional fuels have climbed. Cook Inlet Region, Inc. is actively working on an underground coal gasification project on the west side of Cook Inlet, which is the only present development project in Alaska.

Linc Energy's license is only for exploration, although the license can be converted to a lease in the future. To see maps of the license areas around Healy, Anderson, and Nenana, go to the DCC News page on the DCC website to the post of March 9, or visit this link directly: <http://www.denalicitizens.org/2011/03/underground-coal-gasification-exploration-license-awarded/>. ☞



*Alaskan Native Knowledge Network*

## DCC NEWS

Join Denali Citizens Council and receive a subscription to *DCC News* published six times a year. A form is provided on the back of this newsletter. Or join on the web: [www.denalicitizens.org](http://www.denalicitizens.org)

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## **JOIN US**

Denali Citizens Council is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to protect the natural integrity of Denali National Park and to promote a sustainable future for lands surrounding the Park.

Please join by filling out this form and mailing it to the address below.

Your contribution is tax deductible

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