

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE) had a very dynamic year in 2016, with exciting new programs and increased participation in established events. With a larger seasonal staff, we were able to do critical curriculum development work and community outreach. We also completed our 3-year Americorps VISTA capacity building project.

The WISE board of directors drafted and approved a new 5-year strategic plan in the early spring of 2016, with one of the biggest changes being an added emphasis on mentorship. The most tangible result of this was the recruitment of a summer intern. We also created opportunities for peer mentoring in summer programs, and developed plans for introducing a leadership trip for teens, and a job-shadowing position.

This year WISE welcomed new partners, and enjoyed working with some of our established partners on new programs. We made our traditional blueberry picking trip to Tangle Lakes an overnight, and worked with staff from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to lead the students in geocaching, games, and art projects as well as berry picking. WISE was also excited to offer a Geology Backpacking trip in cooperation with Wrangell Mountains Center. Youth and adults from the Copper Basin and McCarthy camped together and explored the Root Glacier while learning about Geology.

## Programs

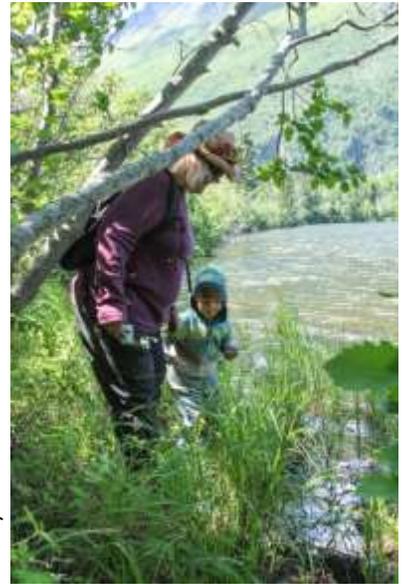
**In-Class Science:** It was a record-breaking year, with 20 total classes presented for In-Class Science in the Copper River School District and Valdez. This year our special topic was hydrology, so we set up the Streamtable in gyms, classrooms, and parking lots throughout the district. We also added "The Incredible Journey," a participatory water cycle lesson, and shared our skins and skulls collection with students from Kindergarten through High School.

**Alaska Forum on the Environment:** This February event in Anchorage is a great chance to meet with partners and get inspired for the new year. Robin attended with three Copper River Stewardship Alumni. The youth presented an overview of Copper River Stewardship Program, and Robin gave a well-attended talk on working with partners to make Environmental Education happen in rural Alaska.

Aquatic Ecology Camp



WISE/BLM Summer Hike



In-Class Science— Hydrology



Salmon Dissection



## Camp Chosen Frozen

This annual winter camping trip for middle school students is led by Wrangell-St Elias National Park Educational staff. We set up camp at BLM's Paxson Lake Campground, and shared lessons including trapping, ice fishing, fire building, and fur sewing. Wet snow and windy conditions made for plenty of challenges this year, but the 44 youth who participated made the best of every moment. WISE's participation was supported by a Youth Development and Culture grant from RuralCAP with funding from the Alaska Department of Juvenile Justice.

Camp Chosen Frozen



## Family Ice Fishing Day

Our favorite rite of spring was also plagued by warm weather. A few days before the event in early April, a chinook blew through and there was slush on the ice at Silver Lake. Happily, it stabilized by the big day, and over 100 people came out to fish, enjoy the spring sunshine, and roast hot dogs over a fire. Many beautiful Rainbow Trout were caught. A great group of volunteers from Bureau of Land Management come out every year to make this program a success.

Family Ice Fishing Day



## Earth Discovery Day

On the second Tuesday in May, 80+ students and over 20 presenters from our partner agencies gathered at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve for a day of outdoor education. The 4th, 5th, and 6th graders participated in 12 lessons including navigating by compass, birding by ear, and finding our place in space. Our stellar partners always go above and beyond the call of duty to make this an amazing day, and we appreciate them!

Earth Discovery Day



## Project Healing Waters

WISE once again supported this program, now in its 6th year. We provide meals and logistical support for the team of volunteers, and hosted a picnic for all the participants. It is a treat to share the wilderness with the amazing veterans and dedicated volunteers. This year we had 10 participants from Alaska and the lower 48, plus a record number of volunteers.

## WISE/BLM Take It Outside Hikes

We had record attendance at hikes this summer with 88 different individuals coming out, and a total of over 250 hiker miles logged. Seven hikes were held, including some exciting new destinations like the Skookum Volcano Trail on the Nabesna Road. Seasonal staff did an excellent job of including an educational focus for each hike, ensured safety, and practiced good stewardship of the land. We were delighted to have a group from the Native Village of Gulkana join us for almost every hike. Several older adult hikers joined us regularly as well, a delightful new trend.

Willow Mountain Hike



## Science Lecture Series

WISE hosted five lectures, with total attendance of over 200. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company was the lecture series sponsor for the 4th year, making it possible to provide our speakers with meals, lodging, and travel reimbursement. Lectures included Raptor Rehabilitation, Stone Tools, and Microfauna, and were attended by a diverse array of locals and visitors.

## Copper River Stewardship Program

It was a big year for CRSP, with 13 students instead of the usual 10 participating in an adventure that included a raft trip from Chitina to the Copper River Delta. The students engaged in a wide variety of learning and service activities including plant transects, salmon surveys, maintenance of Dusky Canada Goose nest islands, and a hike to the top of Willow Mountain. Their final projects included slideshows, newspaper articles, and a memorable comic strip about the life cycle of salmon. We had a funding agreement with Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council that enabled us to develop educational displays about the trip.

## Geology Backpacking Trip

New in 2016, we teamed up with partner Wrangell Mountains Center for an epic journey up to the Root Glacier above Kennicott. It was also an opportunity for youth from the Copper River Basin to get to know their peers in McCarthy. We backpacked in and set up camp on a glacial moraine, then strapped on crampons for an amazing exploration of the Root Glacier led by Wrangell-St. Elias Geologist Mike Loso and Jared Steyaert of Kennicott Wilderness Guides. Aon the final morning, a lively quiz game the final morning summed up the learning with many laughs.

## Aquatic Ecology Camp

This long-running and popular camp was held in early August at Silver Lake with ten youth attending. Several young summer interns from BLM joined the WISE staff, resulting in an experience that was rich in learning, and lots of fun. A camp highlight was a canoe and rowboat journey across Silver Lake, then a hike to Van Lake. We were also delighted to have several older students step up as youth leaders and assist with lessons and camp logistics.

## Blueberry Picking Expedition

For many years, a trip up to the Tangle Lakes area has been an August tradition. This year, we teamed up with new partner Alaska Department of Natural Resources to make it an overnight trip. As well as abundant berries, we enjoyed geocaching, art projects, and first aid lessons.

UAF Planetarium at Science Lecture



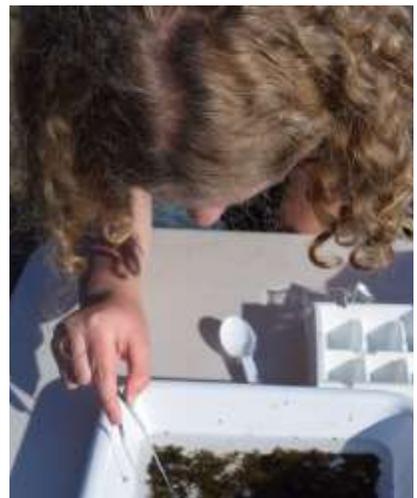
Copper River Stewardship Program final project by Alexis Hutchinson



Geology Backpacking Trip



Aquatic Ecology Camp



## Salmon Blitz

This 2016 was the final year for this citizen science project organized by our partner Copper River Watershed Project. We did several youth field trips and surveys of 10 streams. As a result, five new streams will be nominated for inclusion in the State of Alaska Anadromous Waters catalog. Best of all, we now have the equipment and knowledge to incorporate juvenile habitat surveys into our educational programs.

## Willow Creek Research Project

Our summer intern and one other research assistant worked with the Willow Creek Water Consortium on this ongoing project, continuing to monitor the Willow Creek watershed and local wells in an effort to understand the dynamics of our local hydrology systems.

## HAARP Open House

The High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program facility in Gakona is now under the management of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute, and WISE was pleased to help usher in the new era. We helped host an evening lecture on atmospheric science attended by over 100 people at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Visitors Center auditorium, and the next day assisted with an Open House at the HAARP facility that brought in over 350 visitors. We are looking forward to more cooperative events in the coming years.

## Changing Seasons

We presented this annual school program for 2nd and 3rd graders at Kenny Lake and Glennallen Schools in September. Slana School does not have a student enrolled in this age group, so we missed our annual trip to the north end of the valley. WISE staff built a fully functional Time Machine, and started the program with a skit featuring the crazy Professor Vertumnus, who is trying to experience all four seasons in the Copper Basin in one day. The students then participated in lessons and activities including Web of Life, Salmon Ecology, Wildlife Adaptations, and the Rainshadow Effect.

## Copper Country Discovery Tour

Our revenue-producing tour program had its best year ever, with over 350 guests. We are infinitely grateful for Wellwood Conservancy for providing the location for the tour. The trails and camp at Wellwood Nature Preserve are perfect for our guests to explore and learn about Boreal ecology. We switched tour guides mid-season, but managed to pull it off smoothly. Princess Tours has been a great corporate partner for many years, helping book their guests and providing logistical support of the tour.

Salmon Blitz



Willow Creek Research Project



HAARP Open House



Changing Seasons



Copper Country Discovery Tour



## Capacity Building

WISE finished 2016 with our bank accounts very healthy, and all organizational systems in good shape. We hosted our final VISTA volunteer, Jamie Dawson, who did an amazing job of raising funds, organizing marketing efforts, and doing community and donor outreach. One of the most tangible products of Jamie's efforts is the new WISE website ([www.wise-edu.org](http://www.wise-edu.org)) which she built on an easily editable online platform. Our VISTAs have also given us a vibrant presence on social media, established a very useful donor database, reached out to new donors and new partners, set up an internship program, pioneered a marketing plan, and a myriad of other projects.

As well as a healthy mix of grants, donations, and earned income, WISE sold a piece of property which was donated in 2015. This gave a healthy boost to our unrestricted income, allowing WISE to grow our Capital Reserve Fund. This cushion is essential for future expenses such as office repair, vehicle replacement, and technology needs.

In the spring of 2016 we experienced several computer problems which resulted in lost time, lost data, and plenty of stress. In December we received a \$10,000 grant from the Rasmuson Foundation to purchase and install a whole new system that will include a dedicated server, three workstations, improved battery backup, and laptops and tablets to go on adventures with us. Making the switch in January 2017 will be a most welcome way to ring in the new year!

WISE created a new staff position in the fall of 2016 for a part-time development director. Jolene Nashlund, who also served as our summer tour guide, accepted the position and has been working hard at fundraising.

## Coming up in 2017

In the new Year we look forward to continuing our tried and true programs, and working on a handful of new projects. Challenges include keeping up with the momentum with fewer full-time staff, and dealing with an uncertain future for some of our funding sources.

We have been working with the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RuralCAP) to develop a plan for hosting another Americorps volunteer, either a VISTA or State and National Service member. Ideally, we hope to have a new volunteer serving with WISE by late summer 2017.

In 2016 summer staff worked on developing an outdoor leadership program called Teens LEAD, and we hope to hold the first program this summer. Held early in the season, this backcountry trip would nurture teens in their leadership and wilderness skills, and hopefully help develop a base of youth willing to help on other WISE programs.

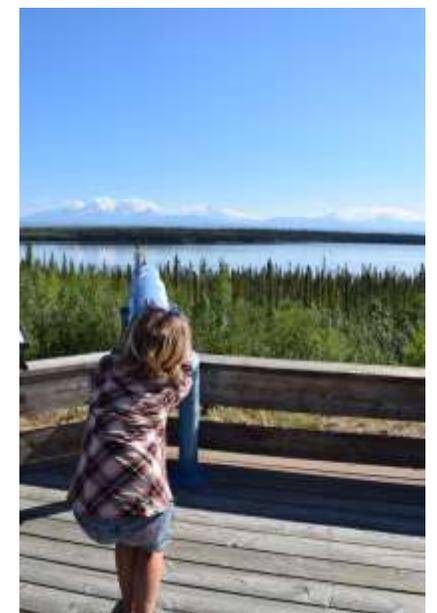
WISE Staff at the top of Willow Mtn.



Tolsona Mud Volcano Hike



WISE/BLM Summer Hike

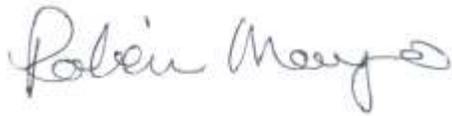


WISE has been working with BLM staff and Anchorage-based Alaska Fly Fishers on a new youth camp to teach ecology, stewardship, and outdoor skills in the context of fly fishing. We hope to piggyback on some of the logistics already in place for Project Healing Waters to offer this program at Tangle Lakes or another nearby location.

We will also continue our focus on reaching underserved youth in the Copper Basin with all our programs. In 2016 we had great results working directly with village employees tasked with youth development, welcoming them on our hikes and providing special programming upon request. The Bruce James Memorial Scholarship Fund has a healthy balance, and we will continue to use it to assist families in sending their youth on programs like the Copper River Stewardship Program and Aquatic Ecology Camp.

WISE is grateful for our wonderful partners who make all of this possible, and to the individuals who donate their time, treasure and talent to make WISEs mission come to life.

Respectfully Submitted,



Robin Mayo, Executive Director



## **2016 Funders**

### **US Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Field Office**

Youth Initiatives Agreement

### **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve**

Cooperative Agreement

### **Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council**

Youth Involvement Partnership

### **Rasmuson Foundation**

Tier II Technology Grant

### **RuralCAP**

Youth Development and Culture Grant

### **Alaska Conservation Foundation**

Studebaker Family Environment Education Fund

### **Copper Valley Electric Association Community Foundation**

In-Class Science Grant

### **Copper Valley Telecom**

In-Class Science Grant

### **Alaska Community Foundation**

Capacity Building Grant

### **Copper River Watershed Project**

Salmon Blitz partnership contract

### **Alyeska Pipeline Service Company**

Lecture Series Funding

### **National Parks Foundation**

Every Kid in a Park Grant

### **Copper Basin Lions Club**

In-Class Science Funding

### **Alaska Forum on the Environment**

Travel Funding

### **Amazon Smile**

### **Fred Meyer Community Rewards**

### **Copper Country Discovery Tour**

Earned Income

### **And 70+ Individual and Family Donors**

## **In-Kind Donors**

### **Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI)**

### **Copper Valley IGA**

### **Glennallen Rustic Resort B & B**

### **Beryl Wardlaw and Victor Bailey**

### **Copper Country Alliance**

## 2016 WISE Financials

### Income

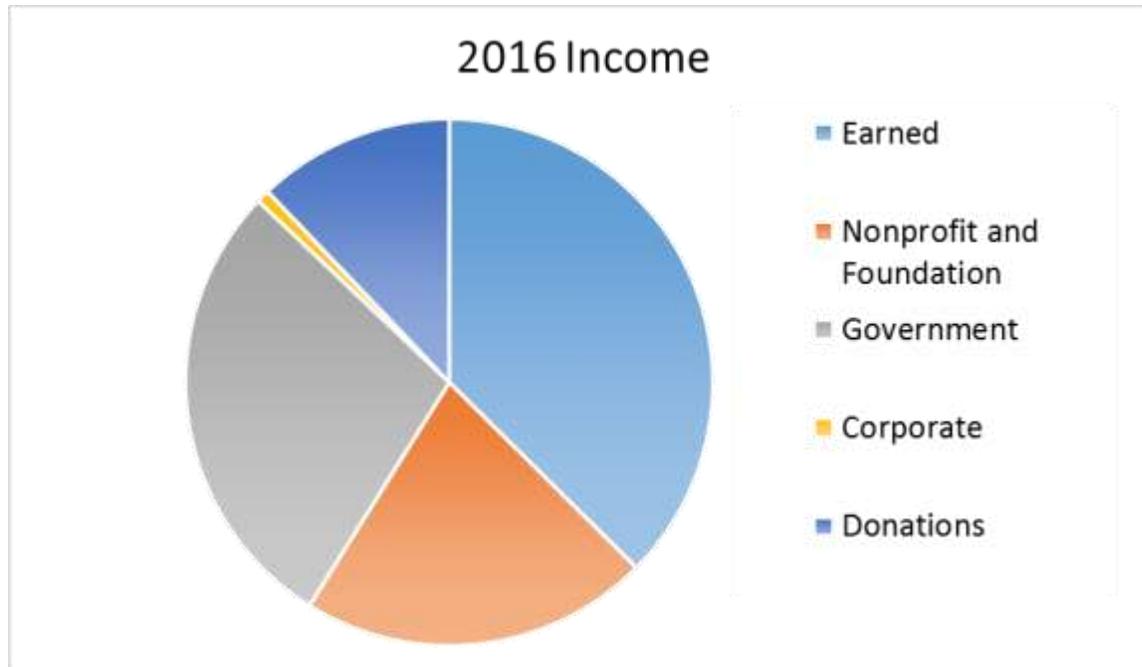
Earned Income	
Tour Sales	\$32,493
Program Fees	5,481
Rent	6,175
Merchandise	1,223
Contractual	3,682
Nonprofit & Foundation	28,137
Government	36,937
Corporate	1,064
Membership & Donors	7,988
Sale of donated land	7,850
Misc. Income	986
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$132,016</b>

### Expenses

Payroll & Taxes	\$58,663
Utilities	6,063
Travel and Lodging	5,765
Program Equip & Supply	10,422
Office Equip & Supply	1,082
Insurance	4,535
Professional Fees	3,245
Stipends and Honorariums	7,167
Vehicle Fuel and Maintenance	3699
Staff Training	598
Ads, Printing, Postage	2,649
Facility Rental	1,966
Facility Repair and Upkeep	2,853
Pass Through Funds	860
Memberships, Licenses, etc	385
Fund Raising	317
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$110,269</b>

### **Bruce James Memorial**

<b>Scholarship Fund</b>	<b>\$2,111</b>
<b>WISE Reserve Fund</b>	<b>\$17,728</b>



**Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment**

HC 60 Box 338A

Copper Center, AK 99573

[www.wise-edu.org](http://www.wise-edu.org) [contact@wise-edu.org](mailto:contact@wise-edu.org)

(907) 822-3575