

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE) had a challenging but rewarding year in 2018. With changes in our funding and partnerships, we were forced to think outside the box, and learn new ways of structuring our programs to help them continue. With the help of stellar staff, partners, and community, we enjoyed a full year of programming, including old favorites and some new ideas.



WISE/BLM Summer Hikes



Lindsey Gordon's final project captures the diverse adventures of the 2018 Copper River Stewardship Program.



WISE/BLM Summer Hikes



In-Class Science

## In-Class Science

Our theme for In-Class Science this year was winter, so we designed a suite of new lessons that explored ecology, habitat, and survival in winter. As well as Copper Basin Schools, we spent several days in Valdez visiting classrooms at Hermon Hutchins Elementary. At Slana School, we spent a full day exploring including a snowshoe expedition in some incredibly deep powder. We finished the day by cranking homemade ice cream.

## Alaska Forum on the Environment

Two Copper River Stewardship Program students from the Copper Basin attended AFE in February, joining a group of peers from Cordova. They presented a 75 minute presentation on the Youth Track, which was attended by about 50 people. Our theme was teaching stewardship using humanities, and the students shared some of the many lessons that we use on CRSP, including journaling, art, and poetry. As a grand finale, we challenged the audience to a poetry slam, and were amazed and delighted with the results. More than ever before, the students took the lead in planning and presenting the session, and it was the best one we've ever done.



Alaska Forum on the Environment

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

## Science Lecture Series

Our lecture series included Ice Caves, Dall Sheep, Wildfire, Traditional Ahtna plant use, and Lampreys. Prince William Sound College stepped up to a much more active partner role, providing a venue and help with all aspects of planning. Attendance is up, we are now averaging about 30 people in the audience for lectures. The quality of the speakers has been outstanding, as we are working with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park to connect with visiting researchers.



Lecture Series

## Camp Chosen Frozen

New Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Education Specialist Russel Scribner hit the ground running, with an awesome job of organizing the 5th Annual Camp Chosen Frozen in early April. We camped at Sourdough Campground, and enjoyed a wide range of activities including skiing, snowshoeing, and ice fishing. WISE developed a new lesson about the evolution of snowshoes, then challenged students to design and build survival snowshoes out of natural materials. We also took the lead in organizing food.



Camp Chosen Frozen

## Family Ice Fishing Day

The McCarthy Road was quite a mess after a heavy snow year, but nearly 100 people braved the drive to Silver Lake for our annual Ice Fishing extravaganza. The crew from BLM put in extra prep time, including plowing, to make sure everything went smoothly. This program is a great way for beginners to try out ice fishing without investing in equipment.



Family Ice Fishing Day

## Earth Discovery Day

This annual May event is a veritable who's who in the Copper Valley, with people from more than a dozen agencies and organizations pitching in to make it a success. 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students from all area schools, as well as homeschoolers, converge on Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Visitor Center for a day filled with a wide variety of outdoor learning experiences. We started the day with a welcome and Ahtna song provided by Ahtna Heritage Foundation.



Project Healing Waters

## Project Healing Waters Tangle Lakes

WISE partners with BLM and Project Healing Waters Alaska for this annual event which brings wounded veterans for spectacular Arctic Greyling fishing on the Delta River. We help organize food for the volunteers, and several events for the entire group. This is a wonderful chance to give back to those who have given so much for our country, and share the healing power of the wilderness.



Liberty Falls Trail Hike

## WISE/BLM Summer Hikes

We hosted 8 hikes this summer, exploring some old favorites and new ground. The Tolsona Mud Volcanoes have been so popular in recent years that we did two hikes in one day this year, and a total of 65 hikers came out to play in the mud. We instituted a \$5 fee for hikes this year, raising some needed revenue for WISE, and raising awareness of the costs of our operations. WISE donors hiked for free, and we gained several new families as donors as a result.

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

## Copper River Stewardship Program

Copper River Stewardship Program is always a life-changing event for the ten students who participate, and this year was no exception. We explored the theme of movement as we travelled through the watershed by a myriad of means, including raft, foot, sailboat, canoe, and van. The students were an extraordinarily amiable lot, and quickly formed a warm community of friendship and support. We are grateful to funding partner Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council for helping make this adventure happen.

## Aquatic Ecology Camp

Eight students spent 3 learning-packed days at Silver Lake, making the most of our time. Dave Wellman came out to talk about beavers, and that evening we were delighted when a beaver swam right up to camp, and came out on the bank to eat and groom himself. Another highlight was canoeing safety with Americorps Volunteer Mikaela Dalton, who taught us how to recover a swamped canoe out on the water.

## Geology Camp

For our third 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. Lingering snow in the high country kept us from our original goal of exploring Bonanza Mine, so we backpacked to a spot near the toe of the Root Glacier, and learned from retired Park Service Geologist Danny Rosenkrans. With the help of funding from Murie Science and Learning Center, we were able to put together a unified curriculum for this program and Aquatic Ecology Camp. A flat tire and a swim in Silver Lake on the way home made for a perfect end to the week of adventure and learning.

## Kenny Lake Library Book Camp

WISE staff helped out at Kenny Lake Public Library Book Camp, with the theme of “Libraries Rock.” The theme was open to interpretation, so Intern Matt Roman taught kids to dance the Salsa, while Americorps Service Member Mikaela Dalton baked a batch of her famous geologic strata cupcakes for a core sampling activity.

## Outdoor Wilderness Leadership Skills (OWLS)

This was the first year for our new credit-earning program for teens, and we had a small but enthusiastic and talented cohort. Americorps Volunteer Mikaela did an awesome job of developing a curriculum and leading the program. At the beginning of the summer we hiked to a public use cabin in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, and spent four days learning a wide variety of outdoor and leadership skills. Throughout the summer, the students assisted with WISE programs and job shadowed with outdoor professionals. In August, they planned their own final expedition, a canoe trek in the Tangle Lakes. We are thankful for the many WISE donors who contributed to a crowdfunding campaign to get this program rolling, and to Copper River School District for their enthusiastic support.



Copper River Stewardship Program



Aquatic Ecology Camp



Geology Camp



OWLS

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

## Willow Creek Research Project

WISE staff and intern assisted with this long-running Citizen Science Research Project investigating the dynamics of a local watershed. It is a chance to contribute to the local knowledge, and also experience scientific field work.

## Copper Country Discovery Tour

### Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour

These two revenue producing tours are a keystone of WISE's finances, contributing about 40% of our annual income. Most of our guests come from the Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge, and we are excited to give them a chance to experience the real Alaska. Two local guides have returned for several years to lead the tours, giving wonderful stability and contributing to steady growth. For the Copper Country Discovery Tour, we are grateful for our partnership with Wellwood Conservancy, allowing us to use their nature preserve and camp facilities. As well as providing income, the tours help advance our mission of providing science and environmental education, and sharing the natural wonders of the Copper River Valley.



Willow Creek Research Project

## National Public Lands Day

We were excited to help revive this important event with a work day at Paxson Lake Campground in late July. Community members and a Student Conservation Association crew spent the morning working on a variety of service projects at the campground and boat launch. WISE provided a cookout lunch, then helped with recreational and educational activities in the afternoon.



National Public Lands Day

## Wings Over the Wrangells

This August community program hosted by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park celebrates the wonderful diversity of bird life in our region. WISE manned the owl pellet station, and enjoyed a day of discovery with young naturalists.



Wings over the Wrangells

## Valdez Middle School Field Trip

For the second year, we helped Valdez 6th grade students learn about the Copper Valley. 50 students explored the park visitor center, and hiked with us to the Tolsona Mud Volcanoes in two groups.

## HAARP Open House

Since taking over management of the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program Research Facility (HAARP) in 2015, University of Alaska Geophysical Institute has been on a mission to educate the public about this misunderstood Gakona landmark. WISE took a group of hikers to HAARP this summer, and helped with their annual Open House in August.

## 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. Rolling out the Time Machine has become a tradition for Changing Seasons, and the kids love it. Learning stations included Salmon Habitat, Animal Adaptation, Weather, and Web of Life.



Valdez Middle School Field Trip

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

## Winter Fun Day

We held our second annual Winter Fun Day on December 27th. The federal shutdown prevented us from holding the event at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Visitor Center as planned, but partner Prince William Sound College made their Glennallen campus available. Outdoor activities included snowshoeing, skiing, snowgo troubleshooting, and CSI (Critter Scene Investigation,) and indoor activities included craft projects and viewing Ahtna artifacts from the Anchorage Museum and Ahtna Heritage Foundation.

## Organizational News

### Nic'anilen na'

In October we stepped into a new era at WISE, accepting the donation of a 40 acre piece of land at Lower Tonsina. We named the place Nic' anilen na' after researching Ahtna Place names. It means "current flows out from shore creek," and was used to describe the location. The property includes spruce and cottonwood forests, beaver ponds, and a spring-fed creek, and provides rich habitat for fish and wildlife.

The property is protected by a conservation easement held by GreatLand Trust, and is currently being used by the donors as part of a lifetime tenancy agreement. The conservation easement ensures that the wild character will be kept forever. WISE has begun the process of developing a management plan which will include facilities such as trails, interpretive signs, pavilions, and outhouses to allow for program on site. The conservation easement allows for a small portion of the land to be developed, and our dream is to have a camp facility.

### Looking Ahead

We are currently in the planning stages for two new programs in 2019. Working with longtime partners Copper River Watershed Project and Wrangell Mountains Center, we hope to convene a Symposium for Copper Basin science and traditional knowledge next winter. This would give scientists and native leaders a chance to share their knowledge with the hope of creating better cooperation and coordination.

On a lighter note, we also plan to roll out "Pop-Up Natural Playgrounds" at schools and community events in 2019. Stocked with creative natural materials, the events will give kids of all ages a chance for unstructured, freeform natural play, which has been proven to be essential for social, physical, and intellectual health.

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,



Robin Mayo, Executive Director



Winter Fun Day



Nic' anilen na'



Nic'anilen na'



Copper River Stewardship Program

# **2018 Annual Report**

## Education Partners

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



*Don't walk behind me,  
I may not lead.  
Don't walk in front of me;  
I may not follow.  
Just walk beside me*

## Government and Tribal Partners

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
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



*There are no bad days if you have good gear!*

## Nonprofit Partners

Alaska Humanities Forum  
Alaska WildBird Rehabilitation  
Ahtna Heritage Foundation  
Copper River Watershed Project  
Copper Country Alliance  
The Foraker Group  
Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce  
GreatLand Trust  
Kenny Lake Community League  
Kenny Lake Public Library  
Prince William Sound Science Center  
Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council  
Project Healing Waters Alaska  
RurAL CAP  
Wrangell Mountains Center  
Willow Creek Water Consortium  
Wellwood Conservancy



*Hiking near the toe of Root Glacier at  
Geology Camp*

**Photo Credits:** Janelle Eklund, Paul Boos,  
Mikaela Dalton, Matthew Roman, Robben  
Taylor, BLM, Jeremy Gallman, BLM, Lauren  
Bien, PWSSC. **Thank You!**

# WISE 2018 Annual Report

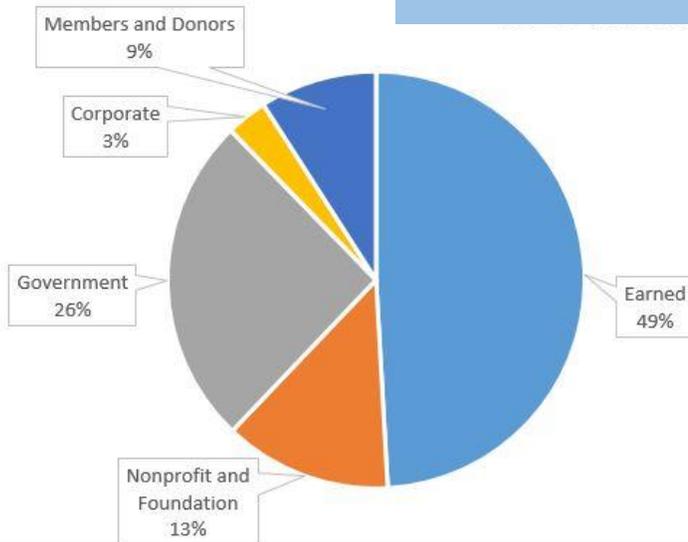
## INCOME

Earned Income	
Tour Sales	\$39,991
Program Fees	\$3,347
Rent	\$4,390
Merchandise	\$1,137
Nonprofit and Foundation	\$12,940
Government	\$25,500
Corporate	\$3,163
Membership and Donors	\$9,045
Misc. Income	\$1,735
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$101,248</b>
<b>Balance in Bruce James Memorial Scholarship Fund</b>	<b>\$1,486</b>
<b>Balance in WISE Reserve Fund</b>	<b>\$15,738</b>

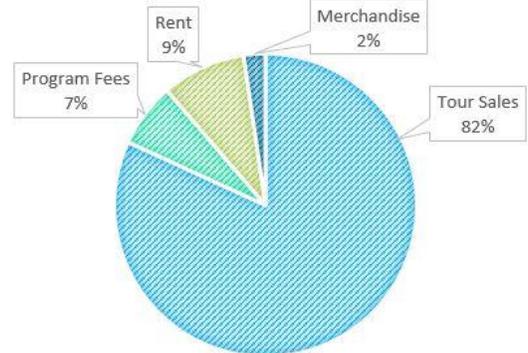
## EXPENSES

Payroll incl. Taxes and Insurance	\$55,573
Supplies	\$5,120
Insurance (except workers comp)	\$4,260
Travel	\$5,571
Stipends, Honorariums	\$13,450
Professional Fees	\$950
Vehicle Fuel and Maintenance	\$4,514
Staff Training	\$865
Advertising, Printing, and Postage	\$1,307
Facility Rental	\$2,342
House/Office Repair and Upkeep	\$1,597
Utilities	\$7,384
Dues, Subscriptions, and Licenses	\$529
Pass through funds to partner nonprofits	\$900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$104,362</b>

### 2018 WISE INCOME



### EARNED INCOME



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 (907) 822-3575

# **2018 Annual Report**

## **2018 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

**Alaska Conservation Foundation**

Studebaker Family Environmental Education Fund

**Murie Science and Learning Center/Alaska Geographic**

Internship and Science Camp Grants

**Copper Valley Electric Association Community Foundation**

In-Class Science Grant

**Copper Valley Telecom**

In-Class Science Grant

**Alyeska Pipeline Service Company**

Lecture Series Funding

State of Alaska Community Assistance Program

Copper River School District

Amazon Smile

Fred Meyer Community Rewards

And 80+ Individual and Family Donors

**Earned Income from:**

**Copper Country Discovery Tour**

**Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour**

**Merchandise Sales**

**Program Fees**

**Rent of WISE facilities**

## **In-Kind Donors**

**Copper Valley IGA**

**Beryl Wardlaw and Victor Bailey**

**Copper Country Alliance**

**Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames**

**Janelle Eklund and Paul Boos**

**Cory and Becky Schwanke**

