



TRUSTEES FOR ALASKA

SUSTAIN | PROTECT | REPRESENT

Alaska's non-profit public interest environmental law firm

October 2012 Legal Brief

Please visit www.trustees.org to learn more about our work

Dear Supporter,

Throughout Alaska we continue to feel the impacts of climate change: record setting snowfall in Anchorage, extreme wind storms in Southcentral, and flooding from the Kenai Peninsula all the way up north to Talkeetna. Not to mention the devastation brought on by Hurricane Sandy in the Northeast.

Although Alaska has a small population, it has the highest per capita rate of greenhouse gas emissions. Here at Trustees for Alaska -- ***along with your support*** -- our goals are to minimize Alaska's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions; especially by keeping Alaska's vast coal reserves in the ground.

However, just a mere 60 miles or so Northeast of Anchorage lies the Matanuska Coal Fields, which is covered by leases to four proposed mines. Together these leases encompass 30,884 acres in the Matanuska Valley -- and if developed, these coal fields would set precedents for all coal development in the state. One such area is the proposed Wishbone Hill mine. If developed, these mines will endanger the health of nearby residents.

Please read on and learn how you can help us fight our latest battles on behalf of Alaska's unique and diverse ecosystems, spectacular fish and wildlife populations, and the special communities we represent.

I can assure you that we will use your dollars wisely -- right here in Alaska -- to fight for the protection of the resources that are a part of every American's natural heritage. That's our promise to you.

Sincerely,

Trish Rolfe
Executive Director

Multi-national coal companies are lining up to turn the Matanuska Valley into rubble.



Coal mining pressure continues to build in the Matanuska Valley. In addition to the Wishbone Hill Mine project near Sutton, in November 2011, the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust (MHLT) offered coal leases for bid near Chickaloon. Riversdale Alaska LLC (Riversdale) was the successful bidder, and acquired leases covering 9,927.6 acres. This lease area covers land rights up to the south face of Castle Mountain, an iconic and scenic landmark on the Glenn Highway. The community of Chickaloon will be directly impacted by exploration or mining activities because the lease area is directly adjacent to numerous homes, it will add industrial traffic to the narrow roads, it will disrupt the recreation and subsistence activities, and it will disrupt the rural lifestyle of the residents. Riversdale is already flying helicopters low over the lease area.

This project is moving along quickly, and Riversdale has submitted and has been granted its exploration permit by Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Trustees for Alaska submitted comments on the permit application on behalf of seven conservation organizations that work to protect the Matanuska Valley residents and their quality of life. Riversdale's application indicates that it intends to explore in three phases. DNR has approved all three phases, but the decision was based only on the information about phase one. The second and third phases will be developed based upon what is found by Riversdale in phase one. As a result, DNR did not properly approve the project.

DNR has a duty to ensure that the environment and surrounding communities are protected when it evaluates applications for exploration permits. This requires DNR to have detailed information about what activities will be conducted, and where. Without information about phases two and three, no one could reasonably conclude anything about the potential impacts for those phases, and whether or not human health and the environment are protected. However, that's exactly what DNR did: despite having no concrete information about phases two and three.

Because of these legal flaws, Trustees for Alaska administratively appealed this decision on behalf of five conservation groups. The appeal seeks to invalidate DNR's approval of the exploration permit, but especially phases two and three until Riversdale submits detailed information that both the public and the agency can fully evaluate to ensure compliance with all the laws and regulations designed to protect the surrounding environment and communities.

by Katie Strong, Staff Attorney

Trustees for Alaska Honors Founder, Peg Tileston



In September, the board and staff of Trustees for Alaska held an event to recognize Peg Tileston for her tireless efforts to establish Trustees for Alaska and many other conservation organizations.

Nearly forty years ago, shortly after the authorization of the TransAlaska Pipeline Act passed Congress in 1973, a discussion started among conservation leaders to establish a system to monitor the massive construction project.

Those initial discussions were launched by long-time activist, Peg, and resulted in what is now Trustees for Alaska. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Peg; her husband, Jules Tileston; our host, Deborah Williams; and the many sponsors who rallied to make this event a success. Also, we would like to extend our gratitude to all those who attended and made a contribution in honor of Peg towards our continued work.

It is our goal to carry Peg's legacy well into the future! Here's to another 40+ years of protecting Alaska's natural resources.

For those who were unable to attend the event but want to honor Peg by making a contribution in her name, please visit our website @ www.trustees.org

Thank you!

Support Trustees for Alaska

Donate Now

Trustees for Alaska is the only Alaska-based non-profit public interest law firm providing legal counsel to protect and sustain Alaska's natural environment. We provide legal counsel to diverse constituencies on the major environmental policy issues facing Alaska.

Our work is far from over -- and relies on donations from foundations and individuals who care about protecting Alaska's special places. Support us today! Your contribution of \$100, \$75 or \$50 is an investment in Alaska's future.



The Combined Federal Campaign Trustees for Alaska's CFC # 11326

Do you know how easy it is to make charitable gifts to Trustees for Alaska through payroll deductions if you are a Federal Employee? If not, now is a good time to find out!

The Fall is campaign season for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and Trustees for Alaska is an active member of Wild Animals Worldwide, a coalition of organizations working to protect endangered animals and their habitat; to provide sanctuary for rescued and threatened species; to keep oceans and rivers safe and thriving; and to defend the "wild" in wildlife!

These campaigns provide you with opportunities to make contributions to Trustees for Alaska and many other worthy organizations through payroll deduction.

Employees of the federal government are eligible to participate in the CFC through campaigns across the Nation.

Look for us and make a pledge by visiting [Trustees for Alaska/Wild Animals Worldwide](http://www.trusteesforalaska.org/wild-animals-worldwide) @ <http://www.savewildanimals.org/detail.asp?>

Welcome Maricarmen!

Trustees for Alaska's
Fall Extern



Maricarmen grew up in Puerto Rico where she completed her degree in Sociology and a course in massage therapy. After school, she joined local communities in their struggle to keep public access to the beaches of Puerto Rico. These experiences led Maricarmen to pursue studies in environmental law at Vermont Law School.

While at Vermont Law School, Maricarmen spent a summer in Puerto Rico working with the Sierra Club and the Northeast Ecological Corridor Coalition. She also had the opportunity to work with the Environmental Clinic at the University of Puerto Rico School of Law, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic of Vermont Law School.

Her love for Alaska salmon brought Maricarmen to Alaska. She joined Trustees for Alaska to finish her masters in environmental law and policy. She enjoys going camping, and when she has the money and the time she enjoys traveling. She has visited the Caribbean, North America, South America, Europe and Africa. As a beginner at rock climbing, too, she looks forward to meeting up on the mountains soon.



Maricarmen taking in the sights at Exit Glacier in Seward, Alaska.

Photo by: Adam Walters