

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment Annual Report January 1– December 31, 2011

Presidents Report

We are sad to lose long time Board member and secretary, Carla Schierholt. Carla served on the Board from 2003 to 2011 and was a valuable asset to WISE. Her teaching skills and connection with the Copper River School District gave much insight as we initiated and implemented programs. We thank her for her many years of service, and we will miss her greatly but know she is only a phone call away. Tim Sundlov has also resigned from the Board but we are happy that he has joined the WISE Advisory Board and his close contact and expertise will still be a great influence for the organization.

I would like to thank our partners for helping to make WISE another productive year. This year we gained three new partners and were able to participate in several new programs.

WISE joined Project Healing Waters and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in sponsoring a outdoor fishing weekend for wounded warriors, veterans, and their families at Tangle Lakes. It was a very rewarding program and the scenery itself was healing. WISE was proud to help with meals, skins and skulls presentation, berry picking and ferrying fisherpersons.

In 2011 Copper Valley Electric Association and Copper Valley Telephone Cooperative supplied WISE with grants to buy science kits and begin the new in-classroom science program to the Copper River School District. This is proving to be a very successful program for both students and teachers. The science kits allow students to learn in a fun and interactive way.



July 2011 Aquatic Ecology Camp participants at Silver Lake

We were able to help the BLM continue the "Take it Outside" initiative by giving people the opportunity to participate in twelve different hikes. Many youth and some adults enjoyed hiking, camping, berry picking, canoeing and just being in the fresh outdoors.

The Copper River Stewardship Program continued the partnership with the Copper River Watershed Project, Prince William Sound Science Center, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST), and BLM. Ten participants hiked and canoed while gaining insight into historic Kennicott/McCarthy, geology, fish and fisheries, climate change, and oil impacts in the upper and lower watershed.

The Aquatic Ecology Camp continues to be popular with two overnight programs. This program is also made possible with the help of the BLM, WRST, and Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game.

As we enter and celebrate ten years of science and environmental education we look at 2012 cautiously optimistic. With budget cuts in the Federal Government and the downturn in the economy we are looking more toward donors and our tour program to sustain us through this year. Programs needing funding are the Copper River Stewardship Program (\$5,000); Project Healing Waters (\$5,000), Earth Discovery Day and Changing Seasons (\$5,000). The hiking program will be down to eight hikes this year instead of twelve, unless we are able to raise more funding. The Development Committee is looking for new innovative ways to raise money through sales of services and/or products, endowment campaign, and using the internet.

We continue to receive positive feedback from participants in WISE programs. It makes us very happy that these programs bring insight and a foundation for connections participants make as they journey through life. We see them coming back, eager for more.

Janelle Eklund, President

Programs

BLM- Take it Outside WISE and BLM have partnered in educational programs for several years, and expanding opportunities for outdoor activities continued. WISE sponsored two aquatic camps at Silver Lake, and participated in 8 hiking/camping trips on public lands. The highlight for the youths was a three day campout at Paxson Lake with swimming, canoeing, hiking and fishing on the agenda.

Earth Discovery Day and Changing Seasons

This was the ninth successful year for Earth Discovery Day held at the visitor center grounds at Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST). There were 100+ students that participated. It was the eighth successful year for Changing Seasons program. This program is held at Slana School, Glennallen School and Kenny Lake School where 80+ students attended. Other schools attended at the various locations.

Partner Programs

WISE helped plan and participated in the Youth Environmental Summit in Copper Center in May. Bruce James and Janelle Eklund helped with several presentations during the three day event. In December,

WISE and WRST hosted a Winter Fun Day at the park Visitor Center. Attendees enjoyed "Animal CSI" where animal sign in the snow was interpreted.

Lecture Series

The first of our 2011 lectures was at our annual meeting. After the Board Meeting we viewed the movie River Webs and performed an interpretive skit on Robert Service's poem The Cremation of Sam Magee. Next was a coordinated effort with the Copper River School District to publically share the students finding during their Air Tox investigation. A month later WISE cosponsored Jack Dalton, a Native Alaskan storyteller at the Ahtna Heritage center. The last one in the spring was An Evening with Raptors was conducted by the Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in early May.

Copper River Country Nature Tour Program

Tours began in late May and ended in mid September. There were a total of 331 paying guests an increase of 50% from 2010. There was about 75 hours of volunteer time that went into hiring, training, pay periods/bookkeeping, etc. The program grossed \$31,000 and netted \$10,000. In 2010 the program grossed \$21,000 and netted \$6,900. Additional expenses included some van repairs (transmission), higher Naturalist wages, insurance and gas prices.

With the generous grant from M. J. Murdock, 2011 was the first year that WISE was able to hire a full time and dedicated Naturalist. WISE was fortunate to hire Cara Wardlaw-Bailey, a recent graduate from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. On days she did not have tours to perform she helped out with other programs.

Conferences and Classes

WISE benefitted from a couple training sessions in 2011. Cara, Bruce and Janelle got Commercial Drivers Licenses to better operate the green tour van. Janelle and Dave taught a tour guide class based on training they had received from the state the year before.

New Programs Started in 2011

Several new programs got their start in 2011. The first was a very successful Ice Fishing Clinic conducted on Silver Lake in March. On a beautiful spring day we had about 60 youths, adults and volunteers attend. A hot lunch was provided on the ice, the kids enjoyed dog sled rides, and the rainbow trout cooperated enough to make things interesting. This event is scheduled this year for April 14th.

WISE partnered with BLM to sponsor an Americorp Intern. Local student, Alex Van Whye was selected and while assigned to WISE he helped with the Willow Creek Research Project and Nature Tours, youth hikes and campouts, and also some independent studies.

WISE also partnered with the Willow Creek Water Consortium to initiate the Willow Creek Research Project. Local student, Cassidy Somerville helped with monitoring station installation, retrieving data and posting information on the WCWC website.

A couple smaller new events included three WISE members supporting a "Wings over the Wrangells" program at the Park and a Youth Adult Partnership Training near Delta attended by Bruce.

Thank You to Our Sponsors, Members, and Partners

Grants: Revenue Sharing Kenny Lake and Glennallen \$4,000; Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve Cooperative Agreement, \$2500 (Youth Programs); Studebaker Environmental Education Fund, \$1,700; Take it Outside, BLM \$23,000; Wells Fargo, \$700, First National Bank of Alaska \$200.

This was the first full fiscal year that WISE received grant money from M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust (\$31,000). In 2012, most of the funds must have a matching amount that WISE developed as new funds from other sources. A direct result of the grant was the transition of the Executive Director and Naturalist (seasonal) to full time employees.

Membership, Individual: \$2723 **Board Dues:** \$275 **In-Kind Services:** Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game; Alaska Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center; Ahtna Heritage, Inc; Advocates for Victims of Violence; Vic and Trisha Bruss; Bureau of Land Management; Copper Country Alliance; Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge; Copper River School District; Gateway School District; Mt Sanford Tribal Consortium; Native Village of Gakona; 4H; Prince William Sound Community College; Prince William Sound Aquaculture; Project Healing Waters, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve and the Whitney Museum. And thank you to all the volunteers and members.

Financial

WISE received \$5,100 in membership, individual, board dues and other income; \$31,000 from the Murdock grant, \$39,000 in other grants; and \$31,000 in Nature Tour receipts for a total of \$106,000. Total Expenses were \$107,000. For day to day operations in-kind hours from board members, partners, and volunteers was about 3,000 hours - \$90,000. A full 2010 financial report is available on our website now and 2011 will be there soon.

The Board of Directors in 2011 also took on the challenge of updating the official logo for the organization. With the help of a professional designer, the final design below was chosen.



Additional information and pictures on our organization and its programs can be found at our two websites www.wise-edu.org and www.copperrivertours.org. We are also on Facebook and we invite you to join us there for updates.

Thank you for showing an interest in Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment.

Respectfully,

March 2, 2012