



COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT

COPPER RIVER

Runner

SPRING 2024

Girl Scouts donned chest waders and learned how to use a beach seine to catch adult spawning salmon. Photo: PWS Science Center

RAISING SALMON:

Reflection from our 5th grade Girl Scout Troop 148

One rare sunny day in Cordova, on a nice autumn afternoon, the Girl Scouts headed to 18-mile to collect eggs and milt. Once we arrived we put on waders then slowly but surely went into the pond and we marched to get the net. Then we cornered the fish to get the eggs and milt. We squeezed some of the milt gently out of the male salmon, then we got the female and gently squeezed out eggs (with the help of Mr. Neil from Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation). Then we put them in separate containers and packed them to head to town. Then we arrived at the elementary school to mix the eggs and milt together, add a splash of water from 18-mile, and put them into the tank.

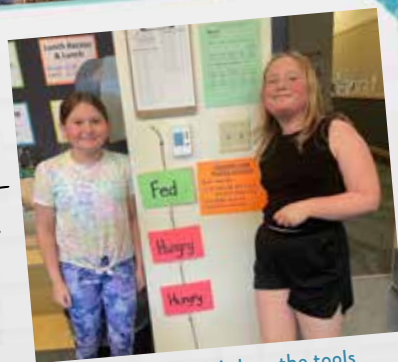
At the beginning of the school year the 4th grade took care of the eggs very well. Then our 5th grade class took over from there and our teacher made a list of 2 students/day to check the temperature, and their overall well-being. After a couple of weeks, they hatched into alevin, living off of their yolk sack until they got big enough to eat 3 times a day!

We have a schedule so that we don't lose track—it is our responsibility to keep the fish healthy!

Harvesting and caring for the eggs has been a really great experience and has given the Girl Scouts and 5th graders many opportunities. We got to try on chest waders which are basically waterproof snow pants that have socks built into them. We learned how to beach seine—it's when you stretch out a net to catch salmon, surrounding the fish to help scare them into the net.

Our class also got to learn about the salmon life cycle and their habitat. We also learned about the different types of salmon. The different types of salmon are silver, king, chum, red and pink. We have silver salmon in our tank. Overall the experience is wonderful and we got to use a lot of teamwork.

By: Daveen Allison, Anja Arduser, Kourtney Babic, Lorelai Botz, Nora Haisman, Una Honkola, Ada Kinsman, Ava McManus, & Lianna Towle



Kourtney and Lorelai show the tools they use in their classroom to track their salmon tank monitoring duties.

... Continued

The Cordova Salmon tank is made possible by our partnership with Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Cordova School District, Prince William Sound Science Center and Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation

Thanks to everyone who participated in our Adopt-a-Fry fundraiser to make this engaging learning experience possible. You helped cover the equipment, travel, and staff time needed to oversee up to six tanks a school year in the watershed!



(top) Kate Morse teaches the students how to feed the fry.

(below) 5th graders monitor and record the tank temperature daily. CRWP photos.

LETTER FROM CRWP BOARD CHAIR



Dear Watershed friends and supporters,

Hello.

I'm eager to tell you about our progress at the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP). Our dedicated, hardworking staff have firmly established a role for the CRWP as the model organization for fish passage and habitat restoration. Twenty-five years of waders in the water, boots-on-the ground, and presence in our community classrooms have resulted in meaningful, long-term, watershed-focused restoration while increasing stewardship through watershed education and outreach.

Designing, implementing, and completing watershed-scale work within the expansive, rugged Copper River drainage is a challenging feat involving many communities, organizations, and partners. Our knowledgeable staff shares our organization's capacity through partnerships to efficiently accomplish more work, maximizing the impact of every dollar we receive.

As champions of this great watershed, our donors and funders have invested over \$20 million in salmon habitat restoration work over the past five years. These dollars are spent right here in our communities to help maintain healthy and robust salmon populations while enhancing the sustainability of our fisheries. The importance of our work continues as our impact on the watershed grows. I call upon you, our members, and partners to continue supporting the CRWP as a wise investment for habitat and infrastructure innovation for our cherished salmon populations. If you want to support Copper River salmon, I urge you to continue supporting the CRWP.

Sincerely,

Matt Piché

Board Chair, Copper River Watershed Project Board of Directors

CRWP STAFF

Lisa Docken, *Executive Director*
Kate Morse, *Program Director*
Kimberlee Casavan, *Operations Manager*
Alexis Cooper, *Accounting*
Kirsti Jurica, *Hydrologist*
Michelle McAfee, *Communications Specialist*
Colleen Merrick, *CRWP/CRNA Climate Change Coordinator*
Amanda Jackson, *Watershed Stewardship Program Manager*
Ashley Taylor, *GIS and Data Specialist*

CRWP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Matt Piché, *President*, Cordova
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Kate Wilson, *Copper Center*
Steve Richards, *Cordova*
Sunshine Metzner, *Glennallen*
Lishaw Lincoln, *Copper Center*

ALASKA STATEWIDE WATERSHED WORKSHOP IN RETROSPECT

BY MICHELLE MCAFFEE

In February, watershed advocates from around the state attended the Alaska Statewide Watershed Workshop in Juneau. The event, hosted by the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), was an opportunity for people in watersheds around the state to share knowledge and network. The Copper River region was well-represented from the headwaters to the coast, with individuals from Mentasta Lake Traditional Council, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission, Copper River Native Association, The Eyak Corporation, Native Village of Eyak, and of course the Copper River Watershed Project.

Focal areas of the workshop included Communications and Collaborations, Organizational Development, and Project Planning and Implementation. The three-day event featured guest speakers, foods from watersheds around the state, and interactive workshops to share watershed organization administration strategies and improve effectiveness of communications.

Casey Cusick, a GIS Specialist / ISN Project Coordinator with the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC), shared his thoughts on the importance of watersheds from around the state gathering in this way. "All of our ecosystems are interconnected in one way or another. Even if there is no physical connectivity between watersheds, too much stress on one ecosystem could lead to greater stresses on others in the form

of both seaward or inland commercial fishing, development, and more."

After learning about other watersheds' challenges and triumphs, Cusick said he felt good about the Copper River watershed's heavy representation at the statewide Workshop. "It was great to see so many representatives of the Copper River region. I think this speaks for itself, and knowing that we all truly work together for the greater good speaks volumes. Our presentations at the Workshop reflected our togetherness through project collaborations."

Colleen Merrick is the Climate Change Coordinator for both the Copper River Watershed Project and the Copper River Native Association. She spoke about the Workshop's broader impact: "It is important to gather together to remind ourselves that we have diverse partners, diverse skill sets, and overlapping goals. Too often, these organizations are put in a competitive rather than a collaborative field. While we are all working for an intact, healthy watershed, we can leverage our unique contributions and work together to make meaningful changes."

CRWP staff members who attended the Workshop returned with new ideas to implement, new connections, and plenty of inspiration to continue watershed advocacy work.

WATERSHED CHAMPION



CRWP Program Director Kate Morse was honored to present Karen Linnell's Watershed Champion award during the workshop. Photo SAWC.

An evening during the workshop was dedicated to honoring and celebrating Watershed Champions—people who go above and beyond to support watersheds and communities in Alaska and beyond!

CRWP's Program Director, Kate Morse, helped present Watershed Champion Awards and had the honor of recognizing one of our Copper Basin partners, Karen Linnell, from the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission. For over two decades, Karen has worked on fish and game management issues in the Ahtna region. She is on the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board and works through local, state, tribal, and federal partnerships to help improve and protect fish and wildlife habitats throughout the region. Like Katie John before her, Karen is another strong Ahtna woman fighting for her people and their access to traditional and customary resources like salmon.

Kate was also excited to present a Watershed Champion to Heather Hanson, our partner and fish passage mentor from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. As a fish passage engineer, Heather has helped set design and implementation standards for Alaska and across the U.S.

Many thanks to the planning committee for making the Alaska Statewide Watershed Workshop possible: Anchorage Waterways Council, Copper River Watershed Project, Kenai Watershed Forum, Klawock Indigenous Stewards Forest Partnership, Tanana Valley Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited Alaska, Tyonek Tribal Conservation District, SEAK Fish Habitat Partnership, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council. Funded by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.




Watershed advocates traveled from across the state to gather in Juneau for the 2024 Alaska Watershed Workshop. Photo: SAWC

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

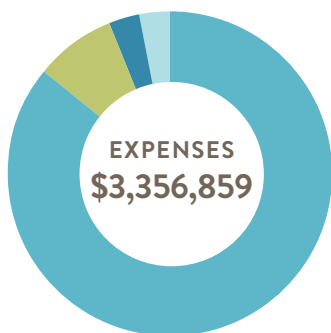


 **\$3,318,835 / 95%**
GRANT INCOME

 **\$113,002 / 3%**
CONTRIBUTIONS

 **\$19,739 / 1%**
SPECIAL EVENTS

 **\$33,205 / 1%**
OTHER



 **\$2,873,949 / 86%**
PROGRAM SPECIFIC EXPENSES

 **\$95,435 / 3%**
SHARED OPERATING EXPENSES

 **\$276,553 / 8%**
PROGRAM STAFF

 **\$110,922 / 3%**
ADMIN. & FUNDRAISING

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	362,854. 99
Accounts Receivable	147,337. 14
Other Current Assets	7,733. 65
Total Current Assets	517,925. 78
Fixed Assets	75,738. 18
Other Assets	96,394. 34

TOTAL ASSETS

\$690,058. 30

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	53,286. 27
Other Current Liabilities	
Deferred Revenue	4,595. 19
Payroll Liabilities	13,601. 67
Sales Tax Payable	1,595. 98
Vacation Accrual	18,780. 06
Total Liabilities	38,572. 90
Equity	
Donor Restricted Contributions	36,416. 52
Retained Earnings	423,946. 52
Net Income	137,836. 09
Total Equity	598,199. 13

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY

\$690,058. 30

CRWP WELCOMES TO OUR TEAM

The incredible growth CRWP experienced in the last several years, allowed us to expand our staff up and down river, adding several dedicated and motivated people to our roster in the Copper Basin and Cordova. The organization is continuing to expand, and this year we are also adding seasonal positions, internships, and a full-time Partnership Administrator to our team. We welcome our newest staff members, and look forward to working together to promote this salmon-rich, intact watershed and the culturally diverse communities that rely on the Copper River.



KIMBERLEE
CASAVAN

Operations Manager

After moving to Cordova almost 6 years ago, Kim fell in love with the Copper River watershed. She has a wide range of on-the-job experience to complement her Bachelor of Arts degree. She is excited to put her talents to use as the Operations Manager with the CRWP Team! Each year Kim has been in Alaska, she continues to learn more about the watershed and the importance of preserving its habitat. In her free time, Kim enjoys knitting, crafting, and gluten-free baking. You can find Kim and her partner Lee, enjoying hikes, bike rides, subsistence fishing, and berry picking on the weekends.

2023 PARTNERSHIPS AND CORPORATE GIVING

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Bureau of Land Management
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S.D.A. State Private & Tribal Forestry
- U.S.D.A. State Private Forestry (BIL)
- U.S.D.A Forest Service

PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

- City of Cordova
- Cordova Community Foundation
- Copper Valley Electric Association
- Ducks Unlimited
- The Eyak Corporation
- K&L Distributors
- Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council
- Trident Seafoods
- Sixty North Seafoods

BUSINESS AND CORPORATE GIVING, \$1000+

A. DONALD FOUNDATION

Ahtna

ALASKA GLACIAL ESSENTIALS

Alyeska pipeline

Chugach

COPPER COUNTRY ALLIANCE

Drifters Fish

DOWL

RIDGELINE

\$500 - \$999

ALASKA COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN ASSOCIATION

CORDOVA DISTRICT FISHERMEN UNITED

CORDOVA TELECOM CO-OPERATIVE

CORDOVA WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS

Chugach

OCEAN BEAUTY SEAFOODS

SENA SEA WILD ALASKAN FISH

2100 BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE SOLUTIONS

\$250 - \$499

OMNI COPPER RIVER IGA

Laura's

SHORELAND PETROLEUM

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND SCIENCE CENTER

AMANDA JACKSON



Watershed Stewardship Program Manager

Amanda Jackson is based out of Copper Center where she is our first full-time permanent upriver representation as the Watershed Stewardship Program Manager. She has a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Biology from Texas State University in San Marcos, TX with a focused background in outdoor educational outreach directly related to non-profit projects and workshops. Since her time in the Copper River Basin, she has worn several hats ranging from federal, state, tribal, and non-profit positions utilizing her diverse skills in biology-related fields of wildlife, fisheries, natural resources, and educational outreach. In Cordova and the Copper Basin, she is planning and implementing various invasive species plant management efforts, coordinating working groups within the community, as well as supporting salmon stream restoration projects.

CRWP/CRNA Climate Change Coordinator

Colleen Merrick is a biologist living and leading climate adaptation efforts in South Central Alaska. She coordinates the efforts of the Copper River Native Association villages, Tribal members, and partner agencies to promote and implement the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan. She resides in Copper Center and employs her diverse skill set to organize and manage adaptation strategies for those living on the front lines of climate change. Experience managing remote health centers and various businesses lends to her ability to bring people and supplies together in a timely and efficient manner, and her background in healthcare and fisheries motivates her to find the best way to balance goals of habitat conservation and thriving peoples.

COLLEEN MERRICK



THE TRAVELING STRAW

BY AMANDA JACKSON



Amanda Jackson giving a thumbs up to the sight of straw being cleaned up properly by various teams.



The CB300 mushers engaged in conversation with Amanda Jackson at the Meier's Lake checkpoint while preparing the dog's beds for rest.

Every year in January, the toughest 300-mile dog sledding race in rural Glennallen, Alaska is traveled by over 400 dogs, 35 mushers, and 100's of family or fan-based volunteers attending this great journey for support. The Copper Basin 300 (CB300) is an annual race that takes place within the Copper River watershed along trails that cross lakes, rivers, and streams. The teams are presenting qualities of some of the strongest and most devoted dog teams in the world.

The 3-day race is only possible by volunteers who devote their race weekend to overseeing the teams at 7 different checkpoints spread across the 300-mile trail. Our very own Watershed Stewardship Program Manager, Amanda Jackson, volunteered at various checkpoints assisting with the team check-ins. Before each team reaches a checkpoint, volunteers set out weed-free straw beds that provide a place of rest for the mushers and their team of dogs. With the large amount of human foot

and paw traffic, there is an unknown spread of invasive plant seeds. Those visiting appendages could have the potential to infest the Copper River Watershed. So, why do we care about straw in the dead of winter? Straw is a vector for the spread of invasive plant seeds. The seeds have the viability to survive through colder temperatures and even benefit from the scarification process which is a freezing and thawing cycle. The invasive seeds will germinate after they thaw, and settle into their new homes. The board monitors proper clean-up methods and even frowns upon them if not taken care of correctly during the race. Through donations from CRWP, the CB300 board strives to acquire weed-free straw every year to ensure preventative methods have been implemented.

We often unknowingly transport invasive seeds via our clothing, pets, tires, boats, etc. Within the state of Alaska, forage and straw products can be qualified as "certified weed-free." It's a way to protect the state from any unwanted invasive plant seeds that can travel by straw, soil, mulch, animal feed, gravel, and many more modes. Proper "Play Clean Go" preventative methods can be followed with the help of the North American Invasive Species Management Association's (NAISMA) ongoing program that can be found online at playcleango.org.



CB300's 2024 1st place winner, Brent Sass, zooming along the highway with Mt. Drum in sight on the way to the finish line. © Whitney McLaren Photography. mushingphotos.com

SOWING SEEDS of STEWARDSHIP

BY AMANDA JACKSON

ADOPT-A-PEST
CRWP
PROGRAM

This summer, the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) will pilot “Adopt-a-Pest” to involve Copper Basin residents in pulling and mowing activities to manage invasive plants in high-priority locations and increase the involvement of residents in helping control the spread of invasives. The hope is engaged citizens will feel a sense of pride in their hard-earned accomplishments while working towards the eradication of invasive plants within the watershed and minimizing the use of herbicide. Because of the ability of white sweet clover to quickly colonize gravel bars, the program will focus on areas near the Gulkana River access points. Citizen science monitoring surveys will be created in a user-friendly format, like Survey 123, to allow appointed volunteers to complete and send in their post-treatment monitoring data. All data will be utilized by CRWP to plan and prepare for future seasons in invasive plant management. After fine-tuning the Adopt-a-Pest programming in the Copper Basin, we will expand efforts to Cordova to increase citizen involvement in managing the spread of reed canarygrass onto the Copper River Delta.

Additionally, in the Copper Basin, our annual volunteer Weed Smackdown event will take to the water! This year the event will be held on the Gulkana River to tackle white sweetclover while promoting invasive plant management techniques. With the help of local rafting guides, there will be three rafts available to take 18 local participants downriver. The event will be free to the public and require a first-come-first-serve signup sheet. More details to come!

While we move forward with our work on managing invasive species, we are also busy launching a new program to help support healthy native plant communities, in particular after restoration or other ground-disturbing activities. CRWP is facilitating multi-organization partnerships to plan and implement native seed harvesting efforts in the Copper Basin and Cordova. The goal is to collect viable native plant seeds from the region that can be used to re-plant areas that have been disturbed, for example after treatment of invasive species, or replacing a culvert. By diversifying the seed bank used to stabilize soil post-restoration, we can quickly establish a more representative native plant community in areas where disturbance has occurred. Once species and sites are identified, the team will recruit volunteers to help collect native plant seeds--who doesn't want to help keep our watershed healthy while going on a hike!?

We are excited for the opportunity to work with our partners, residents, and visitors of the watershed to help support healthy native plant communities and reduce the spread of invasive species, and hope to see you in the field this season!

INVASIVE
WHITE SWEETCLOVER

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web COPPERRIVER.ORG

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COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT



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PARTNER THANK YOU



Chugach owns more than 14,000 acres in the Copper River Basin and almost 1 million acres in southcentral Alaska. We recently partnered with the Copper River Watershed Project to improve fish habitat on the Lower Tonsina River. The project is located on Chugach land within the highway right of way, the scope of which removed narrow undersized culverts on the Lower Tonsina River and replaced them with a single-lane bridge that spans at least two times the bankfull channel width. In addition, the project also improved riparian habitat by using spruce tree rootwads which will help stabilize the bank and decrease erosion. Willow and alders were also planted in the vicinity to provide shade and cover that is critical for healthy salmon. By removing the culverts, over 70 miles of spawning and rearing habitat is now open for chinook and coho salmon that migrate up the Copper River to the Lower Tonsina River.

“The Lower Tonsina River bridge replacement and habitat restoration project is an excellent example of what can be achieved by forming partnerships.”

– Jack Blackwell, Vice President of Lands & Resources, Chugach Alaska Corporation

This project was accomplished through a partnership with a diverse group consisting of representatives from the Copper River Watershed Project, Chugach Alaska Corporation, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOTPF), Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, and the Denali Commission. The project was the first fish passage project in the United States that was funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, with additional funding from ADOTPF.

“It’s exciting to see what can be accomplished when people work together.” —Jack Blackwell, Vice President of Lands and Resources, Chugach Alaska Corporation

