



Interior  
Alaska  
Land Trust

2013

*Working with Interior Alaska  
landowners to safeguard the  
character and natural resources  
of our community*

## Exploring the Chena Flats Greenbelt

A few years ago the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner published a front-page article on the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project. So I was aware that there was, surprisingly, a protected wetland stretching along the foot of Chena Ridge, but had never visited the site. In September, as part of the IALT's annual monitoring requirements as steward of the project's conservation easements, I accompanied intern Francine St. Laurent to assess the condition of several properties. The contiguous properties ran between Roland Road and Chena Point Avenue. We began at the small parking lot on Pickering Drive near Roland Road. IALT has erected an attractive sign here that provides information on wetlands and their importance to wildlife. Navigation was easy with satellite imagery that had overlays of property lines, trails and historical photo sites. On the ground red flagging and IALT property signs marked jogs in property lines. We nailed a few signs up in more remote areas where none existed.

This area gets a lot of winter use from dog teams, snow machines and four-wheelers. Summer and fall use by motorized vehicles is negligible. We saw only a few small problem areas, such as elongated mud puddles from four-wheelers. The photos we took were added to a database to document present

conditions, and could serve as 'before' photos to help assess any change that may occur.

Since these are wetlands XtraTuf boots were required footwear and were especially appreciated while making our way across extensive tussock meadows. The properties have several water features, the prettiest one being an arrowhead shaped lake that Monet could easily have featured in an impressionist painting. The corner of one property allowed us easy access to the channel of Cripple Creek in which we saw several pools of water that were not connected by flowing water. The IALT is currently involved in a project to restore flow to Cripple Creek.

Over the past few decades the south slope of Chena Ridge has seen an explosion of house building which is slowly expanding toward the Greenbelt. This is a continuing process. Just west of the parking lot on Pickering Drive is a tract of land subdivided into seven home sites. On the photo that we used for navigation, homes had been built on four of the tracts. On our visit we saw that all seven tracts had houses erected on them. Walking these conservation easements for several hours over a few days in September was an enjoyable introduction to the Chena Flats Greenbelt, and I appreciated the fact that the wetlands have some level of protection provided by IALT stewardship. ---Larry Byrne

# Message from the President



## IALT ANNUAL MEETING

6:30-8 pm Wednesday November 6  
Noel Wien Library Conference Room  
Speaker: Torre Jorgenson – Mapping  
the Boreal Forest

*This unusually warm fall weather has piqued my curiosity as I wonder about the future landscape around Fairbanks. While we all seem particularly aware that the warming trend is impacting the arctic and subarctic more radically than other parts of the country, we don't always have a clear sense of how the changes will affect our relationship to the land. "Adaptive management" is a term used to describe how we can respond to changes without having all the necessary information. I think of it as a method of fine-tuning our decisions while continuing to learn more about the changing landscape. However, some options shrink if the land all around our community is developed. This is where identifying high priority areas for conservation is paramount.*

*Over the past few years, IALT has identified the Goldstream Valley (generally described as the area lying south of Goldstream Road between Sheep Creek Road and Fox) as a priority area. When the community supported the State's continued management of the Goldstream Public Use Area in 2010, attention was directed to the importance of the valley from a wide range of users. Since that time, a growing number of private landowners have approached the IALT with interest in conserving their land in this area. The redirection of IALT attention comes at a time when we have neared completion of our goal in piecing together lands within the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project area. The high interest among landowners and results of our GIS-based prioritization of properties suggest we view the Goldstream Valley as the next focus area for the community.*

*For many of us in the land trust community, the greatest reward of our work is connecting with people and learning about their relationship to the land. IALT looks forward to working with individual landowners, garnering the support of the community, and potentially seeing the inception of neighborhood groups across the broader community. ---Roselynn Ressa*

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Chena Flats Greenbelt. Photo by M Reynolds

## Fair news

This was the first year the Land trust took the big step and actually had a booth at the Tanana Valley State Fair. We had been debating this first step for awhile, figuring it would give us a public presence and a chance to hear what the public had to say. A little first time jitters, schedule changes and trying not to bite off more than your fellow board members can swallow gave us the opening night in the Fairgrounds Borealis Building. A lot of credit goes to our summer intern, Francine St. Laurent, for going above and beyond the call to help put this display together.



Francine St. Laurent, IALT intern at TVS Fair booth.  
Photo M Raynolds

It was my first time being on the so called other side of the counter at the Fair, as usually I like to walk around and visit whatever booth that catches my eye. Now I got a taste of what the vendors call being stuck to your booth and I was lucky to have Francine, Karen Jorgenson and other Land Trust Board Members to share the load. People would trickle by, some showing interest, some not, and then this sea of humanity would swamp us and I found it interesting that the number one question was, "What is a land trust?" And it's one thing to lay out we are a non-profit group trying to save what the community sees as valuable assets of open space, trail access and wildlife habitat, but try doing that in 30 seconds or less before someone else comes in or the kids drift out of sight and the conversation changes ...

So I resorted to a question of my own, how many farms are there left on Farmers loop road? And most people knew of the Farmers Loop and that there was what, one maybe two farms left? And we got the point across, thanks to all who listened while I struggled to explain and to all of those that knew what we were trying to do.

One of the biggest draws of our booth was the oversize map of the Fairbanks area along with pins to show where you lived. I love a map, they are the perfect icebreaker even between people of different

politics and flavors of coffee, they can bring out our better elements and we can share them with each other. I can't tell you how many kids gave me the confidence that their generation will survive when they showed me just where they lived (I'm sorry I doubted you kids for awhile!). The map also showed various properties that the Land Trust either owns or has an easement on and one thing I learned was how many people did not know we were neighbors. I also heard several very good rumors of our neighborhood as to who owned the property next to them and yes the property was owned by a land development firm and then donated to the land trust, and no we are not some large out of state environmental group, we live and work right here around Fairbanks. And yes we did have some great partners in helping us purchase and maintain the properties, especially the Chena Flats Greenbelt, as in The Conservation Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Fairbanks Borough, and you along with your neighbors.

I'd like to think we will be back next year, thanks for your support and we'll see you at the Fair,

---Mike Stredny

P.S. A special thanks to Francine's dad for making a display mount for the map on such short notice ... which goes to show you that behind every great kid, there's usually a darn good dad!





### Land Conserved by IALT

15 parcels owned, 451.2 acres

22 parcels with easements, 772.4 acres

**1223.5 TOTAL ACRES CONSERVED**

Photo of larch in Chena Flats Greenbelt by intern Francine St. Laurent

## Interning with the Land Trust

I spent two months this summer interning with the Interior Alaska Land Trust with the hope of better understanding how a land trust operates, reaches out to community members and acts as a steward of the land. I quickly learned that truly understanding this process requires more than a brief internship. Building relationships with people, their organizations and the government offices that amplify those voices takes time. Spreading word of the value of setting aside land and carrying out the lengthy legal process to purchase or transfer property rights, such as conservation easements, can take years.

So I started with the basics. I put together the Land Trust's first Tanana Valley State Fair booth, which sported a three-by-four-foot map of the greater Fairbanks area where people could mark their homes with pushpins. In my 40 hours manning the booth, I met incredibly interesting people from pig, wheat and peony farmers to a glacial ice research engineer, a bird taxidermist and everyone in between. They all had some connection or stake in Fairbanks' natural landscape. Hearing their opinions and stories attests what the Interior Alaska Land Trust aims to do: preserve the character of the land.

Following the Fair, I compiled a monitoring binder for each Land Trust property. Each binder includes directions, monitoring plans, maps, easement documents and previous years' monitoring reports, which make monitoring easier for volunteers. I learned how to use ArcGIS to generate maps. Through this I became more familiar with the properties and monitored five with the help of Larry Byrne and Martha Raynolds. Does it surprise you that this was my favorite part? Admittedly, tromping through tussocks is no walk in the park, but the quiet surrounding billions of red-leaved blueberry bushes and still ponds is etched in my brain.

Next I worked on a grant proposal for a National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Grant, which the Land Trust will submit next August. This technical assistance will be used to improve trails on the Cripple Creek property in the north end of the Chena Flats Greenbelt. Writing the proposal was more challenging than I anticipated. I wasn't sure how to approach people to ask for advice and support. (*cont. p8*).

## Salmon in Cripple Creek?

Cripple Creek is a meandering little stream that starts in Ester and flows more or less along the Parks Highway and down Chena Pump Road, emptying into the Chena River near the Pump House Restaurant. Actually, that's what Cripple Creek used to be. Cripple Creek today has very little water in the actual creek, due to its diversion in the 1930s into the Cripple Creek Ditch to flush mining sediments from Ester out into the Chena River. However, the IALT would like to change that and put at least some of the water back into the original creek bed, improving spawning and rearing habitat for grayling and king salmon. The IALT owns a section of Cripple Creek between Chena Ridge Road and Old Chena Ridge Road. We are currently evaluating options for restoration with the help of Herrera Environmental, a consulting company in Seattle. Our goal is to maximize habitat improvement while minimizing disturbance to the creek channel and floodplain.

There are three different scenarios being evaluated to return flows to the historic Cripple

Creek channel. The historic creek is currently separated from the ditch near Old Chena Ridge Road by a plug of dirt. This plug would be removed and a diversion structure installed to move flow from the ditch to the creek. Additionally, grading of the creek channel may be necessary to improve connectivity at lower water levels, and with the help of Herrera Environmental, we are trying to assess how much grading is optimal.

Project partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alaska Department of Transportation. At least one upstream landowner has expressed interest in having his portion of the creek and ditch evaluated for restoration as well, and there is potential for the creek flows to be restored as far up as Happy Creek, which lies on University lands. We are currently on track to begin work on the IALT portion of Cripple Creek next summer. --- *Sally Andersen*





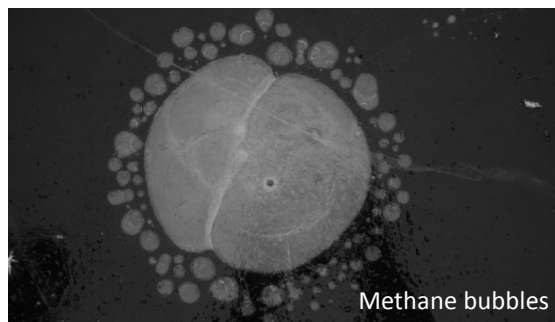
## FUN ON IALT LAND!



Harper O'Brien playing in tree on IALT land.  
Photo courtesy Jill O'Brien



Torre Jorgenson, Francie Berge, Janet Jorgenson



Methane bubbles



Janet Jorgenson and Talik skating on the Peat Ponds

## Wildlife and Science on Land Trust Properties

My office window overlooks IALT land – the Peat Ponds on Goldstream Road, so I have a constant reminder of the many benefits that conservation easements provide to the Fairbanks community. Whether watching moose browse on willows on a cold winter morning or seeing swans land in the pond on a spring afternoon, this IALT land enriches the quality of life for everyone in the area. There are many tangible benefits from conserving green spaces around our community. These areas are used for wildlife habitat, recreation, bird watching, berry picking, and protecting vital hydrologic functions.

Last summer, IALT land was also used for scientific research. Soil scientists from ABR Inc. – Environmental Research & Services collected a soil core and installed permafrost monitoring equipment on the Blueberry Preserves property off Ballaine Road. In addition to providing more information on permafrost stability around Fairbanks, this work allowed them to test their techniques and equipment before conducting more extensive testing on the North Slope.

These scientists used a SIPRE corer to extract a 3-inch diameter sample of permafrost soil to a depth of about 2 meters. This sample can be used to study the characteristics of the soil and ice in the area. They also drilled a small, 1-meter deep hole and installed temperature monitoring equipment in the permafrost. This work will have little visual impact on the Blueberry preserves but will provide an increased understanding of the dynamic landscapes managed by IALT. --- Alex Prichard



Francie Berge checking out a beaver lodge at the Peat Ponds

Peat Pond photos taken 27 Oct. 2013, M Raynolds

The Interior Alaska Land Trust works with landowners to preserve the character of their properties assisting them to create conservation easements that become a permanent part of the land status, to accept donation of land to be preserved and in some isolated cases to purchase land for preservation. It does these tasks in collaboration with the national Land Trust Alliance, an organization of the 1,700 land trusts in the United States that together have more than 100,000 volunteers and 5 million members. So far, land trusts have conserved 37 million acres of land through these easements that benefit the land owners financially as well as preserving lands valuable to the society.

## Tax Incentives for Land Conservation

The top legislative priority of the Land Trust Alliance this year is to prevent the enhanced tax incentive for conservation easement donations from expiring on December 31! The enhanced income tax deduction has allowed family farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners to get a significant tax benefit for donating a conservation easement on their land.

The enhanced incentive helps landowners of modest means choose conservation by:

- Raising the maximum deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to 50%;
- Allowing qualified farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their AGI; and
- Increasing the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years.

Without the enhanced easement incentive, an agricultural landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a conservation easement worth \$1 million could take a total of no more than \$90,000 in tax deductions! Under the enhanced incentive, that landowner can take as much as \$800,000 in tax deductions – still less than the full value of their donation, but a significant increase.

We need your help to persuade Congress to make this incentive permanent. You can reach any Member of Congress by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. You should ask to speak with the staffer who handles tax issues. Please help us by contacting the Alaska delegation and urging their support of this tax incentive.

---Merritt Helfferich



Board member Alex Prichard at Chena Riverwalk. Photo M Helfferich

## 2012 FINANCIAL REPORT

### Income

Interest	853
Membership	1,614
Public support	7,409
Non-government grants	5,034
Government grants	22,753
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>37,664</b>

### Expenses

Equipment	99
Fundraising expenses	250
Land acquisition	522
Operating expenses	1,974
Conferences	3,598
Contract services	15,980
Land stewardship	29,037
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>51,459</b>



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**Annual Meeting Nov. 6, 6:30-8:00 pm**

Noel Wien Library Conference Room

## Interning *(cont. from p4)*

The board gave me the names of local resources and an idea of their vision for the trails and Greenbelt. I slowly shaped my draft around that. But I still was nervous asking individuals and groups for letters of support. Sally Andersen, an IALT volunteer who worked as the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project coordinator for a number of years, changed my perspective. “Just think of it like asking for a letter of recommendation,” she said. I know how to do that! I simply asked. Taking that step helped me meet interesting, enthusiastic people who care about trails in Fairbanks and have experience planning and maintaining them.

In my short time with this organization I already see that its network of volunteers is incredible. The all-volunteer board, past board members and countless others pull together, answer questions, fill gaps and take the reins. Connie Zachel helped me set up the fair booth. Steve and Becca Levey and their children, Van and Mac, along with Martha and I, spent a couple of hours one Saturday morning removing a homeless campsite from a Land Trust property. Volunteers are without a doubt an organization’s most valuable resource and IALT volunteers reaffirm how much Fairbanks residents care about their community and its health.

As an urban planning major at Western Washington University, my studies of the environment and the policies used for preservation and management have boosted my interest in sustainable community development. Yet before this internship I never considered Fairbanks and North Pole, my hometown, at risk of over-developing. You can drive 20 minutes in any direction and find open space. Working with IALT brought the importance of preserving greenspace closer to home. Not only did I become more familiar with the area in which I grew up, but I saw the need for public, interurban trails and wildlife corridors near homes and schools in interior Alaska specifically. Setting aside land within our own community is important. I saw that doing so through a non-profit organization is challenging and I have a deep respect and gratitude for community members – those who run and support the Land Trust – who make time on their own dime to further that cause. --- *Francine St. Laurent*