



alaska report

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This is it, for the Arctic Refuge

Despite Mounting Controversy over Budget Reconciliation, Senate Moves Forward

Since August, activists have been hammering home the message “don’t use the Budget to advance Arctic drilling” back in their Congressional districts as they actively lobby the 30 or so moderate Republicans who are among the most important potential House swing votes.

On September 20, Arctic Action Day, Washington DC saw a huge gathering for the Arctic on the west lawn of the Capitol. More than 5,000 volunteers who had bused in from around the country fanned out to meet with their Congressional delegations and urge them to oppose Arctic drilling. This lobby blitz was noteworthy because of the size of the meetings and the number of meetings that were actually with the member of Congress instead of with staff. We are still trying to capitalize on the tremendous energy that emerged from that event.

Majority leaders in Congress are moving forward to use the Budget reconciliation process to authorize oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Their plan is to raise \$2.4 billion from leasing to oil and gas companies. But they are using grossly inflated revenue projections, and *raising \$2.4 billion from Arctic Refuge leasing will never happen*. If Congress includes these revenues in its Budget Reconciliation it will be giving away one of America’s greatest treasures at a bargain basement price.

Timing

The Senate is expected to vote on the Budget Reconciliation bill in the first few days of November, while a floor vote in the House of Representatives is not likely to happen until at least

Nov. 7. A conference to adjust differences in the versions of both Houses should happen about Nov. 18.

On Oct. 18, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee marked up and passed legislation that would authorize drilling in the 1.5 million acre coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.



Alaska Chapter rafters on the Hulahula River in the Arctic Refuge in 2003. Let’s keep this kind of wild experience available for future generations!

Vicky Hoover

This would allow for lease sales to begin (if the Senate passes the Reconciliation package) and therefore generate money to the Treasury. On October 31, the Budget committee took all of the committees’ changes to law and folded them into a large Budget Reconciliation package for the Senate floor.

On Oct. 26, the House Resources Committee passed its language to open the Arctic Refuge, for inclusion in the Budget

continued on page 2

reconciliation package. In addition to authorizing drilling, Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) also weakened drilling moratoria for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The House Budget Committee will act the week of October 31.

Because the Arctic drilling provision will be wrapped up in the larger Budget Reconciliation package, we will need to defeat the entire package to defeat Arctic development. This is a tough ask for anyone, but the last vote on defeating the Budget Resolution in April failed by just three votes in each House. Since then, there has been renewed scrutiny of some of the fairly drastic cuts to entitlement programs in the Reconciliation package—cuts to Medicaid, food stamps and education funding. The confluence of all these objectionable provisions might be enough to sink this massive bill.

Furthermore, the new Republican House leadership was not able to amass the votes necessary to boost the budget cuts from \$35.7 billion to \$50 billion in an effort to offset mounting Katrina relief costs. They postponed an amendment to achieve these additional savings until the beginning of November. If they succeed in mustering the votes to change the budget targets, it will make conference with the Senate to agree on final legislation even more difficult.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Contact your legislators immediately and urge them to vote against any Budget reconciliation package that includes provisions to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Tell them that this push to drill in the Arctic Refuge is a political policy decision, masquerading as a revenue raiser. Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge won't raise the money the committees say it will, or reduce money that drivers pay at the pump, so it's misleading to include it in the reconciliation bill. Drilling proponents included Arctic drilling in the irrelevant budget bill because budget bills cannot be filibustered, and they do not have the 60 votes needed to stop a filibuster.

Tell them that the \$2.4 billion the Administration claims for revenues from Arctic lease sales relies on inflated phony revenue projections that are liable to increase the federal deficit.

There are several reasons why the American people and the Congress should be skeptical of the fuzzy numbers used by the drill supporters:

- The current average rate per acre on Alaska's North Slope is under \$50 per acre for all lease sales. In the past five years, despite high oil prices this average has declined. Most recently, even in the vicinity of a known, near-shore discovery, bids averaged less than \$200 per leased acre. At this rate, even if Congress leased the entire 1.5 million acres of the Coastal Plain of the Refuge, the lease sale total would be \$300 million at the most, a far cry from \$2.4 billion.

- The administration's current plan is to lease and drill on 400,000 to 600,000 acres. To get to \$2.4 billion in revenues the lease sales would have to average \$4,000 to \$6,000 per acre. This is nearly 100 times the going rate.

- Under the current drilling proposal in the Budget Reconciliation package, new revenue from leasing in the Arctic Refuge would be shared 50/50 with the State of Alaska. Yet the State of Alaska's long-term legal position has been that the Alaska Statehood Act mandates a 90/10 Alaska/United States division of revenue from natural resource development on federal land in Alaska. Even if Alaska's political leaders withdraw their previously stated plans to sue for 90 percent of whatever lease revenues are raised, *including phony revenue numbers for Arctic Refuge lease in the budget reconciliation package is liable to increase the federal deficit.*

- Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge won't lower anyone's energy bills. The Department of Energy now estimates that drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge wouldn't lower gas prices at all in the short term, and would net consumers only about a penny a gallon at peak production in 2025. That's less than the difference in price between two gas stations across the street from each other.

Republican Senators who who have voted previously to protect the Arctic and who especially need to hear our message:

<u>Senator/State</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>
<u>(all start with 202 area code)</u>		

John McCain, Arizona:	224-2235	228-2862
Olympia Snowe, Maine	224-5344	224-1946
Susan Collins, Maine	224-2523	224-2693
Norm Coleman, Minnesota	224-5641	224-1152
Gordon Smith, Oregon	224-3753	228-3997
Mike DeWine, Ohio	224-2315	224-6519
Gordon Smith, Oregon	224-3753	228-3997
Lincoln Chafee, Rhode Island	224-2921	228-2853

If you are not from one of these states, you probably know people who are! Urge your friends and relatives to get on the phone--immediately!

-- Betsy Goll

"In some places, such as the Arctic Refuge, the wildlife and natural values are so magnificent and so enduring that they transcend the value of any mineral that might lie beneath the surface. Such minerals are finite. Production inevitably means changes whose impacts will be measured in geologic time in order to gain marginal benefits that may last a few years."
– then-Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus, in a 1978 speech

Mine Waste to be dumped in pristine Alaska lake

Sierra Club Files Suit on Clean Water Act Violation

On September 12, Sierra Club and two Southeast Alaska local conservation groups filed suit in U.S. District Court, Juneau, Alaska, against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for violating the Clean Water Act. The Club, Lynn Canal Conservation, and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council are challenging the decision by the Corps of Engineers to issue a permit to Coeur d'Alene Mines of Idaho that would allow the deposit of 4.5 million tons of chemically processed mine waste from the Kensington Gold Mine into a freshwater alpine lake.

Kensington is a hard rock mining project proposed by Coeur d'Alene Mines Corporation of Idaho. It is located a few miles north of the City of Juneau road system (50 miles north of downtown Juneau) in the Tongass National Forest. Fifteen years and several proposed operating plans after the initial proposal, Coeur's current operating plan will pipe 4.5 million tons of mine waste into Lower Slate Lake in the Tongass National Forest. (See **alaska report**, March '04, Sept., Nov. '02, Aug. '99, March '94). The Club's Juneau Group and others have opposed this operating plan since its inception, because of the dangers of toxic waters stored in the lake and the irrevocable impacts on nearby Berners Bay and its watershed. Under this plan, and since the Corps granted the permit this past summer, Coeur has already begun moving docking facilities for transporting



Slate Lake with Lions Head; this lake is destined to be filled with tailing

Pat Costello

mine workers, ore, and supplies into recently pristine Berners Bay.

Coeur expects to mine for ten years under this operating plan and may seek to expand that time period. Over the ten years, the proposed mining operations will generate 7.5 million tons of mine waste. Three million tons are to be backfilled into the mine, and the remaining 4.5 million tons will be dumped

into Lower Slate Lake. Coeur will build a dam 90 feet high and 500 feet long to enlarge the lake to accommodate its mine tailings. This dam will have to last forever. If it fails, the mine waste could end up in Berners Bay.

Berners Bay, a favorite destination for recreation, fishing, kayaking, air boating, and camping from Juneau, is an extremely rich estuary system with four rivers flowing into it that provide spawning habitat for wild Alaskan salmon. During spring runs of herring and eulachon (a small energy-rich forage fish) Berners Bay attracts humpback whales, harbor seals, tens of thousands of shorebirds, the second largest congregation of bald eagles in North America (up to a thousand at a time), and Steller sea lions, a listed threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Research has shown that the Steller sea lions in particular may depend on the Berners Bay eulachon runs for maintaining population viability in this part of Southeast Alaska. Berners Bay was deemed an Aquatic Resource of National Importance by the EPA during the Clinton Administration, and its uplands are also home to brown and black bears, wolves, moose, and mountain goats.

Problems with the Kensington Mine

For the first time since Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972, the Corps of Engineers has authorized a mining company to discharge untreated (chemically processed to extract the ore but untreated to remove toxics) mining waste into a lake. In order to permit the disposal of mine waste into Lower Slate Lake, the Corps of Engineers re-defined the mine waste as "fill material" instead of a pollutant. The agency used the same Bush Administration regulation change to circumvent the Clean Water Act that allowed Appalachian coal mining companies to shove overburden into stream valleys in mountain-top removal.

But this mine waste is not benign fill material; it is a toxic pollutant. After it is discharged into the lake, the lake's waters will need to be treated before they can be discharged into Slate Creek and flow into Berners Bay. Congress enacted the Clean Water Act more than 30 years ago to end the use of public rivers and waterways as dumping grounds for industrial waste. Re-defining mine waste as "fill material" and permitting it to be dumped into a lake violates the Act. It is also inconsistent with current EPA regulations which prohibit the discharge of chemically processed mine waste from mines like the Kensington into our lakes and streams.

Corporate profits ahead of the public's interest

Coeur Alaska is building two docks with staging areas in Berners Bay: one in the north at Slate Creek Cove, and one in

-- continued on page 4

Pebble Mine: a threat to Lake Clark, Katmai National Parks

Native subsistence, world-renowned fisheries face great risk

A massive open-pit mining development is being proposed in the heart of the Bristol Bay Watershed, which contains two of the largest salmon runs in the world.

The Pebble Project is owned by Northern Dynasty Mines Inc. This subsidiary to the Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. is preparing permit applications for the open-pit mining operation it hopes to build in a mineral-rich caldera located on state land in southwest Alaska only 30 miles from Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Covering approximately 500 square miles, the property is 17 miles northwest of the village of Iliamna, in the Nushagak-Big River Hills and just north of Lake Iliamna, Alaska's biggest lake. Presently, access to the project site is by air from Anchorage, 236 miles away.

The Nushagak-Mulchatna River system is home to the world's largest runs of Chinook, or king, salmon, and the Kvichak River in the Lake Iliamna watershed is historically the world's largest sockeye producer, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Kensington

--continued from page 3

the south at Cascade Point. Cascade Point contains spawning habitat for the depressed Lynn Canal stock of Pacific herring.

The Slate Creek Cove facility is in close proximity to seal "haul outs" and eulachon spawning grounds. Mine vessel and barge traffic will cross the Bay with fuel, ore, employees, and construction materials via three to five round-trips a day.

In 1997, a final EIS and ROD had been issued for one of Coeur's earlier operating plans. It would have used dry-stack tailings disposal and staged its operations outside of pristine Berners Bay. Coeur did not implement that less damaging operating plan because gold prices dropped in the late 1990s.

According to John Hudson, chair of 'Friends of Berners Bay' and a Sierra Club member, "Berners Bay contributes enormously to Juneau's quality of life. This mine, with its docks and vessel traffic, puts the Bay's wildlife at risk, and will severely impact the recreational uses of the area. It's the first step in turning Berners Bay into an industrial zone."

In expressing the Sierra Club's opposition to the Kensington Mine permit, Mark Rorick of the Juneau Group stated, "The Corps permit to allow a mining company to dam up a freshwater lake and deposit chemically processed, untreated mine waste into it puts corporate profits ahead of the public's interest and will set a terrible precedent. Our lawsuit is about defending the Clean Water Act for Alaska and all of America."

--Mark Rorick

Renowned for sport fishing, this is the only designated Trophy Rainbow Trout region in Alaska. There are several sport fishing and hunting lodges that contribute significantly to the local economy. Local villages, such as Nondalton, Iliamna, and Newhalen, depend on the Mulchatna caribou herd and on the rich salmon runs for subsistence. As former Governor Jay Hammond said in July (shortly before his untimely death). "If I were asked where in Alaska I would least like to see the biggest open

pit mine in the world, I can think of no less appropriate spot than the headwaters of the finest trout stream and salmon spawning drainage in Alaska."

Public opinion about the mining proposal has been mixed. Many see a mining district as an unprecedented opportunity for new jobs for the Southcentral and Southwest Alaska economies, worth the risks to the environment posed by open pit mining. Others see those risks as far too great, especially concerning the fish on



Jack Hession with Gov. Jay Hammond at Port Allsworth, July 2005

Vicky Hoover

which commercial, sport and subsistence fishers depend. At least ten Native villages, corporations and councils in the area have passed resolutions against the mine, and residents worry it would endanger their way of life.

Residents of Homer and other Cook Inlet communities are concerned about the hazards the shipping and treatment facilities would have to Cook Inlet. Now, with few roads in the Bristol Bay region, most of the economy is built on fishing.

Local residents and businesses that depend on the rich biological resources and the remote, pristine nature of the Lake Iliamna region are concerned that the development of a giant hard rock open-pit mine, covering thousands of acres, will adversely affect existing uses including the subsistence lifestyle. No matter how carefully designed and constructed, such a sprawling industrial complex, with its inevitable large ancillary processing facilities and an extensive network of roads and power lines, will diminish the remote and wild nature of Lake Iliamna and nearby watersheds. Water pollution from a mine, including elevated levels of contaminants from the milling process or an accidental release of cyanide or other harmful chemicals, could potentially wipe out fish stocks. Open pit mines release arsenic, sulfuric acid, cyanide, heavy metals including lead, cadmium, zinc, mercury, and many other toxic

pollutants that kill fish and cause human health problems. *On an acre-by-acre basis, the hard rock mining industry is arguably the most polluting and destructive industry on earth*, according to Alaskans for Responsible Mining.

Impacts of the mine feared

NDM has publicly stated that Pebble will be a mine of immense size. According to the company, the mine will cost about \$1.5 billion to construct and will employ about 2000 people. The diameter of the pit would be 2.5 miles, 1.5 miles wide, and the pit would be more than 1500 feet deep. A ten square mile permanent tailings/waste storage lake would be built adjacent to the mine. They plan to “relocate” remote Frying Pan Lake, presently a popular area for subsistence hunting and fishing, and the Kaktuli River—which is a premier sport fishing river and the salmon spawning grounds for king salmon from the famed Nushagak/Mulchatna run.

Mines also “privatize” public lands, such as those containing the Pebble Project, by denying public access during the life of the mine. And while the law requires a mining company reclaim a mine site after closure, the landscape is nevertheless permanently altered.

A new 65-mile haul road would need to be built to connect the Pebble Mine to a port site in Cook Inlet 80 miles from the mine site. Such a road, with one alternative route paralleling the border of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, is in the planning stages. Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) has put a price tag for the road, which would be owned and operated by the state of Alaska, at \$100-\$150 million, though the final cost will likely be much more. To expedite the road building process, Alaska Rep. Don Young put a federal earmark of \$5 million into the Transportation Bill this year to upgrade the existing 15 mile Williamsport-Pile Bay connecting road from Cook Inlet.

A cost-benefit and reconnaissance engineering study by AK DOT to evaluate transportation options are due out soon. But the road itself is a boondoggle. The state cannot afford the hefty price tag and is counting on the \$5 million of federal funds already going to upgrade the 15 miles of existing road by Cook Inlet.

NDM also estimates that the mine will require at least 100 megawatts of power, which is more power than is used by the entire city of Anchorage, population 268,000. The corporation says it has several options for power. One of several power options for NDM is bringing power cables under Cook Inlet from the Kenai Peninsula and another involves re-starting a controversial coal burning power plant near Denali National Park.

Impacts on Lake Clark and Katmai, two of our country's

premier national parks are of great concerns to Americans around the nation. Park officials also are worried about impacts.

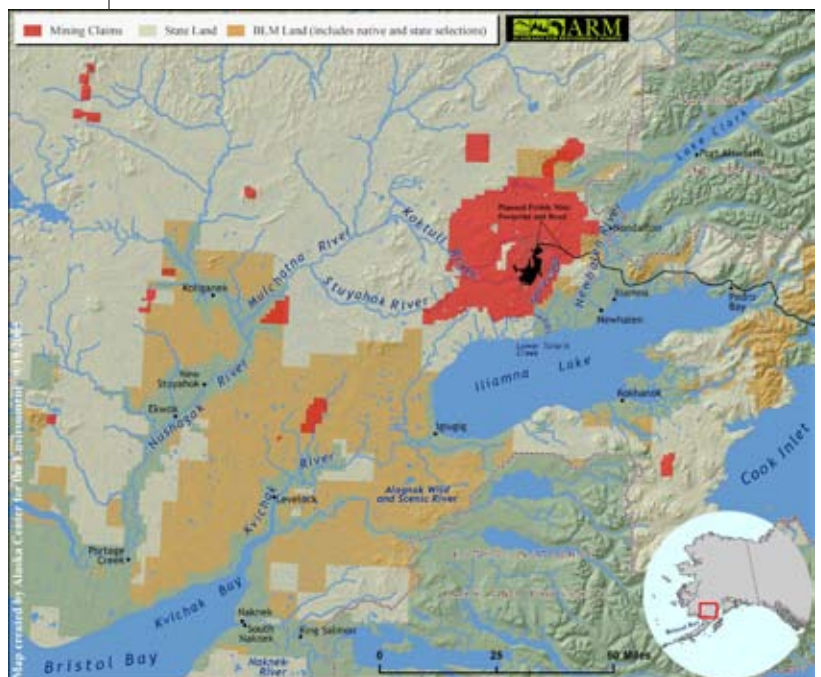
Northern Dynasty officials say they expect to submit their permit applications in early 2006. That will launch the environmental review process, which would be likely to take three or four years before construction could begin. But at this time the Pebble Mine is by no means a done deal.

A tragedy of monumental proportions

In a July visit to Lake Clark National Park, Sierra Club activists Jack Hession, Lance Holter, and Vicky Hoover flew over the Pebble exploration site and asked local residents about their concerns regarding the mine. Holter, Hawaii Chapter conservation chair and a videographer, filmed nearly a dozen interviews with residents, including Gov. Hammond. June Balluta, at her fish camp near Nondalton, said, “I’m dead set against it. No amount of money is worth trading our subsistence culture for.”

Jack Hobson, president of the Nondalton Tribal Council, stated, “Time and again, Northern Dynasty says they want to be a good neighbor. But everyone knows a good neighbor does not come into your town and dig a big hole and when it’s over leave us with all the toxics—and the big hole.”

Fisheries biologist Monroe Robinson called the plan to mine the Pebble prospect, “A tragedy of monumental proportions.”



The Pebble Prospect is the big red blob, just north of Lake Iliamna; Lake Clark N.P.'s light green at top right. Map courtesy of Bristol Bay Alliance and Alaska Center for the Environment.

For more information, visit bristolbayalliance.com, and go to "Current Status".

Tongass Forest Plan Fatally Flawed: *Time for a Change!*

Urge the Forest Service to Set Things Right

In September, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled that the U.S. Forest Service misled the public during the development of its logging plan for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska and ordered that a new Forest Plan be developed.

The decision is an outcome of two lawsuits filed in December 2003 and January 2004 by Earthjustice, together with Natural Resources Defense Council, representing six Plaintiffs; Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and Center for Biological Diversity.

The suits challenged the 1997 Tongass Forest Plan and seven timber sales in roadless areas of the Tongass. Both challenges centered on the impact of a Forest Service error that doubled its projections of market demand for Tongass timber. Market demand projections were used to determine the maximum logging level allowed in the 1997 Forest Plan. The overall effect of the Forest Service's error was to exaggerate Tongass logging levels and put much more land into logging designations than the agency's own economists found was necessary to supply local mills.

"The Forest Service's error in assessing market demand fatally infected its balance of economic and environmental considerations, rendering the plan for the Tongass arbitrary and capricious," the opinion by Judge Ronald Gould says.

The court-ordered preparation of a new plan is an opportunity for the Forest Service to develop an accurate forest plan that reflects the robust and diverse economy of southeast Alaska.

Of the Forest Service's timber programs, the Tongass is one of the most egregiously mismanaged. Since 1982, cumulative losses to U.S. taxpayers have reached nearly \$1 billion. The Tongass is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, with stands of giant Sitka spruce and other old growth trees. More than 5000 miles of logging roads already built in the Tongass face a \$100 million road maintenance backlog. Due to road and other costs, the government loses taxpayer's money on every tree it sells.

--Katherine Fuselier



What you can do:

Let the Forest Service know it's time for a change! Ask them to craft a forest plan for the Tongass which leaves behind the unsustainable practices of logging inventoried roadless areas at a high cost to U.S. taxpayers, to native flora and fauna, and local communities. The lifeblood of the local economy is the scenic beauty, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife and overall quality of life provided by these wild, roadless places of the Tongass.

If you are an Alaskan, write to Forrest Cole, Tongass National Forest Supervisor. P.O. Box 21628, Juneau AK 99802

If you live outside of Alaska: please write to U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth. 1400 Independence Ave SW Washington DC 20250.

Glacier Bay National Park/ Preserve: Cruise ships given 14 more entries in 2007

Glacier Bay National Park in October added 14 more cruise ship visits for the 2007 season (June 1-August 31), a 10 percent increase from the current season quota of 139. (An entry is a visit lasting up to 24 hours; no more than two ships a day are allowed). The timing of the announcement met the cruise ship lines' need to plan and book passengers 18 months in advance.

Coming out of the blue, the increase reminded supporters of park protection of the last time the cruise lines were similarly rewarded. In late 1994, then-Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt suddenly announced an increase of 30 percent from 107 entries to 139. The Washington Post noted archly that Secretary Babbitt's former chief of staff was an attorney with a law firm representing one of the major cruise ship lines operating in park waters. (See **alaska report**, March 1995.)

At that time, the NPS said any further increases would depend on the findings of additional research on the effect of vessel traffic on park resources and values, including on endangered humpback whales that feed in Glacier Bay during the summer months, and on other marine mammals. Additional cruise ship and other vessel visits could be permitted provided that the whales' feeding and travels are not disturbed during this critically important time when, for example, cows with calves born during the winter far away in Hawaii depend on the Bay's plentiful food supply.

This time around, the NPS granted the 10 percent increase in advance of public review of scientific research undertaken since 1994. The park's science advisory board submitted its 2004-05 report prior to the 10 percent increase, but the report is as yet unavailable for public review. It apparently

Scarred Landscapes, Shattered Solitude in Chugach National Forest

Kenai Winter Access Plan Seeks a Balance

Traditionally, winter was the quiet time, and the natural snowscape was largely untracked except by squirrels, hares and other hardy wild creatures. Now, natural quiet and the opportunity to hear and enjoy peaceful sounds of wind, water, and wildlife have practically vanished, replaced by the roar and whine of snowmachines. Snowmachine tracks are ubiquitous. Fairness, balance, respect for winter wildlife and for people seeking quiet recreation dictate an effort to restore quiet and pristine snowscapes on the Chugach National Forest – and also on other Alaska public lands.



Backcountry skiing on the Kenai
Photo: Alaska Center for the Environment

More than a year ago, the Chugach National Forest began an analysis of winter motorized and non-motorized recreation access to the

Carter-Crescent Lakes area on the Kenai Peninsula. In response to feedback they received during that process, a Forest Plan re-write for this issue is underway and has been expanded to include the entire Seward Ranger District, or all Forest Service lands on the Kenai Peninsula.

In spring of 2005, a diverse group of skiers, snowshoers, snowmachiners, trappers and other winter enthusiasts rolled up their sleeves at round tables over detailed maps to work toward a balanced solution. More than 150 citizens participated in one or more of three six-hour community workshops, developing 18 scenarios for addressing winter access across the Seward Ranger District.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Kenai Winter Access Management Plan with proposed alternatives is expected November 9. Different scenarios of motorized and non-motorized winter recreation areas will be included. If you want areas of quiet winter recreation on the Kenai, the Forest Service needs to hear from you! This plan re-write is a unique opportunity to help the Forest Service achieve a more balanced management plan that will encourage responsible use of our public lands – use that leaves the land healthy and unspoiled, that protects our wildlife and wildlife habitat, and that allows for the continued enjoyment of these lands.

⇒ What You Can Do:

- Help shape the future of winter recreation for your Chugach National Forest. Whether you live in Alaska or elsewhere, review and comment on the Forest Service DEIS when it is issued: www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach
- Send a Letter to the Editor encouraging balanced management of winter motorized use on our public forest lands: Anchorage Daily News: www.adn.com. Write to letters@adn.com. Non Alaskans can write too!
- Educate yourself on Sierra Club's motorized recreation policy and what you can do in your local community: <http://www.sierraclub.org/wildlands/orv/>
- If you can help in your own Chapter on snowmobile or other motorized recreation issues, contact the Sierra Club's national Recreation Issues Committee, <http://www.sierraclub.org/recreationissues/>

For more info on the Kenai Winter Access Plan:
Katherine Fuselier, Conservation Organizer, (907)276-4060 katherine@sierraclubalaska.org

Glacier Bay cruise ships

–from page 6

identified “research gaps,” and suggested that a 10 percent increase may be justified.

In a classic example of merely going through the “motions” of public review and comment, the NPS now intends to publish its decision in the federal register next year, including, perhaps, a summary of the science advisory committee's report, and invite public comment. Meanwhile the cruise lines will have already locked in plans for 2007 based on the additional 14 entries.

Against this background, it's easy to conclude that the NPS is again hopping to the tune of the cruise lines and their champion, Gov. Frank Murkowski, who has long demanded two cruise ships a day every day of the 92-day season and who claims to be unhappy with the 14-entries-only increase. As quoted by the Associated Press, he said “They've been studying it for 20 years and I'm sick of waiting. They study and study and study and come up with gibberish that (results in) more studies.” He also is putting pressure on the NPS to let ocean-going Alaska state ferries cruise in Glacier Bay.

Meanwhile, the public has not been informed there were actually 210 cruise ship entries this year, an increase of 51 percent over the quota. The additional 71 visits occurred during May and September under a new NPS allotment of 92 entries for the shoulder seasons. Humpbacks arrive in the park in May and begin departing in September. Up to an additional 92 entries during these times increases the potential for disturbance to these creatures, and for whale-vessel collisions. Last year a humpback, apparently killed by a vessel, washed up on a park beach. Scuttlebutt has it that a cruise ship collided with the whale. A Justice Department investigation is pending.

In addition to the effects of vessels on marine wildlife, there is concern about increased commercialization of the park. For the current vessel management plan, the Sierra Club had recommended that half of the 92-day summer season be free of cruise ships, with a maximum of 92 visits during this period, i.e., the lines could have two ships a day on each of 46 days.

–Jack Hession

Sierra Club members attend 8th World Wilderness Congress

South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Congo, Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Gabon. Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Japan, China, Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Siberia, Ukraine. United Kingdom, Norway, Finland, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Italy. Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Canada, U.S.A.

Delegates from all these countries and more attended the Eighth World Wilderness Congress, held in Anchorage, Alaska Sept. 30 through October 6. Sierra Club participants Richard and Doris Cellarius, Mike Macfadyen, Jack Hession, and Vicky Hoover were among some 1100 delegates at this international event.

The weeklong conference held at the Egan Center in downtown Anchorage featured plenary sessions, receptions, and small concurrent sessions, plus a Conservation Photography Symposium. Themes that achieved top billing mostly focused on conserving biodiversity in protected natural areas. Topics included helping indigenous people benefit from protecting natural areas near them, and how to combine tourism with protection of key lands; combating global warming and coping with its effects, guarding protected areas in a time of population pressures, and assuring protection for transboundary areas, natural places that reach across political boundaries. A special seminar for wilderness managers just before the

Congress allowed many wilderness-related staffers from the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to participate in the Congress.

In deference to the event's location in Alaska, a special focus was on northern lands and Alaska, including impacts of the 25-year old Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The fate of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, now hanging on an imminent budget vote by the U.S. Congress, came up frequently. Sierra Club and the Gwich'in Steering Committee jointly introduced a resolution calling on the U.S. Government to protect this unique and fragile area, and this resolution was one of 51 passed by acclamation on the last day.

Beyond the dynamic and vivid presentations, a significant value of the event was the networking possibilities with a great variety of individuals—Native leaders, academics, government employees, and NGO representatives as well as interested citizens. Sierra Club participants, for example, pointed to the Club's International Outings Program; National Outing Committee member Mike Macfadyen talked to representatives from a number of African nations about how they could use outings to point attention at areas that need protection, and how the Sierra Club might consider new outings to several places.

If there were other Sierra Club volunteers present whom we did not identify, we'd love to hear from you.

--Vicky Hoover

alaska report

alaska report is the newsletter of the Sierra Club Alaska Task Force, encouraging advocacy on Alaska federal lands issues, particularly as they pertain to the passage and implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

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ACTION NEEDED

ARCTIC..... 1, 2
TONGASS..... P. 6
CHUGACH..... P. 7