



COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT

COPPER RIVER

Runner

SPRING 2023

CELEBRATING **25** YEARS OF

BUILDING BRIDGES

Photo courtesy of ADOT.

In a major milestone for its 25-year history of serving Copper River watershed communities, CRWP is set to complete its first bridge construction project on the Little Tonsina river this Spring. The replacement of two undersized culverts with a bridge marks a significant breakthrough in opening up 70 miles of upstream habitat in 2023 and becoming the first U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded fish passage project to break ground. Even more significantly, this bridge represents something bigger and less tangible. Kristin Carpenter, CRWP's Founding Executive Director, says, "CRWP is a convener, a bridge, and pulls people into the room. The huge value of CRWP is being a real facilitator. No other entity can take that on. And we've made a ton of progress by being this convener [in the watershed]."

The new real-life, drive-your-car-over-it bridge you see today is the on-the-ground result of the invisible bridges CRWP has been building for 25 years, enabling the organization to take on larger and more ambitious projects. This achievement is a testament to the power of collaboration and collective action in making a lasting and positive impact in the Copper River watershed.

Since its founding in 1998, CRWP has collaborated with partners in the watershed and beyond on 30 construction projects aimed at restoring or improving salmon habitat. These projects have included the Salmon Viewing Platform at Mile 190 on the Richardson Highway, which provides visitors with a perfect view of spawning salmon habitat in the Gulkana River while protecting the river bank vegetation from being trampled. Other early projects include the installation of an Oil and Grit Separator in 2004 to catch pollution run-off from flowing into Eyak Lake and the replacement of an undersized culvert on Eccles Creek in 2010.

Building on the experience gained from early construction projects and programs like Fishwatch, CRWP developed a system for prioritizing which culverts needed to be replaced and began

chasing funds to make these projects happen. When it came to the Little Tonsina we knew it would require something even bigger. So when the time came, we had the right partnerships in place to make it happen when funding opportunities presented themselves.

CRWP's success in building real and figurative bridges has been made possible by YOU, our membership base. Over the past 25 years, CRWP's funding has evolved from being 80% membership investment and almost no federal funding to a diverse mix of funding sources, including significant federal funding. Nowadays, members' investment in CRWP is amplified by 25x for every dollar, thanks to the invisible bridges CRWP staff have been able to build with membership support. Check out the graph on page 5 to see how your membership investment has made an impact over the past 25 years!

As CRWP looks back on 25 years of building bridges, we are proud of the collaborative spirit and collective action that has made these achievements possible. Katrina Liebich wrote on behalf of the USFWS, "Good work also tends to catalyze funding and momentum to address additional barriers and unstable infrastructure at a watershed level or on nearby tributaries. Thanks to fish-friendly road standards being adopted at local levels, and major investments in fish passage statewide, a barrier-free Alaska is within reach." By continuing to build bridges with partners in the watershed and beyond, CRWP looks forward to achieving even greater success in the years to come.

To assist us in planning for the next 25 years, we invite all CRWP members to participate in our inserted survey. You may choose to fill out the paper copy included in this newsletter and mail it back to us or complete the survey online. By completing the survey, you will also have the opportunity to be entered into a prize drawing for a \$500 Visa gift card! We value your feedback and look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can continue to improve our work and build even stronger bridges in the watershed.

LETTER FROM CRWP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear CRWP Supporters,

It is with great pleasure that we announce the Copper River Watershed Project's 25th anniversary. This milestone is a celebration of the meaningful legacy work accomplished by past and present CRWP staff, board members and volunteers. What a wonderful history to reflect back on. We have over 2 decades of work supporting youth and adult education programming, building partnerships that help us to pool resources and work collectively in support of healthy waterways and healthy fish, listening to community members about their concerns and working to produce tangible project outcomes in support of those needs.

This Spring 2023 newsletter shares current project work while also celebrating the past 25 years. We showcase our Little Tonsina bridge project, and share how tech and youth education can empower how we can work in science and the outdoors. We skim the surface of the list of projects we've done throughout the watershed over the past 25 years as we look back on years of working together with our communities. You will hear from Kirstin Carpenter, my predecessor, who is a founder of the CRWP and has seen it grow into the organization it is today. And finally Eyak Lake is getting a lot of love this year as we work on updating old datasets and the Area Meriting Special Attention (AMSA) document as well as work on the weir design to improve fish passage for this important water body.



This year also serves as a launching point in envisioning another 25 years working for the region. I'm honored to help support the good work being done in the Copper River watershed through partnerships, relationships and of course building all kinds of bridges! Completing our survey enclosed here helps us to ensure we can continue to improve how we do business and to ensure we are staying tapped in to hearing from our members. Your voice is important to us.

Thank you to our members from 25 years ago to today. Thank you to the countless volunteers, interns, volunteer board members and committee members and to all previous and current CRWP staff - you were all critical to our successes and helped pave the way to today and the next 25 years.

Lisa Docken

CRWP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Michelle McAfee, *Communications Specialist*
Chris Iannazzone, *Watershed Stewardship Program Manager*
Ashley Taylor, *GIS and Data Specialist*

CLASSROOM CURRENTS

Thinking Spatially: Mapping Across the Watershed

BY ASHLEY TAYLOR, GIS AND DATA SPECIALIST

When you think of mapping what comes to mind? Possibly a folded paper map from a dusty National Geographic magazine, a gridded sheet of paper dotted with symbols and lines, maybe a compass. How about a smartphone app connected via bluetooth technology to an external GPS receiver the size of a granola bar? CRWP has been working to bring current mapping technology and data collection to teachers and students throughout the watershed.

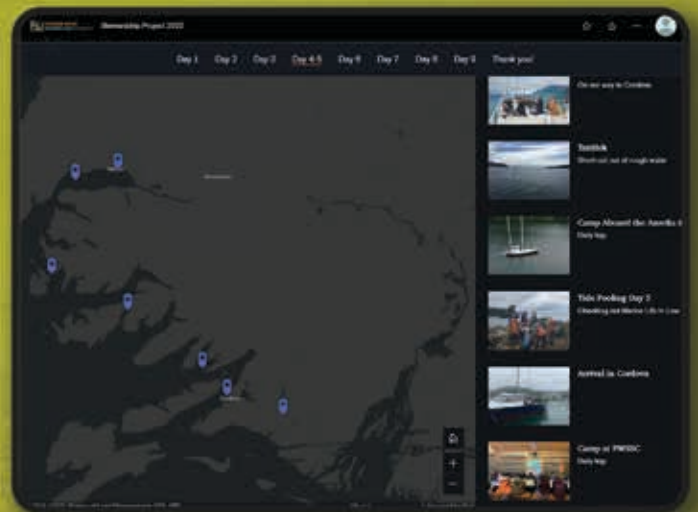
Spatial thinking and collecting environmental and biological data is a key tool for many disciplines and careers, especially in Alaska. CRWP staff was fortunate to lead multiple education days as part of two natural resource courses offered by the Prince William Sound College; one for high school teachers across Alaska who teach natural resource classes and one for college students in a natural resource degree program. The participants of these courses learned about Geographic Information Systems (GIS), how to set up a spatial data form (ESRI's Survey123) to collect data themselves and share with others to crowdsource data, how to visualize and symbolize their collected data, and how to share their digital maps.

Survey123 is a form-centric tool for creating smart surveys and forms, including a spatial data component. It streamlines data collection and automatically generates a GIS data layer. This workflow automates many steps that researchers used to do:

collect field data, format it, upload it, and import into a GIS program for further mapping and analysis. This new process saves time and essentially takes the place of a paper datasheet. These forms are easy to share and a great way to crowdsource data. PWSC teachers and students created Survey123 forms and collected data with their smartphones while out on the Copper River delta and from kayaks on Orca Inlet.

Students of the 2022 Copper River Stewardship Program (CRSP) are also now familiar with using Survey123 and GIS. Students took turns adding an observation each day while on their journey across the watershed, noting the habitat type and other location attributes. They also used the CRWP Invasive Plant Reporter Survey123 to log sightings of invasive plants. CRSP participant Jake Stockhausen took the CRSP data to the next level, developing an ArcGIS StoryMap as his final project. StoryMaps are a digital storytelling format that weave together multimedia: photos, video, audio, with text, and of course maps! Jake's StoryMap combined daily logs he and other students wrote with photos, locations, and data collected from their Survey123 to map the journey and details of each day from the headwaters of the Copper River to the delta.

We've loved seeing the creativity that has come out of students accessing and understanding spatial tools.

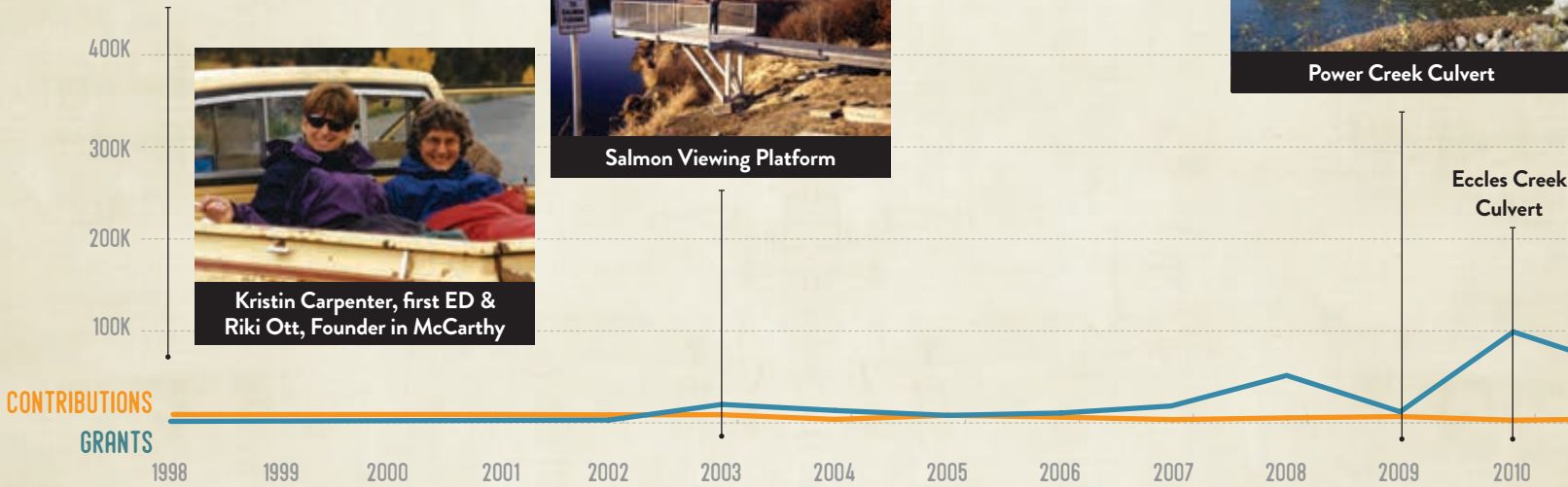


Left: Students document their field findings. Above: Copper River Stewardship Program participant, Jake Stockhausen's ArcGIS StoryMap digitally details their summer journey through the watershed.

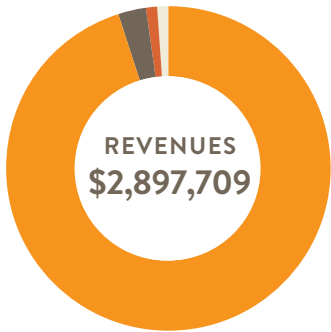
COPPER RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT

OUR CONTRIBUTIONS HELP US LEVERAGE FOR GRANT FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE WATERSHED

The CRWP was incorporated and became a 501(c)(3)



2022 ANNUAL REPORT



\$2,762,654 / 95% GRANT INCOME

\$99,882 / 3% CONTRIBUTIONS

\$3,745 / <1% SPECIAL EVENTS

\$31,428 / 1% OTHER



\$2,481,023 / 88% PROGRAM SPECIFIC EXPENSES

\$33,096 / 1% SHARED OPERATING EXPENSES

\$204,012 / 7% PROGRAM STAFF

\$86,566 / 3% ADMIN. & FUNDRAISING

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	258,110.69
Accounts Receivable	184,898.41
Other Current Assets	15,261.51
Total Current Assets	458,270.61
Fixed Assets	83,126.96
Other Assets	79,209.11

TOTAL ASSETS \$ 620,606.68

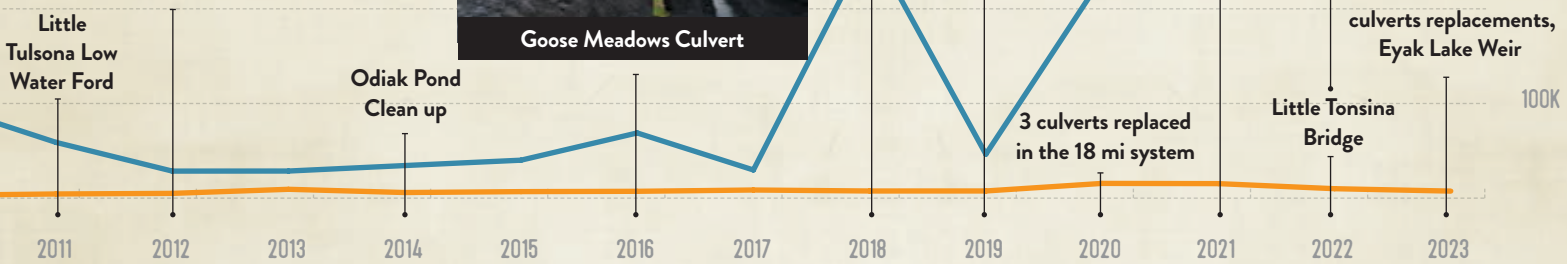
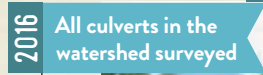
LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	117,944.06
Credit Card	251.12
Other Current Liabilities	
Vacation Accrual	19,741.26
Holiday Distribution	1,790.13
Deferred Revenue	8,848.15
Payroll Liabilities	12,955.98
Sales Tax Payable	1,476.21

Total Liabilities 163,006.91

Equity	
Retained Earnings	386,883.43
Donor Restricted Contributions	32,759.99
Net Income	37,956.358
Total Equity	457,599.77

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY \$620,606.68



2022 FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

Thank you!

FUNDERS

- Bureau of Land Management
- Denali Commission
- The Eyak Corporation
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center
- Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council
- U.S.D.A. Cordova Ranger District
- U.S.D.A. Forest Service
- U.S.D.A. Secure Rural Schools
- U.S.D.A. State and Private Forestry
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - President Joe Biden's Infrastructure Law
 - Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
- U.S.D.A. Farm to School

ANCESTORS' LEGACY, \$1000+

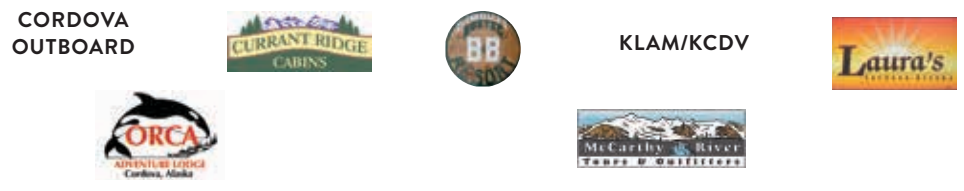


WILSON CONSTRUCTION

WATERSHED STEWARDS, \$500-999



TRIBUTARIES, \$250-499



KRISTIN CARPENTER REFLECTS ON 25 YEARS OF PROGRESS WITH CRWP

BY MICHELLE McAFEE



Above: CRWP Staff with Kristin Carpenter, Christina Cinelli, Becky Clausen, and Riki Ott (Photo by CRWP staff 2002)

Kristin Carpenter poses with a failed culvert on the Copper River HWY.

Twenty-five years ago, when the Copper River Watershed Project was first getting started, Kristin Carpenter joined the staff with Founder Riki Ott. Six months later, in 1999, she became the organization's first Executive Director.

Fish habitat restoration work was the initial focus, with the help of local fisherman Paul Swartzbart. They began revegetating stream banks to provide shade and cover for aquatic insects and for the fish that feed on them.

“When we started doing hands-on projects, working with local contractors who had heavy earth-moving equipment, that gave us credibility then because we’re in a town of doers,” said Carpenter.

After accomplishing several stream bank restoration projects, exploring restoration techniques, and learning how to mobilize and manage volunteers, word started getting out about the new nonprofit organization. The work led CRWP to Bill Rice with US Fish & Wildlife Service, who took the fledgling organization under his wing and helped get the first culvert replacement project started.

Carpenter laughs and describes going to the job site with Rice to look at the culvert marked for replacement, “We walked out to the site, and I was thinking to myself, ‘Okay, this seems sort of big, but it’s just a pipe in the ground, how hard can that be?’ It’s laughable now because there are so many issues as soon as you start digging.”

Becky Clausen was on staff at the time and started a point system to rate culverts. The goal was to create a structure identifying fish passage risk for every culvert. Carpenter said, “Becky started it, and Kate Morse and Kirsti Jurica picked it up and did a phenomenal job creating this structure.”

CRWP was born in Cordova in '95 when Riki Ott wanted to create an alternative to extraction proposals for logging and mining the east Delta. The concept of sustainable development, looking at four kinds of capital to create community health and wealth - Natural, Economic, Social, and Cultural Capital - was a very new idea at the time.

In one of the many community workshops Ott led on sustainable development, a woman who was the Director for the Cordova Fishermen United raised her hand and said, “It won’t amount to a hill of beans if we only talk about this down here in Cordova - if we’re not talking to the people upriver.” Carpenter remembers that workshop as the moment a “watershed” came into focus and CRWP was born.

By 2003, CRWP moved to a new office space, but the organization was still quite small. “I remember thinking, Becky and I are going to rattle around in here with just the two of us. And now CRWP is bursting at the seams. The organization has grown so much!” said Carpenter.

Many CRWP project sites are off the main radar, on dirt roads, and in habitat hotspots that are high value but degraded. Carpenter said, “CRWP is a convener, pulling together partners, people, communities, and resources to solve some tricky issues. Nobody else is doing that, and it brings huge value to the watershed.”

Looking forward to the next twenty-five years, Carpenter would like to see a watershed management plan framework put in place for the Copper River, and said, “The region needs a more synthesized look at resources, trends, and patterns on a watershed scale to preserve the system and keep it as a functioning salmon habitat going forward.”



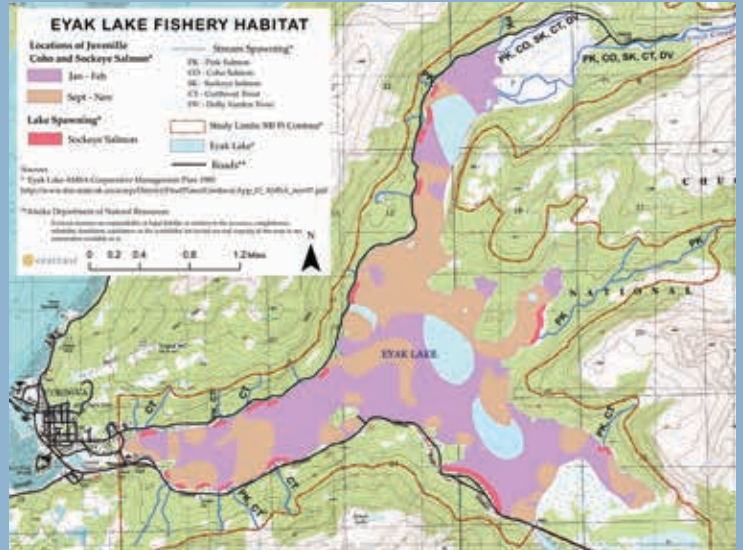
AT THE HEART OF CORDOVA: EYAK LAKE

BY ASHLEY TAYLOR, GIS AND DATA SPECIALIST

CRWP is playing detective and bringing a 38-year-old document into the spotlight once again.

Eyak Lake is at the heart of Cordova in many ways. It provides recreational fun throughout the seasons, is the City’s secondary drinking water supply, and provides key habitat conditions for ten fish species. It is a large spawning lake in the watershed with significant lakeshore development (two-thirds bordered by roads). Although the cultural and recreational aspect is invaluable, it is considered a multi-million-dollar lake when looking at the ex-vessel value of commercial harvest of Sockeye and Coho Salmon returns to Eyak Lake.

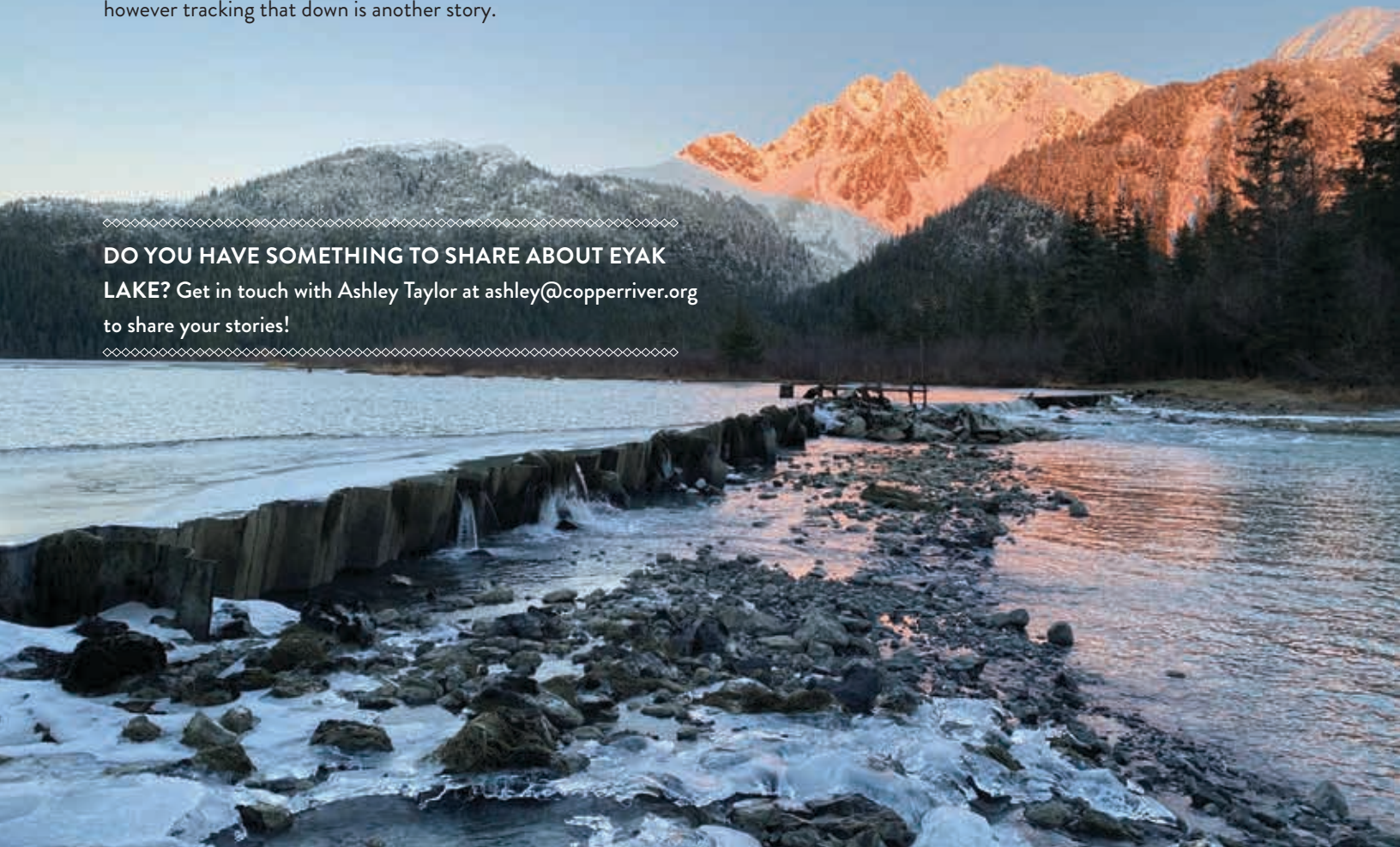
In 1981, the Alaska Coastal Policy Council identified Eyak Lake as an Area Meriting Special Attention (AMSA) and after several years of planning and data collection, a Cooperative Management Plan for the lake was published. The 1985 Eyak Lake AMSA Cooperative Management Plan includes data and maps on: land status, climate, geology, water quality, birds and mammals, fisheries, and human uses - and for the last few decades has been a go-to document. Of course, in a region teeming with biologists, researchers, fishermen, ecologists, and historians there has been no shortage of data collected on Eyak Lake since the 1980’s, however tracking that down is another story.



Map of Eyak Lake developed by Ecotrust shows digitized fishery habitat data from the 1980’s.

CRWP is coordinating with partners to identify and centralize as many past reports, datasets, and stories about Eyak Lake as possible. In addition to important historic information, we will be collecting new data as well. During the 2023 field season, the partnership will be conducting organized spawning bed surveys for the first time in 13 years, adding temperature loggers to study rearing habitat, and surveying for cutthroat trout for the first time in 27 years. The information collected will be organized into a centralized database and interactive web map for all to use.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE ABOUT EYAK LAKE? Get in touch with Ashley Taylor at ashley@copperriver.org to share your stories!



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COPPER RIVER
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Newsletter



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- * Mapping the watershed
- * 2022 annual report
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25

In celebration of our 25th Anniversary at the CRWP, we would like to celebrate one of our long-term donors, Jim Hutchison. Thank you for your support over the years, Jim!



In 1976 I read a book called *Coming Into the Country* by John McPhee and in 1977 made my first trip to Alaska while still a grad student at UC Davis. I started coming to Cordova to fish over 25 years ago. We hiked many of the trails, slept in the Forest Service cabins and experienced the thrill of catching a silver on a wild Alaska River. My support of all the CRWP efforts to maintain and preserve the unique salmon habitat that surrounds Cordova helps connect me to this wonderful place. Your efforts do and will make a difference.

Jim Hutchison

Cheers to our great members and celebrating 25 years of working for the watershed and celebrating salmon.