

Currents

One People

One River

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

JUNE 2004

EDITOR: Kip R. Cronk



www.yritwc.org

Special points of interest:

May 25, 2004 Paul Erhart received the 2004 River Heroes Award from the River Network!

YRITWC Leadership meeting will be in Nenana, Alaska this August 10-13th. Please plan on attending.

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NENANA, ALASKA

YRITWC LEADERSHIP MEETING



AUGUST 10-13, 2004

Downtown Nenana, Alaska (picture taken by Tija Karklis)

The YRITWC along with the Nenana Native Council will be hosting this year's Leadership Meeting in Nenana, Alaska. For more information please read Rob Rosenfeld's article on page 2 and look for future mailings from the YRITWC. We hope to see all of the Leaders together this summer in Nenana!

2004 RIVER NETWORK - River Rally, Wintergreen, Virginia

Ken Margolis, YRITWC Program Development



Over 500 river activists from all over the United States attended the 2004 River Rally, held in Wintergreen, Virginia May 21-25. The YRITWC was represented by Chief Peter Captain Sr., Chief James Landlord, Roger Hamilton, Ed Alexander, YRITWC Biologist Paul Erhart, Alaska Region Director Rob Rosenfeld and myself. The Yukon River watershed contingent was an important part of the tribal caucus that met several times during the event.

A highlight of the Rally was the Hero's Banquet. Each year, four River Heroes are selected to represent the thousands of people working to protect and restore their rivers. This year, Paul received one of the four River Hero awards. Paul's wife, Phyllis and his father, Lester Erhart, were present to hear Paul make a moving acceptance speech. Chief Captain and Chief Landlord were also acknowledged by the group.

International Decade

"Water for Life"

IRC Website

(<http://www.irc.nl/content/view/full/7667>)

At its 58th session, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a draft resolution proclaiming the period from 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", starting on World Water Day, 22 Mar 2005. The goal of the Decade is "a greater focus on water-related issues, with emphasis on women as managers of water [...] to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals", i.e.: to halve by 2015 the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water and who do not have access to basic sanitation. Coordination of activities for the Decade will be in the hands of the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (since 1 Sep 2003, José Antonio Ocampo of Colombia). More than 20 years ago, the UN declared 1981-1990 as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. The aim then was to provide safe drinking water and adequate sanitation systems for all people by 1991.

The YRITWC would like to thank the following foundations for their recent financial contributions!

- Bancker Williams Foundation
- Sweetgrass Foundation
- Alaska Conservation Foundation (ACF)
- Mead Foundation

EDITORS NOTE: We apologize for not giving photograph credits in the April 2004 edition of *Currents*. Pictures of the Advocacy Seminar were taken by Tija Karklis, while those of Paul Erhart were taken by Kip R. Cronk. Thank-you for your contributions!

Preview of the Nenana Leadership Meeting

August 10th -13th, 2004

Rob Rosenfeld, Alaska Region Director

The Nenana Leadership meeting is approaching fast, while the staff, various members of the Executive Committee and key advisors have been busily developing draft organizational goals. Additionally, we have been working to complete draft monitoring and advocacy strategies. Below please find draft organizational goals. They have been developed as steps to realize the Vision and Mission of the organization.

Please review the draft goals below and call Rob Rosenfeld with ideas for their improvement. Most importantly we want to make sure they cover your areas of concern and that they address all the possible activities that will be needed to accomplish the 50-year Vision of drinking water directly from the Yukon River.

Draft Long Term Goals – Last updated on May 29th, 2004

Administration and Funding

- 1) We will have a supportive work culture and sustainable infrastructure to further the goals and guiding principles of the watershed council.
- 2) Maintain a well informed, unified governing body that provides ongoing oversight and guidance to the organization.
- 3) We will have diversified funding that adequately meets the long-term program and operational needs of the organization without competing with indigenous governments within the watershed.
- 4) We will have an emergency reserve fund equal to 6 months of the operational budget.

Monitoring and Stewardship

- 5) Develop and maintain baseline data about the Yukon River Watershed and establish permanent monitoring stations and an ongoing evaluation program.
- 6) Develop and maintain a data-base of indigenous documentation and recordings regarding the Yukon River Watershed, to enhance the quality of scientific and management decisions and promote traditional stewardship practices.
- 7) We will have strong environmental standards enforced that contribute to the health of the watershed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Fourteen Months

By Kip R. Cronk, YRITWC Staff

I sit here on the banks of the Yukon River in Dawson City, which is the home of the Tr'ondek Hwechin First Nation who will host the YRITWC's 5th Biannual Summit, thinking back on the last fourteen months of my life. In April 2003 I left the land of the Great Lakes (Michigan) and flew more than 3,000 miles to Alaska to work for the YRITWC. It has been an incredible experience and one that I will never forget. I studied hard in graduate school to understand watershed management (a watershed is an area of land that empties into a common body of water) and the underlying theme was cooperation and getting everyone to work together. In the past year with the YRITWC we have moved ahead as an organization getting together 56 Tribes and First Nations within the Yukon River Watershed to work in cooperation protecting and preserving it, while at the same time reaching out to the others that have yet to sign the Inter-Tribal Accord. This is rare and a major success that I personally feel will lead to many great accomplishments in the future including the goal of drinking water directly from the Yukon River. By having the Tribes and First Nations in agreement to work together, it will be easier in the future to work as a whole in protecting and preserving the Yukon River, its tributaries, wetlands and lakes. It is an effort that I plan on staying in tune with for the rest of my life. I have put in a lot of different work in the past fourteen months and hope that some part of what I did will help make a difference for the organization, because I truly believe in the cause! At this time in my life I feel that I need to return home to be with my family and friends, but I am fortunate to have had this opportunity. I would like to thank the YRITWC Executive Committee for taking a chance and bringing me out to the Yukon River Watershed region. I also want to thank the YRITWC staff that I have worked with since being here including Rob Rosenfeld, Roberta Auston, Suchot Sunday, Julia Forte, Darcy King, Chris Herberger, Paul Erhart, Tija Karklis and Darcie Warden. Their help and friendships made this all the more rewarding to me. I would also like to thank the communities of Fort Yukon, Tanana, Dawson City and Whitehorse for their wonderful hospitality when I visited. I will be over 3,000 miles away but I will keep the YRITWC and the people within the Yukon River Watershed in my heart and soul and will pass on useful information as I come across it in whatever job awaits me. This has been one of the most positive journeys in my life and it is because of the special people, water and land. Thanks for allowing me to be part of this organization and your lives! By the way, the Yukon River is pretty high this time of the year in Dawson...

*Thank you Kip, &
Welcome Joy!!!!*

YRITWC NEW STAFF WELCOME! Joy Shockley

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council would like to welcome Joy Shockley as a member of our staff this summer. Joy is Koyukon, Athabascan from the Stevens Village Tribe. Joy has been hired to work with the Watershed Council to assist in organizing this years Leadership Meeting in Nenana, August 10-13th. Additionally, we look forward to having Joy contribute to our website and newsletter with her writings this summer. Joy has just completed her second year of undergraduate studies at Dartmouth University where she is majoring in Government and Native American Studies with an emphasis in Environmental Studies. She is focusing on Native Resource Management practices and how traditions are integrated into programs. Joy has previously worked in Washington D.C. in Congressmen Mark Udall's office as a recipient of the Tribal Policy Award Scholarship from the Morris Udall Foundation. Morris Udall has been an incredible advocate with Native peoples and for the environment. As a young woman of many accomplishments, Joy has also received the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. We look forward to having Joy's high energy and enthusiasm in the office. Joy stated, "I'm very excited, the Watershed Council is a great opportunity for Tribes to work together towards resource management and I wish to be apart of this great work starting now."



UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
<i>13th Annual Protecting Mother Earth Conference</i> June 17-20, 2004	Bear Butte, South Dakota	877.436.2121 www.ienearth.org
<i>2004 Water Quality Monitoring Workshop</i> July 13-15, 2004	Canby, Oregon	CSREES Sharon J. Collman 206.553.0038
<i>YRITWC Leadership Meeting</i> August 10-13, 2004	Nenana, Alaska	Darcie Warden, YRITWC 907.451.2530 Bear Ketzler, Nenana NC 907.832.5461
<i>Native Food Summit</i> September 9-11, 2004	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	First Nations Development Institute 540.371.5615 ext 33
<i>Watershed Restoration Institute</i> September 12-17, 2004	Bainbridge Island, Washington	Center for Watershed Protection Jennifer Zielinski 410.461.8323
<i>National Museum of the American Indian - Grand Opening</i> September 21, 2004	National Mall Washington D.C.	www.nmai.si.edu
<i>River Rally</i> May 20-24, 2005	Keystone, Colorado	River Network www.rivernetwork.org

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 life.

YRITWC GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Listening, Inclusive, Consensual,
Sharing Wisdom, Trustworthy,
Timely Decisions and Responses, Not
Judgmental, Tenacious, Respectful,
Fair and Equal, Integrity, Honest,
Patient, Bold, Flexible.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB:

www.yritwc.com & www.yritwc.org

We are always looking for good articles and pictures for *Currents*. Please submit yours to the YRITWC Fairbanks Office or email it to yritwc@alaskalife.net. Thanks!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Chief Charlie Stevens
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907.832.5461
907.832.1077 F



YRITWC WEBSITE:

The YRITWC has made available maps of the Yukon River Watershed (not GIS) that have been put together by staff and outside contributors. To access the maps go to:

www.yritwc.com/maps.htm

Recently Kip Cronk was quoted as saying:

"Paul (Erhart) has shown me that science is not just about chemicals and water, but about people and traditions as well."

Current and past issues of YRITWC's newsletter, 'Currents', are available on our website at:

www.yritwc.com/newsletters.htm

Help save a tree by requesting an electronic copy of "Currents".

ROB ROSENFELD CONTINUED...

Education and Key Support

- 8) Provide information and key support to communities within the Yukon River watershed, to develop and implement comprehensive waste-water, sewage, and solid and hazardous waste systems and plans, leading to affordable and appropriate improvements that contribute to the overall health of the watershed.
- 9) The Watershed Council will promote indigenously produced and adapted environmental education resources to carry out traditional values of resource stewardship.
- 10) The Watershed Council will identify and provide best available information, training and key support to communities as a means to ensure that the vision and goals of the Watershed Council are shared, understood and advanced.

Advocacy and Clean-up

- 11) The Watershed Council is a body that is responsible for the watershed and will participate in policy and management decisions that impact the health and future of the watershed and the continuation of our traditional native way of life.

- 12) Establish and implement a media strategy that builds recognition of the watershed council to assist with advocacy efforts and the furthering of the watershed council's mission, vision and goals.

- 13) Identify the locations and status of Department of Defense and private industry sites, and promote prevention of environmental degradation and the clean-up of those sites that are contaminated.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- 14) Establish collaborative relationships and agreements with municipalities and other entities to ensure that the mission and vision of the watershed council are shared, understood, and advanced.

- 15) Promote the integration of programs and activities to maximize collaboration between the watershed council and indigenous governments and facilitate exchange between watershed communities in-order to optimize learning opportunities, avoid redundancy, and maximize the use of available resources.

Thank you very much for reviewing these draft organizational goals. I look forward to your suggestions and input. I am very appreciative to the many whom have helped in their drafting and review. Thank you to the Institute for Tribal Government, Roy Sampsel, Tim Wapato, Gay Kingman, Jaime Pinkham, Marjie Lundell, Jean Edwards, Marilyn Sampsel, Ed Alexander, Ken Margolis, Chief Peter M. Captain Sr., James Landlord, Harold Gatensby, Roberta Auston, Darcie Warden, Tija Karklis, Roger Hamilton, Paul Erhart and Doug Johnson.

Time to Clean Up

Darcie Warden, Special Project Coordinator



One day out the year we honor the earth. Every April 22, we are reminded to take care of the planet we live on, the creatures we share it with, and our human brothers and sisters. Kip Cronk, the Communications and

Education Coordinator, coordinated "the walk to the river" event. On the evening of April 22, Kip Cronk, Rob Rosenfeld, myself, and my son Cailan Simon, put on our gloves, grabbed our plastic bags and walked to the river collecting garbage all the way. We collected trash from the sidewalk, the street, the gutter, bushes and lawns. The predominant piece of trash was cigarette butts with the second runner up being cans and bottles. Quarter of a mile and several shopping bags full of trash later, we completed our walk to the river.

The outcome of our walk produced a clean stretch of street from our office to the Chena River. I was proud to participate in this event as we helped make a difference. When I look out the window I don't see the empty cans and bottles stuffed under the shrubs anymore and I know that many of those cigarettes won't get washed into the river. It also felt good to volunteer a little bit of my time to clean up our neighborhood.



Safe Travels and many Thanks to Kip:

Kip Cronk is moving on after 14 months with the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council. For those of you who don't know Kip and the work that he has done for us, I would like to take a moment to share with you the invaluable contributions that Kip made for the YRITWC. Kip has creatively managed all updates and improvements to the website during his time with us and he has been the lead editor on our bi-monthly newsletter. Kip is multi-talented as is an Aquatic Ecologist and he has shared his many insights as a trainer in Ft. Yukon and with his writing in the newsletter. In addition, to the above Kip was the logistics coordinator for the 4th Summit, he helped significantly with our office move to Fairbanks, and he took the lead in designing a grant-tracking system. Kip has been an integral part of our recent growth and positive momentum.

Best wishes Kip and we look forward to your return visits!!!

Open Positions at the Watershed Council!!!!

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council is accepting resumes and letters of interest for the following positions. Alaska Region Assistant Director (Starting between September 1st – October 15th, Administrative Assistant (Starting October 1st), Grant Writing and Special Projects Intern (Starting anytime after August 15th), Solid Waste Coordinators x 2 – 3 positions (Starting October 1st), Water Quality Monitoring Staff x 2 (Starting May of 2004). The YRITWC will give preferential hire to Indigenous peoples. All of the above positions are contingent on secured funding. Most of the positions will be based in Fairbanks with the hopes of one Solid Waste Coordinator position being place within the lower Yukon River area. We are looking for self-motivated individuals dedicated to the future of the peoples of the Yukon River Watershed and to the mission and vision of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council. For more information, please contact Rob Rosenfeld at 907.451.2530.

YRITWC Staff Contact Information

Roberta Auston	YK Director
Rob Rosenfeld	AK Director
Paul Erhart	Assessment & Monitoring
Ken Margolis	Program Development
Kip Cronk	Education & Communications
Darcie Warden	Special Projects & Advocacy
Tija Karklis	Organization Development

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Some thoughts on Solid Waste and Contaminants in the Watershed

Harold Frank, Jr. Alaska Operations Manager
with assistance from Susan Alvarez, Senior Civil Engineer, Arizona Operations Manager, Ridolfi Inc.

Changes in Traditional Waste and Waste Management

In our village life, before the modern age, solid waste and contaminants were all biodegradable and the refuse we made went back to the earth the way it was meant to be. In the space of two to three lifetimes, we can account for most of the changes we have seen in Alaska and the Yukon. As an example of change, when I was a child growing up in Angoon, Alaska, taking out the garbage was as easy as taking the refuse down to the beach at low tide. High tide took the garbage away and burning garbage was not that uncommon either. If you think about times when we all truly lived off the land, any solid waste and contaminants we generated had to come directly from the earth, so solid waste and contaminants could return to the earth on the beach at low tide with few, if any, impacts to the earth.

Now, if we think of our villages/cities as a system, we have all of these modern goods coming in to our villages by plane, boat or road. Very little, if any, of the used goods ever leave the community. As we are now a more sedentary people, our wastes become concentrated near our communities, and ultimately to the river. As we multiply each landfill or contaminated site by however many communities there are on the Yukon, things become even more complicated

As rainfall, or snow-melt passes through these many landfills, the runoff can pick up contaminants from the landfill. These contaminants can enter our ground water and ultimately the river itself. To protect the river, it will be increasingly important to consolidate the dumps and landfills in our communities, to reduce the volume of materials going to these landfills, and to properly cover the landfills to protect our water resources. The Yukon Tribes and First Nations have banded together and have committed themselves to cleaning up the Yukon and doing what is needed on a larger scale to keep the river healthy. Fortunately, there are ways to accomplish this task and people that will help either financially or with technical expertise needed to face these new challenges.

“Water is like the Earth’s blood line.” Chief Darren Taylor

In every society and culture in Alaska and the Yukon, preserving the earth for our grandchildren binds us to the future. What we do now will have impacts for those born today and tomorrow. One great leader once said, “...we only borrow the earth from our grandchildren....” If we all believe this, then we each have to begin asking ourselves, “What can we do to start changing the world around us so the grandchildren can enjoy what we have come to enjoy?” How can we protect the river and/or our ancestral homeland in a modern world? What can we do to work towards the keeping the river pristine for time immemorial?

Like adopting changes in fishing equipment, there are many small, familiar ways of managing wastes that each of us can adopt to change our world. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has a motto of “*Reduce-Reuse-Recycle*”; many other tribal communities add “respect” to the triangle. So, just how does that relate to everyday life on the Yukon River?

Reduce – Making the best use of the resources we have been given

One way to begin is by reinforcing what we already know and believe. Our cultures evolved around the sharing and distribution of scarce resources. Nothing was ever wasted from the animals we took for food. Thus, we used to reduce our waste, and reuse things many, many times; that same philosophy can be applied to the modern society we live in.

As another example - we have all become familiar with outboard motors and many of us use them on a daily basis. The older two strokes models, while very powerful, also use two stroke motor oil and burn gasoline less efficiently. The newer four-stroke engines are heavier, but have more favorable emission standard than the two-stroke engines. Something as simple as buying a new motor can improve the condition of the river, by reducing the amount of fuel needed, and reducing the emissions to the air we breathe.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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

LISTEN.
RESPOND.
INNOVATE.

*We are Engineers
and Scientists
Concerned with
the Earth.*



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Re-use – “One man’s trash is another’s treasure”.

We all have many things, like clothing or household goods, that we may not be able to use. And while we may, or may not want to see our neighbors wearing them, these items can always be used by someone else....perhaps, we could consider setting up a co-op or other way of exchanging goods with other tribal communities, to prevent these items from ending up in the landfill.

Recycle - Giving back to the earth

In the old days, our wastes were generally biodegradable, and we returned them back to the earth. Now, we can separate out those wastes that can be composted, as a new-old way of returning the nutrients to the earth. Compostable wastes are generally materials such as fish or animal wastes (bones, carcasses), plant materials and wood wastes, even newspapers. Other materials, such as cans, old automobiles, white-goods (refrigerators, stoves and washers) snow- mobiles, or boats can be recycled, if there is enough volume to entice the metal recyclers to come to the Yukon. If we work together, we can likely generate the volume needed to remove these items from our communities.

Respect – Working with integrity to do the right thing

As a culture, we are learning to take what is best from the world around us and apply it to our daily lives. As we have lived in the Yukon since time immemorial, we know the River: it's health, and generally, what we need to do take care of this resource. We need to use this knowledge to lead the process of cleaning up the Yukon River watershed. With healthy skepticism, we are beginning to question decisions by others that affect our lives. We no longer blindly accept the recommendations on decisions that will change our world. We should be effectively engaged in the discussions issues that are vitally important to our needs, especially when we are dealing with solid waste and contaminants in the watershed.

In many of our lifetimes, there was a day when the environmental horizon was limitless and pollution was an unknown word. The changes to our lives from advances in technology caught us off guard and mother earth buffered our ignorance. We have reached the environmental limits of our earth. Now, we must try and stave off filling the earth with pollution that will choke off our grandchildren's time on this planet.

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

An area of land that drains into a common body of water.



UN International Year of Freshwater (2003)

“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.

YRITWC's Strategic Planning Facilitation Workshop

By Tija Karklis, YRITWC Intern

Strategic: That which is essential to be effective

Planning: To formulate a program for accomplishment

As part of the YRITWC's objective to provide key support to Tribes and First Nations of the Yukon River Watershed, the YRITWC facilitated a strategic planning workshop in St. Mary's May 23-26. The workshop was held in conjunction with the annual Environmental Gathering organized by the Andreafski Tribal Council for Lower Yukon youth and environmental coordinators. While the youth group had sessions on water quality, solid waste, interviewing techniques for gathering information from elders, visioning, + the adult group concentrated on the process of strategic planning.

The development of a strategic plan greatly helps to clarify an organization's future and ensure that all key persons are in agreement and “on board”. It has often been compared to the making of a map that plots a course. Far more important than the strategic plan document, however, is the strategic planning process itself. Doug Johnson, Vice President of Professional Growth Systems, was invited by the YRITWC to offer his expertise to the workshop participants in learning one of the many tools available to effectively facilitate a strategic planning process.

Doug Johnson introduced us to a planning process that requires answering questions such as: Why is the project in question important? What will it include? What is its long-term goal, and what can effectively be accomplished in one year towards this goal? How will success be measured? What challenges will we face when accomplishing this project? What results do we want to see in the end?

We then used this format to work through issues that were of particular importance to Lower Yukon communities, specifically looking at sewage treatment and solid waste disposal in Mountain Village. Because the group included representatives from Mountain Village and Andreafski Tribal Councils, Port Graham Tribal Council, as well as people from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association, and the YRITWC, there was opportunity for honest and active dialogue, the result of which was the creation of “road maps” and setting a course for Mountain Village to begin improving on these important issues within its community. It also gave participants a new method of tackling a challenge - defining what is needed to be effective, and clearly stating how that will be done.

The community in St. Mary's proved to be the most gracious of hosts for the Environmental Gathering, opening their homes to participants and providing evening entertainment such as fiddling and Eskimo dancing. Serena Alstrom, the Andreafski Tribal Council's Director of EPA Programs, and her able team of assistants organized a seamless program for both the adult and the youth participants. The YRITWC thanks Serena and everyone in St. Mary's for giving us the opportunity to share a few days with them.

YRITWC Newsletter

Yukon Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

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Please share this issue of "Currents" with others.



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VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The YRITWC's Fairbanks Office is looking for volunteer help from June until October to help around the office answering phones, filing, labeling, etc...

If you are interested, please call

Rob Rosenfeld, Fairbanks, 907-451-2530

WATERSHED RESTORATION INSTITUTE

September 12-17, 2004

Bainbridge Island, Washington

The Watershed Restoration Institute is more than just a conference! Set on beautiful Bainbridge Island near Seattle, the Institute offers an intensive, interactive learning experience within a committed community of watershed leaders, leaving participants with skills that they can immediately begin using to make their own organization more effective.

For more information contact:
Jennifer Zielinski 410.461.8323 x 218

SOUTHEAST WATERSHED FORUM

Building leadership for healthy watersheds through education, training and regional dialogue.

For more information contact:
866.902.7300
Or check out the website at:
www.southeastwaterforum.org



The YRITWC would like to thank Frontier Flying Service for making travel to our Summits, Trainings and Leadership Meeting possible. Thanks!