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*Your Land.
Your Voice.*



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Addressing Climate Change Through Protecting Alaska's Public Lands and Waters

By: Adam Kolton, Executive Director

One of the questions we often wrestle with at Alaska Wilderness League is how the climate crisis changes how we approach our work and how we talk about it. After all, Alaska is truly on the front lines of a warming world and almost weekly there is another traumatic story about climate change impacting people, wildlife and the landscapes they depend on.

This spring there were several tragic incidents of Indigenous hunters falling through the sea ice on the Yukon River. Scientists believe that elevated sea surface temperatures caused diminished plankton blooms in the Bering Sea, leading to the starvation of thousands of puffins. Similarly, warming Arctic Ocean waters may have disrupted the food web gray whales depend on, causing more than 160 of these extraordinary creatures to wash up along beaches – more than half between California and Alaska.

Perhaps most jarringly, if you watched the David Attenborough narrated series *Our Planet* on Netflix, you witnessed walrus without access to ice, forced to rest on tiny beaches that are so overcrowded that some scale cliffs for a bit of peace. But when they decide to return to the water, these

lumbering animals with poor eyesight wander right off the edge to their horrible deaths. “This is the sad reality of climate change,” Sophie Lanfear, leader of the documentary film crew, was quoted as saying. “They’d be on the ice if they could.”

What these and so many other examples have challenged us to consider is that saving wild places alone won’t be enough to ensure that future generations will be able to experience the unrivaled, spectacular majesty of Alaska. We must start reducing emissions dramatically, quickly replacing fossil fuels with clean energy alternatives to make up for too many years of lost time.

That doesn’t mean Alaska Wilderness League is switching our focus to renewable energy or promoting carbon pricing or energy efficiency – though we will support the many others doing incredible work on these fronts. What we can do is clearly articulate in our advocacy, our public education and our outreach work how protecting Alaska’s cherished landscapes can have enormous climate benefits – or at the very least, keep us from making the problem worse.

Alaska Wilderness League recently released a new report titled *The*

Energy and Climate Impacts of Oil Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Among its conclusions: burning all oil beneath the Arctic Refuge would be like doubling the pollution from every coal-fired power plant in the nation for three years. When you consider that global CO2 emissions must be cut by about 45% by 2030 in order to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, it’s maddening to watch the Trump administration try and hand the Arctic Refuge over to oil and gas companies without consideration or acknowledgment of the climate impacts.

This is a major argument Alaska Wilderness League and our partners are making as we rally shareholders and investors to pressure oil companies to stay out of the Arctic Refuge, noting that the necessary measures to meet the 2-degree Celsius Paris target will render unburnable fossil fuels from extreme regions that are already expensive to produce from.

Our work to protect the Tongass National Forest can also have positive climate impacts. The Tongass alone absorbs approximately eight percent of the

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Alaska Wilderness League is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1993 to further the protection of Alaska’s incomparable natural endowment. Our mission is to galvanize support to secure vital policies that protect and defend America’s last great wild public lands and waters.

Board of Directors: President Jimmy Carter, Honorary Chair, Honorable Robert Mrazek, Chair Emeritus, Betsy Loyless, Chair, Richard Spener, Vice Chair, Gareth Martins, Treasurer, Ellen Ferguson, Secretary, Toni Armstrong, Midy Aponte, Steve Barker, Tom Campion, Kit DesLauriers, Chris Hill, Debbie S. Miller, Lorraine Netro, Brian O’Donnell, Pat Pourchot and David Weinstein. For questions about our newsletter, please email us at info@AlaskaWild.org or call us at 202-544-5205.

Cover photo: Bald eagle in the Tongass National Forest. Daniel Dietrich / DanielDietrichPhotography.com.

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Outdoor Adventurers and Athletes Head to Capitol Hill

By: Emily Sullivan, Conservation Associate

In May, Alaska Wilderness League joined Protect Our Winters and the American Packrafting Association to advocate on behalf of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, bringing outdoor adventurers and athletes to Washington, D.C., to educate members of Congress. They did so to highlight the importance of protecting our public lands and waters and the need to restore protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain. Participants included Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, an Alaska Native and a former Olympic Snowboarder from Bristol Bay, plus a variety of social media influencers, Alaskan adventurers and other professional athletes.

After a day of training and preparation for Hill meetings, participants took to the Potomac River in a solidarity float. The American Packrafting Association had created two custom packrafts to send on trips across the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The two rafts – christened Olaus and Ms. Mardy – have traveled across the Arctic Refuge six times, collecting stories and signatures from those passionate about conserving this invaluable landscape along the way.



Fly-in participants on the Potomac River.

Forest Woodward, Protect Our Winters

The following day, participants engaged in more than 20 meetings with Hill staff, attended two constituent coffees, and participated in a House subcommittee hearing on the effects of climate change on outdoor recreation. Callan and Hilary Hutcheson of Protect Our Winters testified to their firsthand experiences with climate change, and Callan elevated the need to stop fossil fuel extractions from priceless public lands like the Arctic Refuge.

“Your voice matters,” said educator, writer, ski guide and athlete Brennan Lagasse. “If you care about having access to enjoy the outdoors in your home community,

you can care about protecting the Arctic Refuge. You can help by supporting efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge, efforts that on a macro scale can be funneled on more local scales to protecting the public lands and outdoors in your own local community.”

Read more about the fly-in participants and their experience in D.C. on our blog at: <http://bit.ly/refuge-athletes> *



Fly-in participants meet with Arctic champ Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA2) of California (center, red tie). Jacob Moon

Your Voice Can Make a Difference

By: Amelia Weeder and John Kashwick, League Supporters

To people like me who are not comfortable lobbying, many environmental protection efforts feel like struggles between Godzilla and King Kong. I witness the intensity of the contest and the ground around me gets trampled while I do what I can to support or inform the combatants, and yet I am sure that my voice is lost amidst the din. Still, I have found success in working with others like Alaska Wilderness League that support and amplify my concerns so that my voice is heard.

As a busy new congressman from New Jersey's recently flipped 7th district, scheduling a meeting with Representative Tom Malinowski (D-NJ7) took persistence and time. To increase the chances of speaking directly with him, I joined a coalition of Sierra Club members (all of us constituents from within his district) and requested a meeting to address a set of related environmental issues. Each of us succinctly discussed one specific issue. During our face-to-face meeting, I was pleased to find that Representative Malinowski had a firm grasp of and thoughtful, well-defined positions on each of the topics raised; he knew the legislative actions being taken and the sponsors involved.

On Alaska/Arctic issues, he had already been made aware of oil leasing/drilling concerns and demonstrated support for protecting the Arctic by co-sponsoring bills to stop Arctic Ocean drilling and to negate the provisions that had been inserted into the 2017 tax bill that



Amelia Weeder, John Kashwick and others meet with Representative Tom Malinowski (D-NJ7) (center) of New Jersey in his district office. Alaska Wilderness League

allowed drilling in the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

I spoke about the ecologically catastrophic seismic exploration scheduled to start this year. Representative Malinowski reviewed photographs and substantiated information demonstrating the damage to tundra and animals that seismic exploration would inflict. He not only personally supported our effort to prevent seismic exploration and drilling, but also helped to move the effort forward, referring me to a representative on the House Appropriations Committee, which controls funding of the Interior Department's Arctic Refuge coastal plain leasing project.

Again, scheduling a meeting with an aide to the Appropriations Committee member took time, and was accomplished with assistance from my district's Democrat state

committee representative. Still, the effort to gain the support of several of my state's congressional representatives has, in a relatively short time, shifted from initial education to understanding and support, including engaging members of the Appropriations Committee who have influence on the funding for Arctic Refuge exploration and leasing.

Certainly not all meetings with congressional members go this well, and not all representatives will be as responsive to your concerns. At other times with different representatives, my concerns have been listened to politely, but no action has been taken. However, I still feel that thoughtful presentation of well-grounded concerns is how understanding is increased, and that through creating and nurturing relationships with our representatives our voices are heard. *

“Still, I have found success in working with others like Alaska Wilderness League that support and amplify my concerns so that my voice is heard.”

Attending the Arctic Indigenous Climate Summit

By: Lois Norgaard, National Field Organizer

What a powerful week – my recent trip up to Fort Yukon for the Arctic Indigenous Climate Summit, hosted by the Gwich'in Steering Committee, was my first opportunity to spend time in an Arctic Indigenous community. The city of Fort Yukon in northeast Alaska numbers just under 600 residents, the majority of which are Gwich'in.

The event was held June 11–13, and at the end of each day, many in the greater community would join us for an evening meal, music and traditional dancing, and each evening there were also softball games (which I could hear through the trees when I was “turning in” in my tent). With basically round-the-clock light in the Arctic summer, there were no deterrents to activities lasting well into the night!

The summit was well run and welcoming to those of us visiting. For the most part we ate shared meals in the Tribal Hall – caribou roasted or as meatloaf, some vegetables with pasta and soups. Eggs for breakfast with bacon and sausage, fruit and always a potato side. We were well taken care of by our hosts!

“Do it in a good way, tell the world we are here, talk about our connection.”

— Message from a Gwich'in Elder

The line-up of speakers was impressive – Indigenous leaders from the lower 48, as well as Gwich'in and Iñupiat communities in the Arctic. With us the elders shared stories and observations of climate change impacts, and stories of their history and their life on the land. The younger generations spoke up as well – the youngest village chief (at 23 years old!) from the community of Venetie talked to us of climate change and the connection between racial justice and environmental issues like education, housing and food access. These issues go hand in hand with the impacts

and effects of climate change on Fort Yukon and other Indigenous communities throughout the Arctic.



Welcome to Fort Yukon, Alaska.
Lois Norgaard, Alaska Wilderness League



My cozy campsite outside the village.
Lois Norgaard, Alaska Wilderness League

“We are rich in resources; water, land, trees – no money does not mean you are poor.”

— Message from a Gwich'in hunter and traditional scientist

Food security was the subject of the summit's first day, with climate change covered on the second. Climate and food security are naturally linked in the Arctic, and it was beautiful watching the back and forth between traditional

and western scientists – sharing data, statistics, observations and ideas made for a great day loaded with science-based knowledge. Our final day highlighted community organizing elevating each other's voices. Workshops and break-out sessions were led by Native Movement and were deeply moving.

“We are proud to hang on to what we have, hardship is not new for Indigenous people.

Survival involves earth, air, sun, water, it is going to take all of our energy to say no.”

— Message from an Iñupiat leader

In and of itself, the Arctic Indigenous Climate Summit was a three-day journey, but it was also just the beginning of the process of unifying its attendees, connecting us in our work, and uniting us for the hard fights ahead.*

Read Lois's complete write-up at AlaskaWild.org/Blog/Arctic-Indigenous-Climate-Summit.



Selfie time with Kiersten Iwai of Stand.Earth (left) and Mayda Garcia of the Society of Native Nations (center).
Lois Norgaard, Alaska Wilderness League

Welcome to the Board Midy Aponte and Chris Hill

By: Chris Konish, Director of Development

We're excited to announce the addition of two very talented women to our board of directors: Midy Aponte and Chris Hill. Both Midy and Chris bring years of experience and accomplishments working on a range of conservation issues, as well as a strong passion for public lands and waters in Alaska. Read more about their background below, and see our full board of directors at AlaskaWild.org/Who-We-Are/Board-Of-Directors.

Midy Aponte is a senior vice president at Spitfire Strategies, where her portfolio centers on a wide range of public interest issues. Her clients include global, national and state foundations such as the World Resources Institute, Ford Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, Earthjustice, ClimateWorks, The Aspen Institute, Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Rose Community Foundation, as well as mid-sized organizations such as CFLeads, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition and Upwardly Global.

Prior to joining Spitfire, Midy served as the founding executive director of the American Latino Heritage Fund of the National Park Foundation, where she collaborated with the Obama administration, the Department of Interior and the National Park Service on several initiatives aimed at preserving American



Midy Aponte

Lamine Laimeche

Latino history. She serves on several nonprofit boards including the Alaska Wilderness League and the Latino Community Foundation of Colorado. She is also a member of the GreenLatinos Network and the Diverse Environmental Leaders National Speakers' Bureau. Midy was born in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City to Cuban immigrants and was raised in Miami. She relocated to Denver in 2014 after a decade in Washington, D.C.

Born and raised in the Washington, D.C., area, **Chris Hill** earned a B.A. in broadcast communications and electronic media from Appalachian State University and a J.D. from Vermont Law School. With deep roots as a community organizer and environmental policy advocate, she currently serves as the Associate Campaign Director for the Lands, Water, Wildlife Campaign at the Sierra Club. Prior to this role, Chris spent many years as a state and federal environmental lobbyist as Sierra Club's Deputy Legislative Director and Environmental Working Group's Director of Government Affairs. She was also the Director of Government Relations and Communications for the Maryland Energy Administration in the administration of Former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley.

A passionate fly-fisher, Chris has traveled all over the world to fish from the remote rivers of Alaska to the tropical waters of Belize to the small streams of Shenandoah National Park. Her love for Alaska's wild places has prompted numerous adventures throughout the state as well, traveling by foot and by raft. She currently splits her time between Washington, D.C., and Haines, Alaska, where her partner lives. *



Chris Hill

Greg Schlachter

A New Leadership Council

By Chris Konish, Director of Development

Alaska Wilderness League's mission focuses on protecting and preserving the public wild lands and waters of America's most northern state. As another step forward toward achieving our goals, we have established a new Leadership Council that seeks to cultivate diverse input, philanthropic support, community messaging and political action.

The Council, now in its earliest stages, is comprised of individuals deeply committed to our mission with a range of business, scientific, fundraising and political acumen. By participating in phone/video conferencing, communicating directly with League staff, attending in-person meetings and engaging directly in federal

advocacy, members will meet as thought leaders to advise and assist in the planning and execution of League goals.

Current planning is underway for the Council's inaugural Washington, D.C., fly-in this fall, with more opportunities to come for Council members to engage directly with decision-makers on Capitol Hill. If you are interested in this deeper advisory and philanthropic role, please contact me at Chris@AlaskaWild.org to learn more about the benefits – such as Alaska trip opportunities, D.C. lobby meetings and connecting with experts – and responsibilities of joining this influential group of Alaska public lands advocates. *

Check Out Alaska Wilderness League's Blog!

By: Corey Himrod, Senior Communications Manager

Our Wild Alaska Blog is a showcase for the work that League staff and our champions are doing to keep Alaska wild. Here, we share stories and happenings from D.C. and Alaska, and elevate the voices of champions, volunteers and others interested in protecting Alaska's public lands and waters. Check it out online at AlaskaWild.org/Blog. Interested in submitting your own writing for the blog? Simple – just send me a note at Corey@AlaskaWild.org! *



Addressing Climate Change... (continued from page 2)

nation's annual global warming pollution and stores an estimated 10-12 percent of all carbon in our national forests. Keeping its old-growth trees intact will maintain a natural carbon sink at scale – by preserving these trees and expanding our forests we can create a bulwark against climate change.

To tackle the climate crisis, it's imperative to partner with experts in the field – organizations like Protect Our Winters

(ProtectOurWinters.org; see story on Page 3), a group focused on mobilizing the global winter sports community in the fight against climate change. It means standing with our Indigenous allies as they share their firsthand accounts of the changing landscape (see story on the Arctic Indigenous Climate Summit, Page 5). And it means collaborating with frontline community groups and others in Alaska who are working to advance a vision for the state's economy that moves it

beyond fossil fuel extraction.

On this front, success will be measured in part by whether Alaska is viewed not just as a “canary in the coal mine” on climate change, but as part of the climate solution through protection of its public lands and waters. *

Adam Kolton
Executive Director

Your Lasting Legacy for Alaska's Public Lands and Waters



Success for the Next Generation Starts Today

By making plans today, you can leave a positive impact on Alaska's public lands and waters like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Tongass National Forest for generations to come.

To learn more about what steps you can take to provide long-term and long-lasting resources towards efforts to defend these iconic national treasures, contact us at 202-266-0415 or email Chris Konish at Chris@AlaskaWild.org. Visit AlaskaWild.org/Planned-Giving for more information.