

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment

2014 Annual Report



2014 was a year rich in opportunities for Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment. As well as tried and true annual programs, we worked with our partners on several exciting new adventures, including the “Chosen Frozen” Winter Camp led by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park education staff, and “Salmon Blitz” research and citizen science project with Copper River Watershed Project. We reached out to new partners and community members, expanding our funding opportunities, professional networks, and the reach of our programs.

Programs

In-Class Science Program continued to bring fun hands-on learning to classes and homeschool groups in the Copper River Valley and Valdez. We presented 8 lessons reaching approximately 150 students.

WISE Annual Meeting February 8th had the theme of “Celebrating our Youth.” Special guests included youth from the Copper River Stewardship Program, WILD10 Conference, and Willow Creek Research Interns.

Family Ice Fishing Day at Silver Lake on April 5th drew a crowd of well over 100 people, and saw dozens of rainbow trout measuring up to 24” being pulled up through the ice. There was a tent with underwater camera and sonar, ice bowling, build your own ice fishing pole, and hot lunch for all.

Camp Chosen Frozen in early April at Meiers Lake was a great success, with 30 junior high students skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and sleeping over in Arctic Oven tents.

Science Lecture Series included eight events, with a total audience of 150.

- Dall Sheep Ecology with Gretchen Roffler, January 31st
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill 25th Anniversary with Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council, March 21st
- Owls from Alaska WildBird Rehabilitation, and UAF Planetarium, May 6th
- Amphibians and Reptiles of Alaska, Joshua Ream, May 10th
- Glaciers and Climate Change with Michael Loso, June 2nd
- Invasive Weeds with Gino Graziano, June 13th
- History of Scientific Research on Mt. Wrangell, Dr. Carl Benson and Dr. Dan Solie, August 8th
- Tangle Lakes Archaeology with John Jangala, November 14th

Earth Discovery Day on May 6th brought 98 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Visitors Center. As well as tried and true stations, we added a hydrology lesson and field sketching.



Youth Environmental Summit (YES) in late May gave us a chance to help partner Native Village of Gakona. For the theme “Masters of Disaster,” we gave a workshop on edible plants.

Willow Creek Research Project employed three student interns this summer, and had a very productive season of hydrological research.

Copper Country Discovery Tour had a successful season. We purchased a new-to-us Dodge Sprinter van with a grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, and took 248 guests on our tour of the valley and Wellwood Nature Preserve.

WISE/BLM Hikes included an outdoor art project at Copper Center School trail, birdwatching at Kenny Lake, a hike to the top of Willow Mountain, and an excursion to Tolsona Mud Volcanoes. Total attendance was 69 youth and adults.

Mountain Science for Youth at Wrangell Mountains Center hosted us on June 18th for an afternoon of aquatic science, including setting minnow traps and dredging for macroinvertebrates.

Project Healing Waters June 27-30 at Tangle Lakes hosted injured veterans for a weekend of fly fishing and connecting with the wilderness. WISE provides logistical support for this partner program.



Copper River Stewardship Program June 30-July 7th included rafting the Tazlina River, a canoe excursion on the Copper River Delta, and lessons on capturing the experience with photo, video, and interviews. 10 High School students from the Copper River Valley and Cordova participated.

Invasive Weed Smackdown had a second successful year with help from all the partners in the Copper River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area. 42 volunteers pulled over a ton of White Sweet Clover.

Aquatic Ecology Camp July 15-17 was three full days of exploration and learning, including canoeing, sampling for macroinvertebrates, trapping juvenile fish, fly tying, fishing, and camping skills.

National Public Lands Day was at Tangle Lakes this year, and WISE helped organize and feed a large crew of volunteers as they cleaned up garbage along the Denali Highway. Afterwards we enjoyed throwing atlats, Dutch oven cookery, and an archaeology hike.

Kenny Lake Fair August 16th was a chance to share an art project with kids, sell notecards, and introduce community members to WISE programs.

Wednesday Farmers Market in Glennallen invited us to bring microscopes and explore nature with young community members on August 20th.

Salmon Blitz, a research and citizen science project led by Copper River Watershed Project, kicked off with a float trip on the Copper for training and stream surveys in August, and 3 class field trips in September.



Community Science Night at Prince William Sound Community College September 12th was a fun chance to set up the StreamTable and learn by playing with eager young hydrologists.

Upstream Learning Homeschool joined WISE and partners for an outdoor afternoon in September, learning about plants, birdwatching, and observation skills.

Changing Seasons was September 22nd to 24th. We travelled to Slana, Glennallen, and Kenny Lake Schools, presenting stations on Animal Adaptation, Fish, Weather, and Web of Life to 2nd and 3rd grade students.

Other Events and Projects

- VISTA Volunteer Matt Morse finished his year of service in April. He completed a myriad of capacity building projects including new websites and developing a donor database.
- Lyda Rossi, our new VISTA volunteer, arrived in late April, and is continuing with fundraising and capacity building projects.
- We held a fundraising raffle in the fall, with fun outdoor prizes donated by supporting businesses.
- We provided regular articles on programs and local plant lore to the Copper River Record.
- Janelle Eklund taught a 3-day tour guide training course at Prince William Sound Community College.
- We continued to take care of our “Adopt a Highway,” Mile 104-105 of the Richardson Highway.
- WISE continued to market watercolor notecards by Beryl Wardlaw, and the book “Wellwood Flowers” by Cara Wardlaw-Bailey.
- We attended the Copper Valley Trade Fair and the Kenny Lake Christmas Bazaar with merchandise and information on WISE programs.
- Robin and Lyda attended a storytelling workshop presented by the Foraker Group in October, learning skills for telling and gathering stories to help connect people to our mission.



New Programs

This spring we helped plan and implement an exciting new program, the brainchild of Glenn Hart, education specialist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. “Camp Chosen Frozen” took Junior High students up into the mountains for three days of outdoor recreation, survival, and science programming. The trip was a success, and we are planning to expand to include homeschool students, and a group from a statewide intensive high school program.

We also joined partner Copper River Watershed Project in a 3-year Citizen Science project, “Salmon Blitz,” which aims to add local waters to the State of Alaska Anadromous Waters Catalog. Robin went on a training trip on the Copper River, which resulted in some great discoveries of juvenile king salmon in previously undocumented waters. We also assisted with 3 field trips and did a survey of Willow Creek in conjunction with the Willow Creek Research Project.

This fall we added several new classes to the offerings for the In-Class Science program, and have had enthusiastic response from teachers. We are helping with the Salmon in the Classroom program at our schools, and developing salmon curriculum to use throughout many programs including Aquatic Camp and Copper River Stewardship Program.



Capacity Building

With the aid of our awesome VISTA volunteers, we continued to make great strides towards the



goal of sustainability of WISE income and programs. In the spring we received a Tier 1 Grant from the Rasmuson Foundation for a van for the tour program, and purchased a lightly used Dodge Sprinter Van. Its reliability, comfort, and efficiency were a great improvement for the tour program. We also made connections with several independent small tour operators, and have already booked three special group tours for summer 2015. Bookings from the Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge continue to be too sparse to support full-time staff, so we are happy to be developing other

customer bases for the tour.

This summer, a generous unrestricted donation enabled us to add to our capital reserve fund, and pay tuition for staff training. Robin will attend an 80-hour Wilderness First Responder Class at an outdoor center in Washington state this winter, improving our risk management capacity.

This fall, we had a collaborative meeting with two other area nonprofits which share challenges in marketing fee-based programs, Wrangell Mountains Center and Wellwood Conservancy. WISE took the lead in writing a grant to get professional help in marketing planning for all three organizations, and we hope to be able to have a cooperative marketing workshop to develop and begin to implement a strategic marketing plan. We will hear if we received the grant by the end of December.

We are hoping to hire a program assistant for the summer to assist in developing curriculum and staffing programs. Summer programs place multiple demands on the executive director, and technically the VISTA is not allowed to do direct service, so this added position would positively impact our program capacity.

Coming up in 2015

It is our hope that 2015 will see WISE maturing in many of our long-term goals, including cementing partnerships with a variety of community groups, developing a balanced mix of sustainable and earned revenue, and continuing to build our organizational capacity to serve. We are hoping to dedicate significant staff time to curriculum development, assembling resources to teach a wide variety of subjects to a range of ages.

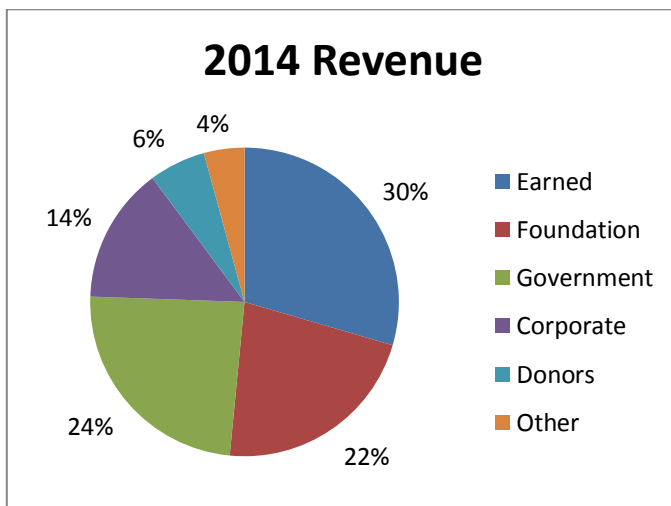
It is our vision to bring quality programs to many more youth and adults in the region, achieving our goals of providing a sense of place, developing interconnections, and instilling stewardship values. WISE is grateful for the community support we receive, and the opportunity to serve and share.



Funders

- US Bureau of Land Management**
"Take it Outside" Cooperative Agreement
- Rasmuson Foundation**
Tier 1 Grant for Tour Van
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve**
Cooperative Agreement
- Alaska Conservation Foundation**
Studebaker Family Environmental Education Fund
- Kenny Lake Soil and Water Conservation District**
Willow Creek Research Internships
- Alyeska Pipeline Service Company**
Lecture Series Sponsor
- Copper Valley Electric Association Community Foundation**
In-Class Science Program
- Copper Valley Telecom**
In-Class Science Program
- Captain Planet Foundation**
Grant for program technology
- State of Alaska Community Revenue Sharing Program**
- Prince William Sound Community College**
- BP Fabric of America Fund**
- Fejes Guide Service Ltd.**
- Copper Valley IGA**
- Great Harvest Bread Company**
- Moose's Tooth Pub and Pizzeria**
- Princess Cruises**
- Stan Stephens Cruises**
- Tenkara USA**
- Glennallen Rustic Resort B&B**
- Copper Basin Sanitation**

And charitable donations from **90 generous individuals!**



Income

Earned Income	
Tour Sales	27,594
Program Fees	1,965
Rent	5,575
Merchandise	640
Foundation Grants	26,661
Government Grants	29,106
Corporate Grants	17,300
Membership & Donors	7,174
Contracts	2,092
Fundraising Events	1,850
Misc. Income	1,207
Total	\$121,164

Expenses

Payroll & Taxes	55,048
Utilities	6,984
Travel and Lodging	1,395
Program Equip & Supply	5,925
Insurance	4,048
Professional Fees	2,280
Volunteer Costs	878
Vehicle Purchase	24,995
Vehicle fuel & maintenance	4,472
Staff Training	1,930
Ads, Printing, Postage	2,263
Tour Facility Rental	1,080
Office Equip & Supply	433
Memberships	618
Fund Raising	1,170
Misc Expenses	1,011
Total	\$114,530

**Bruce James Memorial
Scholarship Fund \$1400**

Volunteer Hours --estimated

Programs	300 hours
Office	80 hours
Board of Directors	360 hours
In-kind	280 hours

Program Attendance

estimated 1300 people

Nonprofit Partners

Alaska Travel Industry Association
Alaska WildBird Rehabilitation
Ahtna Heritage Foundation
Copper Valley Development Association
Copper River Watershed Project
Copper Country Alliance
Copper Valley Community Library
The Foraker Group
Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce
Kenny Lake Community League
Kenny Lake Public Library
Prince William Sound Science Center
Project Healing Waters
Valdez Convention and Visitors Bureau
Wrangell Mountains Center
Willow Creek Water Consortium
Wellwood Conservancy

Education Partners

Copper River School District
Prince William Sound Community College
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Valdez City Schools
Campbell Creek Science Center

Government and Tribal Partners

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Americorps VISTA
Cooperative Extension Service
Kenny Lake Soil and Water Conservation District
Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium
Native Village of Gakona
Native Village of Gulkana
Native Village of Kluti-Kaah
US Bureau of Land Management
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

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Prepared December 18, 2014



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