



Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment

**WISE | LEARN. GROW.
GET OUTSIDE.**



www.wise-edu.org

Volume 15 Winter 2017/2018



The Art of Environmental Education

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October 26, 2017

Dear Friends of WISE,

Looking back over the year as we compile the newsletter is an exciting time. We reflect on lessons learned, discoveries made, and connections deepened. We hope that in 2017 you were able to have your own explorations outside, experiencing

how our environment impacts and teaches us. Summer was another busy season for WISE, with many exciting programs and eager participants across all ages. Our spring ice fishing day and summer hikes were popular, as always, and had lots of folks enjoying themselves and learning outdoors. The Copper Country Discovery Tour, which generates revenue for WISE, had its best year yet, and we introduced a second tour - Field Sketching and Watercolor.

Back in June, I participated in a WISE workshop, learning about wild plants with author Janice Schofield. We spent



Recently harvested wild plants ready for transformation into food and medicinals at the Wild Plants Workshop.

two and a half days looking closely at everything growing around us, learning exciting medicinal and culinary uses for plants we had often ignored, or even tried to remove over the years (dandelions!). Every participant seemed struck by the wealth of resources we have right outside our doors.

Towards the end of the class, Janice encouraged us to each pick a plant and spend some time with it: feeling it, smelling it, tasting it (depending on the plant), and drawing it. Even participants with many years' experience with wild plants were impressed by how this activity, especially the drawing, ingrained that plant's unique characteristics into their minds. This simple

artistic exercise helped us all see our environment in a new way.

Throughout our programs, WISE looks to engage participants on many different levels, helping them use different mediums to learn and express themselves. Using art as a method of expression not only helps the artist to understand their world better, but it offers a powerful perspective to the observer, helping them engage at a deeper level. Throughout this newsletter, you'll read and see examples of how WISE is using art in environmental education.

At the end of another full year, we owe a big thank you to our Executive Director Robin Mayo for her deep well of enthusiasm, creativity, and knowledge. She works tirelessly to make WISE programs the best that they can be, and is always looking for ways that we can expand and improve.

And of course, we would like to say "Thank you!" to all of you, our donors and supporters. Whether you donate to WISE financially, or with your time and energy, you are an integral part of our work. WISE would not be able to continue growing, educating and impacting more individuals every year without your support. Keep exploring,



Rebekah (Helkenn) Donohue grew up in Kenny Lake, and has served on the WISE Board of Directors since 2015.

Rebekah Donohue
President, WISE Board of Directors

Thank You!

Newsletter Photos: Paul Boos, Janelle Eklund, Robben Taylor, Lauren Bien, Tim Daly, Thomas Matia, Amanda Friendshuh, Kaylee Rodriguez
Printing: Donated by Victor Bailey

2017 Program Highlights

In-Class Science Lessons

As well as old favorites including electricity and sound, we introduced a new lesson on winter birding.

Ice Fishing Day

This annual rite of spring drew well over a hundred people to Silver Lake on April Fools Day.

Alaska Forum on the Environment

In February, Stewardship Program students presented a lesson on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill at the Youth Track.

WISE Annual Meeting

Student presentations and a lasagna dinner were highlights of our 2017 Annual Meeting

Camp Chosen Frozen

This event in cooperation with Wrangell-St. Elias National Park produced sunburnt noses, cold toes, and great memories.

Earth Discovery Day

WISE's keystone event is now in its 15th year, and we were proud to open the event with an Ahtna song led by Elder Karen Linnell and youth.

Science Lecture Series

We featured Park Science this year, with talks on wolves, bats, birds, and the power of plants.

Youth Environmental Summit

Native Village of Gakona hosts this annual early summer youth gathering, this year at Kenny Lake School.

Wild Plants Workshop

Author Janice Schofield led this weekend workshop which included foraging, cooking, and medicinals.

Project Healing Waters

The spectacular scenery and superb fishing for Arctic Grayling at Tangle Lakes make this event for wounded veterans an annual treat



Copper River Stewardship Program

See the Article on page 5 for poetry and stories from this year's annual intensive program for teenagers

'Take it Outside' Hikes

125 Individuals participated, and hiked a total of over 400 miles on 7 hikes this summer

Aquatic Ecology Camp

10 campers enjoyed 3 days

of activities at Silver Lake.

Copper Country Discovery Tour

Our revenue-producing program had a banner year, with over 350 happy guests

Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour see page 8 to

learn about this new program at the local Princess Lodge.

Geology Backpacking Trip

Our second annual expedition included a Kennecott Mill tour and glacier hike.

Willow Creek Research Project

WISE staff assisted with this multi-year project, gaining valuable insights into the hydrology of the region.

Community Canoe Days

We joined our partner Copper River Watershed Project for two fun days of watershed education in Mentasta and Slana.

Changing Seasons

How do you improve on a program that has been going strong for over a decade? Costumes, games, and another spin of the Time Machine!

WISE also assists with partner programs throughout the year. For details see the 2017 Annual Report at

www.wise-edu.org



Awe and Altruism: Why We Bring Kids Outdoors

*By Mikaela Dalton
WISE Americorps Volunteer*

I have always loved playing outdoors. Maybe it was how I was raised; you come home from school and go straight outside to play in the woods until dinner. I learned at a young age to love camping, hiking, swimming, and paddling around our mountains and lakes. I grew up loving the feeling of awe; a reverence and wonder for the world around us. That feeling when you're alone in a tall woods, or on top of a mountain you struggled to climb, or watching a meteor shower with no city lights to block it. It's that feeling that sends shivers down your spine, makes your hair stand on end, and gives you goosebumps. I chase after that feeling whenever I get trapped in my house or a city for too long, whenever I need to feel refreshed.

I think about awe every time I take a group of kids or young adults out into the wilderness on adventures. I want them to be as in awe of our surroundings as I am. But I've wondered, is this feeling as important to others as it is to me? Should I be working so hard to try and help others experience awe in nature? Is awe benefiting them?

A few years ago, I found several studies that supported what I knew in my heart; that feeling awe is good for us. Through a variety of experiments involving being placed in nature, watching a short video about a place in the natural world, or even just thinking about a

time you experienced awe, researchers measured how awe affected people's behavior. Results of the studies showed that participants who were exposed to something in nature and felt even a small amount of awe were more likely to help a stranger in need nearby, share something they had won, or display more



willingness to work with other people. The researchers found that being exposed to nature made them more altruistic; more willing to do something for others that had no benefit to themselves. The researchers' takeaway? Spending more

time outside makes us more selfless human beings.

So why do we bring our kids outdoors? Why should we try to to give them incredible, awe-inspiring experiences outdoors? Because we want our kids to be the best people they can be. We want them to care about and care for the people in their neighborhood, in school, across the country, and around the world. By taking our kids camping, hiking, paddling, or maybe even just a walk around the block, we are exposing them to the wonders of the natural world and instilling them with awe, creating a generation of more altruistic adults in the future. And those adults will someday be making decisions for all of us, policy, health, education, social services, and laws. So if we want our kids to be better, more altruistic adults, don't we want them to explore outside and experience awe? Don't we want them to be awesome?



Mikaela graduated from University of Vermont with a degree in Global Studies in May, and arrived in August for a year as WISE's Resilient Alaskan Youth Americorps Volunteer

By Alex VanWyhe
 In the summer of 2007, between my freshman and

A Steward Comes Full Circle

immense beauty of the place that we call home. Since participating in the

sophomore years of high school, I had the chance to participate in the first iteration of what is today the Copper River Stewardship Program. I can't remember the exact wording of my application nor how I articulated my motivation. But, like many youth of the area, I had not had the

Watershed Leadership Program in 2007, I have worked for a number of agencies and organizations within the watershed in a variety of roles. I've worked as an interpretive aid at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, done data collection on salmon spawning habitat and water quality for WISE, and wiped down outhouses, built trail, pulled literally tons of garbage, and monitored National Wild and Scenic Rivers for the BLM.



*As the tide passes
 We sit, cold in the water
 Writing a haiku
 Cassidy Austin-Merlino and Kelsie Friendshuh*

This past summer I had the opportunity to work in another capacity that

brought me back to the impetus of my personal identification as a steward of the Copper River Watershed. While this was a radically different trip from the one that I participated in, the bones of the program still represent a familiar structure—the heart of the program still beats with the same conviction and intent: crafting stewards of local high school students.

opportunity to experience much of what makes the Copper Basin such an incredible place. My family didn't hunt and most of my experiences camping were limited to what was accessible by car. Of course we were outside constantly: clearing land and gathering wood and tending livestock were part of my normal daily routine. As with anything, though, our intentionality (or lack thereof) can radically alter the way that we view ourselves in relation to the places that we inhabit or reside in. One of the greatest gifts that I received on that journey was the awareness and practice of being intentional about my relationship with the Copper River Basin. As this summer's guest educator, I was thrilled to be able to help foster and instill that same sense of purposeful, active stewardship.



As a guest humanities instructor my primary goal was to help students find their voices by recording and expressing their reactions to the watershed. From competitive haikus to letters to future selves, stewards worked to develop personal understandings of their own responsibilities for the place that they call home. Silted slip-n'-slides, artificial nest islands, exhausting ferry rides, and bouncy rivers were among some of the different prompt materials to work from. Far from the traditional classroom students internalized critical lessons and gave voice to responsibilities and motivations, many of which they may not be able to fully articulate for years to come. For now it is sufficient that they feel and believe in their role as stewards and that they encourage others to exercise stewardship as well.

Spending ten days on the Copper River as a young adult largely shaped my trajectory to become the slightly older young adult that I am today. Not

only did it give me a better understanding of the dynamics of a watershed, including a variety of uses, philosophies, and management agencies, it also gave me a sense of the

*We slide upon rocks
 Struggling from their heavy grasp
 Worn rafts now flow free
 Will Hand*



Alex VanWyhe grew up on a farm in the Copper River Valley, and received a Masters Degree from University of Alaska Fairbanks. Alex is now an English Teacher at Haines High School.

In late May, Tommy pointed his car north, headed to Alaska and a summer of adventure. He studies Environmental Science at Eckert College in Florida, and fills any spare time with adventure and service. On the afternoon he arrived, he took a quick hike up Willow Mountain to check out the lay of the land. The next ten weeks were spent in similar fashion, taking advantage of every opportunity to explore, or help out with a community project. Both Tim and Tom spent many weekends at Wellwood Nature Preserve, helping build the new suspension bridge.



Just a few days after he arrived at WISE, Tim was leading nature walks for the students at Native Village of Gakona's Youth Environmental Summit. He set off through the woods with a band of laughing children, inviting them to decorate his hair with leaves and flowers. Right then and there we dubbed him the Pied Piper, and throughout the summer he definitely lived up to the nickname.

Tim never faltered in his enthusiasm, willingness to take on challenges, and genuine joy in being with youth. He was an awesome role model for local boys, and livened up our world with his philosophy of "Never a Dull Moment."

Tim has now returned to his winter job at a nature center near San Mateo, California, continuing to hone his talents as an environmental educator. *Robin Mayo*

Environmental Education and Stewardship Intern Tommy Matia



Tim and Tommy ended up being a superb team for our education programs. Tim could usually be found in the lead, and Tommy would bring up the rear, lending a hand or engaged in gentle conversation with someone who could use some quiet

time. He often served as our fact checker, doing the research to be sure the science was on point. And his quiet, methodical, organized strategy for getting things done was a great positive influence in the chaotic moments of preparing for programs.

Summer Program Specialist Tim Daly

The opportunity to work for WISE this past summer is one I will never forget. I feel so lucky that I was chosen to work with not only an amazing group of individuals, but also to be a part of an organization that is

dedicated to such an important mission. It was a really incredible experience to be brought in at the beginning of summer, meet so many important figures in the community and to be immediately thrown into changing lives.

I was born and raised in the concrete sprawl of Los Angeles, CA, and to see that a place as wild, rugged and alive as the Copper River Basin still exists gives me both a sense of great hope and a fear of this natural splendor being taken for granted.

By spending so much time reaching out to the youth of the Copper River Basin and offering them such a diverse range of educational opportunities, WISE is having a direct and positive impact on the future of the Copper River Basin, Alaska and the world. With WISE as the catalyst, the next generation can be inspired by the world around them, find their voices and use their knowledge to create a better world tomorrow. In my brief time with WISE, this is what I observed happening with the students who came on our hikes and participated in our various programs.

It is more important than ever for citizens to engage in science, to be environmentally literate, to be able to speak wisely about the challenges facing us and to reach comprehensive, pragmatic solutions. And that's where I see WISE as an integral force to inspire the stewards of tomorrow which ultimately benefits not only the individuals on each hike, but also the community for years to come. It's for these reasons and many more that I am so appreciative, proud, and fulfilled that I got to be a part of that profound change.

Tim Daly, September 2017

WISE to Receive Land

For several years, the WISE Board of Directors and staff have been working with local landowners and a statewide land trust with the goal of long-term conservation of a local property. The 40 acre site at Lower Tonsina includes a stream where salmon spawn, a beaver complex which is visited by many waterfowl, and dense Spruce and Balsam Poplar forest. The landowners plan to donate the property to WISE, while retaining a life estate, or bequeath the property to WISE in their will, with the caveat that its wild character be protected with a conservation easement.



A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement that charges a third party, in this case Greatland Trust, with enforcing restrictions on how a property can be used or developed forever. We are currently in the final stages of helping draft the agreement. For most of the property, improvements will be limited to things which have a minimal impact on habitat but improve access, such as trails, viewing platforms or blinds, and interpretive signs. There will also be a small part of the property where limited development will be allowed. WISE is particularly interested in this area, because it holds potential for developing a facility such as an outdoor classroom, nature center, or residential camp.

This property is an exciting opportunity for WISE to practice our stewardship values, and have a unique and vibrant piece of the landscape to use as a teaching location. *Robin Mayo*

New OWLS program to Focus on Outdoor Leadership for Teens

“The wilderness gave them their first taste of those rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts which every outdoorsman faces daily, but against which civilization has built a thousand buffers” Aldo Leopold

Wilderness Leadership Skills (OWLS) will give High School students a chance to develop their outdoor and leadership skills, and put them to practice in real-life outdoor situations.

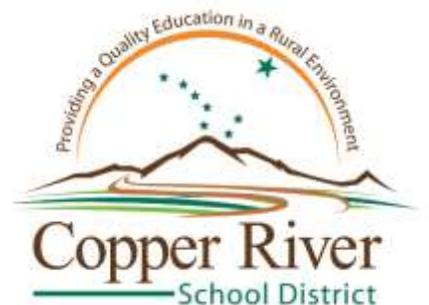
Looking at the numbers for our WISE/BLM summer programs, we see a precipitous drop in participation among teenagers. In conversations with youth, we’ve learned that they don’t want to just follow along on a day hike anymore, they are ready to take on bigger challenges, call the shots, and take the lead.

OWLS will start with a multi-day backpacking trip where the students are challenged to take responsibility for their own well-being, and learn essential wilderness skills such as map reading, nutrition, equipment maintenance, and knots. Throughout the summer, they will have opportunities to help with logistics and take leadership roles on WISE programs, and job shadow local professionals who work in the outdoors. The summer finale will be a wilderness expedition chosen and planned by the youth. *Robin Mayo*

Partner Focus:

Copper River School District

CRSD has been a core partner since the beginning of WISE, making our programs an integral part of the school year, and providing invaluable guidance.



Alaska Forum on the Environment



Akilena Veach, Kat Hale, and Alexis Hutchinson pose with a graphic summary of their presentation.

William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council.

The students led the “Voices of the Spill” lesson for a group of 20 youth leaders, guiding them in learning about the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, reading first person accounts from spill responders, then expressing their feelings through an art project. Then they assisted with a presentation on Reaching Youth Through Art and Science to about 60 adults in the Education track. We explored some of the many ways to enrich youth programs through art, including journaling, group poetry, and visual arts.

The students also attended a wide variety of sessions at the Forum, including inspirational keynote speakers, reviews of a wide variety of projects, and discussions of strategies for addressing environmental issues. They also enjoyed spending time with a cohort of youth from all over the state who shared their concern for being stewards of the land. *Robin Mayo*

In February, three students from Copper River Stewardship Program attended Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage. The trip was made possible with the help of our funding partner Prince

WISE Revenue-Generating Tours

Three to five times a week throughout the summer, WISE staff pin on their nametags, fuel up the van, and greet an enthusiastic group eager to explore and learn. Another hike with local youth? Not exactly...This is the Copper Country Discovery Tour and the Field Sketching and Watercolor program. The two tours are WISE’s most popular program, with over 350 guests from Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge per year. The profit makes up about a third of WISE’s total income every year, providing vital unrestricted funds which we use to run the organization and support other programs.

For the Discovery Tour, guests meet their guide at the lodge. After a 25 minute drive in a beautiful Dodge Sprinter van we purchased using a Rasmuson Foundation grant, the group arrives at the Wellwood Nature Preserve in Kenny Lake. At the preserve, they walk the forest trails, enjoy the views at the Tonsina River bluff, and visit a backwoods camp. In a wall tent, we share our collection of skins and skulls. Throughout the tour, we stress the unique lifestyle local residents are able to enjoy because of the healthy ecosystem and vast wilderness in the Copper River Valley.

In 2016 we introduced the Field Sketching and Watercolor tour program. Under the guidance of their tour guide, guests explore the Boreal Forest around the Lodge before settling in to listen to and feel the world around them, capturing on paper the colors of the wind, the rushing river, and the birds singing and flying by. Then they enjoy a playful

brushless watercolor project, which produces a charming picture of an aspen forest.

The most important ingredient for a successful tour is the guide, and WISE is very lucky to have two local staff who deliver an outstanding experience to our guests.

Jolene Nashlund and Judith Lorenz both live in the area, and weave stories from their families into the information about the natural history of the Copper River Basin.

Local residents and WISE supporters are invited to go on a complementary tour in the summer of 2018. Call the office to set up your trip! *Mikaela Dalton, Robin Mayo*

Naturalist/Tour Guide

Judith Lorenz



Originally from France, Judith arrived in Alaska on a sailboat in 2009. She came to Kenny Lake to work on an organic farm, and ended up staying and starting a family. Judith has made plants her specialty, and includes their medicinal uses and cultural history in her tour.

Meet the WISE Board of Directors

We believe that gaining a rich knowledge of the physical world, experiencing and honoring wild places and creatures, and investing in local education of others is critical to the development and enrichment of all people.

Dr. DB Palmer, Board Member

We believe that spending time in nature inspires creativity, and is a palate from which to share and learn.

Jenny Moser, Board Member

We believe every student should have an intimate understanding of how connected they are to the place they live.

Mark Proch, Board Member



Stewardship Haiku

*My hope today is
For this place to stay wild
So others may dream*

Robin Mayo

We believe that experiences in nature encourage individuals to develop greater care for and understanding of the environment.

Rebekah Donohue, President

We believe that the ability for citizens to think rationally is important for a strong society, and that this is aided by an understanding and trust in the methods and results of science.

Dave Wellman, Vice President

We believe the earth supports us, and through, listening, understanding, respecting and honoring her there will be harmony.

Janelle Eklund, Board Member

We believe that to become good stewards of our environment requires good education and experiences.

Gay Wellman, Secretary

We believe that all citizens have the responsibility to understand, care for, and respect their environment.

Paul Boos, Treasurer

We believe that every child we reach through nature is a child who may pass along the gift of wild things.

Jan Miller, Board Member

On a rainy September day five years ago, I started working for WISE as an Americorps VISTA Volunteer. The next few months brought lots of changes, and by December I was serving as the Interim Executive Director, and struggling with the decision to apply for the permanent job. Since then I've often reflected on how different my life might be if I hadn't decided to make the leap.

This is a job that by nature must be a lifestyle, and the friends and adventures I've encountered along the way are priceless. There are many things to love, but if I had to choose just one it would be the privilege of being supervisor, mentor, and friend to the young people who come to work at WISE. Their lives are full of idealistic hopes, hard choices, and raw energy, and I'm happy to report that stuff is contagious!

This year's focus on the humanities has been tremendous for staff as well as for our participants. So much of our daily work is filled with questions of who, when, where, and how, we forget to set aside time to ask "Why?" It has been a treat to delve within on many quiet moments this year, reaffirming my personal and professional commitment to nature, adventure, and the power of awe.

Robin Mayo, Executive Director October 2017

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Taking a moment for a long-range view, out the window of the abandoned copper mill at Kennecott

WISE Mission

WISE provides science and environmental education, supports scientific research, and shares the natural wonders of the Copper River Valley.

Core Values

Stewardship ~ Grassroots Involvement
Partnerships ~ Integrity
Sense of Place ~ Mentorship

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

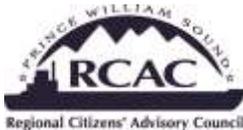
Partner Focus:



**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.

2017 Funders



Alaska Forum for the Environment
 Copper River Basin Lions Club
 Copper Valley Telecom
 Fred Meyer Community Rewards
 Amazon Smile
 Earned Income from
 Copper Country Discovery Tour
 and Field Sketching and Watercolor Tour

For more details on WISE revenues and expenses, please request our 2017 Annual Report, or see it at www.wise-edu.org

A heartfelt Thank You to all of the individuals who give to WISE so generously. You are the heart and soul of what we do, and we appreciate you!

Spruce \$500 and up
 Janelle Eklund and Paul Boos
 Gail Mayo
 Daniel Solie

Aspen \$100 to \$499
 Susan Andrews and John Creed
 Charlotte and Charles Bird
 Nancy and Bob Boos
 Karen Combs and Lynn Wegener
 Evan Franklin
 Sally Gibert
 Marnie Graham
 Cathy Hart and Eric Downey
 Shari Hart
 Ellen and Barry Hecht
 Kayane James
 Tami Long
 Judith and Matt Lorenz Family
 Charles Maas
 Suzanne and Kevin McCarthy
 Ruth McHenry and Cliff Eames
 Marcia and Henry Milette
 Debbie and Mark Moderow
 Danny and Arlene Rosenkrans
 Laurie Thorpe
 Lauren and Matt Vos
 Barbara and Denny Wallace
 Jeremy Weld
 Gay and Dave Wellman



*Oil Painting by Moses Korth
 Copper River Stewardship Program*

Diamond Willow up to \$100
 Sandra Bales
 Elaine and Ed Begy
 Allison Brooking
 Kristin Carpenter
 Barbara Cellarius
 Nancy Deschu
 Rebekah and Joe Donohue
 Shirley and Jim Hannah
 Heidi Hatcher
 Doris Ivory
 Julie Jessen
 Markus Johns
 Paula and Bruce Kaye
 Sally and Terry Keizer
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 Linda Rutledge
 Dorothy Sine
 Kelly Smith
 Bunny Sterin
 Tim Sundlov
 Mark Vail
 Ben Williams
 Kirsten Williams

Special Thanks

Beryl Wardlaw and Victor Bailey for donation of artwork and printing this newsletter
Paul Boos and Janelle Eklund for use of the house for our office and staff quarters
WISE Board of Directors and Advisory Board for your time and wisdom
Copper River Record for making room for the WISE column every week
Tom Butler for Moose and Caribou Skulls
All WISE Volunteers for the energy and talent you share

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