

Currents

One People

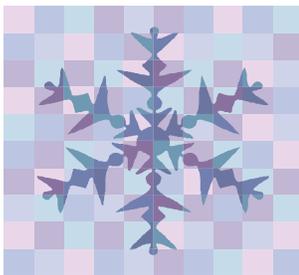
One River

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

DECEMBER 2003

Happy Holidays!

6th Year Anniversary Edition



Special points of interest:

*Alaska Region Office has moved:

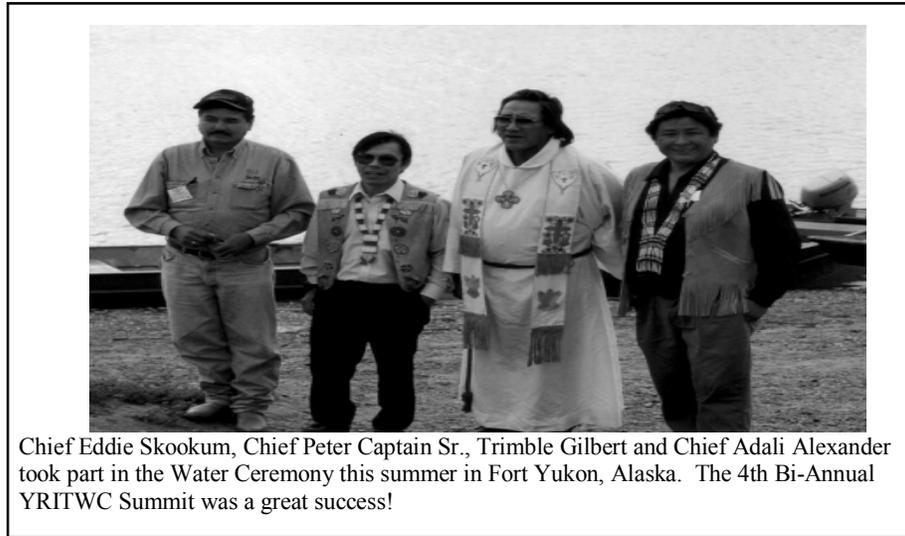
136 Dunkel Street, #2
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-451-2530

*Yukon Region Office has reopened:

Box 31213
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 5P7
867-393-2199

Inside this issue:

AK Region Director	2
Interview with Paul Erhart	4
Fund Raising	6
Water Quality	8
Training/Funding	11
E.R. Training	13



Chief Eddie Skookum, Chief Peter Captain Sr., Trimble Gilbert and Chief Adali Alexander took part in the Water Ceremony this summer in Fort Yukon, Alaska. The 4th Bi-Annual YRITWC Summit was a great success!

SPEECH FROM THE YRITWC 4th SUMMIT

Clarence Alexander: Good morning. [Clarence speaks in Gwich'in] I have never written anything to talk before. I am doing this just to show you something. I will tell you what I think in Gwich'in. My relations, may the Great Spirit be with you. We have the utmost respect for water. Our ancient ancestors tell us water is life in itself. Treat water with respect. We are alive because of water. Even life, it takes back as quick as it maintains life. Striving for life on our land.

Whenever on our land fish, animals, birds are sick we are the same – we feel the same. Work for water will be the focus of the discussion. Local communities will clean their surroundings. So that is exactly how I think. And when we talk in Gwich'in we find ourselves explaining it in full detail, exactly what it means. And yet, when we try to explain in English, we lose our meaning. So that's why I tried to give you an understanding in Gwich'in and English.

Back in 1997, and even prior to that, all the communities along the Yukon were expressing their concerns about the water. Not necessarily the water, but they were talking about fish, the birds, about animals and all the surrounding areas. They started recognizing something was going wrong. And they really had to do something about it. If we waited, we would have been still waiting. It means our health, our good health. If our animals and everything around us is healthy we as people along the Yukon River will also be healthy.

PASS IT ON

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Celebrating an Important Anniversary!!! By Rob Rosenfeld, Alaska Region Director

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council is celebrating its six year anniversary during December of 2003. It is hard to believe six years have passed since the first gathering in December of 1997. It was -47 degrees in December of 1997 when Native Leaders and Elders flew in small planes and traveled by snow machines to the remote village of Galena, Alaska along the Yukon River. First Nation Leaders came from the Yukon Territory from the headwaters of North America's third largest river.

The untold wounds of the Yukon River were shared by Chiefs and Tribal Leaders. Participants were stunned by reports of mines that carelessly spilled severe toxic waste into the River at the headwaters into the Tagish Lake. More injuries were revealed as Leaders learned of a Creosote Plant that released a tremendous amount of chemicals into the Tagish Lake located at the Headwaters of the Yukon River. Hearts weighed heavier as the first day unfolded and we learned of raw sewage being dumped into the Yukon River by the City of Dawson. The testimonies continued revealing the horrible neglect of the U.S. military as they have left behind pools of hydrocarbons, and approximately 150-200 thousand contaminated 55 gallon drums spread out over a 58-mile radius in the middle and lower Yukon River area beginning in Galena. All were saddened as they heard the story of the Yukon River. Humbly the Tribal Leaders looked into their own communities and spoke of their own landfills and habits that contribute to an unhealthy Watershed.

Adding further clarity to the seriousness of the gathering, leaders spoke of the increased cancer and leukemia related deaths, and noticeable abnormalities and anomalies in the animals that they live on. Survival of future generations was the main issue that the Tribes addressed.

In May of 1999 the second summit was held. Over 100 people representing 36 Tribes, First Nations and other organizations within the Yukon River Watershed in Alaska and the Yukon Territory of Canada gathered in Mountain Village, Alaska. Chiefs and representatives from the Tlingit, Gwich'in and Koyukon Athabaskan, and Yup'ik Nations—covering the entire 2,000 miles of the Yukon River and several major tributaries—reached consensus on four specific environmental protection and education initiatives in their communities.

The Tribal and First Nation delegates developed Guiding Principles based on cultural values, traditional wisdom, inclusiveness, and their common connection to the River and land. These Guiding Principles have directed the work of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council.

Yukon River Indigenous Peoples spoke with diverse and united voices to support each other's efforts to protect their traditional territories for future generations. Delegates said they would return to their communities and share what they have learned at the summit. With each community taking responsibility for their portion of the River, and the YRITWC coordinating the wider effort, summit participants hoped to restore both their traditions and the River on which those traditions depend. Since the inception of the Watershed Council, the staff has assisted the indigenous governments in many ways in the areas of Environmental Education, Assessment and Monitoring of the watershed and in providing trainings and workshops in water quality assessment, grants management, emergency response planning, hazardous waste management, strategic planning, grant writing, quality assurance project plan development, environmental education teacher training, and Clean Water Act trainings; just to name a few.

The greatest successes to celebrate in the past six years are those of the many Tribal Environmental Programs and Lands Departments. We congratulate all the hard work of the many Tribal Environmental Technicians, and Natural Resource and Lands Department employees that are working to improve the environmental conditions in their respective territories.

The successes of the Yukon River tribes are abundant and have been recognized by Harvard University and the John F. Kennedy School of Governance. The Harvard Project awarded the YRITWC recognition as a semifinalist in the Honoring Nations award program and the Harvard University / JFK School of Governance has also elevated the YRITWC to another semifinalist position in the Harvard Innovations Award Program.

During the 3rd Summit in Teslin, Yukon Territory, history was made yet again as 34 Indigenous governments on the Yukon River Watershed signed a ground breaking Inter-Tribal Accord articulating their long term commitments to continue the stewardship role that indigenous peoples have always assumed. Since the 3rd Summit 14 Indigenous governments have signed onto the Inter-Tribal Accord totaling 47 Tribal and First Nation governments who have signed their names to paper for the benefit of future generations. The Yukon River is a national and international treasure, which is now in good hands due to the commitments made by 47 Indigenous Governments in the form of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Accord. The Inter-Tribal Accord will take on more and more depth and detail in years to come, so that the tribal governments can assert their collective power in the form of a unified voice, while holding past polluters and future developers accountable. The stage is set for the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council to coordinate the unified voices of tribal governments in order to truly make their way to planning, regulatory, and enforcement decision making tables. Advocacy on the Yukon River is urgent due to eroding national and state regulations and increased development pressures.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Celebrating an Important Anniversary Continued...

During the 4th Summit in Ft. Yukon the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) presented our new resource, "Opportunities for the Protection of the Yukon River Watershed," (available at www.yritwc.com), which is the 1st phase of our collaborative effort with the ILRC. YRITWC staff time was dedicated to the development of this valuable tool which was utilized to launch a historic dialogue on the significance of relevant international laws, agreements and treaties. The YRITWC is now approaching foundations to fund an advocacy coordinator position to assist with completing phase 2 of this advocacy tool, which will focus on educating tribes about domestic and provincial laws that apply to the Yukon River Watershed. Additionally, the advocacy coordinator will accomplish other significant tasks including the completion of an advocacy strategy, the identification of potential advocacy partners and the implementation of current resolutions that were signed at the most recent Summit in Ft. Yukon. One resolution was focused on applying pressure to Dawson City and the Yukon Territory government to build a secondary sewage treatment facility. The mayor of Dawson City was so concerned about the power and potential impact of this resolution that he drove to Fairbanks from Dawson City and flew to Ft. Yukon to meet with the Tribal Leaders to establish a ground breaking working relationship. As a result, the YRITWC was invited to take a seat at the decision making table that oversees the selection and building of the sewage treatment facility. Paul Erhart, the YRITWC Assessment and Monitoring Coordinator, from the Tanana Tribe was selected by the entire leadership to sit on this very important oversight committee.

Clearly the YRITWC is continuing its responsibility towards the goal of being able to drink directly from the Yukon River within 50 years. During the 4th summit the YRITWC mission was expanded by a resolution submitted by the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments (CATG). The CATG resolution passed by consensus and directed the YRITWC staff to begin working to empower indigenous governments to effectively co-manage all environmental and natural resources. The YRITWC made its first step towards implementing this resolution by holding a strategic planning workshop in Ruby. The Ruby Tribal Government hosted a 3-day training that resulted in a draft co-management plan that will be used for the Ruby Tribe to develop co-management agreements with local and regional native corporations. The Ruby Tribe has graciously offered to share this plan with others. We sincerely thank the Ruby Tribal government for hosting this groundbreaking planning effort and we appreciate the brains and expertise of the Ruby Tribal and community members, Pat Sweetsir, Herbie Edwins, Paul Erhart, Serena Alstrom, Leona Kriska and our facilitator Doug Johnson from Professional Growth Systems. We also thank the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments (CATG) for hosting two separate trainings in Ft. Yukon during the fall of 2003. The learning opportunities in Ft. Yukon were Emergency Response and Grants Management trainings. The YRITWC is currently planning the remainder of the winter and spring trainings at this time. The YRITWC is taking the lead in bringing 5 training organizations together to plan two seasons worth of trainings collaboratively. On December 16th, the YRITWC will bring together TCC Environmental Health Department, Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments, Native American Fish and Wildlife and the Yukon-Koyukuk Tribal Environmental Consortia. We plan on increased training and opportunities to arise out of this meeting. Additionally, the YRITWC has started to forge a new relationship with the Institute for Tribal Government at the Hatfield School of Government, College of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University. On December 8, 2003 the YRITWC met with Executive Director Honorable Elizabeth Furse to begin planning an advocacy training to be held in Fairbanks during March or April of 2004. We thank Ken Margolis for introducing us to former-Congresswoman Furse.

Lastly, but most importantly I want to welcome the many new staff members, contractors and interns to the YRITWC team. Our new team consists of Roberta Auston from the Ta'an Kwach'an First Nation who was recently hired as the Yukon Region Director, Edie Solomon from Kaltag, was brought on as a temporary part-time Administrative Assistant, Tija Karklis from the School for International Training is working as an Organizational Development Intern, Ken Margolis former President of the River Network is working as our Interim Development Director, and Kip Cronk who was working as our Logistics and Grants Management Intern is now our Communications and Education Coordinator/Staff Ecologist. Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council current staff and contractors include: Paul Erhart of the Tanana Tribe who is our Assessment and Monitoring Coordinator, Diana Ervin, from the Northway Tribe, is contracted to provide trainings, Carl Gatter, from the Kodiak Island Aleut Tribe, works as our Accountant, and Chris Herberger has been our Bookkeeper since our inception.

At this point, I want to thank Ridolfi Engineering, Inc. who has generously agreed to sponsor our newsletters for an entire year. Ridolfi has done wonderful work with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Metlakatla Tribe, Loudon Tribe and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council to name a few. Please see the enclosed ad and contact Callie and Bruno Ridolfi for excellent services in the areas of waste management planning, habitat restoration, and contaminant remediation. Also I wish to extend a heart felt thank you to the U.S. EPA, the Bureau of Lands Management, First Nations Development Institute, Lannan Foundation, SEVA Foundation, Project AWARE, Norcross Wilderness Foundation, Environment Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Walter Gordan and Duncan Foundation, North American Fund for Environmental Conservation, the Oak Foundation, and the Alaska Conservation Foundation. Finally, thank you to Lester Erhart from Tanana, for all the support and expert training you have given our Tanana staff. We thank Lester for donations of wood, equipment, traditional ecological knowledge and the type of guidance that is there when we need it!! Happy Holidays and a healthy new year.

Sincerely and respectfully: Rob Rosenfeld / Alaska Region Director

YRITWC Under the Ice Research
Interview with Paul Erhart, YRITWC Staff Biologist, by Kip Cronk

WHAT IS UNDER THE ICE RESEARCH:

“200 days a year the river is covered by ice. Very little is known about what is going on under the ice. Under the ice research is auguring a hole through the ice to check ice thickness, flow, depth, bottom configuration and vitals (dissolved oxygen, turbidity, temperature, pH and conductivity). It is more important than summer research. The water in the river is more representative of the whole river because a majority of the river is sealed off by ice. Because the winter river is so representative of itself, it gives me a very good idea of what it carries all of the time. It is a real challenge, but it can be done. Weather permitting testing will be done from December to April.”

WHAT TYPE OF EQUIPMENT IS REQUIRED:

“State of the art equipment such as Sonar (gives bottom configurations), and an all in one water quality meter (measures vitals). I also need a 10-inch auger to drill through the ice and an Eskimo ice pick. The hole is only opened during the testing time and then it is allowed to refreeze.”

“Batteries are needed for the Sonar and water quality meter, but they don’t work very well in the cold. The batteries will need to be insulated to keep them warm and we will need to look into buying a battery pack warmer.”

“GPS is used so that the same spot is used over and over to get data that can be compared later.”

WHERE WILL YOUR TESTING SPOT BE AND WHY?

“I used Traditional Ecological Knowledge from the elders in Tanana to find good testing locations. I have three test sites, two on the Yukon River and one on the Tanana River. One is 40 miles above the Village of Tanana at a spot known as “the Rapids”, with another 40 miles below the Village on the Yukon River where the two rivers mix together. On the Tanana River the location is at “Squaw Point”, because elders told me this is where the Tanana River is mainstreamed.”

“These sites are representative of the whole system as well as showing effects the Tanana has upon the Yukon River”.

HAS THIS TYPE OF RESEARCH BEEN DONE ON THE YUKON RIVER?

“Never. The YRITWC will be doing the first research.”

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO GATHER DATA IN THE SUMMER AND WINTER?

“In the summer you have a lot of tributaries running when it rains and it goes into the river. This shows a big picture of the contaminant load going into the river.”

“Under the ice research is so important because most of the tributaries are frozen and it gives a real solid reading of the Yukon River. Things slow down and it gives me a good opportunity to see what the Yukon River is constantly carrying. It is important to get data when the top of the river is capped by ice.”

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THIS TYPE OF RESEARCH?

“Long term research! To obtain the best research and in 50 years we will be able to tell changes and trends in water quality, ice thickness, climate, etc...”

WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WILL YOU TAKE?

“I will have survival gear such as warm clothing, sleeping bag, shelter, and a satellite phone to deal with the cold temperatures and harsh winds. You need to be able to call out for help if you need it. I will work with Tanana Search and Rescue to let them know where I am going and for how long. I will also have a two-man support crew to help out with the sampling and for protection. The water is deep, cold and moving quickly so it is important to have the support crew in case of an emergency.”

CLOSING COMMENTS:

“You need to have a lot of passion for what you do. There is nothing like doing a job that you love to do. I love my job! It is for the good of the people and the good of the river. What could be better than that?”

50 YEAR VISION: ‘To be able to drink water directly from the Yukon River’

CLARENCE ALEXANDER CONTINUED

When we are finding out that we are not. I have immediate family members who are gone. My assumption is that it might be from the water. Before that people didn't get sick around here. They died of natural death, except for other problems that existed. But natural death was the way our life was. We have people that are dying. I have a friend right now in Anchorage with internal problems. And we have that. All our friends along the Yukon, a lot of us are feeling the same way. And there is nothing we can do for them. And I think the only way we can do something is by striving to take care of our water. To clean it. Do something.

We have done quite a bit right here in our community. Recognizing that whenever you see all the boats along the Yukon right down here at the river bank. There is no more oil cans floating down the river like there used to be. We don't see no more barrels, we don't see no more gas cans. We don't see any camp sites unclean. I think that is all we are here for. We want everything clean and we come from a clean environment. We came from clean ancestors. We have land out there where we go everyday. And people will say "how come we don't see nothing around here?" Well, I do. I see my camp fire place. What more do I need? That's all I have, all I needed – my campfire place.

And that's why it is so important that we keep our land clean because several years ago when I was trying to get land from the outside world they wanted to know why there was no degradation of habitat. What does it mean? It means, how come you didn't ruin the place before we got here so we could recognize it. And I said, "Hey wait a minute! What do I have to prove to you?" What can I do to prove to you that I have been on this land for thousands of years?" So I immediately just claimed our grandfather rights. The only thing I knew is my grandfather's right to claiming our campfire site and that is the way I can claim the land. The only identification I have with my land. Otherwise it is clean. I grew up here, right along the river bank, right here; up to the time I was 10 years old. This is the native community that I knew. Almost just like you all sitting here. We were together; we were like one language, one people, one river – or whatever way you want to look at it. We were just one. And we all spoke Gwich'in and once we all moved from here and moved to the other side of the town we started talking English.

[The children now] we didn't teach them Gwich'in. I will tell you right now, my sisters, I would talk to them in Gwich'in and they would talk to me in English. There are 10 in my family, the first 5 are traditional, the second 5 modern. We say they don't know nothing. We see our young people around the community, and even though they are educated we say they don't know nothing. Why? Because they don't get the same training as a traditional. Me, I had traditional training – meaning that I am aware of all my surroundings. I am aware of my language, I am aware of 2 languages. So I can go back and forth and speak any way I please, which is really good right now. I think there is a move or a feeling to say, "Hey, how come we are losing language? Lets see if we can do something about it." But anyway...

Water – I know one thing. I like this joke because I haven't really seen anybody jumping up and down at the meeting saying I want to drink dirty water. Why are you talking about clean water? This is as simple as that. I haven't really heard anybody fight with us yet; except for those that are polluting it. They're the ones fighting with us. I am hoping we can change that. Maybe, hopefully, that we might be able to sit down and discuss the very presence of those pollutions and find out how we can sit down and talk about it and resolve it. Everything can be done in a good way, they say. Gwich'in people are known to do it in a good way, okay? We have and will keep doing what we are doing and maintaining our way of life and fighting to maintain that way of life.

And that is exactly where we are today. We are dealing with other issues, other than water. But those issues are very important to us, as important as water. And water is the most important, but there are other issues that are right in line.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

FUND RAISING

In some ways, a non-profit organization like the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council is a business. Like a business, YRITWC produces a product, and like a business it must cover the costs of producing and distributing its product.

But, unlike a business, YRITWC does not sell its products to anybody. The YRITWC product is the work, at the direction of the Board of Directors, to protect and restore the health of the Yukon River and the lands that make up its watershed. The Council's product is a gift to future generations as well as a way of paying a debt to the river, which has always taken care of those who live along it.

Most businesses pay their costs by selling their products. For non-profit organizations, we pay our costs through donations from Indigenous governments, and from fundraising.

Indigenous governments contribute \$250 each year to the Council to help it do its work—to pay for rental of offices, staff salaries, and travel and food to Summits and leadership meetings. Beyond those funds, we support our work through fundraising, primarily from government agencies and charitable foundations, and eventually we will also be seeking donations from individuals who care about the Yukon, and perhaps even from corporations.

One day YRITWC will have a full-time fundraiser on staff. Until then, each member of the staff does some work to raise money, and in doing this we get great leadership and support from our Board and Executive Committee members. Ken Margolis, who began working with YRITWC in 1999 when he was president of River Network, has taken on the job of Development (that's fundraising) Director on a part-time basis until we are able to afford a full-time staff member. Ken uses his wide knowledge of the charitable foundation world and his writing skills to help us find the money we need to keep our operation going.

We welcome Ken to the YRITWC and he may be contacted through the Alaska Region Office. ~YRITWC Staff

INDIAN GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM US EPA Region 10

Region 10 of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently soliciting applications for the FY 2004 Indian General Assistance Program from federally-recognized Tribes and tribal consortia.

CFDA Number: 66-926 Indian Environmental General Assistance Program

Important Dates:

February 20, 2004 GAP Application postmark deadline

February 20, 2004 GAP Workplan for PPG postmark deadline

March 24, 2004 Tentative award decisions

May 21, 2004 Final revision deadline

September 30, 2004 Grant awards completed

YRITWC NEW STAFF WELCOME

Roberta Auston, Yukon Region Director
yritwc@yknnet.ca

I am from Lake Le Barge of the Ta'an Kwach'an, born and raised in Whitehorse. I have worked with other First Nation organizations such as the Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dun, The Jim Skookum Friendship Center, and the Ta'an Kwach'an Council. I am familiar with the political, economic, and social fabric of the FN society.

I began working on Oct. 14, 2003. I met with the AK region staff in Fairbanks and have been setting up my office, and organizing the backlog of files and reporting mechanisms. In the near future, I will begin accessing and targeting projects for funding.

If people have songs that they sing for the river or traditional songs that they know, I would be interested in learning them.

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council Staff

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YRITWC NEW STAFF WELCOME

Edie Solomon, Administrative Assistant
esolomon@yritwc.com

My name is Edie Solomon. As some of you might know already, I am the new administrative assistant working part-time. My hours are from 1PM to 4:30PM. I am originally from Kaltag. My parents are Edgar and Dolly Solomon. I worked at Tanana Chiefs Conference in the Family Services Department for three years prior to this job. I am glad to be a part of this organization.

YRITWC WEBSITE LINKS:

Located on our website under the ONLINE RESOURCES tab are Miscellaneous Links. These links have been added to the website to enhance its usefulness as a resource tool. If you have a link that you would like us to add, please email it to kipcronk@yritwc.com.

Looking for upcoming YRITWC events, grant deadlines or workshops? Check out our website under YRITWC INFO, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS and click Upcoming Programs. If you have an upcoming training and would like us to list it on our website please email it to kipcronk@yritwc.com.

VISIT US ONLINE: www.yritwc.com



[Click here to view our new Yukon River Watershed GIS mapping site](#)



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Understanding Water Quality, by Kip R. Cronk, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

Many people are working within the Yukon River Watershed to test the water quality of the river and its tributaries. This guide will help understand the tests that are being performed. In order to have a healthy watershed clean water is needed. To determine that, it is a must to perform water quality testing and understand the results. Once we have the results we can move on to the next step of trying to clean the water or ideally, know that the water in a particular region is clean. We encourage all of the communities within the Yukon River Watershed to complete a Quality Assurance Program Plan (QAPP), monitor the water in their community and to share their information with the YRITWC and other communities. This will allow us to gain tremendous amounts of information about current conditions as well as create historical water quality knowledge of the watershed. In this guide we will discuss temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity and total solids. There are additional tests that can be done, but these 5 tests can give us a good indication about the health of a river.

TEMPERATURE

The temperature of the water is an easy water quality test, but is important. The types of animals and plants that live in the water are dependent on the temperature. Certain types of fish are able to live in warm water, while others require cold water. Temperature is also important in the amount of dissolved oxygen that the water can hold. Cold water is able to hold more oxygen, so when the water begins to warm there will be less and less oxygen.

DISSOLVED OXYGEN (DO)

Dissolved oxygen is essential in a healthy river; without it many plants and animals would not be able to survive. Like us, the animals that live in the rivers need oxygen to support life. Dissolved oxygen readings that are high are a good sign, while low readings indicate there is a problem. Dissolved oxygen enters the rivers in two main ways. The first is through the atmosphere as winds create waves and allow oxygen to enter into the water as well as rapids in the river. The second way that oxygen enters into a body of water is through plants. During the process of photosynthesis (how plants create energy) the plants give off oxygen into the surrounding environment. Just like the trees, shrubs and grasses around us give off oxygen; so do the plants underwater.

pH

pH measures the acidity or alkalinity of the water. Like other water quality parameters, only certain species of plants and animals can live in water with specific pH levels. pH is measured on a scale from 0 to 14, with 0 being acidic and 14 alkaline. Some examples of the scale are: 1-Battery Acid, 2-Vinegar, 6-Rain Water, 7-Distilled Water (Neutral), 8-Baking Soda, 11-Ammonia, 12-Bleach. The examples show pH levels near either end of the pH scale become harsher. Natural conditions such as a limestone rock creates a more alkaline condition, while acid rain may cause the water to become more acidic.

TURBIDITY

Turbidity measures the clarity of the water. If the test results are high, it means that the water is murky, which means that there are many suspended solids in the water. High turbidity levels can be caused by erosion and runoff. Suspended solids can cause the water temperature to increase, clog fish gills and as the solids settle to the bottom cover breeding grounds and eggs. Turbidity can be measured with a Secchi disk or more expensive turbidimeters.

TOTAL SOLIDS

This is a measurement of dissolved and suspended solids. Suspended solids can be things such as silt, plankton, and sewage. Dissolved solids are calcium, nitrogen, phosphorus, iron and sulfur. Total solids can come from runoff of developed areas, streets and lawns.

High amounts of total solids can cause reduced water clarity, decrease photosynthesis, bind with toxic substances and lead to increased temperatures.

Source:

Mitchell, M.K. and Stapp, W.B.. *Field Manual for Water Quality Monitoring*. 11th Edition. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa. 1997

“More and more people are realizing that we need to find better ways to share our world’s natural resources with each other and with other species to ensure that the planet can support life in the future. By allowing poison in our rivers, we are slowly drinking it ourselves. Everything we do affects our water. We are beginning to see how important each of us is to making the world a better place to live, no matter what kind of work we do or how intelligent society says we are.” Mitchell and Stapp, 1997.

Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy, by Rob Rosenfeld

In January 2004, the YRITWC staff and advisors will begin planning the YRITWC Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy. If you wish to be involved please call Tija Karklis at 907-451-2530 or tjakarklis@yritwc.com. Emerging from glacier-fed lakes and mountain streams in the Yukon Territory, crossing the vast and mountainous interior of Alaska, and stretching into the Bering Sea near Russia, the Yukon River supports the longest inland run of ocean salmon in the world. The River provides for not only the salmon and other wildlife such as moose and caribou, but it is also the lifeblood of the Indigenous Peoples who live in the area and depend on the fish and wildlife for their traditions, culture, and sustenance. In 1999 and 2000 the Yukon River experienced a state of emergency due to severe decreases in salmon returns. It is our hope that ongoing monitoring and assessment work will bring to light the reasons for the continued salmon decline. The Yukon River watershed provides essential habitat to numerous species of common conservation concern and is considered by many to be a "biodiversity hotspot," especially for migratory bird routes. As free trade continues to extend its reach across national borders, innovative and cooperative policies that integrate local communities and governmental participation will play an increasingly important role in managing the global commons for mutual benefit. The process of conducting a large watershed assessment by dividing the watershed into smaller components, empowering communities to participate in this process through training, coordination, and long-term monitoring, and then synthesizing all of the individual efforts into a broad and integrated context, provides many opportunities for directing sustainable community development and grassroots environmental protection. We believe we can provide a model for other international watersheds that incorporate numerous governments, jurisdictions, cultures, and natural environments to address human and environmental health along with economic sustainability, international law, and free trade in a collaborative manner.

YRITWC MISSION STATEMENT: We, the Indigenous Peoples from the headwaters to the mouth of the Yukon River, including its tributaries, having been placed here by our Creator, do hereby agree to initiate and continue the clean-up and preservation of the Watershed for the protection of our own and future generations of our Indigenous Peoples and for the continuation of our traditional Native way of live.

CLARENCE ALEXANDER CONTINUED...

So I like to welcome, especially my friends here that I have grown to know over the years, the ones I have worked with – Peter, James, Harold, Pat and Edna. When we first started out we didn't know what was going on. We didn't know what we wanted. We didn't know how to bring you together like this and ask you for your blessings to say, "hey, how can we work together?" And that is all we are asking, is that somehow we need to all work together and make every effort. I will just give you an example.

Native village of Ft. Yukon, GZ Corporation transferred their land to native village here. What does that mean? The native people here own the land. They make their decisions on the land. The corporation is only designed to accept the money that is being made off the land. So the people actually own the land here, every one of them. There is no difference. We have place. Our land is priceless. That is the number one goal of the GZ Corporation; that we will never sell land, not even one square inch. That we haven't sold any land. We are not going to, because it has been transferred, all of it back to our native communities.

Anyway, I would like to thank you for being here. I am supposed to be giving you just a welcome thing here. But whatever...I think we all have to somehow enlighten each other so that we can have some thoughts in our minds as to what we are doing. The question is what you want to get out of this meeting here. That was the question asked of me yesterday. And for the life of me I couldn't answer it, I was tongue-tied. You know what I want? I want clean water. It's as simple as that. I should have said that, but I didn't so I like to thank you. In our hearts we are very happy to have you in our midst and enjoy yourselves. Thank you very much.

YRITWC Executive Committee

YUKON REGION

DAHKA TLINGIT NATION: Harold Gatensby, Carl Sydney - Alternate

VUNTUT GWITCH'IN/TR'ONDEK HWECH'IN: Chief Darren Taylor, Deputy Chief Clara VanBibber - Alternate

NORTHERN TUTCHONE: Chief Steven Buyck, Chief Lucy McGinty & Chief Eddie Skookum - Alternate

KASKA TRIBAL COUNCIL: Chief Sam Donnessey

SOUTHERN TUTCHONE: Geraldine Pope, Chairperson Bonnie Harpe - Alternate

KWANLIN DUN: Lesley Smith

ALASKA REGION

YUKON FLATS: Clarence Alexander, James Nathaniel Sr. - Alternate

TANANA RIVER: Edna Hancock, Charlie Stevens - Alternate

MIDDLE YUKON: Chief Peter Captain Sr., Pat Sweetsir - Alternate

KOYUKUK RIVER: 2nd Chief Karen Kriska, Chief William Derendoff - Alternate

LOWER YUKON: Chief James Landlord, Mary Andrews - Alternate

INNOKO REGION: Roger Hamilton Sr., Chad Walker - Alternate

HELP SAVE PAPER

Please contact the YRITWC staff at 907-451-2530 to receive an electronic version of "Currents" in the future.

Hydrologist Timothy Brabets and a few of his colleagues at the U.S. Geological Survey in Anchorage took a good look at the Yukon River Basin in a paper published in 2000.

(One-Third of Alaska Water Finds Its Way to the Yukon, Article #1518, Alaska Science Forum, by Ned Rozell)

- Counting its headwater basins in Canada, the Yukon River drains 330,000 square miles, an area the size of Turkey.
- Two rivers—the White River that drains the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains and the Tanana River that drains the north side of the Alaska Range—account for 29 percent of the Yukon's total water flow.
- The White and Tanana rivers are largely responsible for making the Yukon brown and silty over much of its length. They carry powdered rock from the Wrangell and the Alaska Range and dump it by the ton into the Yukon.
- The Yukon transports 60 million tons of silt, sand, and clay each year to the Bering Sea.
- The Yukon deposits 20 million tons of silt, sand and clay each year onto its flood plains and gravel bars.
- Glaciers cover just one percent, about 3,500 square miles, of the Yukon River basin.
- The Yukon moves more than 95 percent of all its sediment in May through September. During October through April, the river is almost clear.

TRAINING AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

JANUARY 2-3, 2004, Campaign Training in Anchorage. Start the new year with an excellent training that will give you a concise view of how to run a winning campaign. To register, contact Kay Brown kay-brown@alaska.net.

JANUARY 6, 2004, Proposals due for EPA Environmental Education Grants. Additional information at <http://www.epa.gov/enviroed/grants.html>

JANUARY 15, 2004 (Nominations Due), Call for Nominations to Receive Grants Under the Watershed Initiative. To further preserve and restore the country's waterways, the Bush Administration is calling on the nation's governors and tribal leaders to apply for the second round of EPA's watershed grants. In May 2003, EPA announced the first round of nearly \$15 million in grants to 20 watershed organizations selected as part of this new Watershed Initiative. The president has asked Congress for \$21 million in grants to support community-based approaches and activities to help protect and restore watersheds. Nominations by the country's governors and tribal leaders for the second year of grants competition are due to EPA on Jan. 15, 2004. The Agency will then evaluate and rank each submission based on a set of criteria outlined in the Federal Register Notice. Final selections of the watershed grantees will be announced next spring. To access the Federal Register Notice and for more information about the Watershed Initiative go to: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>.

JANUARY, APRIL, AUGUST & OCTOBER, The Science to Achieve Results (STAR) Program has four formal solicitation periods during the year January, April, August, and October. STAR-Requests for Applications invite research proposals from academic and non-profit institutions located in the U.S., and state and local governments. All forms necessary for completing an application are available on the Internet at <http://es.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/>

FEBRUARY 1, 2004, Applications Due. The EcoAction Community Funding Program is an Environment Canada program that provides financial support to community groups for projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment. Call 800-667-7779 for additional information.

FEBRUARY 9-13th, 2004, the 2004 Alaska Forum on the Environment at the Egan Center in Anchorage, Alaska. It's time to register while the discounted rate still applies! Call with questions at 888-301-0185. Register Online at <http://www.akforum.com>

FEBRUARY 13, 2004, River Network-River Hero Nominations are due (forms available at: http://www.rivernet.org/howwecanhelp/index.cfm?doc_id=479)

FEBRUARY 16 –APRIL 30, 2004, EETAP still has scholarships available for the spring 2004 offering of the "Fundamentals of EE" online course. We want to encourage state level EE leaders interested in completing the course to apply. More information about the course can be found at www.eetap.org/eecourse.

MAY 21-25, 2004, River Rally 2004 at Wintergreen Resort, VA. Details related to program, registration and scholarships coming soon, check <http://www.rivernet.org> for updates.

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**River Network
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Portland, OR 97204
800-423-6747
503-241-9256 F

**Environment Canada
Pacific & Yukon Region
EcoAction**
800-667-7779
ecoaction.pyr@ec.gc.ca

YRITWC NEW STAFF WELCOME
Tija Karklis, Organizational Development Intern
tjakarklis@yritwc.com

Sveiciens (Latvian for “greetings”)! You will be seeing me at the YRITWC Alaska Region office over the coming months, so this newsletter is an excellent opportunity to introduce myself to all of you.

My title with the YRITWC is Organizational Development Intern. This internship coincides with a decision by the YRITWC Executive Committee to update and revise its strategic plan. The YRITWC will conduct the strategic planning process and present the new plan to the leadership at their meeting in Nenana, scheduled for August 2004. Since my area of professional interest is in building capacity for non-profits, I will be providing support to Rob Rosenfeld and the YRITWC in this process, in addition to assisting with fundraising, financial management, and training.

I was born in Seattle, WA, but have lived most of my life on the east coast near Washington, D.C. I spent a number of years overseas in Thailand, Germany, and the past 13 years in Latvia. My parents emigrated to the U.S. from Latvia, a country in northeastern Europe that was incorporated against its will into the Soviet Empire in 1944. Thanks to my parents, my brothers and I grew up in a bi-cultural environment; we learned Latvian at home and English at school. When the Soviet Union began to break up in 1990, I went to Latvia to participate in the grassroots movement that resulted in Latvia regaining its independence a year later. The experience was so empowering that I decided to make my home in Latvia, and have been there ever since.

Living in post-Soviet Latvian society, I gained a good deal of professional experience in cross-cultural and organizational management, which included working for the U.S. government in educational, professional, and cultural exchange, for the Latvian government as director of a translation center, and for the non-profit sector as deputy director of administration and finance of an organization developing methodology and teaching materials for Latvian as a second language. A year ago, I began to pursue a graduate degree; this internship at the YRITWC is one of the requirements towards my MS in Organizational Management from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.

My passion is supporting good causes and good people. In all my travels and experiences, I continue to be inspired by the ability of grassroots efforts to “move mountains”. Your accomplishments through the Inter-Tribal Accord set a positive example for others around the globe. I am therefore honored to offer my skills and experience to this organization, and in return I hope to gain new insights from all of you.

I have come a long way to be here, but in many ways the distance is not important; your vision of drinking water directly from the river is one that people all over the world can share.

*“The land I wished for
Is the land God granted me:
The river flows all around,
The sun dances in the center.”*
Latvian folk song

“It is often said that water crises and scarcities will at some point lead to armed conflict. But this need not be the case. Water problems have also been a catalyst for cooperation among peoples and nations. The International Year of Freshwater can play a vital role in generating the action needed - not only by Governments but also by civil society, communities, the business sector and individuals all over the world. Whatever else divides the human community, water issues should link us in a common effort to protect and share this precious resource equitably, sustainably and peacefully.” Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations

This edition of “Currents” along with previous editions can be found on our website at www.yritwc.com/newsletter.htm. If you would like additional paper or electronic copies of current or previous issues please contact Kip Cronk at 907-451-2530 or kip-cronk@yritwc.com

Emergency Response Training

Hosted by the YRITWC and the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments, by Bryan Neubert, CATG

The YRITWC and the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) Natural Resources Department hosted a Community Emergency Response Planning (CERP) workshop on November 11th-13th in Fort Yukon, Alaska. Approximately 20 people participated in the three day workshop, including representatives from: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Circle, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Alaska State Department of Homeland Security – Division of Emergency Services (DES), Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), and Ecology and Environment, Inc. The workshop was facilitated by Diana Ervin of the YRITWC.

The workshop provided examples and background information on why it is important for a community to develop a CERP. YRITWC provided a CERP template that is designed specifically for village planning. Day three of the workshop consisted of attendees using this template to begin writing a plan. One highlight of the training was a mock oil spill scenario. Participants of the workshop were asked to work together in teams to determine the proper action steps necessary to mitigate this type of incident.

This was a very informative and useful workshop for all who attended. The importance of being prepared to handle an emergency cannot be stressed enough. What would your community do if the bulk fuel tank storage area suddenly ruptured? What if a flood knocked your tank farm into the Yukon River, how is your community prepared to respond? These were questions that were presented to attendees during the workshop.

Thank you to all who attended and to all of the trainers who put a lot of time and effort into their curriculum. Also, thank you to CATG Natural Resources for organizing and hosting the workshop.

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YRITWC Newsletter

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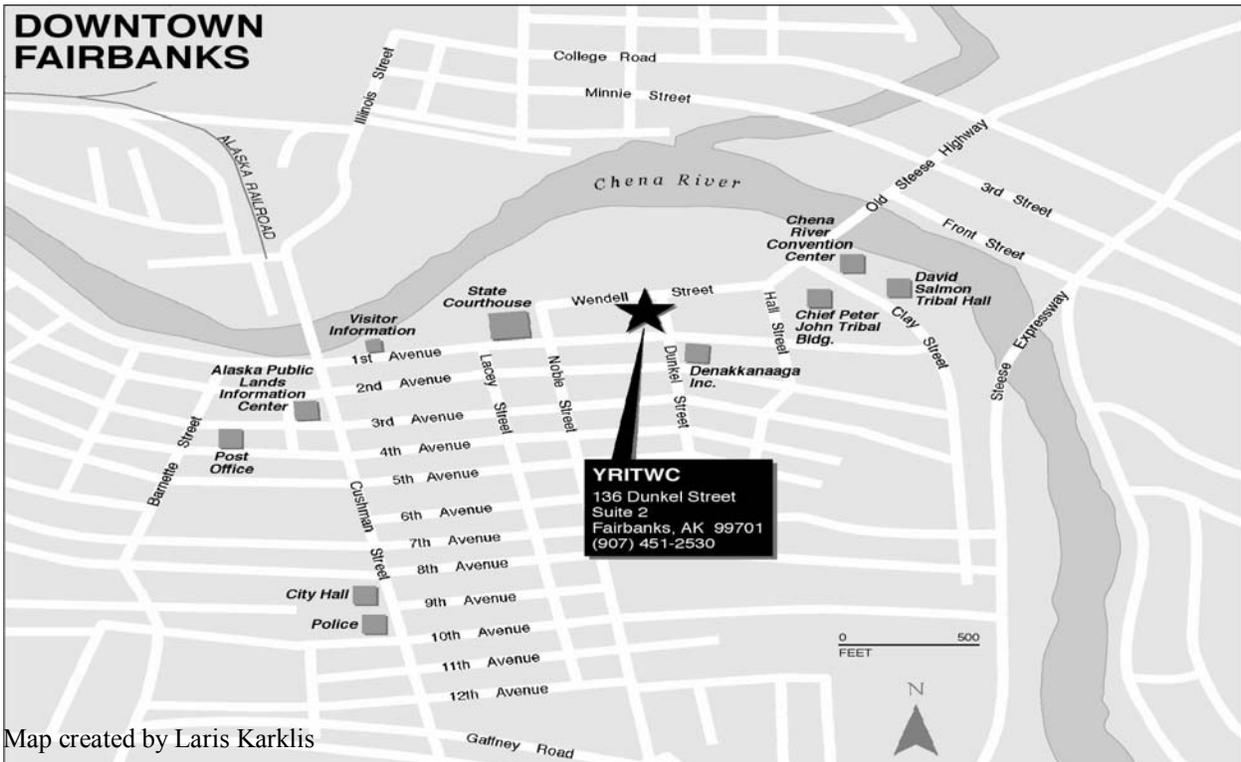


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Map created by Laris Karklis