

WISE 2017 Annual Report

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE) enjoyed a year full of adventures and learning in 2017. Our focus for Copper River Stewardship Program was humanities, with lots of inspiration on capturing our wilderness impressions through writing and art. Those ideas, especially haiku writing, flowed out into other programs. Youth and adults alike tapped out syllables, played with words, and shared their creations for the enjoyment of all.



Aquatic Ecology Camp



WISE/BLM Summer Hike



In-Class Science



Alaska Forum on the Environment



Family Ice Fishing Day

In-Class Science

The highlight of our In-Class Science program this year was a full day of bird-related learning at Slana School, with presenters from Bird Treatment and Learning Center. The students learned about migration and the physics of feathers, and got an up-close look at live education birds. We also presented hour-long lessons on a wide variety of topics in classrooms throughout the Copper River Valley and Valdez.

Alaska Forum on the Environment

Three Copper River Stewardship Program students attended AFE in February. The students led a lesson on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill for a group of youth, then assisted with a presentation on the education track about using art in Environmental Education. This annual conference is a great way for youth to spread their wings and join the larger community of environmental activists in Alaska. Our trip was assisted by a funding agreement from Prince William Sound Citizens Advisory Council.

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Camp Chosen Frozen

Camp Chosen Frozen in early April was our last program with Glenn Hart, Education Specialist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. We trapped and skinned beavers, and everyone tried a taste of the rich meat. Cross Country Skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and building of quinzees (snow caves) were some of our other activities. Junior High Classes from several schools came out to spend 2 nights at Paxson Lake and learn winter survival skills.



Camp Chosen Frozen

Family Ice Fishing Day

Ice Fishing Day is a delightful chance to catch up with friends and neighbors, enjoy a day outdoors, catch some fish, and sometimes even get a spring sunburn. Over 100 people came out this year, and we enjoyed good fishing and great company. Hotdogs and s'mores roasted over a fire in a barrel on the ice made the day perfect.



Kenny Lake Birdwatching

Earth Discovery Day

We started the day with drumming and a song led by an Ahtna elder, and students spontaneously came up front to join her. Definitely a goosebump moment! We welcomed several new partners with cool new stations to make this outdoor day for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders complete. A highlight was riding a stationary bike hooked to a generator, and lighting up bulbs with kid energy! Key partners for Earth Discovery Day are Wrangell-St. Elias National Park who provides the venue, and BLM Glennallen Field Office, who provides experts for many of the learning stations.

Kenny Lake Birdwatching

We teamed up with partner Copper Country Alliance for a morning in May when migratory wildfowl were resting on Kenny Lake. Young participants enjoyed looking through spotting scopes, and watching the antics of the diving and preening ducks. Everyone went home with a laminated mini field guide to local birds to encourage them to continue birdwatching.



Wild Plants Workshop

Youth Environmental Summit (YES)

This annual event is organized by our awesome partner Native Village of Gakona, and brings together youth from all over the Copper Basin. The three day event was held at Kenny Lake School this year. Our summer staff had just arrived, and led nature hikes, demonstrated the stream table, and assisted with a macroinvertebrate study of Willow Creek.

Wild Plants Workshop

We welcomed author Janice Schofield for a weekend of identifying, gathering, processing, and sampling wild plants. We spent the mornings on field trips, and the afternoons at Kenny Lake Community Hall, where our harvest was transformed into everything from lasagna to lotion. Twenty participants travelled from as far as Fairbanks for this unique chance to learn from a master herbalist. We are planning to offer this workshop again in 2019.



Tolsona Mud Volcanoes Hike

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WISE/BLM Take It Outside Hikes

We had record attendance this year, with 125 individuals joining us on at least one of our 7 hikes, logging a total of over 400 miles! Some hikes were easy jaunts in the woods for little ones, followed by art projects. Others, like our trek up Willow Mountain, were all day adventures that tested our stamina. A highlight was a trip to Tangle Lakes Archaeological District with BLM Archaeologist John Jangala, who opened our eyes to the evidence of ancient hunters right at our feet.

Project Healing Waters

WISE provided logistical support for this annual program which brings wounded veterans to Tangle Lakes for a weekend of fly fishing in late June. As well as spectacular fishing for Arctic Grayling, we enjoyed the fellowship of meals and campfire time with volunteers from BLM, Alaska Fly Fishers, and Project Healing Waters. WISE was excited to share T-Shirts custom designed for the event.

Copper River Stewardship Program

Ten students from the Copper River Basin and Cordova took the journey of a lifetime through the watershed, including canoeing on the Copper River Delta, ferry rides through Prince William Sound, and a low-water trip on the Gulkana River that had us dragging stuck rafts off of rocks. Our guest educator was Alex VanWyhe, who was a student on the Watershed Leadership Program, a precursor to CRSP, 10 years ago. He led the students in writing projects and a lively poetry slam on the final day. This program was once again supported by our funding partner Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council.

Aquatic Ecology Camp

Ten students took to the water at Silver Lake in July for this perennially popular camp. We tied flies, made underwater viewers, tried to start fires with friction, and dredged for macroinvertebrates. It was a treat to be joined by several BLM interns for this and other summer programs, they always are a huge help, and enjoyable company. It was also great to have two youth from McCarthy.

Geology Backpacking Trip

For our second year of this program, we spent four days in the McCarthy area with partner Wrangell Mountains Center, exploring the history and geology of the region. Park Service Geologist Mike Loso joined us for a crampon hike on the Root Glacier, and entertained us all with his famous Snickers Bar demonstration of glacier movement. Self-supported backpacking and sleeping out beside the glacier make this a challenging and memorable adventure for all.

Kenny Lake Library Book Camp

WISE staff helped out at Kenny Lake Public Library Book Camp, with the appropriate theme of "Build a Better World." We were able to explore the woods near the library as well as explore the world of books and reading. Especially for younger students, keeping up their reading skills over the summer is essential for a smooth transition back to school.



Copper River Stewardship Program



Project Healing Waters



Aquatic Ecology Camp



Geology Backpacking Trip



Kenny Lake Library Book Camp

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Kenny Lake Fair

For the second year, WISE had a booth at the Kenny Lake Fair, with food and lemonade to keep fairgoers fed and hydrated, and a slide show with fun pictures from our year of activities. This is a fun way to make a little money, and keep in touch with our community.

Willow Creek Research Project

WISE staff assisted with the Willow Creek Research Project, which is establishing a long term study of the dynamics of a local watershed. Our summer program specialist and intern joined research assistant Kyle Engle and project lead Dave Wellman for research outings to three gauging stations. As well as gathering valuable data, a local youth gets to try out a cool job.

Copper Country Discovery Tour

We partner with the Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge to offer this 4-hour naturalist led tour. Guests learn about the ecology, history, and lifestyles of the area from a local guide as they explore Wellwood Nature Preserve. We are lucky to have two outstanding local guides, Jolene Nashlund and Judith Lorenz. This summer over 350 guests took the tour, a new record. This program generates much needed unrestricted revenue for WISE.

Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour

We introduced this new revenue-producing tour in 2016, and were excited to see it become more firmly established this summer. Guests hike near the Princess Lodge while learning to capture their memories through sketching and sound mapping, then create a watercolor of an Aspen forest using a unique and creative no-brush technique.

Watershed Education Days

We assisted our partner Copper River Watershed Project with two education days in August. We spent a day on Mentasta Lake canoeing and wading among spawning salmon, then canoed down the Slana River. Kids love getting into the water, and learned memorable lessons about salmon habitat, and the value of healthy lands and waters.

Valdez Middle School Field Trip

In September, we helped host 50 Valdez 6th Grade Students on a field trip. We hiked two groups to the Tolsona Mud Volcanoes, where they investigated this unique geologic formation. And of course, you can't go on a mud volcano hike without getting good and muddy!

Changing Seasons

We were joined by many great partners for this seasonal school program for 2nd and 3rd graders at Kenny Lake and Glennallen Schools. Americorps Volunteer Mikaela Dalton wrote a new skit and tuned up the Time Machine to the delight of the students.



Copper Country Discovery Tour



Copper Country Discovery Tour



Watershed Education Days



Valdez Middle School Field Trip



Changing Seasons

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Organizational News

It was a somewhat challenging year for finances. A bright spot was a banner year for the Copper Country Discovery Tour, and the steady growth of the Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour. We also receive unrestricted income from our merchandise sales and from tenants in our house/office. With federal funding uncertain for the future, we are grateful for these sources of income to keep us solvent through the changes.

We welcomed stellar staff for the summer. Jolene Nashlund worked part time on development through the winter, and returned as our Naturalist Tour Guide. Judith Lorenz also completed tour guide training, and they provided informative tours with lots of local color to our guests. Tim Daly joined us for the summer as Program Specialist, and Tommy Matia was our Stewardship and Environmental Education Intern. The teamwork and great attitudes of the summer staff were a joy.

We worked through the spring and summer on a cooperative agreement with statewide nonprofit RurALCAP to join their Resilient Alaskan Youth program, which enabled us to hire an Americorps State and National Volunteer to assist in all aspects of WISE operations. Mikaela Dalton graduated from University of Vermont with a degree in Global Studies in May, and arrived at WISE in August to begin her year of service. WISE has already benefitted greatly from her years of experience in outdoor education, from youth camps to college.

Looking Ahead

For several years we have been working with local landowners and the Greatland Trust to preserve a large piece of land at Lower Tonsina. The 40 acre tract includes a beaver complex, salmon spawning stream, and forest land. The landowners will give it to WISE when they pass, and are protecting it with a conservation easement which will limit activities on the property. Long term plans are to develop interpretive trails, and possibly an outdoor classroom or camp facility at the site.

We have also been working closely with Copper River School District and Copper River Native Association to develop a new program, Outdoor & Wilderness Leadership Skills (OWLS.) Teenagers will have the chance to learn skills and put them into practice as they assist with WISE programs and plan their own final expedition. We are excited to be empowering the next generation of leaders in a strong first step towards a career in the outdoors.

The Board of Directors approved a new strategic plan in 2016, and we are working hard towards the goals we identified. Better serving Native and underserved youth, a new program for teenagers, and the second successful year of our college internship program are well underway. We continue to explore ways to provide more experiences to preschoolers, and better serve the outlying communities in our region.

WISE is deeply grateful to our partners, funders, members and volunteers for their support. We were founded 15 years ago as a bridgebuilding organization, and are humbled by the many community members who have rallied around that idea.

Respectfully Submitted,



Executive Director



WISE Staff at Project Healing Waters



Copper River Stewardship Program



WISE/BLM Summer Hike



Valdez Middle School Field Trip

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2017 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 I Technology 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

Alyeska Pipeline Service Company

Lecture Series Funding

Copper Basin Lions Club

In-Class Science Funding

Alaska Forum on the Environment

Travel Funding

Amazon Smile

Fred Meyer Community Rewards

And 80+ Individual and Family Donors

Earned Income from:

Copper Country Discovery Tour

Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour

Wild Plants Workshop

Program Fees

In-Kind Donors

Copper Valley IGA

Beryl Wardlaw and Victor Bailey

Copper Country Alliance

Tom Butler

Jim and Shirley Hannah



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Education Partners

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



Arctic Lupine
Lupinus arcticus



Staff from WISE, Campfire Alaska, RurAL CAP, BLM, and National Park Service team up for a skit at Changing Seasons

Government and Tribal Partners

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Alaska 4-H
Copper River Native Association
Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium
Native Village of Gakona
Native Village of Gulkana
Native Village of Kluti-Kaah
US Bureau of Land Management
US Forest Service Cordova Ranger District
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

Nonprofit Partners

Alaska WildBird Rehabilitation
Ahtna Heritage Foundation
Bird Treatment and Learning Center
Copper River Watershed Project
Copper Country Alliance
The Foraker Group
Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce
Kenny Lake Public Library
Prince William Sound Science Center
Project Healing Waters Alaska
RurAL CAP
Wrangell Mountains Center
Willow Creek Water Consortium
Wellwood Conservancy

Partner Focus:



RURAL ALASKA COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.

RurAL CAP is a statewide nonprofit focused on improving the quality of life for low-income Alaskans. We participate in their Resilient Alaska Youth Americorps Project, which enables WISE to have a year-round staff member dedicated to youth programs. RuralCAP provides recruitment, administrative support, and training for our Americorps member. We have greatly benefitted from the wisdom of their statewide network of Americorps members, leaders, and organizations. We also enjoy when RuralCAP staff comes out for a site visit. At our Changing Seasons program, Program Coordinator Charlie Ess dressed up as a snowman and hammed it up in the opening skit.

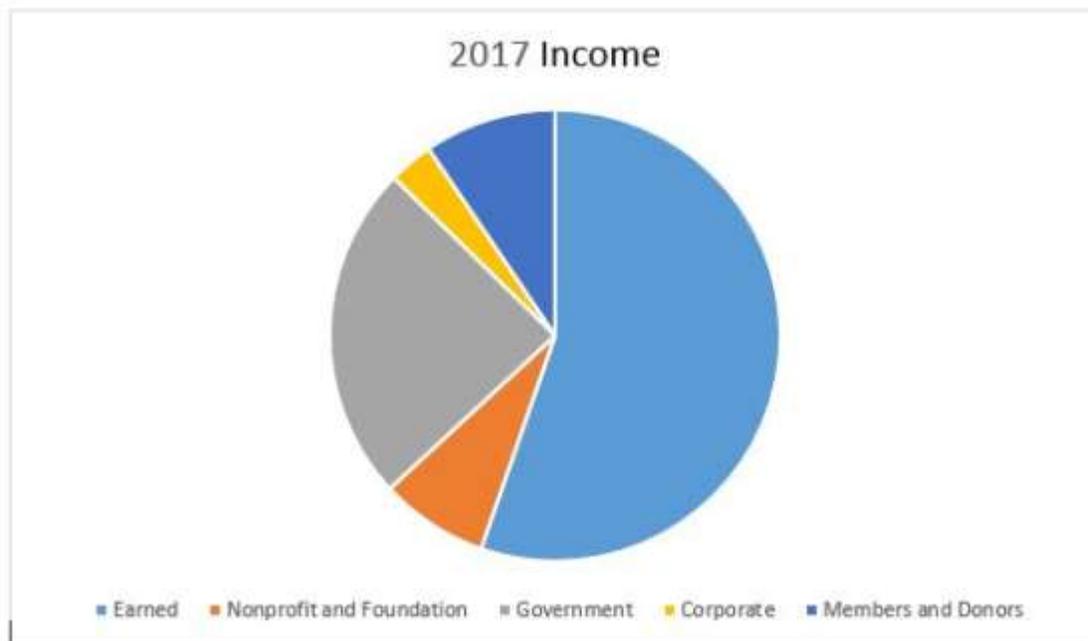
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2017 Income

Earned Income	
Tour Sales	\$35,982
Program Fees	\$6,342
Rent	\$8,180
Merchandise	\$1,429
Contracts and Agreements	\$427
Nonprofit and Foundation	\$7,512
Government	\$23,327
Corporate	\$3,082
Membership and Donors	\$9,194
Misc. Income	\$438
Total	\$95,913

2017 Expenses

Payroll incl. Taxes and Insurance	\$75,714
Supplies	\$7,943
Insurance (except workers comp)	\$3,334
Travel	\$1,951
Professional fees, Stipends, Honorariums	\$10,675
Accounting	\$1,739
Vehicle Fuel and Maintenance	\$2,687
Staff Training	\$756
Advertising, Printing, and Postage	\$2,138
Facility Rental	\$2,556
House/Office Repair and Upkeep	\$2,000
Utilities	\$7,789
Dues, Subscriptions, and Licenses	\$714
Total	\$119,696



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