



Wrangell Institute For Science and Environment

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Enlightened Citizens Make WISE Decisions

2007 W.I.S.E. TALES

Watershed Leadership Program Rafts the Copper River

On August first ten high school students from the Copper River Basin were singing "Rowin' Down the River" as they completed a five day rafting trip from Chitina to the Million Dollar Bridge and Cordova.

In March students from the Copper River Basin wrote an essay on "The importance of the Copper River as a natural resource, its influence as a watershed, and how it affects the surrounding ecosystem" to apply for this program. Fourteen students applied for ten slots and a panel of four judges chose the winning essays from a list of criteria. Judges were Bruce Heaton from the American Legion, Linda Flint from Copper Valley Telephone, Mark Somerville from Alaska Dept. of Fish Game and WISE board member, and Dave Wellman, WISE vice president. The panel of judges received the essays after names had been excluded. Winning applicants were: Mary Carlson, Naomi Carlson, John Giraldo, Michael Helkenn, Mark Henspeter, Wade Jones, Samantha Knutson, Mary Marshall, Alex VanWhye, and Kimberly Woods. Instructors for the raft trip included Janelle Eklund, WISE president, Glenn Hart, WRST Education Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator, and Carla Schierholt who also was the official photographer.

Students said they were inspired and impressed by the magnitude and diversity of the river, along with the geologic forces, wildlife,

plants, the sheer beauty, and the infamous winds. The students spent two days getting their 'feet wet', so to speak, by participating in various presentations from experts with local agencies and organizations.

This part of the program included a tour of the Gulkana Hatchery at Paxson; acquiring information on fish species and importance of the watershed from Mark Somerville at Alaska Department of Fish and Game; a lesson on GIS/GPS by Josh Scott of WRST; a guided tour by Fred Williams of the Copper Valley Historical Society through the George I. Ashby Museum in Copper Center; a visit to the Ahtna Cultural Heritage site to learn about subsistence from Dorothy Shinn, Donald Johns, and Jack Sabon; a talk from Copper Country Alliance members Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames about their organization and current focus on the pipeline oil spill contingency plan; an overview of the geology of the watershed by Suzanne McCarthy, director and geology teacher at Prince William Sound Community College; and river safety by Trooper Simeon.



Watershed Leadership Students and Instructors

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Students help launch rafts on the Copper River

At the end of the river trip, in Cordova, Tori Baker from the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, gave students first hand knowledge about the Copper River Delta area and the coastal fisheries; students visited the Copper River Watershed Project office where Kristin Smith and Brenden Reilly gave an overview of their organization and projects, focusing on sustainable economic development.

Students kept a positive and fun attitude throughout the trip despite being 'silt blasted' at the Bremner sand dunes in the high winds that funnel through that area. Copper River silt was imbedded in every pore and orifice of the face, not to mention clothes and gear. It was so thick visibility wiped out any view of the mountains or nearby terrain. But as one student said, 'it's all part of the experience'.

Observations and notes were taken by each of the students and compiled into essays, as well as a power point slide show. These are shared with the public and sponsors and published in the Copper River Record.

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment made this program possible through a grant from the National Park Foundation, American Legion donation, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) in-kind donations, Alaska River Expeditions discounted rates, a small stipend from each of the students, and membership donations. WISE thanks all the sponsors, presenters, and volunteers that made this program possible.

Earth Discovery Day and Changing Season

This was the fifth anniversary for these programs. One hundred and thirty two students attended Earth Discovery Day 2007. This year students learned about recycling, planetarium, aging fish, birds, the living earth, map and compass, rock crystals, tree identification, Leave No Trace, and the watershed enviroscape. Earth Discovery Day is scheduled for **Thursday, May 1, 2008.**



Joe Hart from BLM teaches Map and Compass at Earth Discovery Day

Seventy nine students attended Changing Seasons September, 2007. Students learned about trees and plants, fall gathering, animals, and honed their observation skills. WISE thanks all the presenters from agencies and organizations that make these programs possible, along with our sponsors, ConocoPhillips, Studebaker Environmental Education Fund, and Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve.



Vicki Penwell from WRST teaches students about squirrel caches at Changing Seasons

2007 W.I.S.E. PROGRAMS

Nabesna Day Camp

WISE board members Janelle Eklund, Dave Wellman and Paul Boos helped out at the July Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve Nabesna Day Camp. The theme of the camp was "Whatever the Weather, We're in it Together". Janelle taught pre-school through second grade students about the water cycle; Dave Wellman, taught third through sixth grade students about clouds; and Paul Boos taught jr. and sr. high students about wind. Rain the night before settled down the dust, partly cooperating with the theme of the day.



Janelle Eklund teaches students about the water cycle at Nabesna Day Camp

WISE Completes Business Plan

The Foraker Group business plan training helped WISE to complete a business plan for the organization. Thanks to Mike Walsh for his expertise in helping us develop a quality plan that will be instrumental in getting WISE on the road to sustainability. Board members Dave Wellman, Carla Schierholt, Paul Boos, Gay Wellman and Janelle Eklund worked on putting the plan together. Dave Wellman put a lot of thought and time into editing, gleening skills he learned through the Prince William Sound Community College Tourism Class.

February Fundraiser Draws a Crowd

A baking contest and auction drew many adults as well as children to the WISE February fund raiser. Other festivities at the fundraiser included a silent auction, a presentation of a live rough legged hawk and hawk owl by the Bird Treatment and Learning Center, an eagle demonstration by Copper Center 5th and 6th grade class, and music from local musicians. The fundraiser netted close to \$800.

Paula Lawlors Copper Center 5th & 6th grade class demonstrates parts of an eagle at February fundraiser



WISE Receives Grant from Rasmuson Foundation

In September, WISE received a grant from Rasmuson Foundation to purchase a 15 passenger vehicle for its programs. This means WISE will be gearing up for the summer 2008 Natural History Tour. This program provides a comprehensive introduction to the natural history of the Copper River country. Participants will enjoy a short walk through a wild landscape and a visit to a camp area with a wall tent and fire circle. Work is being done to advertise in the Copper River Princess Lodge brochure, as well as other venues. A notice will be posted to hire two naturalists to conduct this program, and a program coordinator to oversee the programs. Naturalists must be familiar with the Copper Basin region, it's flora, fauna, ecology, geology, cultural and natural history. This fee based program will help to fund WISE youth programs. WISE is very appreciative to the Rasmuson Foundation for its role in helping WISE to become self sustaining.

You Can Make a Difference

The Natural History program is critical to sustain and grow WISE youth programs. Goals are to hire staff, grow a youth summer science camp, and develop infrastructure for a learning center. The goal is to raise \$40,000 by April 2008 for start-up of the natural history program. Please make this happen by donating anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000 or more. Help nurture good stewards for mother earth.



A WISE Thanks To Our Generous Donors

Wise is making a positive impact on citizens of the Copper Basin thanks to contributions from you. This revenue helps fund programs and works towards developing others.

MEMBERS

Geoff Bleakley, Bob & Nancy Boos, Barbara Cellarius, Dana Bruden, Copper River Record, John Creed & Susan Andrews, Eric Downey and Cathy Hart, Cliff Eames and Ruth McHenry, Janelle Eklund and Paul Boos, Lil & Terry Gilmore, Marnie Graham and Doug Vollman, Lynn & Craig Grams, Kay Hackney & Fred Decicco, Jen Jolliffe, Karin Kozi and Bill Route, Paula & Bruce Kaye, Wendy & Ronal Langseth, Louise & Gordon Marshall, Chuck Maas, Suzanne McCarthy, Bonnie McLeod, Ramone McCoy, Marcia and Henry Milette, Bev Oatman, Smitty Parratt, Kim Roeske, Barbara Rudio, Carla Schierholt, Roger & Marilyn Schnittjer, Tim & Dorothy Sine, Dr. Daniel Solie, Vicki Snitzler & Marshall Neeck, Mike Swisher, Marci Thurston & Ben Shaine, Barb & Will Tipton, Dave & Gay Wellman, Deborah Williams, Fred Williams, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

GRANTS

Alaska Conservation Foundation; American Legion; Conoco Phillips; National Parks Foundation; Rasmuson Foundation; Studebaker Environmental Education Fund; Wells Fargo Bank; Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve Challenge Cost Share.

IN-KIND HELP

Ahtna Heritage Foundation; Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game; Alaska Dept. of Forestry; Alaska River Expeditions; Alaska State Troopers; Kate Alexander; Bird Treatment and Learning Center; Bureau of Land Management; Cooperative Extension Service; Copper Country Alliance; Copper River School District; Copper River Watershed Project; Copper Valley Historical Society; For the Love of Gardening, Matt Lorenz; Suanne Hart; Ramona Henspeter; Gateway School District; Gulkana Hatchery; Kenny Lake Soil and Water Conservation; Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium; National Parks Conservation Association; Prince William Sound Community College; Resource Conservation & Development; SAPA; Bev Oatman; Sandy Williams; University of Alaska HAARP Education Outreach; Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve; and numerous volunteers from throughout the Copper Basin.

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