

Chichagof Conservation Council

Box 621 Tenakee Springs AK 99841 907-736-2305 March 2002

Waiting for the next shoe to drop...

Tongass issues have been relatively quiet in the past year. However personnel changes made by the Bush administration mean that CCC needs to remain alert and poised for action. In particular, the installation of Mark Rey as Undersecretary of Agriculture in charge of the Forest Service is a serious source of concern.

We remember Mark Rey as a timber industry lobbyist who opposed the Tongass Timber Reform Act. Later Rey orchestrated attacks on the Tongass Timber Reform Act from his position on Senator Murkowski's staff. It would be nice to think that Rey's views have changed with his new position, but while hoping for the best we should probably prepare for the worst.

TLMP Supplement In 1999 Jim Lyons (Undersecretary of Agriculture in the Clinton administration) issued a decision on the appeals of the 1997 Tongass Land Management Revision. Lyon's decision gave extra protection to many vitally important areas, including Long Bay, Seal Bay, Goose Flats, and the remaining old growth of Crab Bay and Inbetween Creek. The Lyons decision was challenged by both the timber industry and several national environmental groups. In 2001 the Federal District Court overturned the Lyons decision. Interestingly enough the judge found for both sides, saying that the Lyons decision gave inadequate consideration to possible additions to wilderness areas and also agreeing with the timber industry's contention that public involvement was inadequate. Consequently the Forest Service is

preparing a Supplemental EIS. The draft is scheduled to be released next month, and your comments will be essential. CCC will try to keep you informed.

CCC takes on Tenakee Trash

Although Tongass issues remain CCC's primary focus, our organization has taken on several local projects of undisputed benefit to Tenakee.

Last summer CCC shouldered the cost of removing the pile of abandoned batteries that had accumulated at the Tenakee Harbor. Many thanks to everyone who helped organize that effort and move the batteries, and to the owner of the "Gumption" for reduced freight charges.

Now CCC is working with VISTA volunteer Melinda Moore to secure funding for two new projects. CCC's support as a well-established and effective local non-profit organization is vital to the success of these proposals.

The energy conservation project would replace light bulbs, refrigerators and freezers with modern high-efficiency units and provide for disposal of old units. Another project would provide barge removal of scrap metal and some other categories of garbage.

Melinda and several CCC members put in long hours working on surveys, research and preparing the grant applications. Successful completion of these projects will require a significant amount of additional volunteer labor.

DNR'S Northern Southeast Area Plan

by Joan McBeen The Alaska Department of Natural Resources has released the Public Revised Draft of the Northern Southeast Area Plan which will determine land use designations for state

owned land. Tenakee Inlet has some upland state land and the state owns the tidelands. We are requesting a public hearing for Tenakee. Matthew Davidson, SEACC grassroots organizer, is planning to visit Tenakee to help us prepare for the hearing. This will be an important opportunity to express your opinions about aquaculture, floating lodges, tourist development and other issues affecting Tenakee Inlet. Watch for posted notices of the hearing schedule

Fish Farms The province of British Columbia recently removed its moratorium on new fish farms. This could be bad news for Alaskan wild salmon stocks. Escaped farm salmon have already turned up in Southeast spawning streams, bringing with them the risk of disease and genetic contamination. Worse still, Alaska's farsighted ban on fish farming is being questioned. Short term profits or the long term health of Alaska's wild salmon stocks? Seems like a no-brainer, but at some point your calls and letters to state legislators may be essential. CCC will try to keep you informed.

News from SEACC A legal challenge to the blanket permitting of log dumps was successful in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. This means proposals for future permits will be subject to public review and comments.

Jeremy Anderson is SEACC's new executive director. Jeremy is familiar with Tenakee from his days as a grassroots organizer.

Raven Radio SEACC has again provided funds for CCC to sponsor programming on Raven Radio.

Tenakee Bird Count *by Beret Barnes*

The 102nd Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon Society took place in Tenakee on December 16, 2001. Eleven participants covered 12 miles of shoreline from dawn until dusk. 44 species of birds were counted, with a total of 1,484 individuals. These totals can be compared to the 2000 count numbers of 32 species and 1,816 individuals.

This year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count had over 50,000 volunteers taking part in 50 states, every Canadian province, parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies and many Pacific Islands.

Another local bird count, "The Great Backyard Bird Count," was conducted Feb. 15-18. While this is not an organized count in Tenakee, five folks took part and counted 27 species, which put us in 4th place in the state for the number of species sighted.

Over the past three years the Audubon Society has been converting from paper forms to entering all count information in their database via the Internet. Count results from 1900 to present are available to anyone at www.audubon.org or at www.birdsource.org (a collaborative project of the Audubon and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology).

Some would say that we look a bit odd out with our notebooks and binoculars, but the Christmas Bird Count has evolved into a powerful and important tool. Accumulated count data has become increasingly important as a way of monitoring the status of early winter bird populations as well as the overall health of the environment.

Excerpts from

DC

by Deena Wisenbaugh

I went to Washington DC this September to learn to lobby and I was going to lobby for the Alaska Rain Forest Conservation Act. I was there when the travesties on the eleventh went down.

I guess I should start from the beginning. This summer my dad and I went to Joan and Jed's for dinner. I left for a while and when I returned my dad was saying "Oh, I don't know. It sounds like too much excitement for me."

Being the curious person I am, I demanded to know what they were talking about. Joanie gave me a sheet of paper that was basically a pep talk for something called Alaska Wilderness Week. I briefly read through it; it sounded cool. The more I thought about it the better it sounded. I needed to get out of Dodge anyway. I said I might be interested. When Jed heard that, he started in with the "You'd be perfect" spiel.

At that point I was really getting into the "save the world" mood. "Yeah, I'd love to go!" I said.

A few weeks later I made a few calls to SEACC, with the help of Joanie and Jed. Matthew, a guy at SEACC, told me where I had to apply. I went online and signed up. I was so pumped up! I had been slightly concerned about being too young to go, but Matthew didn't seem to think that would be a problem.

SEACC sent me the information and the maps I would need in DC, and I started packing. We were going to leave for Washington on the ninth. All I actually knew before going was that I was going

to change the world, at least my little chunk of the big blue Earth, and that this would be an experience I would remember forever.

(Deena traveled to Washington and enjoyed a day of sightseeing)... We walked down the way to an African-American street party. Elmer, who is part Hawaiian, was the only one of us who didn't stand out like a cow at an aquarium. I looked dayglo-pale next to all those beautiful brown-skinned people.

That night we had a dinner/cocktail party at the Wilderness Society's main office. Many of the people had come from places like Texas, Tennessee, and Washington state. Most of these folks had never even been to Alaska, but they were there to save what we live in. They didn't know us, but they cared deeply. I felt so happy to meet all those compassionate wonderful people.

The next day we had lobbying classes and took a tour of Capitol Hill to see where we would be visiting. I was ready. I knew if they would just let me at 'em I could show the Congress the errors of their ways.

Monday took forever to arrive! That morning I got dressed in the "respectable outfit" that I had borrowed from a friend. I love that outfit, it could make a gorilla look classy. Perfect! We walked up to Base Camp, the basement of a local church. We had our pep talks and tried to work out any nervous energy that might be radiating from us, not that we had ever been a calm collected group anyhow. We needed to be able to walk into those offices and try to show them

that we were full of passion and purpose. I found that if I got the "Please don't do this to me! This is my home we're talking about" look I came across quite well. Also being a non-paid volunteer and a student really helped drive it home.

That evening we had a wine and cheese reception at the Canadian Embassy. (I was too young for wine, but they gave me my soda in a fancy glass. Yea for me.) Their Embassy is beautiful. We watched a slide show about the Gwich'in Natives. The Gwich'in are a group of people who will be drastically and unpleasantly affected by the drilling in the Arctic National Wild Refuge.

Tuesday, September 11, 8:30 a.m. I was back at the Wilderness Society building with the rest of the Southeasters and a woman from the Chugach National Forest for a press conference. We were being interviewed with a camera and everything. We were to discuss the Alaska Rain Forest Conservation Act and why we were there to support it.

We got done around 9:15 a.m. The reporter went out to make a phone call. When he came back in he said, "I think your story has been upstaged. Two planes have just kamikazied in to the World Trade Center and the Pentagon is on fire."

The walk back to our hotel, that would have normally taken twenty minutes to half an hour, took us two hours. It was like a scene from a bad movie with people and cars everywhere, car bombs going off in the distance, sirens going off, and cops all over the place.

I called my dad as soon as I could. Poor guy. I woke him to me in hysterics. I was fine when I dialed the number, but when I heard him groggily answer "Hello?" I lost it. I couldn't take it. I

wanted to go home! No such luck for me. The planes weren't flying, the metro had been stopped, and the city was in a basic lockdown.

The next day my grandmother came and got me and took me to her house in northern Virginia, which was a godsend. It took me until the nineteenth just to get back to Juneau. The airport I flew into was closed "indefinitely".

I was so happy just to be in Alaska even if it was raining sideways and 40 degrees! We live in the most beautiful place in the whole world! I have never been so excited to see great green towering trees, or a dirt road leading no place that any one has ever heard of. It really made me appreciate why I had felt so strongly about it here.

Gardens Galore by Joan McBeen

Master gardener Ed Buyarski, owner of "Ed's Edible Landscape" in Juneau, visited Tenakee last fall. Ed showed slides of his recent trip to China to collect seeds of plants that will thrive in our climate. The Department of Agriculture approved the importation of all the plants and seeds he brought back. Ed distributed samples here, including primroses, Chinese iris, pink lupine, and blue columbine.

Ed also had slides of gardening throughout Southeast Alaska, and gave hints for improving productivity. He toured local gardens and delivered many helpful suggestions.

Tenakee Whale Tales *by Leba Shaw*

The whales of Tenakee Inlet seem to enjoy a crisp winter afternoon as much as we do on shore. Sometimes in the distance, and then close up, you can see them move and work together. As you bike along the path you may be able to outdistance them, and sometimes they outdistance you. At night you can hear the Tenakee whales make strange groaning noises. The dogs hear them and look with apprehension toward the Inlet. But after a while the strange sounds become familiar and reassuring. The whales are in the Inlet and sound as if they are doing well.

Tenakee Springers think of our Tenakee Inlet whales as special. Recently we learned that local whales are in fact special and perhaps even unique. It is not just anthropomorphism that makes us think that they are working together. They do work together in catching herring in their bubble nets. Each whale may be able to do several different tasks in making the bubble net.

One could presume that the ability to work in a group comes from the fact that the whale was born into a particular pod. They would work well together because they are related to each other and stay together over the years. However, researchers who have studied whales in Tenakee Inlet for several years now know through DNA testing that the whales are not related. So far they have not found one baby whale who returned to be a part of the bubble netting group. Our whales come back year after year, but they are not a family group. Their ability to bubble net far outstrips the bubble netting skills of pods whales in adjoining waters. Those other whales

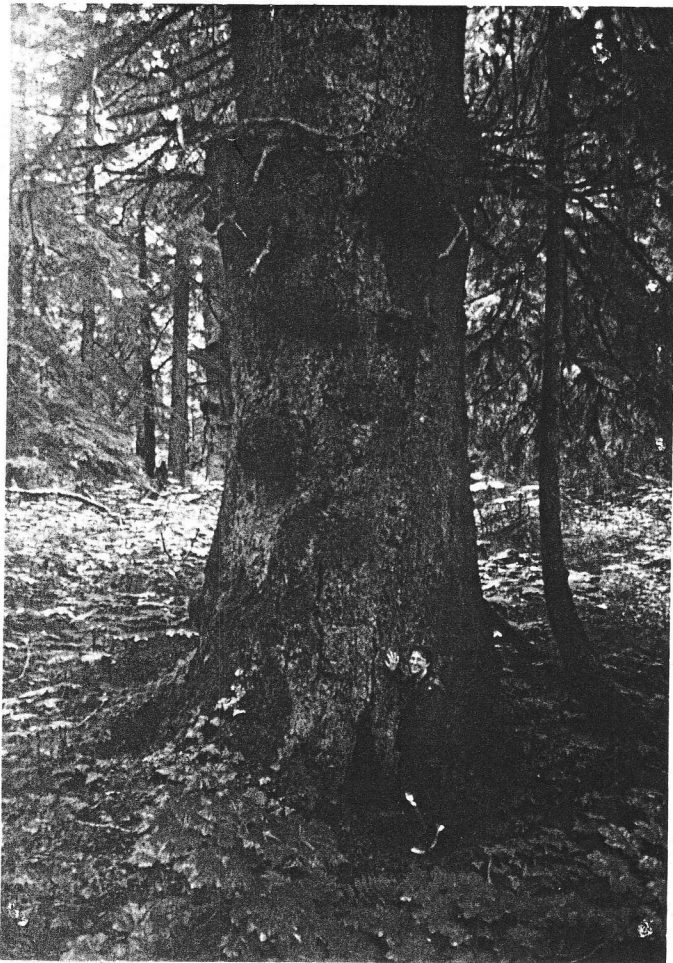
are usually solitary feeders preferring krill to herring.

The Tenakee Inlet whales may be lucky opportunists. They found a great source of food and succeeded in taking full advantage of their find. There probably are a lot of scientific theories about why they are the way they are, but the bottom line is that they do what they do with great skill and perseverance.

Many people who live on the shores of Tenakee Inlet are convinced that the number of whales in the Inlet decreased when herring was commercially harvested in the Inlet. After the bait herring fishery was closed for several years, the whales returned in continually increasing numbers. Tenakee Springers are concerned that with the resumption of the bait herring fishery Tenakee's whales may lose the resource they need to remain a viable and unique group.

So, as you race the whales along the trail or sit on the shore and watch the whale plumes in the distance, think about the importance of habitat in the existence of our whales. The flashing silver herring spawned just across the Inlet are essential to the whales, yet the USFS has proposed a bay where herring spawn as the site for a log dump and camp for the Finger Mountain timber sale. The bait herring fishery has returned to Tenakee Inlet where the success rate is better than in other waters.

Tenakee's whales may be large. They may be skilled working together to survive. However, it falls to people to make certain that the interests of the whales are represented in human decision-making on shore.



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A note from your secretary:

I want to thank everyone who contributed articles and helped produce this newsletter. I'd like to continue expanding the CCC newsletter in the direction of natural history notes, positive local efforts, and celebration of our extraordinary home. If you like this idea, please join in! Send your ideas, articles, essays, artwork, poetry or anything else to Box 621.

Sincerely, Molly Kemp

May the forest be with you.

It's that time again! Your support of the Chichagof Conservation Council has never been more important.

2002 CCC Membership

Name _____
Address _____
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Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Annual dues: \$5 individual or \$10 household

Would you like to receive membership information from SEACC (the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council)? yes _____ no _____