Land Trust Protects Two Properties in Park

The Land Trust recently completed its second transaction by accepting a conservation easement over the only private inholding in the Silver Horn Fiord of Lake Beverly. The easement was secured through the efforts of the Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Alaska. Native allotment owner Gusty Chythlook of Dillingham sold an easement over the parcel to The Nature Conservancy which in turn transferred the easement to the Land Trust. The Land Trust will enforce the terms of the easement. The easement prohibits any commercial development of the property and limits the owner to the construction of one cabin for personal use. There are currently no improvements on the parcel. Tikchik Narrows lodge committed $3500 to the Land Trust stewardship fund to underwrite enforcement and monitoring of the property.

The Silver Horn Fiord is one of the most visually stunning landmarks in the Wood-Tikchik State Park. The acquisition of this easement secures the wilderness character of this fiord in perpetuity.

The first parcel protected by the Land Trust is a 160 acre allotment at the head of the Agulukpak River also on Lake Beverly. The parcel, originally owned by Harvey Samuelson of Dillingham, was sold to The Conservation Fund. The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund provided financial assistance for the purchase. The ownership of the parcel was conveyed to the State of Alaska subject to a conservation easement conveyed to the Land Trust. The easement prohibits permanent structures and limits the amount of public use.

The acquisition of the parcel protects an historic site as well as preserves shoreline along one of Alaska’s most popular rainbow fishing rivers. Robert Osborne provided a donation to the stewardship fund for the perpetual protection of this property.

Land Trust Formation

We formed the land trust because we are concerned that the use and sale of private land within our region could be detrimental to the five species of wild Pacific salmon that return each year to our waters. These returning salmon include the world’s largest runs of sockeye or “red” salmon. The eco-system of Bristol Bay is built upon the nutrients that wild salmon bring back from the sea. Wild salmon are the foundation of the subsistence tradition that has sustained the local Native population for thousands of years.

The Land Trust was spearheaded by Choggiung LTD. This Native corporation believed the commercialization of hundreds of small private parcels within a vast region set aside for its wilderness values could result in too much pressure on the resources (moose, caribou, and salmon) upon which so many of its shareholders depend for subsistence and for a livelihood.

This is the first annual report of the Nushagak/Mulchatna – Wood/Tikchik Land Trust. Although the Land Trust was formed in 2000 this is the first report because we now have some exciting activities to report.
The two properties together amount to approximately 190 acres under protective easements held by the Land Trust.

William H. Donner Foundation Continues Support

The William H. Donner Foundation of New York City recently awarded the Land Trust $25,000 in addition to the $75,000 granted to the Land Trust in 2001. The funds are to be used to support general operations of the Trust and are currently being held in reserve until the Land Trust can secure sufficient funds to hire an executive director for a period of two years.

The William H. Donner Foundation invites applications only through members of its Board of Directors. Thanks are due to Donner Foundation boardmember William Roosevelt an annual visitor to Bristol Bay for his continuing interest in the work of the Land Trust.

Land Trust Hires First Employee and Opens Office in Dillingham

Until recently the Land Trust relied entirely upon the dedication and time that could be given to its operation by members of the Board of Directors. These efforts have been fruitful and enough funds have now been raised through grants and contributions to hire Marjorie Dunaway as a part-time administrative assistant to the Board. Marjorie keeps office hours only about ten hours per week, but she has become an invaluable asset.

The office is located on the second floor of the Aleknagik Natives building and is shared with the Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area. The Land Trust can also be reached by e-mail at nmwtland@nushtel.net or by phone at (907) 842-2832 or fax at (907) 842-2776

Land Trust Begins Initiative to Protect Agulowak River

The most immediate concern for salmon habitat within the region served by the Land Trust is the potential for development along the Agulowak River. The river connects Lake Nerka and Lake Aleknagik in Wood-Tikchik State Park and is considered one of the most productive rivers in the world for wild rainbow trout. An estimated 1.2 million sockeye salmon pass through this short corridor annually.

The reason for the concern is that the Agulowak is heavily used and most of the uplands surrounding the river are privately owned. The Land Trust is working with some of these owners to secure voluntary protections for riverside habitat. In addition, the Land Trust has partnered with The Conservation Fund to raise funds to acquire land and conservation easements where necessary.

The Land Trust was awarded a grant of $50,000 under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to support its efforts on the Agulowak. “The grant, however, is just a beginning”, says Land Trust Board Chairman Ward Jones, “it will take much more to secure the protections needed to assure this vital salmon habitat is available to support our subsistence and recreational values forever.”

Grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grant was matched by a financial commitment from The Conservation Fund of $81,000 to be used for protection of the Agulowak River. The USF&W has also awarded the Land Trust two successive $10,000 grants through a cost sharing agreement that also includes The Conservation Fund.

Charter Members

The Land Trust was fortunate to receive vital financial assistance from several organizations that was needed to underwrite the efforts to get started.
These organizations were Choggiung LTD, The Nature Conservancy of Alaska and The Alaska Conservation Foundation.

Special recognition is also appropriate for the charter members of the Land Trust who provided assistance when it was most needed – at the very beginning. Charter members include: Choggiung LTD, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Ekwok Natives Limited, Bristol Bay Lodge, Crystal Creek Lodge, Tikchik Narrows Lodge, Ward Jones, Thomas Tilden, Alice Ruby, Bud Hodson, Ron and Maggie McMillan, Dan and Marjorie Dunaway, Tim Troll and Leanne Goethius, Robert Glenn Ketchum, Russell and Debbi Nelson, Jan Konigsberg, Trout Unlimited, Bob King, Oscar and Sue Flensburg, Rainbow King Lodge, Jim Stratton and Colleen Burgh, Jonathan Blattmachr, Robert Osborn, Herb and Bonnie Belkin, James Stuart

**Individual Contributions and Memberships Continue to Grow**

The measure of continuing viability for a land trust is the number of individuals and businesses who are willing to provide support. Here we have every reason to be encouraged. Since inception over 76 individuals and businesses have contributed to the Land Trust in amounts ranging from $25 to $3500.

Special recognition must go to the guests of Bristol Bay Lodge and Tikchik Narrows Lodge who have generously responded to the encouragement of owners Ron McMillan and Bud Hodson. The support from those who enjoy visiting the region is especially welcome.

Individual and business donations help underwrite the general operations of the Land Trust and provide matching support for various grants. However, these donations are not consumed entirely for general operations. By board policy 5% of each donation is set aside and invested in the stewardship fund. The stewardship fund protects the acquisitions of the Land Trust. The fund is tapped only to underwrite the cost of monitoring properties subject to conservation easements held by the Land Trust and defending those easements in court when necessary.

**Minnesota Land Trust Conducts Workshop**

Jane Prohaska the Executive Director and David Hartwell one of the founders and a board member of the Minnesota Land Trust came to Bristol Bay to visit with our land trust. Ms. Prohaska and Mr. Hartwell conducted a workshop with the Board providing insights and advice on a wide range of topics from property monitoring and fund raising to strategic planning and board development. The Land Trust is adapting many of the policies of the Minnesota Land Trust.

In addition to the workshop Ms. Prohaska and Mr. Hartwell enjoyed the hospitality of Bristol Bay Lodge and were given a tour of the Nushagak River by Board Chair Ward Jones with lunch in Ekwok provided by board member Luki Akelkok.

The visit and workshop with the Minnesota Land Trust was underwritten by Charles Moos of Minnesota. Mr. Moos, a frequent visitor to the region, served on the Land Trust board for two years. He serves on the board of directors of The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota.

**Land Trust Sponsors Second Book by Robert Glenn Ketchum**

Aperture Foundation will soon be publishing a second book of Bristol Bay photographs by internationally acclaimed wilderness photographer Robert Glenn Ketchum. The book entitled “Wood-Tikchik” will be in bookstores in early 2003. In addition to Ketchum’s stunning photography the book includes an essay by Alaskan writer Bill Sherwonit that describes the potential problem posed by private inholdings in the park and the formation of the Land Trust as a response to that problem.

Ketchum’s first book “Rivers of Life” focused attention on salmon habitat and contained photographs from around Bristol Bay. “Rivers of Life” also featured an essay by Bruce Hampton and the underwater photography of Greg Syverson. The Land Trust secured grants from the Alaska Conservation Foundation and the National Fish and
Wildlife Foundation to help with the publication of “Wood-Tikchik.” Board member Bud Hodson and Tikchik Narrows Lodge contributed logistical support and the hours of flying that made it possible for Mr. Ketchum’s eye to capture the vast expanse and the intimate corners of America’s largest state park.

Copies of both books will be available through the Land Trust.

Heart Lake © Robert Glenn Ketchum

Board and Staff Attend Land Trust Rally in Austin, Texas

The Nushagak / Mulchatna – Wood / Tikchik Land Trust is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization dedicated to promoting land conservation through land trusts and establishing professional and ethical standards for land trusts. Board Chair Ward Jones and administrative assistant Marjorie Dunaway attended the annual Land Trust Alliance Rally in Austin. Travel assistance for the convention was provided by the Land Trust Alliance and The Conservation Fund.

Alaskan Land Trusts to Focus on Sales of Native Lands

During the Land Trust Alliance Rally representatives of Alaska’s land trusts were able to meet for the first time to discuss issues of statewide concern. No issue seemed more pressing than helping Alaska’s Native communities address the issue of sales of Native lands out of Native ownership. As a result of that informal get together in Austin Alaska’s land trusts will be gathering together in Anchorage in February of 2003 to discuss how the land trust community and the tools of private land conservation might be used to help Native Alaskans retain ownership of their lands. Leaders from Alaska’s Native community have been invited to participate.

The meeting is being underwritten with financial assistance from the Land Trust Alliance, Northwest and the Alaska Conservation Foundation.

Web Page Available in 2003

The Land Trust will soon have its own web site and e-mail account. Bruce Hampton writer of “Rivers of Life” is putting together the web site. The site will be a contact point for the land trust and also be a useful source of information about the region. The address will be www.nmwltrust.org. The Land Trust’s e-mail address will be nmwtland@nushtel.net. The web site is being developed with financial assistance provided by the Alaska Conservation foundation.

The Land Trust Board meets 2 to 3 times per year. The next meeting is scheduled for May 24, 2003. Boardmembers are concerned about habitat protection in the region and preserving the subsistence and recreational opportunities that currently make this region special. Boardmembers are expected to participate in meetings and help with fundraising and other activities of the trust. The Board of Directors have voted to expand and are soliciting interest from people who would like to serve. If interested, contact Marjorie Dunanway at the Land Trust office for information and an application.

Bristol Bay Coastal Resource Service Area Board Supports Land Trust

The Bristol Bay CRSA Board allocated a portion of its coastal impact funds to the Land Trust. The grant of $10,000 will be used to support general operations and to match other funds. In addition to the grant, the Bristol Bay CRSA leases office space and provides payroll support to the Land Trust.