



COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT

COPPER RIVER

Runner

FALL 2014



WILLOW SHOOTS COLLECTED BY VOLUNTEERS GREW QUICKLY ON THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED STREAM BANKS CREATED AFTER THE RAILROAD-ERA CULVERT AND TRACK STRINGERS CROSSING THE STREAM WERE REMOVED.

ODIAK POND RESTORATION

BY KATE MORSE

Railroad engineer Michael J. Heney was lauded, and sometimes cursed, for his 1908 construction of the Copper River and Northwest Railroad that was certainly built to last – and last it did!

On a field trip in 2010, I found the opening of a railroad-era culvert built on the inlet stream leading to Odiak Pond. Fish must have used it back then, and Odiak Pond and stream are still home to coho salmon, a resilient fish that has persevered in the heart of town as Cordova has grown up around it. But the stream bed had filled in at the culvert mouth which was restricting the original channel width considerably.

In July, 2014, the Copper River Watershed Project and its community partners excavated remnants of the culvert and re-established an open stream channel. We took on this restoration effort to provide unimpeded movement of juvenile and adult fish, in particular coho salmon, between spawning and rearing habitat and to help return a more natural flow of water through Odiak watershed.

With the City of Cordova's backhoe, the National Civilian Conservation Corps Gold 7 crew and the expertise of the U.S. Forest Service, remnants of the Copper River/ Northwest Railroad were removed. Once the channel was re-opened, dormant willows that had been collected in March by CRWP student intern Gabrielle Brown and a group of Cordova High School students were used for brush-layering the newly exposed stream banks. Just a few weeks after re-planting, the willows sprouted leaves and started growing in their new home. Many thanks to Trident Seafoods for helping keep the willows dormant through our early spring — Jake Betts and his crew helped to keep the willows covered in ice, storing them for us at the local cannery in some extra insulated fish totes.

This restoration work will provide educational and recreational opportunities for the community of Cordova for generations to come and will help sustain local coho populations by protecting the genetic diversity of individual stocks. The water quality and habitat will be improved in this public park where families and friends gather. Local students will continue to study and explore this accessible aquatic habitat through field trips supported by CRWP and Cordova School District.

This project is part of an ongoing effort by CRWP and community partners to improve Odiak Pond water quality and fish habitat.

MORE INFO ON ODIAK POND RESTORATION AT
www.copperriver.org/programs/fish-habitat-restoration

CRWP MISSION

To foster the health of the Copper River watershed's salmon-based cultures, communities, and economies.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KNEELING IN THE MEADOW, feeling the propeller winds wash over me, I was struck by how powerful a tool a helicopter is. I was so grateful for the assistance we were getting that day from the U.S. Coast Guard MH-60T helicopter and a ground crew on our Eyak Mountain Trail restoration project.

You've experienced that, haven't you? Started work on some project and not been able to lay your hands on a vice grip, or the right spreadsheet model for budgeting, or that special kitchen gadget? Having "the right tool for the job" can make a job go more smoothly and make your work load seem so much more manageable.

The same goes for having the right partners – finding the right combination of skills and resources in a partner, or a team of partners, for a project can really move an effort forward. I believe we talk about our partners a lot in our messages to members, but what does that really mean in practice? How is it that the U.S. Coast Guard would get involved in a trail restoration project with a helicopter?

A helicopter is actually a very good tool for moving heavy loads, and that's what we needed: to move four tons of treated lumber up the hillside, to a location where our trail construction volunteers could cut it to size for installation to protect wetlands. And for the U.S. Coast Guard, such a special mission is both a contribution to the community as well as practice for moving big loads and dropping them in a marked location. How else do partners help with our watershed work? Wrangell – St. Elias National Park arranges for the invasive weeds we collect to be burned in a controlled facility. The U.S. Forest Service's Cordova Ranger District Trail Crew spends time with our trail restoration volunteers showing them trail construction techniques. Wrangell

Institute for Science and the Environment (WISE) helps lead our Copper River Stewardship youth leadership program each summer. To pull the railroad-era culvert out of the Odiak Pond salmon stream that you'll read about in these pages, we were very fortunate to have assistance from the City of Cordova's Water Department backhoe for excavation of those 24" x 8" bridge stringers. Talk about the right tool for the job!

Our partners include educators, biologists, contractors, City employees, state and federal agencies, fishermen, and tourism business owners. To all of our partners, we want to shout out a huge **THANK YOU** for contributing to the work of thinking and acting on a watershed scale!

Many thanks,

Kristin Carpenter

KRISTIN CARPENTER AND NIECE MARGARET SMITH
AT COPPER RIVER OVERLOOK, JULY 2014.



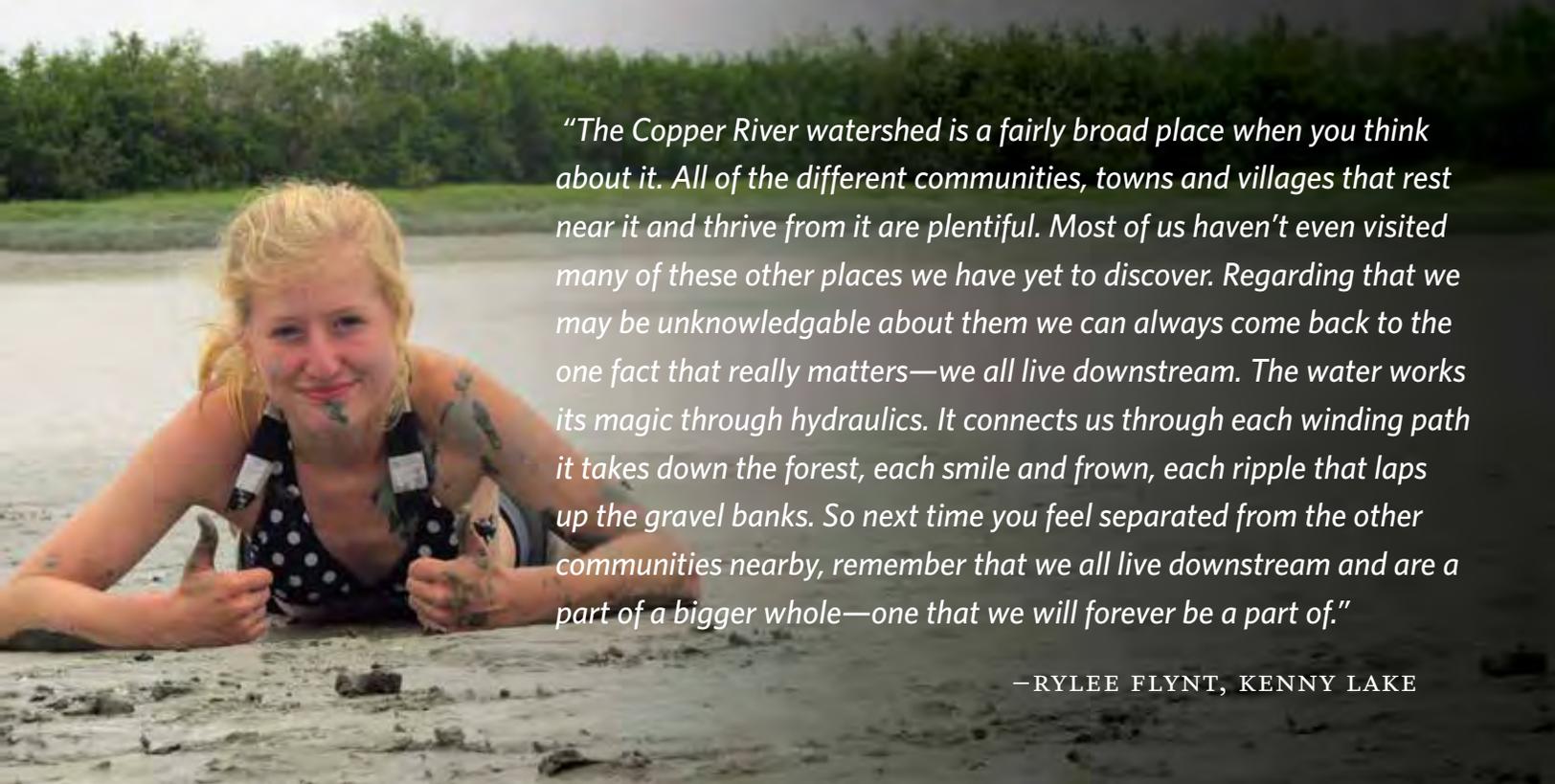
CRWP STAFF

Kristin Carpenter, *Executive Director*
Kate Morse, *Program Director*
Danielle Verna, *Invasive Weeds Coordinator/Cdv.*
Don Hofstetter, *Invasive Coordinator/Copper Basin*

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Copper Basin seat (2), *open*



"The Copper River watershed is a fairly broad place when you think about it. All of the different communities, towns and villages that rest near it and thrive from it are plentiful. Most of us haven't even visited many of these other places we have yet to discover. Regarding that we may be unknowledgable about them we can always come back to the one fact that really matters—we all live downstream. The water works its magic through hydraulics. It connects us through each winding path it takes down the forest, each smile and frown, each ripple that laps up the gravel banks. So next time you feel separated from the other communities nearby, remember that we all live downstream and are a part of a bigger whole—one that we will forever be a part of."

—RYLEE FLYNT, KENNY LAKE

CLASSROOM CURRENTS

We All Live Downstream

BY KATE MORSE, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Through the Copper River Stewardship Program, a summer outdoor exploration program, high school students consider their role as active members of a community that spans the whole watershed. On the 2014 expedition, students worked with guest teacher Jack Dalton to write "creative non-fiction" capturing their experiences and impressions on the theme "we all live downstream".

Additional student pieces have been published in Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council's Observer newsletter (pwsrca.org). Program information available at www.copperriver.org. The Copper River Stewardship Program is presented annually by the following program partners: BLM/ Glennallen Field Office, Copper River Watershed Project, Prince William Sound Science Center, U.S. Forest Service/Chugach National Forest, Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment, and Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

"To me it means we're all connected through a web of water. All the fishermen, residents, animals and water bodies are interwoven through this whole watershed and we have all formed some attachment to it. This attachment has inspired us to protect, stand for, and represent something that can't defend itself from manmade dangers. If we take care of it, it will take care of us. A major piece of information I learned on this trip is mostly about how powerful nature is. Rafting on the Gulkana River I saw all these trees—big trees—hanging by a thread on the banks, having dropped by a relatively small mass of moving water. We have no control over nature and what it does. The lack of control reminds us that just because you think you have power doesn't mean you do."

—AMANDA FRIENDSHUH, KENNY LAKE



orange hawkweed
(*Hieracium aurantiacum*)



INVASIVE WEEDS

BY DANIELLE VERNA
INVASIVE WEEDS COORDINATOR



SAGA CREW WORKING ON REED CANARYGRASS INFESTATION ALONG EYAK LAKE.

THE 2014 COPPER BASIN WEED SMACKDOWN VOLUNTEERS
GLENNALLEN, AK



CRWP HAS BEEN PULLING, DIGGING, MOWING, and spraying invasive weeds all summer. Our Invasive Weed Coordinators in Cordova and the Copper Basin, Danielle and Don, have targeted high priority species for control such as reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), bohemian knotweed (*Polygonum x bohemicum*), orange hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*), white sweetclover (*Melilotus alba*) and bird vetch (*Vicia cracca*).

We have had many successes and also a few setbacks during our busy 2014 field season. Our biggest accomplishments include:

- Holding the 2nd annual Copper Basin Weed Smackdown in Glennallen on July 12th. Over 40 volunteers gathered to pull 2,032 pounds of white sweetclover! We celebrated our hard work by sharing in a delicious lunch from Tok Thai Food (the purple food truck at the Glennallen T-junction).
- During a long weekend in August, we floated portions of the Gulkana and Copper Rivers to examine gravel bars for invasive plants. We also surveyed 25 miles of heavily used trails in the hills north of Eureka. Thankfully, we found no signs of invasive plants in either of these valuable habitat areas.
- In Cordova, a crew of eight from the Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) assisted CRWP for a week in managing nearly 3 acres of reed canarygrass. We removed over a quarter mile of light-excluding

tarps that was installed to eliminate an infestation bordering Eyak Lake for several growing seasons. The area was then re-vegetated with native grass seed.

- An infestation of reed canarygrass was eliminated from the Copper River Delta at 18.2 mile on the Copper River Highway (*One-Eyed Pond*). An initial herbicide application was applied to this area in summer 2013, and a second follow-up application was made this summer.

As for our setbacks, we continue to discover new infestations of invasive plant species throughout the watershed. In the Copper Basin, the first known infestation of reed canarygrass was reported in Glennallen and infestations of bird vetch were reported along the Glenn Highway and Richardson Highway. In Cordova, we found invasive common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) for the first time, as well as a small patch of bird vetch.

Nevertheless, our invasive plant program continues to stay strong. With the support of our many partners in the region and throughout the state, we're focused on controlling the spread of invasive plants and leading education and outreach throughout the region on a regular basis. As the threat of invasive species of all kinds continues to gain global attention, CRWP will maintain its daily effort to protect the Copper River watershed from their impacts. We're looking forward to the exciting projects planned for the 2015 field season, and hope you'll support this important endeavor!

RIDGELINES: AROUND THE WATERSHED

PWS COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFERS FISHERY TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

Alaska is currently experiencing a shortage of fisheries technicians and biologists, a trend that is predicted to continue for at least the next ten years (University of Alaska/ Southeast). To help fill that gap, the PWS Community College and the University of Alaska/ Southeast have formed a partnership to offer an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree in Fisheries Technology at the PWS Community College campuses in Glennallen, Valdez and Cordova. Students who complete the A.A.S. degree will be prepared to pursue a four-year degree with the UA/Fairbanks School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, or for entry-level employment in federal and state agencies, hatcheries, and the private sector. *For more information on the Fisheries Technology Program, visit www.uas.alaska.edu > Sitka > Educational Programs > Fisheries, or www.pwsc.edu > Academic Programs > Associate Degrees, Fisheries Technology. E-mail a local Valdez advisor at keparker3@uas.alaska.edu or call directly, (907)747-7705.*

ALASKA BOARD OF FISH MEETS IN 2014 TO CONSIDER COPPER RIVER PROPOSALS

Twenty-five proposals for changes in management of Copper River fisheries will be considered by the Alaska Board of Fish which is meeting in Cordova on December 3 – 8, 2014. Proposals address king salmon management, personal use dip net salmon fishery management, a request by the Ahtna Corporation to re-establish a 24 hour station for

checking fishing permits and harvested fish, and increasing the grayling limit on the Gulkana River. The Board of Fisheries' main role is to conserve and develop the fishery resources of the state. This involves setting seasons, bag limits, methods and means for the state's subsistence, commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use fisheries. The board is charged with making allocative decisions, and the department manages fisheries based on those decisions. *The proposal book and meeting information are available at www.adfg.alaska.gov.*

COPPER RIVER-AHTNA INTERTRIBAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT AWARDED CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT

The U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service announced that a Conservation Innovation Grant of \$640,000 has been awarded to the Copper River-Ahtna Intertribal Resource Conservation District (CRITR). Funds will be used by the CRITR to develop technical expertise in wildlife habitat and forestry management for benefiting forage vegetation available to moose, an important subsistence species in the Copper Basin region. Karen Linnell, the Chair of CRITR, explained that "the project will adapt NRCS practices to Alaska for moose browse and other subsistence practices. We are most excited about implementing a solid moose browse enhancement program in the Ahtna region and then sharing the successful strategies with other tribes." Bruce Cain, Executive Director of CRITR, notes too that the tribal

conservation district will coordinate with the CRWP in its invasive weed control work by re-planting native willows species for moose foraging in places where invasive weeds are removed. CRITR will also use the funds to provide advisory services to land managers for Ahtna, Inc., the Chitina Native Corporation, and the Copper River valley's seven regional tribal councils. (CRITR and USDA NRCS Joint News Release, Palmer, Alaska as reported in the Copper River Record, September 25, 2014).



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WATERSHED PROJECT

watershed
(wa'ter-shed)
the region or area drained
by a river or stream:
all the land that carries
rain to the same river system



SAVOR OUR SALMON AND HELP US GROW!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR RESTAURANTS AND OTHER VENUES in your town to help the CRWP grow. A beautiful jewel-toned, ruby red piece of Copper River salmon on the table is a great way to connect with people who are interested in sustainable, healthy food, and want to learn more about the glacier-scoured watershed that is home to this renewable resource. The Copper River watershed is one of the world's last salmon strongholds and we want to keep it that way! What we're hoping for from an event like this is to meet new potential members, people who are interested in learning about the Copper River and what they can do to help keep it the thriving, salmon-rich system that it is. If you have an idea for a restaurant in your town that you think would be interested in hosting an event to benefit the CRWP, or if you are interested in hosting a house party, for which we will donate the salmon, please let us know and we will follow up!



DO YOU HAVE A PROJECT TO RECOMMEND TO THE CRWP?

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A PROJECT in the Copper River Watershed that you would like to recommend to us? We welcome ideas that you might have for work in our watershed that would help further our goal of fostering and diversifying the watershed's salmon-based economies, cultures and communities. We look for projects that have support from community partners; benefit one form of community asset (social/cultural, economic or natural resource capital) without detracting from the others; and give us a mix of short- and long-term results.

We work on programs like Salmon Blitz, culvert assessments, watershed education and invasive weed control that benefit the entire drainage. Other projects are more specific to a part of the region: for the Copper Basin, our focus is on tourism resource development and citizen oversight for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, and in Cordova we've done a lot of work around stormwater pollution prevention. If you know of a particular location in the watershed that needs habitat restoration attention, have an idea for a tourism resource that you think would be of interest to visitors, want to see a watershed education activity in your local school, or have an idea for an energy generation micro-project, please contact us to talk about your idea. Or maybe there's something you have in mind that we haven't thought of – let's talk about it!

Please give us a call at (907)424-3334 or send an e-mail to info@copperriver.org.



I'M THOMASINA ANDERSEN, DEPARTING OPERATIONS MANAGER OF THE COPPER RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT. I came to work for the CRWP in 2012, because of its reputation as the group that "gets stuff done." Having been born and raised in Cordova, I thought I knew everything about the Copper River, but the CRWP has taught me so much. I learned that with enough love for a place and its people, a small but dedicated group of workers and volunteers could do amazing things, like assess 15 streams for possible new salmon habitat in one month, or eradicate more than a ton of invasive plants by hand in one day! My mind was opened to the importance of managing salmon fisheries in a way that includes all the stakeholders, and that it's up to us to be the voice of the watershed in the process of crafting public policy. I am a better person for having worked here, and I encourage everyone to support this valuable organization. Contribute what you can, volunteer for one of the many programs, or serve as a board member. *Thank you.*

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Newsletter FALL 2014

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A Tribute to

JOHN KOCH

October 22, 1930 – May 26, 2013

Lili Koch Colby honored her father with a year-long, monthly pledge of \$100 to the CRWP.

Of her father, she wrote:

John Koch rafting with his grandchildren on the Gunnison River.

John and Dick (*Steinman, another CRWP supporter*) loved to hunt and fish. For both of them, habitat preservation and conservation went hand in hand with enjoying field sports. They shared duck blinds with men like Owen Gromme and Freddy Ott. They won awards from the State of Wisconsin and Ducks Unlimited for their management of the Rosendale wetlands. The first time John went fishing to Alaska with Dick, we all knew that this was a love affair that would last the rest of his life. Stories about flying into remote villages and camps, and standing in rivers casting for trout next to bears scooping up wild salmon were ones that he kept telling to the very end.

Lili chose to support the CRWP with a tribute gift because of her father's love for Alaska and because John was a close friend of Fred Ott, whose daughter Riki Ott helped found the CRWP in 1998.