

Chichagof Conservation Council

Box 621

Tenakee Springs Alaska 99841

February 2012

What is the Chichagof Conservation Council ?

Until passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act in 1990, management of the Tongass National Forest was dictated by 50-year contracts that guaranteed profits to the two voracious pulp mills located in Sitka and Ketchikan. The Chichagof Conservation Council grew from the efforts of Tenakee residents to change the direction of Tongass management toward sustainable timber harvest with protection of critical fish and wildlife habitat. Persistent local voices called for permanent protection of **Trap Bay, Kadashan, and the fish-rich watersheds of Upper Tenakee Inlet.**

The House version of the Tongass Timber Reform Act included all of those areas, but the eventual compromise legislation dropped Upper Tenakee Inlet. CCC's primary goal remains finishing the job and gaining permanent protected status for **Seal Bay, Long Bay, Goose Flats, the head of Tenakee Inlet, and Saltery Bay.** All those watersheds are still intact, in large part because Tenakee has fought off every threat. Someday there'll be another opportunity to gain permanent protection for Upper Tenakee Inlet, and CCC will be ready.

In the meantime, the CCC network has resisted many other threats to Tenakee Inlet, ranging from proposed creation of a new Native corporation based in Tenakee, the State of Alaska's renewed push for a road connection to Hoonah, a legislative attempt to turn over land inside TKE city limits as a revenue source for the University of Alaska, and most recently Senator Lisa Murkowski's plan to finalize Sealaska corporate land claims with new selections in Tenakee Inlet.

Over the years CCC has sponsored numerous other projects ranging from replacing energy-hungry appliances to supplying poop-scoops for the Tenakee trail. Current projects are described within. CCC communications and alerts to members have made the inevitable transition to email, and this once-quarterly newsletter is now an unabashedly annual event.

Please consider joining the Chichagof Conservation Council. Your 2012 membership form is on the back page. CCC is a registered non-profit organization and all donations are fully tax-deductible.

Sealaska in Upper Tenakee Inlet– New Information

Senator Lisa Murkowski has chosen to support the Sealaska Corporation's effort to expand its land claims outside the original boundaries of the Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act. The current version of the bill would privatize 40 acres in the vicinity of the hot springs at the head of Tenakee Inlet, an area identified in the bill as "Pegmatite", with the claim that it could provide geothermal electricity for Hoonah, Pelican and Tenakee.

CCC, the City of Tenakee Springs, and many individuals have expressed strong opposition to this notion, citing among other reasons the potentially huge transmission costs, availability of more realistic hydroelectric generation, and the potentially devastating effects of road construction in the steep watershed at the head of Tenakee Inlet.

The Alaska Energy Authority recently released a study that validates Tenakee's opposition. AEA's analysis of the Pegmatite proposal states: "With an estimated project cost of \$27 million before roads and transmission lines and over \$200 million in costs for approximately 30 miles of roads in the area, this project would be in excess of \$30,000/kw for a 6 MW project" and concludes "In line with AEA's response, Black & Veatch (*the study authors*) are of the opinion that this project is uneconomical." *Continued on next page.*



An avalanche path extends to the stream bed at the head of Tenakee Inlet. Proposed road construction would cross this slope.

Monitoring Salmon Stream Water Temperatures

While the immediate threat of deforestation in Tenakee Inlet has diminished, long term residents of Tenakee Springs are increasingly concerned about the effects of climate change on forest and ocean ecosystems. We are particularly concerned about the health of salmon streams.

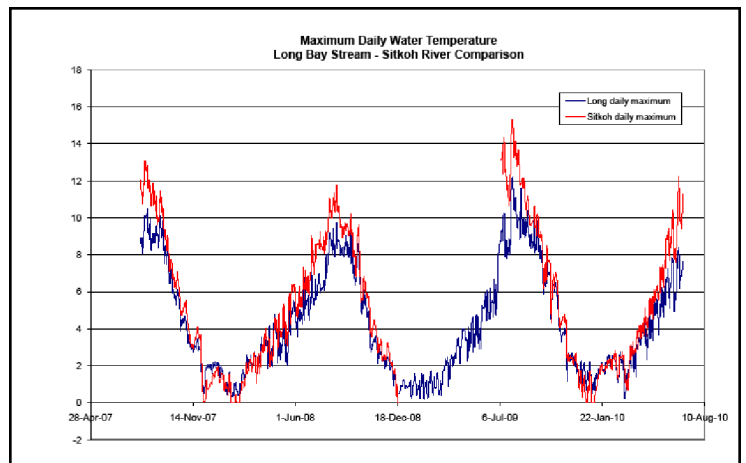
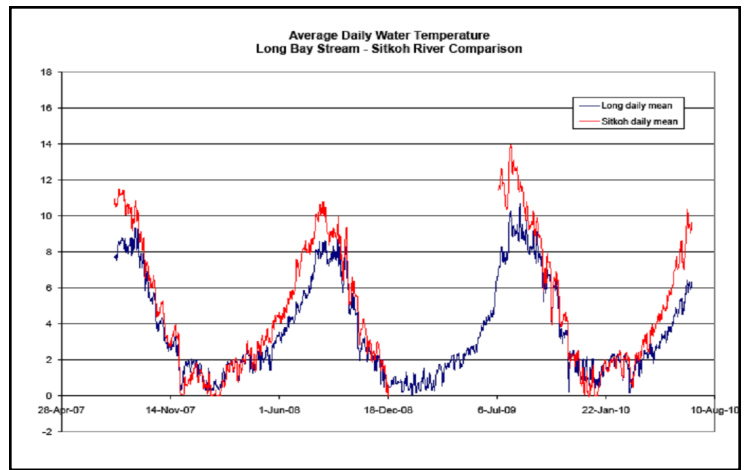
The possible impacts of global climate change may include warming of freshwater streams that provide critical salmon spawning and rearing habitat. Spawning salmon require adequate levels of well oxygenated water in order to successfully reproduce. Catastrophic die-offs may occur when returning spawners are packed into streams that are too low and too warm. Specific watersheds may have characteristics that offer resilience in periods of low precipitation and high temperatures.

CCC has monitored stream temperatures in 5 local salmon streams for the past 4 years. This effort has revealed that Upper Tenakee Inlet streams maintained lower water temperatures than the Sitkoh River during periods of hot dry weather. Although many factors may contribute to stream temperature variation, the most obvious characteristics of Upper Tenakee Inlet watersheds are their north-facing aspect and intact forest cover. These watersheds may offer a stronghold for salmon species threatened by climate change, and deserve the highest level of protection. While a few degrees seem insignificant at the low end of stream temperature range, as things heat up that buffer might make a huge difference. State water quality guidelines specify maximum water temperatures of 13 degrees C for spawning and egg incubation, 15 C for migration and rearing, with 20 C as the absolute upper limit.

CCC has made a long term commitment to this project, which requires ongoing volunteer contributions including labor, boats and fuel for transportation to remote streams, and technical expertise. CCC recently received grant funds to continue and expand this project, and hopes to work with University of Alaska staff to develop a more sophisticated study design and analysis. There is increasing interest in developing a regional program of stream temperature monitoring.

CCC is a registered 501c-3 non profit organization, and all contributions are tax-deductible.

John Wisenbaugh (President)
Joan McBeen (VP)
Molly Kemp (Sec/treasurer/communications)
Sam McBeen (Board)
Steve Lewis (Board)



Sealaska-Pegmatite cont.

You can see the full AEA report at this site:
http://www.akenergyauthority.org/SEIRP/12-23-2011_Vol2_SoutheastAlaskaIRP.pdfmk

Senator Murkowski's staff is aware of this report and its recommendations regarding the "Pegmatite" proposal, and that Hoonah's energy needs could be more than fulfilled by a local hydroelectric project with a price tag of \$10 million. It remains to be seen whether the next draft of her Sealaska bill will be modified to reflect that information.

If the "Pegmatite" selection is not removed from the Sealaska bill it will be up to us to remind Senator Murkowski and her colleagues that we are watching this boondoggle develop. We are also aware that the Inner Passage Electric Cooperative (IPEC) has already received \$590,000 to assess "Pegmatite", and that those state funds are being managed by Sealaska.

Following members' involvement in several marine mammal stranding events in Tenakee Inlet, CCC has joined the Alaska Stranding Network under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Working closely with the Tenakee Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD), CCC volunteers have already assisted with Steller sea lion, harbor porpoise, and humpback whale necropsies and disentanglements.

CCC cooperation with the TVFD during stranding events is mutually beneficial. NOAA reimbursement for rescue boat fuel use permits more TVFD training opportunities than would otherwise be possible, while use of TVFD equipment increases marine mammal response options.

Gordon Chew will attend the Stranding Network conference in Seward in late February.



Free at last! "Oliver" after disentanglement

photo by Fred Sharpe NOAA permit 716-1456

While membership in the Alaska Stranding Network does not change the restrictions and requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, having an ongoing relationship with the agency may streamline communication and enhance local response capabilities.

CCC has agreed to collect data on any reports of dead or distressed marine mammals. There is a 3-ring binder in the Fire hall with more information on the Stranding Network and marine mammal response.

Agency contact numbers if you see an entangled, dead or distressed marine mammal:

NOAA Fisheries National Hotline 1-877-925-7773
 NOAA Fisheries Juneau 1-907-586-7235
 US Coast Guard (whales only) 1-907-463-2000

Local network contacts:

Gordon Chew 736-9200 Mark/ Cynthia Meyer 736-2300
 Wendy Stern 736-2442 VHF "Journeyman"
 Rachel Myron/Steve Lewis 736-2405 VHF "TenakeeTwo"
 Nick Olmsted/ Molly Kemp 736-2305 VHF "Peggotty"
 Fred Sharpe R/V "Evolution"

Marine Debris Removal The City of Tenakee Springs has applied for a grant to clean up Tenakee Inlet shorelines and responsibly dispose of plastic and other garbage. The grant proposal identifies CCC as a source of volunteer labor, as a member of the Alaska Stranding Network, and as a conduit for education about preventing marine mammal entanglements. Grant awards will be announced in April.

Tenakee-Hoonah Road Connection Plans Shelved—for now

Efforts to replace ferry service with a road connection between Tenakee and Hoonah are filed under "issues that refuse to die".

Tenakee has consistently opposed this cockeyed idea since it was first proposed in the 1970's, and gained federal protection with language in the Tongass Timber Reform Act that specifically prohibited the USFS from seeking to build a road connection without approval of both Tenakee and Hoonah. In 2005 that sneaky Representative Don Young slipped language into a massive national transportation bill that gave the connection right-of-way to the State of Alaska. In 2007 the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) secured state funds to undertake construction planning for the road connection, and quickly found that Tenakee's opposition is still strong.

A recent DOTPF report states that the "project will not proceed beyond reconnaissance stage". This outcome is a direct result of immediate and forceful local opposition in the form of letters, phone calls, resolutions, and well-attended public meetings.

It is unfortunate that the \$164,000 of public funds that DOTPF spent surveying and planning the TKE-HNH road connection was not put to a better use. That is a point we will be sure to make the next time this zombie reappears.

Chichagof Conservation Council
2012 membership application/renewal

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

Phone_____ E-mail_____

Membership dues \$5 individual, \$10 household. Additional contributions are welcome!

CCC is a registered 501c non-profit organization and all contributions are fully deductible.

Would you like to be on CCC's e-mail list for *infrequent* announcements and alerts?

yes ____ no____