

COPPER RIVER

Runner

FALL 2015



COPPER RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT



BEFORE: SNOW STORAGE SITE ON THE BANK OF ODIAK POND. MELTING SNOW CARRIED SEDIMENT AND ADSORBED POLLUTANTS TO COHO SALMON HABITAT IN THE POND.

AFTER: RE-GRADING OF SNOW STORAGE SITE CREATES A DRAINAGE SWALE TO ALLOW FOR BIO-FILTRATION AND SEDIMENT TRAP CAPTURE OF POLLUTANTS BEFORE SNOW MELT REACHES ODIAK POND.

BEFORE THE SNOW FLIES . . .

BY KRISTIN CARPENTER

Snow. A blanket of white that covers the yard and all that lies there. Those dark days of winter are quite a bit brighter with that floating, reflecting layer of white.

Before the snow flies is a good time to clean up the yard, put away loose things that could get crushed or damaged under ice and snow. Probably the most important thing you could take care of for winter preparation is your fuel tank – it’s one thing you want to function without a hitch in the next several months! And, a leaking fuel tank can contaminate nearby streams, ponds or wetlands, degrading fish and wildlife habitat.

Check your tank for signs of rust, dents, stains or wet spots; check the fuel tank stand for stability and make sure the tank is not touching the ground; and make sure the tank, stand and fuel lines are protected from falling ice, snow or trees. In Cordova, the Native Village of Eyak offers free home heating oil fuel tank inspections (call (907)424-7738).

We often associate snow with “fresh” and “pure”, but snow plowed from streets carries with it oil, grease, anti-freeze, heavy metals, trash, debris, and melting snow drains all of that to nearby receiving waters.

To help with snow management on a municipal level, the CRWP worked with the City of Cordova this summer to implement “best management practices” at one of the City’s snow storage sites. The City had a practice of piling snow up on the bank of Odiak Pond, where the snow pile would melt and drain directly into the pond, carrying with it all the accumulated pollutants scooped up by plowing. The City agreed to move a pavilion, making room for a re-graded V-swale to hold plowed snow. Sitting just above a line of alders and willows that will bank the snow pile, melting snow will now drain down to a sediment trap that will capture most of the road sand entrained in the snow pile. Any snow melting directly down slope to the pond will be filtered by the vegetation left in place.

You can help with snow management by keeping snow out of fish streams, lakes and wetlands and at least 50’ away from the water’s edge. The best place to store snow is on a lawn or vegetated site where contaminants and debris can be gradually released and contained or collected.

CRWP MISSION

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

LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR

AS PART OF THE CRWP'S Salmon Blitz program I recently had the great pleasure to volunteer for a trip surveying tributaries of the Copper River between Copper Center and Chitina. Five of us were out in the field for five days traveling by raft working as a biology field team. I loved it. It is one of the highlights of my almost half century of life.

One observation that impressed me while living next to the river was the simple fact that it is always moving, always flowing toward the ocean. It never stops, the water keeps coming. It moves in so many ways-it bubbles and swirls; swishes over to a side eddy; tumbles over rocks; in places is almost still as a pond. Every night when we zipped up into our tents the river was moving and every morning when we crawled out, there it was flowing ever on.

Along with musing about the river, I've been reflecting on my six years as a board member. Like the Copper River, the Copper River Watershed Project never stops and is a strong and steady force moving forward, carrying out its mission, part of which is keeping the river and the communities that live around it and depend on it healthy and vibrant. I am nostalgic and a little sad about my final term ending. Mostly though, I'm reminded about what a great organization the CRWP is and how happy I am to have been on the board. It is a healthy, strong organization doing good work. Yes, at times there are rocks and log jams. But just as the Copper River flows on despite obstacles, the CRWP is able to overcome and successfully navigate them too. It can do this in large part

CRWP STAFF

Kristin Carpenter, Executive Director
Kate Morse, Program Director
Danielle Verna, Invasive Weeds Program Manager
Don Hofstetter, Invasive Weeds Coordinator/Copper Basin
Shae Bowman, AmeriCorps Volunteer

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LEARN MORE ABOUT SALMON BLITZ

Contact our office or
visit www.copperriver.org.

because it has extremely capable, observant and experienced staff who listen, cooperate, collaborate and incorporate all voices be they audible, silent or somewhere in between.

It also is successful in carrying out its mission due to the support of you, its members. We are all drops in this river and together we support the organization and are the organization. My time as a board member may be up but I look forward to maintaining my membership, contributing financially, and volunteering on various projects. I want to help keep the CRWP moving forward, healthy and constant as the Copper River and its enormous and spectacular watershed.

Molly Mulvaney



KIRSTI JURICA, MOLLY MULVANEY, SHAE BOWMAN, ALYSSA KLEISSLER, AND KATE MORSE SALMON BLITZING THEIR WAY DOWN THE COPPER RIVER, AUGUST, 2015.



Voices from the Spill: NEW ACTIVITY INCORPORATES ORAL HISTORIES FROM 1989 EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL

Creative expression was an effective way for students to reflect and share the lessons they learned from the personal accounts of people living during the EVOS.

The tone of a person's voice helps to express emotions associated with personal memories. This summer CRWP staff created an activity that incorporates oral histories from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) to help youth connect to the environmental disaster that happened before they were born. In their words, "hearing the sadness in the people's voices really made me think more of it."

CRWP was founded in the aftermath of the economic meltdown caused by the oil spill in an effort to prioritize sustainable economic development over large-scale development. By establishing a deeper connection with this tragic event, it is our hope youth will be motivated to help ensure history will NOT be repeated, on Prince William Sound or from the pipeline that runs through the heart of our watershed.

After listening to oral histories available by Prince William Sound Regional Citizen's Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) through the University

of Alaska's Project Jukebox, participants created visual and written pieces to represent the story of the person about whom they were learning. The stories helped students grasp some of the important lessons learned from the event, including impacts on the environment and community relationships, the poor coordination of response efforts, human health implications, and important legacies like the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and the PWSRCAC.

Based on feedback collected from students after their learning adventure through the Copper River watershed, they left with deeper connections to the social and environmental trauma experienced as a result of the EVOS. By listening to the personal accounts of the people who lived the disaster, they understand the importance of preventing history from repeating itself.

"One of the most lasting ideas I'll take from this experience are the new

perspectives I learned about during the oil spill. As kids in the Prince William Sound, we've been taught about the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill our whole lives. I already knew it was terrible for the Sound, that it killed thousands of animals and took away much of the herring fishery here. However, I never thought about how people were affected. I never knew how many people's livelihoods and futures were shattered. It was fascinating to hear their statements. Hearing people talk from personal experience about a historical event helped me understand the history of it more."

"I remember most learning about the devastating effects from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill... It left damaging effects for both wildlife and people. Alaska was in a time of turmoil and depression... Alaskans lost their jobs and people had less trust in Alaska's fish. It served as a huge lesson for everyone, teaching us to prevent events like this from happening ever again."

Voices from the Spill was created with support from PWSRCAC.

SOWING SEEDS of SUCCESS AMONG INVASIVE PLANTS

BY DANIELLE VERNA
INVASIVE WEEDS COORDINATOR

June 26, 2015: Danielle paused from digging and bagging invasive dandelions to take this picture of Kate and Jessie in action (right). In the background, Jim and Brad were getting the “kitchen” ready for making dinner, building a fire, and attempting to dry out gear after a few rainy days. This U.S. Forest Service easement near Baird Canyon on the Copper River is used as a camp site and contained roughly 200 dandelions (all were removed). Our final member, Pete, was likely setting up the groover.

EVERY SUMMER FIELD SEASON is another opportunity to curb the spread and influence of invasive plants in our watershed, and this year we took full advantage. With many sunny days and a large area to cover, May through September had us full speed ahead. Below are highlights from our work throughout the region:

- **San Juan Bay:** from June 11th – 13th, three people traveled to San Juan Bay on Montague Island in Prince William Sound to remove invasive dandelions near a U.S. Forest Service recreation cabin and adjacent to an old logging road. We removed dandelions from two sites and a follow-up trip is anticipated during spring 2016 to work on a larger third site. Why so much trouble over dandelions? Even an invasion of the common dandelion in an otherwise pristine setting can make an area susceptible to further invasion.
- **Copper River:** from June 23rd – 28th, two boats holding six people rafted from Chitina to Flag Point on the Copper River (Mile 27 on the Copper River Highway), stopping at U.S. Forest Service easement sites along the way to survey and remove invasive dandelions. These easements are frequented as rest stops and campsites by river users. A return trip is planned for spring 2016 by jet boat from Cordova to revisit the heaviest infestations along the lower river.
- **Copper Basin:** on July 11th, we held the 3rd annual Copper Basin Weed Smackdown. Along with our partners from the Copper Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area, 28 volunteers joined us in pulling 1,319 pounds of white sweetclover along the Glenn Highway near Glennallen. In total we’ve controlled roughly 60 acres of white sweetclover in the highway rights-of-way and in gravel pits. Surveying was also a

big part of our work this summer: from roadsides in Mentasta, to ATV trails in Chitina, and the Brenwick-Craig road in between, we covered a lot of ground!

- **Copper River Delta Elodea:** we held a second public meeting concerning Elodea on September 9th in Cordova, with presentations given by representatives from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, Portland State University, and SePRO. No definitive plans or decisions have been made yet regarding wide-scale treatment in Eyak Lake or on the delta.
- **Cordova bohemian knotweed:** working with three homeowners, the City of Cordova, Eagle Contracting, and the Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC), we coordinated a revegetation project of this highly invasive and difficult to control plant. The tenth of an acre site, on a hillside near downtown, was prepped by removing the top layer of soil containing plant material, gently re-contouring the slope, and re-directing drainage. Agronomists from the PMC applied a topsoil replacement and a large amount of native plant seed to promote quick vegetative growth. Unfortunately, but as expected, some of the knotweed returned. We treated the re-growth with a localized herbicide application and will return in the spring for follow-up.
- **Cordova reed canarygrass:** last but not least, we continued our control of reed canarygrass. The small infestation at One-eyed Pond at Mile 18 on the Copper River Highway is nearly gone. However, infestations in town continue to return. This year we increased our use of herbicide control in focused locations along the Copper River Highway and Whitshed Road. Many other areas were manually treated with digging and seed head removal.

CRWP 2015 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Sarah Hoepfner

SARAH ENROLLED THIS FALL AT HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY to study biology: “The summer before high school I got the chance to go on the Copper River Stewardship Program. It was an amazing opportunity and I came back wanting to ... become a biologist. [Later,] by just mentioning to someone at the CRWP that I was interested in biology they connected me with the [Prince William Sound] Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council. With them I re-started monitoring for the European Green Crab in Cordova and took over invasive tunicate monitoring from the previous person. This ... turned into a paid internship where I [taught] students and adults about what I do, write up ... report[s], and present at conferences such as RCAC’s annual board meeting. I really enjoy this and love that I get to do my own ‘research.’”



Deanna Knutson

DEANNA IS PURSUING A UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA/FAIRBANKS degree in photography, a medium she finds compelling for its “way of getting a message across when words do not have enough power. . . The area I call home is full of beautiful land and wildlife, and one way to protect it could be to, like [Sebastiao] Salgado, draw attention to its innocence. These photographs do not have to be specifically of the watershed, nor do they have to be taken today, tomorrow or years from now, or even taken by myself. These could be photographs from the past, where the environment’s beauty is evident and importance is drawn to maintaining that splendor. Anywhere that relies on nature’s health, like the Copper River watershed, can be seen as necessary in a world full of incredible environmental quandaries.”



CRWP AMERICORPS VOLUNTEER
Shae Bowman

OCCUPATION: AMERICORPS
VOLUNTEER AT CRWP

COLLEGE: UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS

DEGREE: BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

AGE: 23

My favorite thing about working at CRWP is that it allows me to get involved in the community and be outside! So far I have been able to organize 2 cleanup days and one service project on the Eyak Mt. trail. I have also helped lead groups of volunteers and students on Salmon Blitz outings. It is really inspiring and encouraging to see how many people in Cordova are willing to get out and volunteer.

I am also researching recycling to expand the recycling program in Cordova. Over the next few months I will be writing a grant to buy more recycling equipment and a report about my recycling research. I would really love to see a sustainable recycling program in Cordova and I think most Cordovans would too.

RIDGELINES: AROUND THE WATERSHED

ALASKA TEACHER ON-BOARD WITH BLM PARTNERSHIP

Lifelong Alaskan and a BLM Teacher on the Public Lands, Fran Daly, spent much of her summer outdoors teaching skills to help the BLM and partners capture, develop, and improve the high school curriculum for the Copper River Stewardship Project this past summer. Fran also assisted partners in their education efforts with bat inventories, hydrology experiments, vegetation transects, stream surveys, and a variety of outdoor skill and team-building exercises. Fran can now take her great experiences back to her classroom. And her curriculum work will help further the goals of the Copper River Stewardship Project, such as exposing students to land and resource management at the landscape level and associated careers. *Contact: Marnie Graham, Public Affairs Specialist, BLM/Glennallen Field Office, (907)822-3217.*

US FOREST SERVICE RESEARCH INVESTIGATES ROLE OF ELODEA ON THE COPPER RIVER DELTA

The 2015 field season proved informative for the USFS as they worked to answer key questions about the role of non-native Elodea on the Copper River Delta. Since 1982, Alaska's first invasive aquatic plant has surfaced in several waterbodies across the delta. In 2015, the USFS Cordova Ranger District and Pacific Northwest Research Station initiated a preliminary survey of current conditions on the delta to capture extent of infestation and to assess the impact of Elodea on fish, native aquatic plants and macroinvertebrates within delta ponds and lakes.

To study this, waterbodies with infestations of Elodea were sampled multiple times throughout the growing season. Vegetation abundance and composition were characterized by snorkel survey plots. Fish species were assessed using minnow trap techniques and macroinvertebrates were collected in beds of Elodea or native vegetation. *Data are being processed and further study is needed to describe the effects of Elodea on the ecosystem.* *Contact: Cordova RD, (907)424-7661.*

COPPER RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS TO HELP REBUILD KENNECOTT SCHOOL

The National Park Service (NPS) and Copper River School District shop students are working together to restore the old Kennecott, Alaska school building, located within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve. The NPS has provided students with blueprints and materials to turn the dilapidated structure into a visitor's center. Students in the woodworking class will visit Kennecott as part of their work on the restoration project. Reprinted with permission from the Copper River Record, 10/1/2015. *Contact: Copper River School District, (907)822-3234.*

COPPER RIVER-AHTNA INTERTRIBAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT (CRITR) AWARDED BIOMASS GRANT FUNDS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded a Rural Business Development Grant of \$287,552 to the Copper River-

Ahtna Intertribal Resource Conservation District to promote a biomass feedstock harvesting project. Funds will be used for technical assistance to plan, research and train local Native Alaskan entrepreneurs for a biomass feedstock harvesting project. Equipment purchased with grant funds will be leased to native owned small businesses to harvest biomass. "This project will help protect our communities from wildfire and will produce affordable fuel, healthy traditional moose meat and jobs," said Karen Linnell, Executive Director, CRITR. Reprinted with permission from Copper River Record, 10/8/2015. *Contact: Karen Linnell, CR-Ahtna Intertribal Conservation District, (907)822-3476.*



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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

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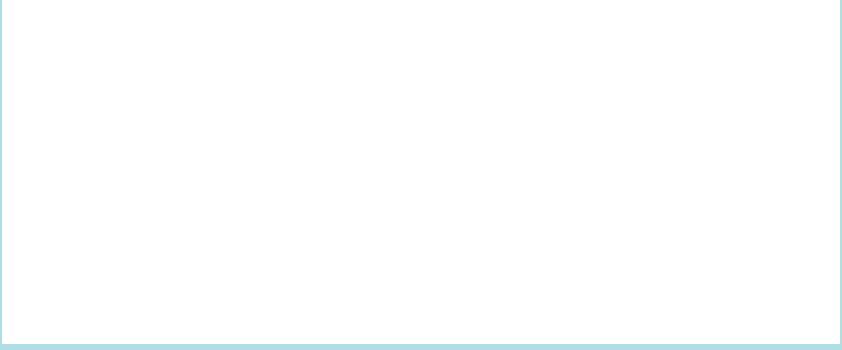
Newsletter

FALL 2015

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- Teaching with oral histories
- Invasive plant update
- Meet our AmeriCorps volunteer
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TO



I HAVE BEEN COMING TO CORDOVA SINCE 2005. It was the year of my 50th birthday, and as a surprise my wife Donna saw to it that my lifetime dream of visiting Alaska became a reality. I have returned every year since then, staying at least a week and sometimes up to 3 weeks. Early on I became aware of the Copper River Watershed Project. My background deals with local government and a stint serving as an elected public official. After that I dedicated myself to looking out for our water resources. I now serve on the Chesapeake Bay Commission, the

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, and the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council. You have a very effective organization here, and I am happy to support it financially. I have tried to increase my level of contribution every year because I see how much is done with a comparatively small amount of staff and financial resources. The CRWP has done terrific work with habitat projects at Eyak Lake and Odiak watershed. I would encourage anyone who cares about the Copper River, wild salmon, and helping to keep this area the special place that it is to support the CRWP.

Sincerely, Warren Elliott

WHY I SUPPORT CRWP

G. WARREN ELLIOTT
CHAMBERSBURG, PA

