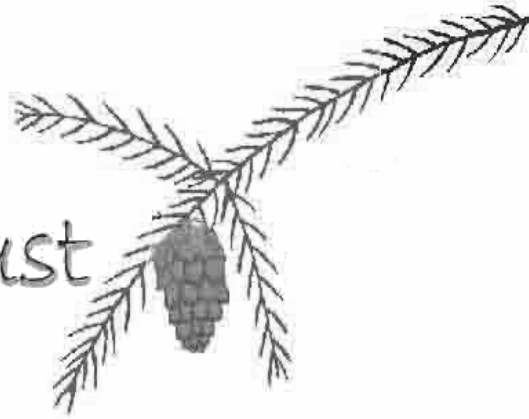


NOTES
from the

Interior Alaska Land Trust



January
2006

Blueberry Preserves Protected

Thanks to contributions from many private individuals (see list on page 5, and a generous grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, the Interior Alaska Land Trust (IALT) has been able to complete the purchase of the 111-acre "Blueberry Preserves". The land is in Goldstream Valley on Ballaine Road, and can be seen on the right when you drive from town to Goldstream Road. It is especially beautiful in the fall, when the leaves of the tundra turn, with the red of the shrub birch, the purple of the blueberries and the yellow of the willow coloring the landscape.

The Blueberry Preserves property was put up for sale in the winter of 2000. Goldstream residents approached IALT to find a way to keep this land open for public recreation and wildlife use. The property's previous owner, Brock Cordes, wanted to sell the property but also wanted the land to remain undeveloped and to continue to be enjoyed by Fairbanks residents, both humans and critters. He offered to sell the property to the IALT for a fraction of its value. Thanks to community support, IALT was able to raise the money to purchase and protect this property for the future.

Blueberry Preserves is located between and connects two large blocks of State-owned land on either side of Ballaine Road. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game

manages this land for recreation and wildlife as part of the Goldstream Public Use Area. IALT is in the process of transferring title to Blueberry Preserves to the State of Alaska, which will manage it as part of the Goldstream Public Use Area. Legislatively designated activities within the Goldstream Public Use Area include: "...horseback riding, hiking, mining, all terrain vehicle driving, bicycling, dog sledding, cross-country skiing, skijoring, snowmachining, camping, and other traditional public uses of fish and wildlife populations such as fishing, hunting, trapping, viewing, and photographing of moose, trumpeter swan and other waterfowl, otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, and fox." --AS 41.23.150 (c). The Land Trust will retain the development rights, through a conservation easement, assuring that the land will always remain undeveloped.

The "Blueberry Preserves" property has trails across it used by dog mushers, snowmachiners, skiers, bikers and walkers. It will provide a public property connection across Ballaine Road, which does not presently exist. It will provide habitat for owls and waxwings, furbearers and moose. All of these benefits have been protected in perpetuity thanks to the foresight and generosity of IALT members and donors – you and your neighbors!

INVITATION TO ANNUAL MEETING

You are cordially invited to the **Annual Meeting** of the Interior Alaska Land Trust

6-8 pm, Friday 27 January 2006

Potluck Dinner at the Ken Kunkel Community Center

(our thanks to the Goldstream Valley Lions Club for donating the use of the Center)

We'll present information about conservation of properties in Goldstream Valley: Blueberry Preserves and the Exclusive Landscaping peat mine at Goldstream and Murphy Dome Roads. We'll also briefly discuss a project in another part of town: the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project.

We'd like your input: What are the best conservation options for the peat mine? What are other land issues important to residents of Goldstream Valley and Fairbanks? Do you have any suggestions for the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project? Please come and let us know your opinion.

Board President's report:



2005 was a year of progress and challenges. We celebrate the purchase of the Blueberry Preserves parcel and especially appreciate the grass roots support for this bit of the Goldstream valley. We continue to work toward a similar transfer and easement project on land that includes a defunct peat mine also in the

Goldstream Valley. The IALT board was approached by a resident of the Chena Pump Road, and the Chena Flats Project was launched. Working with local residents, balancing their needs and visions for the area is a welcome challenge.

The Chena Flats, Blueberry Preserves and other projects present the IALT board with the opportunity to educate the public about land trusts in general and about conservation easements as a tool for landowners whose needs and vision includes protecting conservation values of family property.

Deb Horner, who joined the Board last year, brings her experience, enthusiasm and interest in landscapes and planning.

The Fairbanks-based land trust draws advice, inspiration, and support from relationships with both the five other Alaskan land trusts and the national Land Trust Alliance. See www.lta.org for more about land trusts and easements.

Nora R. Foster, IAL T Board President

Board Member Profile: Deb Horner

The newest member of our board moved to Alaska in 1990 from New York State's Adirondack region. She was quickly seduced by dog mushing, and spent the next 14 years running dogs. Her favorite trip was the inaugural Serum Run with Norman Vaughn in 1997, from Nenana to Nome. "I know that I will be remembering that trip when I am in my dotage!" She was also fortunate in 1998 to find a 35-acre parcel with several cabins in the Healy area where she goes as often as possible for solitude and silence. The dogs are now retired, as is the musher, but she spends lots of time walking, cross-country skiing, and sea kayaking (when able to get to Valdez) to enjoy the magnificence of Alaska. Deb is also a watercolorist, specializing in landscapes.

Employed at UAF, Deb was originally hired as the Director of Conferences and Special Events. In 1997, she volunteered to fill a retirement vacancy doing space management, which has metamorphosed into recently being named the University Planner. In 2002 she was appointed to the FNSB Planning Commission, a volunteer post that she still holds. Deb played a major role in the development of the new FNSB Comprehensive Plan. She also served for six years on the Alaska Natural History Association, and several years on the Yukon Quest AK Board of Directors.



Other board members:

Nora Foster, President

Larry Knapman, Vice-President

Martha Reynolds, Secretary/Treasurer

Merritt Helfferich

Mike Stredny

Brief history of the Interior Alaska Land Trust

The Interior Alaska Land Trust (IALT) was incorporated in August 1995, to work with Interior Alaska landowners to safeguard the character of the land and natural resources of our community. IALT is a private, tax-exempt charitable, 501(c)(3) organization that works with private landowners to acquire, protect or manage natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural, historic, or cultural aspects of property. An all volunteer association, IALT operates under the guidance of the Land Trust Alliance, a national

organization that ensures that land trusts are stable, well-run organizations. IALT is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, and has adopted and followed their standards and guidelines since its inception. IALT board members participate in national and regional conferences to receive training and work with the other five Alaska-based land trusts to back up each other's conservation work.

Exclusive Landscaping Peat Bog

Exclusive Landscaping, owned by Dan Himebauch mined peat from five parcels of land (about 25 acres total) along the south side of Sheep Creek Road at the intersection of Murphy Dome Road. Dan Himebauch and the Army Corps of Engineers have agreed to a permit stipulation for the excavation work that states that the property will be donated to a conservation organization, and that a deed restriction will keep it undeveloped.

Exclusive Landscaping contacted the Interior Alaska Land Trust (and numerous other conservation organizations) several years ago about accepting the property. Initially, because of legal questions including Army Corps of Engineers permit violations and trespass onto neighboring properties, IALT was not willing to accept the property. Exclusive Landscaping has remedied the trespass situation, and have been working to fulfill the final reclamation stipulations of the Corps of Engineers permit.

The Interior Alaska Land Trust contacted the Alaska Department of Natural Resources about the possibility of transferring the land to the State. DNR and ADF&G expressed interest in having the land as an addition to State land in the Goldstream Valley (managed as the Goldstream Public Use Area). IALT has agreed to act as intermediary, and will accept the property from Exclusive Landscaping once all permit stipulations are met. As with the "Blueberry Preserves", IALT will transfer title to the State, but will retain a conservation easement on the property, ensuring that it will stay undeveloped.

Part of the process of writing the conservation easement is identifying the conservation values of the property. Some of these will be determined with the help of ABR, Inc. As

neighboring landowners, the staff of ABR has watched developments at the peat mine over the years with interest. Last year, an ABR intern monitored bird use of the peat mine. IALT has been soliciting input from other neighbors who know the property. Information about existing and potential uses of the property will be used as baseline documentation on which the conservation easement will be based. Known uses include: waterfowl staging and breeding, swimming and canoeing, dog walking, ice-skating, skiing and snow-machining, painting, photography and firearms shooting. If you have any information or suggestions about conservation of the peat mine property, please contact the Interior Alaska Land Trust (Martha Reynolds, 479-3726).

History of the peat mine: During the last 7-8 years, Exclusive Landscaping removed 3-4 feet of peat at the west end of the excavation where the deposits were shallowest, and more at the east end (down to about 10 feet). Excavation was halted several years ago when the peat contained too much silt or massive ice. The entire pit used to be water-filled, but has now drained to nearby Goldstream Creek, leaving a number of ponds. The area is heavily used by birds in the spring and summer, and has some unusual plants which are thought to have grown from exposed seeds in the peat.

Chena Flats Greenbelt Project

The Chena Flats Greenbelt Project is a coalition of residents, property owners and non-government organizations seeking to establish a multi-purpose corridor of open space between the base of Chena Ridge and Chena Pump Road in Fairbanks, Alaska. This area is privately owned, but is used by snow machiners, dog mushers, skiers and walkers. These lowlands encompass some of the last natural lakes and wet-meadow wetlands remaining in the immediate Fairbanks area and are frequented by moose, swans, cranes, owls, lynx and the occasional coyote. In addition, the southern portion of the area includes a portion of the original town site of Chena, which could be managed as a historic site and/or a small campground.

As our community grows, this area of open space, habitat and recreation will become increasingly valuable. At the same time, land available for development will become increasingly limited and valuable as well. The goal (*cont. p.4*)



is to work collaboratively with property owners to conserve a portion of this area for the long-term benefit of the community. Clearly, we need the willing participation of property owners to succeed.

Formed in May of 2005, the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project has now joined forces with the Interior Alaska Land Trust to acquire contributions for the purchase of land and conservation easements, which will be necessary to make this idea a reality. The Conservation Fund is another non-government organization that is working with the Project to secure funds. In order to secure outside contributions, we need to show sincere interest on our part.

Our first Open House was held December 13 at Woodriver Elementary and was attended by 70 people, only three of whom were oppositional to the Project. Others expressed strong support of the Project and many signed up to volunteer for various work. We hope to have another gathering early this spring to share ideas. We invite all who may be interested in volunteering time or financial support to contact us.



Chena Flats Greenbelt Project Coordinator: Peggy Powell and her family live in the Chena Flats area and have been involved in this Project since it began last spring. Peggy has been holding neighborhood meetings, presenting the Project to various organizations, working with property owners, writing grants, fundraising and organizing events to promote the Project. If you have questions regarding the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project or would like to volunteer in any way to help, call or email Peggy: 451-7891 or pgpowell3@yahoo.com.

Peggy will also be assisted by Nicholas Lisuzzo. Nick recently finished his M.S. degree at UAF, where he studied the Tanana River Floodplain. Nick's expertise in local ecosystems and his experience with mapping and computers will be a great asset to the project.

Alaska Land Trusts Meet in Anchorage

In September, representatives from all of the Alaska land trusts met in Anchorage to discuss ways that they can work together. There are now six land trusts in the State: the Interior Alaska Land Trust (Fairbanks), the Alaska Farmland Trust (Palmer), Great Land Trust, (Anchorage), Kachemak Heritage Land Trust (Homer), South East Alaska Land Trust (Juneau), and Nushagak-Mulchitna-Wood-Tikchik Land Trust (Dillingham). The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Nature Conservancy and the Conservation Fund, two national organizations that work with local land trusts.

The newest Alaska land trust, the Alaska Farmland Trust, has been formed to help preserve farmland in Alaska. Arable land is rare in this State, and much of the farmland is under development pressure, especially in the Palmer area. Rising property values due to the increased demand for residential land makes it difficult for farmers to keep farming their land. The Alaska Farmland Trust will offer to buy development rights from farmers, and protect those development rights with a conservation easement. The money farmers receive, along with lower property taxes resulting from the decreased value of their land, will allow them to continue farming. The easement will assure the perpetual conservation of the agricultural land.

All of the Alaska Land Trusts use conservation easements to protect conservation values for their communities. The group reviewed the wording of their

easement documents to assure that they are compatible, so that organizations can work together to write, uphold and defend effective easements. Much of the discussion focused on the best way to word easements so they protect the conservation values, and yet allow landowners the flexibility to deal with new, unforeseen conditions. One example is the bark-beetle kill of spruce in the Homer area: landowners there are having to decide if and how to remove the dead trees. The local land trust, KHLT is helping landowners make these decisions for lands on which they hold conservation easements. The consensus of the group was that easement wording should focus on protection of conservation values rather than specific allowed or prohibited uses. This makes the goal of the document clearer, and allows landowners and the land trust in the future to work together to make decisions based on the conservation values, rather than the wording of the document. The land trusts also reviewed the importance of having stewardship and legal defense funds to manage and protect easements.

The group discussed the Land Trust Alliance's revision of its "Standards and Practices". The Land Trust Alliance is an umbrella organization for land trusts, which has developed a list of standards and practices that assures that a land trust has a solid organizational structure and can conduct effective land conservation. Since most land trusts are small, all-volunteer organizations like IALT, the Land Trust Alliance provides valuable (cont. p. 5)

professional support. The “Standards and Practices” have been revised recently, partly as a result of perceived conflicts-of-interest in the way that some organizations were run, and excessive tax-write-offs for the wealthy. IALT will be adopting and conforming to the new “Standards and Practices”. The Land Trust Alliance is also developing an accreditation process for land trusts (see article on page 6).

Another topic was communication between the land trusts, through e-mail, shared newsletters, and web-links. Alaska has a diverse group of land trusts, each appropriate to meeting the needs of its community, yet they share many of the same issues, approaches and tools. Continued communication will only strengthen the whole group.

Thank-you list of Blueberry Preserves donors

Judy Gottschalk	Martha Raynolds	Bill Witte & Anne Doerpinghaus	Gail & Larry Mayo
Bill Stringer	Marie Beaver & Anthony	Kathy Dietrich	Steve Rankin
Gene & Jeanette Grasto	d'Aoust	Ginny Wood	Marjorie & Jeffrey
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Chena Newman	Anonymous	Tony Gasbarro	Charlie Parr
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Katherine Richardson	Mary Burtness & Jeff Adams	David Murray	Paul & Cordelia Reichardt
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Janet Ricker & Rob Childers	Sam Dashevsky	Goldstream Valley Trail Users	Julie Baecker
Tschon Ombadykew	Jane Williams	Association	Sally Anderson & Michael
Gordon Wright	Linda DeFoliart & Dave	Barbara Jackson	Wald
Thomas Paragi	McGuire	Marjorie & Jeffrey Crosby	
Jan & Garnett Pessel		Evelyn & Dennis Trabant	

Land Trust Alliance to Ensure High Standards for Land Conservation

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) has announced an accreditation program for the nation's 1500 land trusts. The Interior Alaska Land Trust is a member organization of LTA. The program is designed to provide independent verification that land trusts meet high standards for voluntary land conservation.

The accreditation program will maintain and increase public confidence in land trusts. It will also help strengthen land conservation organizations by providing guidelines for organizational and conservation practices.

Accredited land trusts will be required to adopt the LTA's Standards and Practices, ethical and technical guidelines for responsible operation of land trusts. The

accreditation process will involve independent peer review of a land trust's ability to operate in a sound ethical, legal and technical manner, using 42 of the Standards and Practices as indicators.

The program will be managed by a commission of land trust professionals incorporated as a subsidiary of LTA, with independent decision-making authority.

The accreditation program is just completing a year-long public comment period, reviewing the design and implementation of the accreditation process. Over 1000 comments from the land-trust community were received, helping to assure the development of a fair, accessible and creditable accreditation program..

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PLACE
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