

ALASKA REGION

Yukon Flats
Clarence Alexander

Tanana River
Edna Hancock

Middle Yukon
Vacant
Pat Sweetsir (Alt)

Koyukuk River
Karen Kriska
Eliza Jones (Alt)

Lower Yukon
Chief James Landlord
Jacob Isaac (Alt)

Innoko Confluence
Harry Maillelle
Chief Carl Jerue, Jr. (Alt)

Coastal Communities
Roberta Murphy
Agatha Napoleon (Alt)

Youth Representatives
Merril Lake
Roseanne Kruger (Alt)

YUKON TERRITORY

Teslin Tlingit Nation
Carl Sidney

Carcross/Tagish
George Shepherd

Vuntut Gwich'in/
Tr'ondek Hwech'in
Chief Ed Taylor

Clara Van Bibber (Alt)

Northern Tutchone
Chief Eddie Skookum
Chief Darren Isaac

Kaska Tribal Council
Sam Donnessey

Southern Tutchone
Geraldine Pope

Kwanlin Dun
Jessie Dawson

White River First Nation
Chief David Johnny
2nd Chief Angela Demit (Alt)

Youth Representative
Ashley Van Bibber
Alex Oakley (Alt)

ELDER ADVISORS

Sarah James
Nick Andrew, Sr.
Stanley James
Chief Benedict Jones
Trimble Gilbert
Peter Captain, Sr.
Harold Gatensby

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council
To Be Able to Drink Water from the Yukon River

DECEMBER 2008

VOL 3 ISSUE 4



View of hydrokinetic turbine in Yukon River from cliff above Ruby.

Ruby Turbine Project Launches

BY BRIAN HIRSCH, PH.D.

The YRITWC Energy Department began full operation in January 2008 with the award of a three year Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) grant. Our focus is on community education, training and outreach related to energy conservation and efficiency, since the cheapest and cleanest energy available is the energy you don't have to use. We are also committed to teach Tribes about renewable energy and install a renewable energy technology such as a wind turbine or solar panel in a different location each of the three years of the grant.

Brian Hirsch and Monty Worthington, YRITWC Energy Department staff, have both been involved in several wind turbine and solar panel projects in the past, and repeating this task in a watershed community would have been the straightest path to fulfilling the terms of the grant for project

year one. However, like other watershed residents, we kept looking at that big powerful river, and wanted to highlight the connection among all the communities and the essence of the Watershed Council itself. Guided by elders' directions provided at our 10 year anniversary Summit in St. Mary's, Alaska in August 2007, we began researching possibilities such as electric powered river boats and canoes for clean transportation and also experimental hydrokinetic turbines that harness the river's energy without creating dams.

Many of these technologies are considered experimental in that they are not commercially available right "off the shelf" or on the internet. Fortunately, one technology became commercially available as we were researching our options, though it had never been installed in the United States before. This was a

see Turbine, page 3

Start Preparations for 2009 Summit!



The next YRITWC Summit will take place in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory on August 6-8, 2009. The Summit is a convention of the entire Board of signatory Tribe and First Nation delegates, youth, and elders. Please plan ahead to ensure representation at the Summit by choosing a Council representative and elder and youth representatives now! Keep in mind that every Alaskan attendee will need a US Passport to cross the border, although

BY FAON O'CONNOR

the new US Passport Cards will be acceptable for ground transportation across the border. Very few scholarships will be available to assist travel expenses, so please contact your IGAP Coordinator as soon as possible to seek approval to use IGAP funds for international travel. If you have any questions about Passports, Passport cards, or travel funds, call any of the YRITWC offices.

From the Director...

BY JON WATERHOUSE, ALASKA REGION DIRECTOR

Another year has come and gone. We now find the country in a financial crisis, a new federal administration, high fuel costs in villages, but the Yukon, the mighty Yukon and its tributaries still remain flowing along. It is amazing that the whole world can seem to have gone crazy and the People of the Yukon Watershed can count on the rivers to continue as they have for thousands of years.

At this time of year it is good to remember about how lucky we are to be able to draw strength from the rivers. But, in this modern age that they need our help. In these times there are many threats to clean water. These threats, mostly manmade, continue and it is up to all of us to work hard towards the day when the threats will be gone and the rivers run clean.

So, I say to you in this season, hug your loved ones, help the less fortunate, and remember to take care of the rivers, they are the life blood of our way of life.

Yukon Territory Office Grows in '09

BY ROB ROSENFELD, YUKON REGION DIRECTOR

As the New Year approaches, the YRITWC Yukon Region office in Whitehorse is preparing for a busy spring and summer. The outlook for next year includes 3 interns, 2-3 staff, a busy water quality monitoring season, and the bi-annual summit to be held in the Whitehorse area, August 6-8th, 2009.

The Yukon Region will welcome two summer interns from Canadian Lawyers Abroad which will be the second time YRITWC has worked with the program. YRITWC will also bring an Organizational Development Intern from the School for International Training for 12 months.

Staff will be focused on continuing

collaborative work with the First Nations to conduct ongoing water-quality monitoring which will include base-line studies with the U.S. Geological Survey. It is being paid for by the Northern Strategy Trust and supported through a partnership with the Yukon Territory Division of Water Resources.

We look forward to visiting the homelands of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation during the YRITWC Summit.

Please come visit us in our new downtown office on the corner of 5th Avenue and Strickland Street or contact us at (867) 393-2199 or (250) 483-5705.

YRITWC Guiding Principles

We will strive to:

- Be Good Listeners
- Be Honest
- Be Consensual
- Be Trustworthy
- Be Respectful
- Be Timely
- Be Unifying
- Be Flexible
- Be Tenacious
- Be Non-judgemental
- Be Fair and Equal
- Have Integrity
- Share Wisdom
- Be Inclusive
- Be Bold
- Be Patient

Turbine, continued

hydrokinetic river turbine produced by New Energy Corporation out of Canada and sold through ABS Alaskan out of Fairbanks. While the elders did not call them hydrokinetic turbines, fish wheels are the best known hydrokinetic device in the watershed, and we knew that many Tribal people have experience and skills from fish wheels that would translate well to operating hydrokinetic turbines to generate electricity from the river.



Turbine resting out of water before installation.

In early April 2008, we decided to purchase New Energy Corporation's "Encurrent" turbine through ABS Alaskan, complete with a custom-designed pontoon boat to install in a Yukon River community that summer. Our search for suitable communities quickly led us to Ruby because of its extremely high cost of energy, community support for the project, and geographical features that included seemingly fast water close to shore, which helped to minimize power transmission costs and logistical challenges. The Encurrent turbine is rated at 5 kilowatts, and if it was producing full power (which is based on how fast the water is flowing and the turbine spinning), it could provide energy for about two homes. The total cost of the system was about \$65,000 including shipping, the pontoon boat, anchoring, and underwater and on-shore power transmission cables. ABS Alaskan and others donated a large amount of in-kind contributions to the project.

Ideally, we would have had a year to prepare for the installation, with detailed site assessments, water speed measurements, river bottom investigations, permitting, and other activities. But if we wanted to get the turbine in the water in the summer of 2008, we needed to rely more on traditional knowledge and on-site innovation. Fortunately, the people in Ruby, including the Tribal and City governments, the electric utility, and our project partners were all up for the task.

In early June we measured the current speeds to make sure the water was fast enough to spin a turbine and produce electricity and to pinpoint the site of the installation. In general, the faster the water, the more energy produced. In this case, the water appeared fast enough to produce power, though certainly on the low side of the curve. Because

of these slower current speeds--which are typical for the Yukon--we did yet another custom design of the turbine that should benefit many watershed communities.

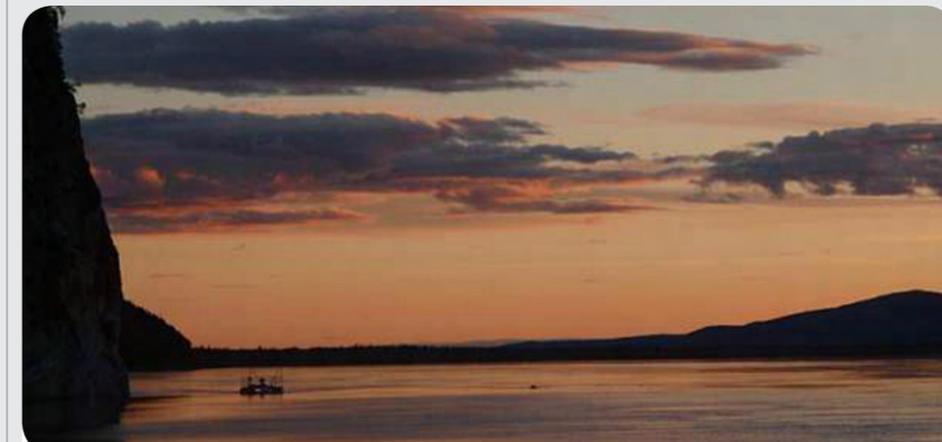
The actual installation took place in early August. We learned many lessons, such as how NOT to anchor a pontoon boat and how many trees can float downriver right after a flood upriver. Thanks to many people in Ruby, including Pat Sweetsir, Stanford Cleaver, Dorothy Captain, Buster

Brown, Jay DeLima, Jenny Peter, Carleton and Holly Koyukuk, and many others, the project was quite successful.

We still have many improvements to make and data to collect to determine how well the system performs, but we are confident that we are on the right path toward reducing diesel fuel use and promoting good stewardship of the Yukon River. The turbine produced power for over a month before it was taken out for the winter. Next year we hope to re-install the system soon after spring break-up, and monitor its performance and possible impacts to fish.

Looking ahead, we have also applied for additional funding through the Alaska Energy Authority to install a 25 kW Encurrent turbine, which could produce five times the amount of electricity. As well, New Energy Corporation has directed a charitable donation of another 5 kW Encurrent turbine from Advantage Products, Inc., based in Calgary, Canada, to the YRITWC for installation in the Yukon Territory in the summer of 2009. We are already looking into appropriate sites for this installation and welcome input on possible locations with swift currents and lack of conflicting uses close to watershed communities in the Yukon Territory.

For more information on this project, other renewable energy technologies, or energy conservation and renewable energy workshops in the watershed contact the YRITWC Energy Department.



The deployed turbine in operation, by the bluff at sunset. Photo courtesy of Eddie Davidson

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Advocacy Updates: Proposed Donlin Creek Mine, Galena Nuclear Reactor, and Yukon Flats Oil Development

• YRITWC has been gearing up to prepare for an expected 2009 submission of an Environmental Impact Statement addressing the proposed Donlin Creek gold mine.

One issue that has emerged as we learn more about this proposal is that mercury has been identified in the samples of gold that have been taken from the site. In other locations such as in the state of Nevada, where 80% of US gold is mined, mercury has been targeted as a major cause of fish consumption advisories as it has moved through the air and water into neighboring states such as Utah. While the proposed Donlin Creek mine is located within the Kuskokwim watershed, it is quite close to the Yukon River watershed and any mercury

released from the mine could end up in the Yukon River.

Another concern is that the proposed mine is so large it would require almost as much energy as the city of Fairbanks uses, yet there is no power plant or transmission lines in the area. An option under consideration is shipping fuel down the Yukon and then by land to the mine site. This could significantly increase chances of a large fuel spill on the Yukon or Kuskokwim watershed and would certainly increase air pollution in the region.

• YRITWC staff has been meeting with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to discuss the proposed nuclear reactor in Galena. Nuclear reactors are typically huge construction projects built for large

cities, but Toshiba Corporation has stated its desire to develop a nuclear reactor that would be sized for small communities such as Galena.

NRC has previously committed to help us develop a set of Tribal consultation protocols so affected Tribes would have an official way to participate in the regulatory process and opportunity to voice their concerns as the proposal takes shape. It appears Toshiba is running into several problems, including the increasing cost of uranium fuel and construction costs for the reactor, the long lead time for NRC approval of a new reactor design that has never been built or tested, and ongoing questions about safety, uranium mining impacts, and disposal of nuclear waste. Our next teleconference with the NRC will be in late January.

• The proposed Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge land transfer between the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Doyon Corporation,

aimed at enhancing oil development opportunities for Doyon, appears to be stalled for now. There are several reasons for this, including significant opposition voiced to the proposal during the EIS process and complications related to valuing the land as a real estate transaction.

A related development that we have just learned about are seismic studies for preliminary oil exploration near the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. This would not involve the federal government in land swaps or real estate appraisals and could perhaps proceed fairly quickly.

We will continue to monitor these issues, considering their potential effects on the Yukon River watershed. Thank you to the Lannan Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation who support our work!

Inter-Tribal Accord Signatories

- Alakanuk Traditional Council
- Alatna Village Council
- Algaaciq Tribal Government
- Allakaket Traditional Council
- Anvik Tribal Council
- Arctic Village Council
- Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council
- Beaver Tribal Council
- Birch Creek Tribal Council
- Canyon Village Council
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Chalkyitsik Village Council
- Chevak Native Village
- Chuloonawick Native Village
- Circle Village Council
- Eagle Traditional Council
- Emmonak Traditional Council
- Evansville Tribal Council
- Grayling IRA Council
- Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government
- Hamilton Tribal Council
- Holy Cross Traditional Council
- Hooper Bay Native Village
- Hughes Village Council
- Huslia Tribal Council
- Iqurmiut Tribal Council
- Kaltag Tribal Council
- Kluane First Nation
- Kotlik Traditional Council
- Koyukuk Tribal Council
- Kwanlin Dun First Nation
- Liard First Nation
- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation
- Louden Tribal Council
- Manley Village Council
- Marshall Traditional Council
- Mentasta Village Council
- Na-cho Nyak Dun First Nation
- Naqragmiut Tribal Council
- Native Village of Bill Moore's Slough
- Native Village of Minto
- Native Village of Shaktoolik
- Native Village of St. Michael
- Native Village of Tanacross
- Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government
- Nenana Native Council
- Nulato Tribal Council
- Ohogamiut Traditional Council
- Paimiut Traditional Council
- Pilot Station Tribal Council
- Pitka's Point Traditional Council
- Ruby Tribal Council
- Scammon Bay Traditional Council
- Selkirk First Nation
- Shageluk IRA Council
- Stebbins Community Association
- Stevens Village Council
- Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation
- Taku River Tlingit First Nation
- Tanana Tribal Council
- Teslin Tlingit First Nation
- Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation
- Venetie Village Council
- Vuntut Gwichin First Nation
- White River First Nation
- Yupiit of Andreafski

Affiliated Organizations

- Kotlik City Council
- Pitka's Point City Council

BACKHAUL BULLETIN

BY STEPHEN PRICE



Backhaul preparations on old vehicles in Nenana

Through the tireless work of Tribal solid waste technicians, the 2008 Backhaul season saw over two million pounds(!) of solid waste removed from the Yukon River Watershed. This fall the Backhaul Program completed and published a **Backhaul "How-To" Manual** which is available on our web site and can be sent to

any Tribe that would like to receive a copy.

The Backhaul Program is holding 4 week-long trainings teaching Tribal workers solid and hazardous waste handling. Trainings will be held in Fairbanks, Galena, St. Mary's, and Anchorage. The classes for 2009 are full but if you are interested in future classes please contact Stephen Price at 907-258-3337 or email at sprice@yritwc.org.

Strategic Planning in Tanacross

BY FAON O'CONNOR

In August 2008, the YRITWC Executive Board and staff met in Tanacross, AK for a three-day Strategic Planning meeting. The intention of this gathering was to reevaluate the YRITWC strategic plan, craft new directives, and discuss visions for our next ten years of work in the Yukon River Watershed.

A copy of the revised Strategic Plan for the Watershed Council (awaiting full Board certification at our 2009 Summit) and the standing Strategic

Plan are both available through our website, www.yritwc.org.

The Executive Board also issued Directives to create Task Forces on:

- * Fisheries and Salmon Issues
- * Water Rights
- * Water Quality Standards
- * Climate Change

These task forces will meet over the next year and present reports to the entire Board of 66 signatory Tribes and First Nations at the 2009 YRITWC Summit in Whitehorse, YT.



Many thanks to the Tanacross community members and Tribal Council for their generosity during our stay!

ANNOUNCEMENTS



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WWW.YRITWC.ORG > MEDIA > NEWSLETTER

Apply Now for EPA CARE Grant!

Around \$3 million will be available in 2009 to support community-based partnerships to reduce pollution at the local level through the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program. EPA anticipates awarding CARE cooperative agreements in two levels. Level I cooperative agreements range from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and will help establish community-based partnerships to develop local environmental priorities. Level II awards, ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 each, will support communities which have established broad-based partnerships, have identified the priority toxic risks in the community, and are prepared to measure results, implement risk reduction activities, and become self-sustaining. Application deadline is March 16, 2009. For more info go to www.epa.gov/care.

ALASKA FORUM ON THE ENVIRONMENT 2009

will be held **February 2-6, 2009**.

Sessions topics include: climate change, energy, environmental regulations, cleanup and remediation, fish & wildlife, solid waste, and of course much more. YRITWC Energy, Backhaul, and Brownfields Department will all be presenting. Hope to see you there! For more info or to register, go to www.akforum.org.

President Elect's Message to Native Americans

BY ROB ROSENFELD

President Elect Barack Obama made landmark promises to Native Americans in his speech to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) in October of 2008. President Elect Obama will take office on January 20th, 2009 at which point we will all have the fortune to observe his actions pertaining to his many commitments.

Highlights of President Elect Obama's speech to NCAI leadership follow: "We need more than just a government-to-government relationship. We need a Nation-to-Nation relationship and I will make sure that Tribal Nations have a voice in the White House. I'll appoint an American Indian Policy Lead Advisor to my senior White House staff to work with Tribes and we will host an annual summit with tribal leaders to come up with an agenda that works for tribal communities. That is how we will make sure you have a seat at the table when important decisions are being made about your lives, about your Nations, and about your people."

In order to view President Elect Obama's NCAI Video Speech:

1. Search for "Barack's Message for First Americans" or
2. Go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWocEgc3bPK

2009 SUMMER INTERNSHIP AVAILABLE!

The Alaska Conservation Foundation has chosen YRITWC to be a host organization for the 2009 Conservation Intern Program! Interested college students or recent graduates should contact YRITWC staff for more information about the 12-week paid position for a Science and Energy Intern.

We will tailor this position to the candidate's skills and interests. However, our vision is that the Science and Energy intern will support the Science and Energy departments through topical research and communication strategy development. The two main summer activities will be: 1) research and synthesize the progress of environmental science and renewable energy initiatives throughout the watershed and state, and 2) participate in a broader effort with the Energy and Science departments to better communicate this technical information to village communities and Tribal leaders. This two part focus will allow the intern to learn about statewide cutting edge achievements in environmental science, renewable energy, and rural technologies and help to shape the social impact of these developments by informing YRITWC member communities. This position is well suited for individuals with interests in science, energy solutions for Alaska, rural Alaska sustainability, and communication.

Applications due by Feb. 15th. Go to www.yritwc.org for application information.

There's a new way to reach out and help Alaskans. Apply for your PFD online and you can share part of your dividend with some of your favorite Alaska nonprofits. It's a chance for all of us to come together and give a little extra. Just Pick, Click, Give.

Give Cash. Make Change. For Alaska.

PickClickGive.org

YRITWC is pleased to announce that we are part of the new PFD Charitable Contributions Program for 2009. The Alaska Legislature passed a law in 2008 making this new way to give possible for all Alaskans filing for their PFD on-line. We are excited about the opportunity that it provides all Alaskans to give to their favorite nonprofit organizations. This program provides a safe, secure and easy way to make a donation.

Let's Connect Online!

BY SONTA HAMILTON

Despite the long distance from the headwaters to the mouth of the Yukon River, connecting and communicating with Tribes has been possible through the organization web site (www.yritwc.org). In recent months, YRITWC launched an updated web site which makes it easier for Tribes and the general public to stay connected with departments and YRITWC staff.

Sustainable Lands Department staff has made it a priority to utilize the web site to outreach and provide data to participating Tribes that have signed up with the Brownfields Tribal Response Program. So far, the site contains an



interactive map of the Yukon River watershed region which specifies what work, such as the inventory or completed assessments, have been completed in the communities. There

is a link to the Public Record which lists brownfield sites that have received some level of assessment or clean-up.

In the upcoming months, expect to see a brownfields public database of sites within the Watershed and an enhanced map. This will be a useful tool for Tribes to view and prioritize contaminated sites within their communities. To allow for more discussion of brownfields questions and concerns, an online forum link will also be available in the future on the Sustainable Lands Department site. Log on to the web site periodically for updates!

The Samples Are In

BY BRYAN MARACLE

The 2008 field season has now come to a close, and we have officially closed out a three year project for our ANA Environmental Regulatory grant. Thanks to the hard work of the local environmental workers and YRITWC staff the 2008 season produced 197 sample kits (1379 individual samples) and over the past three years we have collected 424 sample kits (2968 individual samples). We have compiled all the field data from all three years, the 2006 and 2007 lab data is complete and we are currently waiting for the 2008 lab results. We are currently mining water quality data (2001-2005) from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Water Information System with the objective to combine selected water quality parameters into an 8-year database, continuing to build toward long-term datasets.

While at our strategic planning meeting in Tanacross, I was asked, "After 3 years of work collecting data, what do we know?" This question is difficult to answer because the scientific method requires data verification through quality control and quality assurance practice before data interpretation can begin. Now

that data collection has occurred we must begin a transition toward the interpretation stage. The first steps of this process include plotting data in graphs for visual analysis, combining preliminary data from 2006 and 2007 with published historical USGS data, incorporating related datasets such as the 2007 healing journey data, and conducting an extensive literature review of interpreted and published data to compliment our findings. Our preliminary findings suggest that water quality of the Yukon Basin is changing; for example, there appears to be downward trend in alkalinity across the Watershed, suggesting possible changes in ground water flowpaths. Other findings of interest include water temperature variability is greater than expected; significant exports of nitrates from the Tanana basin; an unexpected geochemical influence of the Koyukuk River on the Yukon River; and the documentation of a possible short-lived uptake of carbon-dioxide by the Yukon River at a basin-wide scale (carbon dioxide measurements usually show the Yukon river as a source to the atmosphere). It is important to stress that these data interpretations are still

in preliminary stages and subject to modification through scientific method. Although the Yukon River Basin is an exceptional basin to study the effects of climate change because it is not complicated by the man-made effects of hydrologic controls, working at scales as large as the Yukon River basin introduces a multitude of geochemical and ecological variables that range from differences in climate regimes, variable vegetation cover, geologic terrains, and hydrologic conditions ultimately having an effect on the water quality of the Yukon River and its tributaries. In short, the Yukon River Basin ecosystem is complicated and the Yukon River can be viewed as a great integrator of all these variables. 'Connecting the dots' will require time and collaboration from all disciplines and walks of life. We hope to have a more detailed synopsis some time in early 2009.

Over the course of the winter months we will be updating the YRITWC website with information posters, site data, community photos maps, and other information resources.



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