

Runner

FALL 2021

TAKING TIME TO CELEBRATE SUCCESS

BY KATE MORSE, Program Director

Since our founding in 1998, partnerships have been at the heart of the Copper River Watershed Project. I had the opportunity to reflect on the benefit of our partnerships while preparing for a recent presentation. I am in awe of what we have collectively accomplished. We have achieved so much more than any one of us could working alone. It's the pooling of resources and expertise, especially local knowledge, that has led to our successes.

However, in thinking about our partnerships, I was also reminded how much time and energy is invested to develop strong working partnerships. Like in all aspects of life, relationships take time to develop and trust takes experience to build. For a nonprofit, the time to do this sort of relationship building is costly, especially over such a large area like the Copper River watershed, that is logistically complicated to access. But it's the investment of our members that has helped provide support for our program and partnership development, so it's only right to make sure you are a part of our celebration!

With this, please join us in celebrating the recognition received by our **Fish Passage partnership**, an over decade-long partnership that is having significant on-the-ground impacts to open up access to spawning and rearing grounds for juvenile and adult salmon, trout, and other aquatic organisms. In late 2020, our partnership was pleased to be recognized nationally



by the U.S. Forest Service as part of their Chief & Under Secretary's Honor Awards. This past spring we had the honor of being recognized as an Outstanding Partner as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) AK Regional Director Awards. And while we want to take time to celebrate success, we are ready to keep moving forward towards a barrier-free Copper River watershed, thankful for the recent award from the Natural Resource Conservation Services Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Our partners pledged \$4.1 million, leveraging an additional \$3.8 from NRCS to help improve fish passage throughout the region. Thanks CRWP members and partners for your part in these successes.



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The USFWS is so thankful to have CRWP as a partner in our fish passage restoration work. CRWP has an amazing talent for bringing a diverse group of stakeholders together with different priorities and missions and helping us figure out how to work together to achieve conservation benefits for salmon while at the same time addressing the goals of our diverse organizations. I feel that CRWP has been the key player in the success of the fish passage program in the Copper River area; we just couldn't do this work without their facilitation of all the meetings and phone calls, their applications for grant funding from multiple sources, and their ongoing support and development of the relationships that really make these projects successful.



HEATHER HANSON Fish Passage Engineer, USFWS

The Copper River Watershed Enhancement Partnership epitomizes the social, economic, and ecological benefits of partnerships for restoring habitat for salmon, trout, and other keystone species in the Copper River watershed, one of Alaska's signature landscapes. Through a highly successful collaboration between a local watershed group and multiple state and federal agencies, the Partnership prioritized 13 culverts for replacement, co-wrote a project plan, and was awarded an \$8.1 million grant from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council to implement the restoration work. By working together, the Partnership was able to overcome significant challenges including mixed land ownership, project scale and cost, agency capacity and expertise limitations, and differences in stakeholder needs. In addition to improving roads that provide access to public lands, reducing agency road maintenance costs, and increasing the productivity of over 25 miles of salmon and trout habitat, this project also benefits the local construction sector.



DIRECTOR

To all our Copper River friends,

I have now had the privilege of working with the Copper River Watershed Project staff for two very exciting and very FULL years. Our small but mighty team works hard and is always pushing forward to come up with new, innovative ways to work for you and for the watershed.



Lisa Docken and John Baenon (Wilson Construction) with Ruby the sockeye salmon celebrating the last of three culverts being placed on the Copper River Highway this summer! Photo by Amanda Williams

There is only one thing I wish we could do more, and that is stop and take the time to effectively celebrate our accomplishments and marinate in the end-products of staff efforts. With a pace like we have, grants are awarded, work is completed and we make leaps in positive relationship building with our partners. But by the time projects are wrapping up, staff are already looking forward and preparing for the next watershed-scale task and motivated to move onto the next great thing. Talk about some awesome people!

So, I feel that I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate staff accomplishments, our great partners and our dedicated members. Only a few of the accomplishments can make it into our newsletters; as you won't even see an article in here about the three stream-simulation design culverts that were constructed this past summer, the grants that were written and submitted, the efforts made by staff to take training and engage in professional development opportunities, and the continued on-going conference calls and discussions about what we can all do to assist this region.

When we were able to have staff meetings in-person, we often tried to celebrate with a treat of some kind (often cake!) to take the moment to celebrate CRWP successes. Though of course, as you would imagine, the staff are already discussing the next project in between bites!

Thank you to all for an incredible two years doing this work. I'm looking forward to another FULL year ahead while also savouring the accomplishments behind us.

Sincerely



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NET RECYCLING

BY SHAE BOWMAN, OPERATIONS MANAGER

This summer Nicole Baker, owner of Net Your Problem, visited Cordova to help CRWP host our first Fishing Web Recycling Event of 2021 and give our fishing web recycling program for gillnet and seine web a jolt of energy. The program was started in 2009, but recently CRWP has needed to find a way to elevate collection methods to meet rising standards for recycling.

Moving forward CRWP will be hosting multi-day collection events at least three times a year. This will allow us to coordinate volunteers to inspect and prep the web for the baler. The program relies on community members to strip their nets of any non-nylon material which includes removing hanging twine and organic debris from the web.

During the first two events this summer CRWP collected and prepared an estimated 6,000 lbs of web for recycling. After an October collection event, CRWP will ship the first load of web for recycling to Net Your Problem in Seattle. Once the web arrives at the Net Your Problem warehouse our web will be combined with web from other communities in Alaska including Haines and Juneau. Net Your Problem will coordinate shipments of all the fishing gear they receive to recyclers, and Cordova gillnets and seines will eventually make their way to Portugal.

Web can be recycled into hard, molded components like glasses frames and knife handles, it can be recycled into yarn to make carpeting and clothing, or it can be used to make 3-D printer filament.



Residents of communities that lack fishing gear recycling programs are invited to contact Net Your Problem to learn what can be done in your area. You can call or email Nicole at 907 359 3450 or nicole@netyourproblem.com

Thank you to our partners who make this program possible, including A.C. Value Center, AML, Copper River/Prince William Sound Marketing Association, Cordova Community Foundation, City of Cordova, Eyak Corporation and the Rasmuson Foundation.



Products pictured are made from Recycled Fishing nets. Photos provided courtesy of Zachary Smith, Cordova Times.

INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

BY DANIEL SCHMALZER
INVASIVE PLANT PROGRAM MANAGER



COVID doesn't stop alien invaders! During the 2021 field season, CRWP staff were busy in the field. They worked with volunteers to pull orange hawkweed and oxeye daisy around Cordova, and worked with partners to treat reed canary grass. While treating white sweet clover in the Copper Basin, CRWP staff spent a morning working with the Copper River Native Association YETI Program. The YETI Program allows youth from the area to gain new career experiences. CRWP staff talked about how invasive plants affect native plant communities, the importance of controlling invasive plants, and how

to report infestations. After the short presentation, 20 youth and four adults spent three hours pulling white sweet clover and narrowleaf hawksbeard from around Gulkana Community Hall.

With fall quickly approaching, take some time and create a free Anecdata profile and subscribe to the Copper River Watershed Project Invasive Plant page. Familiarize yourself with the reporting route and be prepared to make observations next summer. Anecdata is also a great way to see what and where the Copper Watershed Project invasive plant staff have been working

this summer. Anecdata allows you to report any invasive plants you have found, and don't forget to request native seed packets when making observations! This summer, 206 observations were made on Anecdata with Copper River Watershed Project staff making most of them. We want you to help us next field season, so sign up now!

For quick access to the Copper River Watershed Project Invasive Plant page scan the provided QR code - we look forward to seeing you there.

ACCESS IMPROVED to Cordova's local fishery

KATE MORSE, PROGRAM DIRECTOR





Recreational access for anglers, kayakers, birders, and other intertidal explorers at Shelter Cove was significantly improved in 2021. Shelter Cove is the most accessible local fishery to Cordovans, located on Orca Road, about one mile from downtown Cordova. Since 1990, Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, and later Alaska Department of Fish & Game (1999), have been releasing Coho and Chinook Salmon smolt to enhance the sport fishing opportunities.

With funding from the United States Forest Service Secure Rural Schools Title II Resource Advisory Committee, the CRWP and the City of Cordova received initial funding to remove the dangerous, failing "concrete pillows" at the site and install a safer access from the street level to the tidal flats. This work was coordinated with Alaska Department of Transportation's work to replace the culvert and other road improvements on Orca Road. Unfortunately the project total came in a lot more costly when the final contractor bids were received. However, thanks to our relationships with amazing regional partners, CRWP was able to reach out and rapidly raise the remaining funds needed in order to bring this project to reality by the 2021 sportfishing season.

This past spring and summer, sport fishermen of all ages were able to safely cast their line for a chance at the Coho and Chinook Salmon returning to this site. A huge thanks to our generous partners who closed our funding gap to make construction possible, including the City of Cordova, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Cordova Telephone Cooperative, Native Village of Eyak, Wilson Construction, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, and Lynden Transport. We look forward to a small on-site celebration and installation of a sign recognizing these awesome partners soon.

CLASSROOM CURRENTS

EXCELLENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

BY ROBIN MAYO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT WRANGELL INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

This Fall, CRWP Program Director Kate Morse will be awarded Alaska Conservation Foundation's Jerry S. Dixon Award for Excellence in Environmental Education. Kate is a creative, innovative, and passionate teacher, and we are so proud that she is receiving this statewide recognition.

Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) Educator Lauren Bien remembers the first time she put on chest waders and went out in the field with Kate: "I followed Kate through the streams, clunky in my too-big wading boots, watching her look for calm pools and undercut banks, which I was learning were good places to set minnow traps...I took in every word, and not just because I was gaining valuable knowledge, but for the almost palpable passion Kate emitted for this project and this place. That day held a lot of "firsts" for me and I can honestly say the most memorable of which was getting to watch Kate in her element- teaching in and about the Copper River Watershed."

Students of all ages throughout the watershed have shared that unique experience. We emerge muddy, exhausted, and inspired, having felt the pull of the current and the exhilaration of holding a wriggling juvenile fish in our hands. And most importantly, we feel Kate's passion for conservation and her deep conviction that by bringing people together with place-based experiences, we are building stronger communities.

As well as working directly with students in the classroom and in the field, Kate has worked tirelessly behind the scenes, convening diverse groups, facilitating hard conversations, guiding the process of education, and mentoring others. She has developed innovative curricula such as "Voices of the Spill" which has students listen to first-person accounts of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, then process the emotions through writing and art.

When Kate learned of this award, she expressed her excitement and gratitude that she is still considered an educator although she spends time on many other projects. Kate embodies the ideas that teaching doesn't just happen when you step in front of a class and that learning is lifelong. When she's managing construction projects, I have no doubt that the heavy equipment operators gain a new understanding of the subtleties of fish passage. When working as a convener of diverse and potentially divisive groups, she embodies the idea that deep down, we are all on the same side, and if we keep the lines of communication open, we will find that common ground. And her own daughters are learning to be good stewards in a hundred subtle ways every day.

Thank you Kate for your tireless service, and congratulations on this well-deserved award!





Robin Mayo from WISE, Lauren Bien from PWSSC, former CRWP Executive Director Kristin Carpenter, Betsi Oliver from Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, and Copper Basin teacher Mark Proch coordinated on this nomination in celebration of Kate and her contributions to youth education- thank you for lifting up our hard working educator!



HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Get a jumpstart on your holiday shopping, and give gifts that keep on giving. By purchasing from the list below, portions of your purchase will directly support CRWP and our efforts to keep the Copper River watershed intact and functioning. Thanks to these businesses for their investment in our work to sustain the communities, culture, and economies of the Copper River region.

ADOPT A SALMON FRY!

ESSENTI/LS

This annual fundraiser helps boost our watershed education efforts, supporting the installation of salmon rearing tanks in all schools in the region, and field trips where students literally immerse themselves (wearing chest waders) into the aquatic ecosystems they are learning about. This year we are excited to offer a new commemorative ornament for every \$25 gifted.

ALASKA GLACIAL ESSENTIALS

Alaska Glacial Essentials boasts a whole line-up of "wildly potent skincare powered by Mother Nature." Buy their original glacial mud mask line through our online gift store, or use the link from our website (via QR code provided) to purchase from their new line of glacial-inspired products. Items purchased through our store or website result in direct contributions to support our watershed-sustaining work.

SENA SEA - EAT WILD TO SAVE WILD

For CRWPs fall fundraiser we partnered with Sena Sea to bring you a Wild Salmon Cooking series. Kinsey Justa represented Sena Sea in a "Wild-style" cooking video where she prepared coho salmon over an open fire complete with a blueberry glaze vinaigrette. In the second part of the series, Sena joined us virtually for a salmon cooking demonstration where she prepared herb-crusted coho salmon with a crispy skin - this video was all about technique and will help viewers understand the ins and outs of cooking that perfect fillet. To accompany the video, members from the lower 48 can purchase the Sena Sea ingredient box which includes fresh Copper River Coho Salmon and locally sourced in-season ingredients (available while supplies last). Tune in to the cooking series to learn about the connection between where your sustainably-sourced salmon comes from and the partnership between Sena Sea and the CRWP as we work together to restore and improve the habitat that raises salmon - Eat Wild to Save Wild.

Looking for a holiday gift for that special someone? Sena Sea can ship frozen salmon caught this fishing season to your loved ones! Shop via on our website, available at the QR code provided and 8% of the proceeds will be donated back to CRWP!

Shop Alaska Glacial Essentials, Sena Sea, and other business affiliates here.



GIFT SHOP UPGRADE

Our gift shop has been restocked and upgraded! Come and visit us on 1st Street in Cordova to peruse our new gift shop full of goodies and admire our new shelves! A new business in town, Boswell Bay Lumber and Woodworking Co. has designed and built us beautiful live-edge cedar shelves cast in epoxy. This locally-sourced and milled lumber is a thing of beauty and Kyle King from Boswell Bay Lumber has created a piece of art the CRWP can cherish for years to come. We are proud to support businesses within the Copper River watershed and are excited to be able to have additional shopping for visitors and residents as we come into the holiday season.



THANK YOU, MEMBERS

ANCESTORS' LEGACY,

Alaska Geographic Alexander Family Foundation Boswell Bay Lumber & Wood Working Co. Bill & Marion Alexander Rich & Shannon Alloway Arthur J. Donald Family Foundation William Beattie & Evonette Aponte-Beattie BioFish LLC Allison & Chris Bovard Karen Hyer & Ken Carlson Danny & Kristin Carpenter Chitina Native Corporation Diane & Mark Colleran **Drifters Fish Eyak Corporation** John Garner & Liz Cardwell Marie & Charles Hoffman Dan Hull & Nancy Pease

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RAVEN'S CLAN, \$50-99

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Christopher lannazzone

Oskar Johansson-Theis

Melissa J Robinson

Kendra's Kreations

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Denis Keogh

Meera Kohler

Sophie Littee

Caroline Ketron

Rodger & Gerri Koechling

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Jerry McCune

Galen Meyer

Stanton Moll

Andrew Morin

Gary Nygren

Martin Parsons

Becky King

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Ivy Rae Patton

Frederic Reid

Wendy Robbins

Ann Robinson

Aaron Sandone

Melissa & Derek

Pam & Bob Smith

Aubrey Smith

Jessica Speed

Art Works

Art Koeninger

Norma & Doyle

Glenn Ujioka

Diane Ujioka

Mae Vansant

XOAK

David Hartley &

Helen Weagraft

Wily Splain

Dick & Sue

Sikes

Jeremy A Robida

Amanda P Hults

Dorothee Pruessne

Tony Perelli &

Emily Olsen

Kate McLaughli

Oatman

Jonathan Aguirre Kris Anderson Nathan Anderson Barbara Autry Mike Babic Jeff Bailey & Helen Howarth Teal Barmore April Rederman Gabrielle Brown Mary C Convey Cordova Realty Judy and John Day Amber Degn Jim & Nancv DeWitt Stephen Diane Rachel Ertz Karla Freivalds Signe & Jim Fritsch Doug Fulton Margo Ghia Dr. Richard Harpe Kris Hegland Brian Hodges John Patrick Phil & Audrey Kathleen & Chris Tom McGann & Sue Laird Tom Lanini

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Newsletter Fall 2021

COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT

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IN MEMORY OF BARRY YOCOM 10/29/1951 -7/8/2020

My dad loved the Copper River since he first laid eyes on it, the canyons, the history, and its importance as a fish habitat. He collected rare books, leaflets, and dove into the history of the area his whole adult life.

My dad told us he wanted his ashes spread in the Copper after he died, that it was his favorite place on earth. Last July when attempting to cross O'Brien creek, his Argo was swept downstream into the Copper and he wasn't able to swim to shore in the relentless river.

For our family, it is a relief that he is not lost, but where he wanted to remain.

It is because of this connection to the Copper River that we invited others to contribute to CRWP in his memory because of their work to ensure the Copper River will be a healthy system for future generations to treasure.

-Barry's family