

The Cordova Times

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The Cordova Times

EYAK LANGUAGE

Another miracle for Eyak

For the first time, a universally-accessible eLearning program has been developed for the Eyak language and participation is on the rise.

BY BEN YEAGER
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Last month, the Eyak Language Revitalization Project reached a milestone, one that could disprove the notion that Eyak is an "extinct" language, and in fact, has a fighting chance: An eLearning program for the language is now available online, attracting users and drawing the community together.

With funding from the Administration for Native Americans and other contributors, the Eyak Language Revitalization

Project, a grassroots effort to save the language, sought to revive the language and engage their community. After teaching the language at Eyak Culture Camp and hosting a few language immersion workshops three times a year, the Project did an ancestry survey. Of approximately 150 members, about 40 adults responded with interest in reviving the language; of that forty, at least 14 were interested in becoming fluent. That is no small number, considering the small size and dispersal of

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JENNIFER GIBBINS/THE CORDOVA TIMES

Barbara Sappah, Eyak descendant and Eyak Language Project Community Director, is teaching her children ages five and three to speak Eyak.

STREAM RESTORATION



A look at the re-constructed stream channel and stream banks.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE AUSMAN

Bringing the salmon back

The Copper River Watershed Project, despite other obstacles, removes a natural barrier to local stream

BY BEN YEAGER
For The Cordova Times

Coho salmon used to run through the creeks right here in town. That memory drives the Copper River Watershed Project's stream restoration initiative: getting local streams healthy again so the fish can come back.

The Copper River Watershed Project has been reviving Odiak pond and its feeder streams since 2009, when they learned that the system contained Coho salmon fry. Since March, the group, along with

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HARVEST GROWS

Bristol Bay salmon harvest tops 28 million fish

With significant Canadian, Russian sockeye runs anticipated, major processors reportedly were offering \$1.20 a pound as the going home price

BY MARGARET BAUMAN
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Commercial salmon harvests have topped 28 million fish in Bristol Bay and 23 million fish in Prince William Sound, and the preliminary statewide harvest

through July 15 exceeded 61 million salmon of all species.

Just a week earlier the preliminary total stood at just 22.8 million salmon, including 21.4 million salmon

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STREAM

From Page 1

AmeriCorps volunteers, has been working to remove a rotting wooden railroad culvert that had been obstructing the flow of water and fish. Now complete thanks to cooperation between the city and local agencies, the project faced an obstacle in the form of an oil spill from an unknown source and a lack of local spill response infrastructure.

The spill presented the project with an inauspicious start. When doing an initial survey of the area, a private contractor found mousse and foam on the water. She alerted CRWP, which contacted Native Village of Eyak and the Department of Environmental Conservation. DEC has no local presence, so there was no agency on site to assess the spill; they sent respirators and personal protective equipment for the crew and NVE sent oil booms and absorbent pads.

“Because there’s no communication, it took time to facilitate the clean up,” said project director Kate Morse. “Why are we liable for a spill?”

CRWP couldn’t find the responsible party, thus had to manage the spill themselves. “It was a time suck,” said Morse. The oil contaminated the soil and seeped into the sediment. Despite the setback, CRWP worked laboriously to clear out the culvert and build a channel with a natural substrate. In time, with the help of transplanted nitrogen-fixing willows, the contaminants will clear.

In the spring of 2010, after discovering salmon fry in the system, CRWP applied for funding from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund and was accepted into the Anadromous Waters Catalogue, which grants certain protections to salmon streams. The funding came through one and a half years ago, and the project began



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE AUSMAN

The team excavating the site and unearthing railroad ties.

in earnest in March. According to the rules of the grant, thirty-five percent of federal funds had to be matched by a non-Federal source, which was the city’s Parks and Recreation Commission, which donated an excavator. CRWP also applied for an AmeriCorps volunteer crew, and got help from the Forest Service.

“[Odiak pond] is a community park and resource,” said Morse. “The city has been a natural partner in our endeavors.”

Trident Seafoods helped store the willows in ice, keeping them dormant. When transplanted, the plants put their energy into growing a robust root system which strengthens the creek bed. This process is called “willow layering.” On June 27, the USFS cleared 16 trees from the site and on June 30, began digging out the culvert. Over the next ten days, the group rehabilitated the site, mopped up what it could of the spill, used a beach seine to safely relocate fish, planted willows and built a

new culvert using creosote-treated logs as anchors.

“It was definitely very rewarding to take part in something like that from start to finish,” said Mike Ausman of the Forest Service.

The channel is now open, and the flow of water and fish has resumed. Among the species of fish trapped for relocation were juvenile Stickleback, Dolly Varden and Coho salmon. Although there is no additional funding at this point, the Odiak pond will continue to be an area of focus for rehabilitation. A 2012 hydrology assessment by a private firm identified the area as one in need of water quality improvements to benefit salmon habitat. That area has a history of small contaminant spills: In 2010, an upstream home had a fuel leak that went into the system. It was reported, but DEC wasn’t on site to respond. CRWP wishes that more spill response infrastructure was in place, believing that this area



An AmeriCorps volunteer lays the willow shoots.



Disposing of used oil absorbent pads.

is of vital importance to the biological diversity of the area, as well as a great resource for field education for children.

This project has the potential to establish a Coho run right through town,” said Ken Hodges of the Forest Service. “People will be able to see salmon spawn and kids can get an education there.”

The Culvert Removal Project is one of two initiatives so far by the CRWP. The first was an introduction of a bioswale, a vegetated drainage ditch with water filtration capacities, behind the Cordova Community Medical Center. CRWP will continue work on Odiak pond when it secures additional funding.

“We are a fishing community,” said Morse. “That’s why we’re here.”




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