



E-Currents

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

Summer 2018 Newsletter

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Letter from our Alaska Region Director

By Kelly Donnelly, Alaska Director

How much plastic does your family use each week? What happens to that plastic when you're done with it? How could we all use less plastic? These are important questions for each of us, our communities, and our planet.

While there are some legitimate and genuinely helpful uses for plastics and other petroleum-base products, we, as a society, have gone overboard and the environment, aquatic life, and animals are paying the price.

Every bit of plastic ever created is still here.

The durability that makes it convenient for packaging also makes it difficult to break down. Plastic grocery bags can take as much as 20 years; disposable diapers can take 450 years; fishing line, 600 years; shotgun shell casings can take as much as 1,000 years.



Photo by Ted Jacobson

We can make a difference in how much plastic is floating in our rivers, oceans, and polluting our lands just through simple choices. Use solid soaps, shampoos, and conditioners instead of liquid versions eliminate all those shampoo bottles and pump soap dispensers. Bring your own coffee mug to meetings or coffee shops instead of using

styrofoam ones. Join communities like Emmonak, Hooper Bay, Chevak, Ft. Yukon, plus more that have banned or passed an ordinance to ban plastic shopping bags, choosing to use cardboard boxes or reusable shopping bags instead. There are many, many other ideas for how you can reduce the use of plastics and every one of them you adopt is one more step in protecting our futures.

To see how simple changes, affect the amount of plastic we use, I am offering the "My Plastic Week" Challenge from August 15-September 30, 2018. Stay tuned for details, but the gist is that we want to (a) post photos of how much plastic a household uses in a week, and weigh it, and then (b) track their plastic usage for at least four weeks, trying alternatives to reduce the amount used. Households that can reduce their plastic use by at least 25% will be entered into a drawing for a \$500 gift card. The more

you reduce, the more entries you'll have. I hope that we can count you in!

Okay, I'll get off my soapbox. I hope this edition of our newsletter finds you all busy with fishing, gardening, and enjoying all that our beautiful watershed has to offer. Keep your eyes peeled for YRITWC in

your areas, providing trainings, doing brownfield inventory work and assessments, monitoring water quality, and doing their very best to support you in your efforts to protect and sustain the watershed.

Warmly,

Kelly

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Have news to share?

If you have an announcement, newsworthy story, or would just like to update everyone on your recent projects, please consider submitting content to our next newsletter!

If interested, please contact
Emily Anderson at (907) 258-
3337 or by email
eanderson@yritwc.org

Meet our new intern: Daniel Ahrens!

Hey! My name is Daniel Ahrens, and I am excited to be the Alaska Conservation Foundation Ted Smith Conservation Intern at the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council this summer. I'll be working with the Science team developing a Mining Advocacy Toolkit. I am excited to learn about the unique challenges in and opportunities for the Yukon River and become a better and more thoughtful listener as I work with people across the watershed.

Prior to this summer, I recently graduated from the University of California, Berkeley where I studied Environmental Science. I grew up in Northern New Mexico's Rio Grande Valley in Los Alamos where spending many summers on a trail crew developed my sense of stewardship. Previously, I studied the river geomorphology of the Yukon River at Los Alamos National Laboratory, advocated for Native American Policy in the Obama White House Domestic

Policy Council, and synthesized the two at NOAA improving scientific networks in Alaska. I recently finished my senior thesis on Indigenous water governance, synthesizing qualitative and quantitative policy analyses. I love road trips through the American West (I drove the Alcan up), any coffee I can get my hands on, and riding my bright green bicycle, Granny Smith. I am excited to engage with the important work of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council this summer.

2018 Creek Clean Up

By Emily Anderson, Outreach Coordinator

This May, the YRITWC staff participated in our first Creek Cleanup in Anchorage. We usually do the City Wide Cleanup held earlier in the spring but being dedicated to waterways, we thought it was only appropriate to help clean up the creek. Our cleanup location was Ship Creek, a very popular fishing spot located downtown at the mouth of Cook Inlet, near the Port of Anchorage. We can even see the mouth of Ship Creek from our office.



Staff members pose next to the trash we collected.

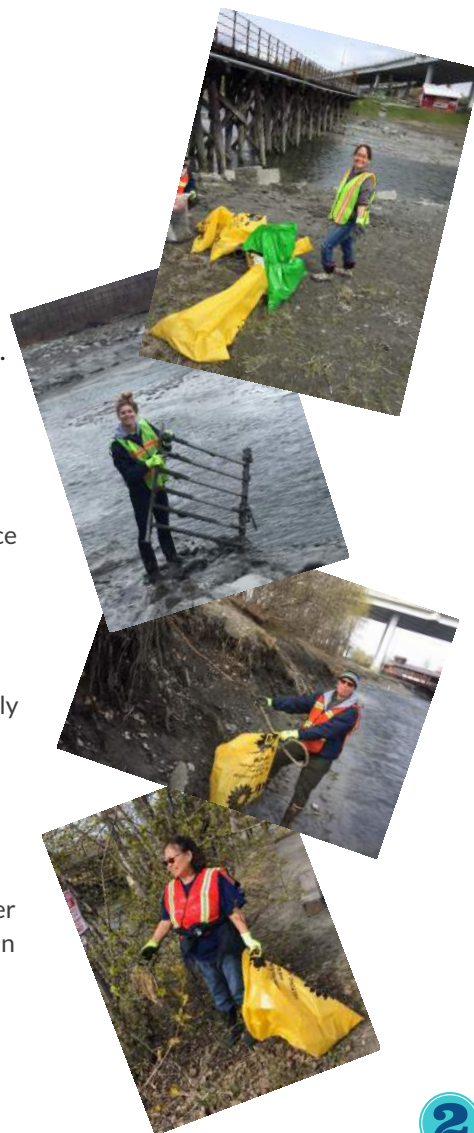
To our surprise, when we first started we actually didn't notice much trash! We were pleased until we made our way down the creek near the mouth and into the muddy banks. Buried deep and on the surface was a ton of fishing line. It was like a spider web of plastic fishing line along the bank of the creek. Anchorage Waterways Council even has dedicated trash bins for plastic fishing lines in several spots along Ship Creek. They gave us a trash bag specifically for fishing line that we were able to fill.

Our Science Director, Edda was even named "Most Valuable Creek Cleanup Player" because she went too far into the mud to get a wad of fishing line and got stuck. After about 30 minutes of trying to free her feet, the mud claimed her Xtra-Tuff boots! After a fun filled day, we left with about 10 bags of trash and a large piece of metal fencing.



Kari and Edda being creek clean up heros!

More photos of our fun





New Pilot Program: YRITWC Brownfields Leadership Working Group

By Emily Anderson, Outreach Coordinator

YRITWC will be starting a pilot project this summer aimed at the environmental leaders within our communities; Brownfields Leadership Working Group. The goal of this working group is to create a network of five to eight tribal representatives aspiring for change in their communities related to brownfields. You don't need experience in the brownfields program, just the passion and determination to get things done! We are looking for dependable, reliable, altruistic tribal representatives to be a part of this group to build capacity and help with pushing our brownfields projects along.

For starters, brownfield properties are real properties that are underused or underutilized due to the presence of perceived contamination, pollutant, or hazardous substances. The EPA Brownfields Program is beneficial to communities because it involves a reuse plan as well as leveraging jobs within communities. Brownfields sites come in all shapes in sizes but commonly in rural Alaska we see them as old tank farms, buildings containing hazardous materials such as lead and asbestos, petroleum spills, old dumpsites, etc.

In this group, you will attend a workshop about Brownfields 101, introduction to our upcoming brownfields mobile app, and Environmental Site Assessment Work. Throughout the year, you will attend audioconferences with myself and other

resources and sources of funding to help move our projects along. You even have a chance to attend the National Brownfields Leadership Summit in Washington D.C this September! Because this is a pilot program, it will be a learning experience for all parties as we look for recommendations and feedback during the process.

The goals of the working group are to push sites towards their reuse goal while building capacity to assist with Environmental Site Assessments and other projects. This will be done by developing a vision for the communities' sites, work together to find resources for additional funding, workshops to strengthen their leadership skills and act as a model for other tribes with brownfield sites. Our working group participants will be ensuring YRITWC database is constantly up to date regarding the sites in their community.

Stay tuned for the application packet on our website. Please do not hesitate to reach out for more information!

(907) 258-3337 or eanderson@yritwc.org



members plus informative webinars. We also plan on conducting a Qualified Sampler Course so you are capable of getting hands on experience. Within the group, we will share



Participants of the Hazwoper held in Alakanuk

A Season Full of Successful Solid Waste Trainings

by Katherine Brower, Solid Waste Management Coordinator

The solid waste department for this past quarter has been busy conducting three 40 Hour HAZWOPER trainings to the communities of Hughes, Alakanuk, and Nenana. All that attended the training passed and are now certified. Because of these trainings, some participants have been able to immediately obtain employment with their new certification. One participant immediately got a job with Doyon Corporation that is contracted with Conoco Phillips up north with the National Petroleum Reserve, NPR. Another gentleman got a job the following Saturday with Cruz Construction Company, while another participant is currently attending more trainings in Seward AVTEC which requires HAZWOPER certification prior to starting the program.

YRITWC Solid Waste Management conducts trainings throughout the watershed and tries to spread the trainings equally and as you can see, the most current trainings were in different regions of the watershed. From these trainings each of the participants walks away with personal protective equipment (PPE), their training

manual and workbooks so that they can refer to them when they are due for their 8-hour refresher certification the following year.

On June 27 – 29, 2018 at Holy Cross there will be a combined training on Integrated Solid Waste Management, Drum Crusher and Freon Removal training. Travel Reimbursement up to \$750 will be available for participants that successfully complete the training. Anyone that applies for trainings will need to have a sponsor to pay for their travel and per diem. The sponsor will be the one that is reimbursed.

Any information you need is available in the YRITWC website. If you or your staff needs training in solid waste management from Integrated Solid Waste Management, HAZWOPER, Freon Removal, staging and preparing for backhaul, hazardous materials transportation you can let Katherine R. Brower know and she will make an assessment to make the training's possible.



Wilson at graduation

Congratulations Nicole!

by Edda Mutter, Science Director

We are very proud to congratulate Dr. Nicole Wilson on her great achievement. Dr. Wilson, graduated with a PhD in Research Management and Environmental Studies from the University of British Columbia. Her dissertation on “More precious than gold”: Indigenous water governance in the context of modern land claims in Yukon will deepen the understanding of Indigenous people, their relationship to water and essential water governance. Nicole has been a long-time partner over the past six years and contributed strongly towards many projects such as Health Canada and ION water quality and active layer program.

Update on Backhaul Alaska

by Simone Sebalo, Zender Environmental

What is Backhaul Alaska? It is a program that will move hazardous waste out of rural Alaska villages by using a centrally-coordinated network of villages, statewide uniform training, streamlined transporter logistics, and brokered recycling. You may access the draft program plan as well as the high-resolution version of the attached outreach brochure at www.BackhaulAlaska.org. The idea for a statewide system was initially conceived by Senator Murkowski and it has been developed based on the small and large group meetings that have been held over the last two years. The program plan has expanded to a **long term vision of a rural Alaska waste service that reduces waste-related costs for private and public projects and creates local village jobs.**

The first Pilot Project for Backhaul Alaska is underway and several YRITWC communities are involved. A full update about the Pilot Project and more can be viewed at www.zendergroup.org/docs/BASpring2018Bulletin.pdf



New Publication from the Science Team

by Edda Mutter, Science Director

The science team and collaborators are continuing their effort to inform interested stakeholders on your amazing accomplishment with ION. This month we are very proud in announcing a new publication on “Community-based monitoring as the practice of Indigenous governance: A case study of Indigenous-led water quality monitoring in the Yukon River basin authored by Nicole J. Wilson, Edda Mutter, Jody Inkster and Terre Satterfield in the Journal of Environmental Management.



Maryann enjoying surface water sampling

Staff Participate in Environmental Sampler Workshop

by Edda Mutter, Science Director

The science team coordinated with Dr. Birgit Hagedorn for an environmental qualified sampler workshop. The YRITWC environmental samplers gained theoretical and field background relating to field and laboratory practices. The workshop contained information on successfully conducting soil, surface and groundwater sampling, insights in field analytical methods, contaminated site evaluation and sample handling such as preservation and shipping. This workshop was funded by the Lannan Foundation to enhance Tribal capacity in conducting successful soil and water monitoring in areas suspected of pollutants.



Edda participating in the recent workshop

Upcoming Qualified Sampler Workshop

with Birgit Hagedorn, PhD

July 23-26
Anchorage

For more information visit environmentalsampler.com or email info@searchlc.com

Community Action to Tackle Plastic Waste

by Thomas Brower III, Drinking Water Improvement Coordinator

Educate the communities across our great land of Alaska, on the impacts of the onetime use plastic bags have on the environment, rivers, lakes, oceans, and beaches. Start by observing and researching your community. Walk around and take pictures where there are large number of plastic bags. This could be in the vicinity of stores, in and around landfills, in and around your yard, and throughout the community.

A great resource for each community is a summer youth cleanup program. Every summer youth pick up large quantities of plastic bags. Have a big youth rally across the community with banners and rally at the tribal/city council meetings.

In every community there are alternatives other than using plastic bags: cardboard boxes, bring your own home made bags, pack bags or reuse your plastic bags. This will help as an individual to support banning of plastic bags as to eventually break the personal habit.

Plastic Saving Tips

1. Research the community; do the stores, schools, or restaurants use onetime use grocery bags? Encourage them to stop ordering plastic bags.
2. Take photos of summer youth clean up programs picking up plastic bags and track amount the amount collected around the community. Let the kids rally at the rivers.
3. Educate the community to change habits by using alternative grocery bags like mesh nylon bags.
4. Work together as a tribe to pass a resolution to ban plastic bags all together!
5. Research grants that help your community reduce its plastic and other forms of waste. EPA Pollution Prevention (P2) Grant is a great start.



Catch Up with IGAP

by Kari Young, IGAP Coordinator

Things are picking up for the IGAP department as the beginning of summer has arrived. Edda, YRITWC's Science Director, was in Fort Yukon in early June for a successful water quality training with folks from the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG). They were able to go and collect water quality samples as well as to incorporate hands-on learning into the training. In YRITWC's spring issue, it was announced that through IGAP grant funds, YRITWC would be making funds available to signatory tribes to assist with the removal of solid waste through backhaul mini grants. Funds requested through the mini grants could be up to \$3,250. The selection committee reviewed applications from nine tribes to make the difficult decision of which five would be awarded the mini grants. Thanks to those who applied for the backhaul mini grant and for the strides you are taking to remove solid waste from your community! IGAP has also been working on educational material. I am revising curriculum I created last year that highlights the importance of water and water quality. I am also in the process of making an educational activity booklet for youth that focus on watershed education. My goal in this project is to create more awareness about what a watershed is and the importance of keeping the land and water in that watershed clean. If you have any questions or input on my educational work or if you would like to join the GAP listserv where I send out updates, please email me at kyoung@yritwc.org. I hope everyone has a wonderful summer!

Healthy Lands, Water, Wildlife, and Communities: Working Together for a Better Future

by Leanna Heffner, Partnership Director for the Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative

As a recent newcomer to Alaska I have been continually in awe of the incredible vastness and beauty here, in addition to the strong connections that Alaskan communities have to the land and all that it provides. I grew up in the deserts of New Mexico, a place that inspires much of the same profound connection to spirit, life, and wildness. And so, when I arrived in Alaska nearly two years ago, I felt very much at home.

What has made my experience here especially wonderful, is that I've had the privilege to partner with amazing people in Alaska and western Canada who are working together to keep our lands, waters, wildlife, and communities healthy and resilient. I've had this opportunity by working with the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) for the last two years. The LCCs are self-directed partnerships comprised of many partners, such as Indigenous leaders, scientists, land and resource managers, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders. In 2011 and 2012, five LCC partnerships were established throughout Alaska and western Canada, originally funded by the Department of Interior as a way for these diverse groups to work together on shared conservation goals – essentially empowering these groups of organizations to be more effective together than any one entity can be alone.

The LCCs in Alaska have provided a way for forward-thinking leaders to build relationships and collaboratively tackle critical issues such as climate change, food security, land use planning, resource extraction, and community resilience. The LCCs have respected and included Indigenous knowledge along with scientific research to help address these concerns. What I appreciate most about the LCC partnerships, in addition to bringing together so many diverse people and organizations, is that we use an approach that breaks past the artifice of bureaucratic boundaries: instead we holistically focus on the land across long distances. We recognize that animals, plants, water, weather, and people are interconnected across these distances and cannot be treated as separate, especially if we are to successfully adapt to climate change, protect water quality and our food sources, and determine how to manage our lands and resources responsibly. The LCC partnerships have built themselves around this principle, and we have been helping to lead and support efforts to use large-scale, connected approaches in order to solve the challenges of our rapidly changing, modern-day world.



Leanna Heffner, Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative

Most recently in my new position as Partnership Director for the Northwest Boreal LCC, I have been getting to know our partners throughout interior Alaska and northwest Canada, such as the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and Tanana Chiefs Conference, as well as reaching out to others who are interested in working with us. Together our partners have created critically important tools to inform decision-making – based on western science and Indigenous knowledge – related to climate change, human impacts on the land, and wildlife and land management.

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The LCCs have respected and included Indigenous knowledge along with scientific research to help address these concerns.



Northwest Boreal LCC Steering Committee members and local leaders from the Upper Tanana region, during an April 2018 gathering in Tok to network and discuss issues that impact local communities in the region.

Looking ahead to the future, the Northwest Boreal LCC partnership plans to support efforts for Indigenous-led land use planning and community-based monitoring. As we move forward in our work, I hope to connect with communities along the Yukon River, and to continue to grow Indigenous leadership within our partnership. This summer I will be fortunate enough to join the YRITWC staff for part of their annual Yukon

River float, and greatly look forward to the opportunity to visit the communities of Rampart and Tanana. I invite anyone to contact me at Leanna@nwblcc.org with questions or feedback. To learn more about the LCCs in Alaska, information can be found at www.northernlatitudes.org.

2018 Backhaul Mini Grant Recipients

by Kari Young, IGAP Coordinator

YRITWC, through an IGAP grant from the EPA, made funds available to signatory tribes to assist with the removal of solid waste with up to \$3,250 in funds via a mini backhaul grant. Signatory tribes were invited to apply by this opportunity by filling out the application form, sharing backhaul plans that the funds would be used for, and by agreeing to create a success story if awarded. YRITWC gave preference to communities that demonstrated capacity for safe handling of potentially hazardous materials as well as those who aimed to remove white goods, the focus of 2018's mini grant cycle. This year, YRITWC was able to award five mini grants. A total of nine communities applied and this year proved to be a competitive selection process. Thank you to all who applied! YRITWC hopes to have mini backhaul grants available for FY2019 so keep an eye out for the future opportunity. Congratulations to this year's recipients!



Hazwoper trainees stage waste for backhaul

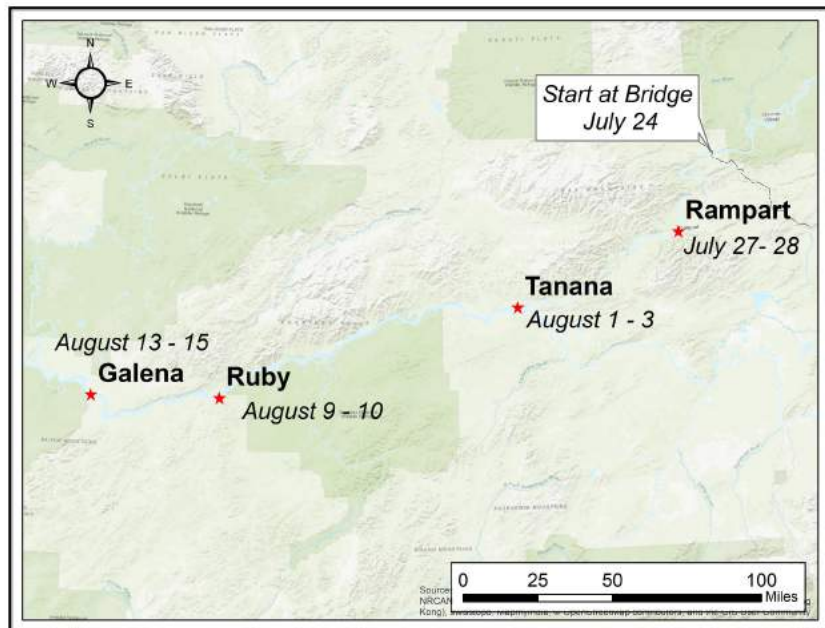
- *Alakanuk Traditional Council*
- *Anvik Tribal Council*
- *Chalkyitsik Village Council*
- *Native Village of Ohogamiut*
- *Native Village of Ruby*

River Trip 2018!



This summer YRITWC staff are looking forward to a canoe trip from the Dalton Highway Bridge to Rampart, Tanana, Ruby and Galena. We will be documenting continuous water parameters along the way, as well as collecting samples at established sites. We can also work to address the Brownfield and water sampling training needs of communities. In addition, we will work with Tribal Councils to convene community meetings about mining to help shape our mining program, and interviewing Elders about resilience.

Keep an eye out for
the river trip folks
and say hello!



Opportunities Outside of YRITWC



AYEA YO SUMMIT

The application period is open for the Youth Organizer Summit. The Summit takes place Aug. 31- Sept. 3

akcenter.org/ayea/yo-summit/



SPILL RESPONSE TRAINING

July 24-26 in Bethel, AK

For more information about this training please call 907-428-4111



FREE WEBINAR! JUNE 26

"How to Stand out From the Crowd in Online Grant Applications"

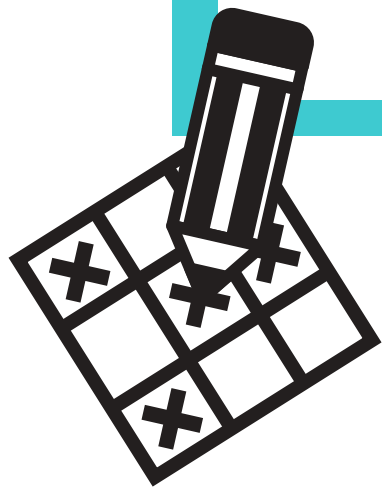
<https://goo.gl/55D1E8>







RTOC COORDINATOR POSITION

To apply for this position visit region10rtoc.net/were-hiring/

YRITWC'S NATURE BINGO



Fill out the bingo below to get five in a row either across, down, or diagonal. Write answers down on bingo square when applicable. **Once you get a bingo, send it into YRITWC for a prize!** You can fax it to (907) 258-3339, email it to Kari at kyoung@yritwc.org, or mail it to the office at 725 Christensen Dr., Suite 3; Anchorage, AK 99501 with Attn: Kari.

<p>Start a garden</p> 	<p>Write your name in the dirt</p>	<p>Turn an old t-shirt into a reusable bag</p>	<p>Go bird watching: learn a new species</p> 	<p>Stop and smell the flowers</p>
<p>Go "screen-less" for one day</p>	<p>Learn a new word in your native language</p>	<p>Write down the current temperature outside</p>	<p>Lay down on the ground outside for 15 min. and observe</p>	<p>Have a picnic with friends</p>
<p>Skip a rock on the water</p>	<p>Like or follow YRITWC on social media</p> 	<p>Find something in the trash to turn into something useful</p>	<p>Ask an elder to take a walk with you outside</p>	<p>Eat a meal that is made of local foods only</p>
<p>Sit outside for 30 min. and count how many animals you see</p>	<p>Spend at least one hour outside</p>	<p>Write down 3 things you are thankful for in nature</p>	<p>Find a wildflower and draw a picture of it</p> 	<p>Go outside to find something red, orange, and yellow & then write them down</p>
<p>Describe a place that you have seen erosion taking over</p>	<p>Find some animal tracks and see if you can ID them</p> 	<p>Use a reusable water bottle instead of disposal plastic bottles</p>	<p>Pick up 5 pieces of trash</p>	<p>Start a nature journal</p> 