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.
LEARN MORE ABOUT SALMON BLITZ
Contact our office or visit www.copperriver.org.

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 for 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

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

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 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 disaster that incorporates oral histories from the Exxon Valdez 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 damming 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.”

“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.”

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Sowing Seeds of Success Among Invasive Plants

BY DANIELLE VERNIA
Invasive Needs Coordinator

Every summer field season is another opportunity to curb the spread and infestation 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 roadisides in Mentasta, to ATV trails in Chitina, and the B阿森wick-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 Whitsed Road. Many other areas were manually treated with digging and seed head removal.

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.

Cordova reed canarygrass:

Copper River Delta Elodea:

San Juan Bay:

Copper River:
To assess the impact of Elodea on fish, the Cordova Research Station initiated a preliminary study in 2015. The USFS Glennallen Field Office awarded a Rural Business Development Grant of $287,552 to the Copper River-Delta (CR-D) Watershed Trust Fund to support the project. The USFS作为他们工作的努力和进一步研究是需要了解的 Elodea on the Copper River Delta. Since 1982, Alaska's first invasive aquatic plant, Elodea, was assessed using minnow trap surveys. Equipment funds purchased with grant funds will be leased to native small businesses to harvest biomass, “...this project will help protect our communities from wildlife and will produce affordable fuel, healthy traditional moose meat and jobs,” said Karen Lamelle, Executive Director, CITRUS. Reprinted with permission from Copper River Record, 10/8/2015, Contact: Karen Lamelle, CR-D Alaska Intersalt Conservation District, (907)822-3217.
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