



“SERVING THE HUNTER WHO TRAVELS”

“Hunting provides the principal incentive and revenue for conservation. Hence it is a force for conservation.”

Special To The Hunting Report

World Conservation Force Bulletin

by John J. Jackson, III

Southwest Alaska Profile In Conservation

(John J. Jackson, III Note: Conservation Force is a land trust. We have an extensive program to conserve and to restore lands to their wild hunting condition. For example, we accept donations of conservation easements from landowners as tax-deductible donations. Conservation easements restrict development on private lands so that they can be hunted forever. Consequently, we have a keen interest in the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Initiative that is being co-sponsored by The Conservation Fund to save habitat in Alaska. The Conservation Fund is one of the original 38 founding members of the American Wildlife Conservation Partners with Conservation Force and is even a supporting financial contributor to Conservation Force. Conservation Force is supporting The Conservation Fund's land initiative in Alaska.)

The Conservation Fund has formed an impressive coalition of local groups, landowners, guides and lodges and major foundations united around a simple idea: purchase land or conservation agreements from willing local landowners to affect landscape-scale conservation of intact habitats used by abundant wild salmon, trout, bear, caribou, moose and migratory waterfowl. In health

terms, this is classic preventive medicine.

The Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Initiative is a widely supported Alaskan conservation project with the biggest upside for hunters and anglers. The stakes for sportsmen and wildlife



cannot be overstated in Southwest Alaska, a 40-million-acre region that includes the Alaska Peninsula and the salmon-rich Bristol Bay drainages.

The alternative is to allow a steep local economic downturn to force the sale of private coastal and riverine properties up and down the most pro-

ductive drainages of Southwest Alaska. Most of the properties at risk of subdivision, sale and development are inholdings within renowned state parks, national wildlife refuges and national parks. These conservation units include the Togiak, Becharof, Alaska Peninsula and Izembek national wildlife refuges; Wood Tikchik State Park; and Lake Clark, Katmai and Aniakchak national parks and preserves.

Ten Percent Solution

Together, the state and federal lands set aside for conservation total 26 million acres. Throughout Southwest Alaska, lie 4,500,000 acres of private Native land transferred to the local people in 1971 pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act or through the 1906 Native Allotment Act. Much of this land is within or adjacent to these large public areas. For a variety of reasons related to historic settlement and land use, these Native lands disproportionately include much of the best hunting and fishing and highest value habitats in the region.

The project partners in the Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition estimate a critical ten percent of the Native holdings, or 450,000 acres, throughout Southwest Alaska should be kept open to public access for hunting and fishing and secure vital fish and wildlife habitat. They plan to achieve that goal over the next decade. Although that may seem like a large number, the footprint of the conservation purchases is small by Alaska standards: slightly over 1 percent for Southwest Alaska. Better yet, the benefit of conserving the inholdings for wildlife and public access is magnified by the surrounding large public lands that will remain available for hunting and fishing as they have in the past.

Salmon Crisis & Land Ownership

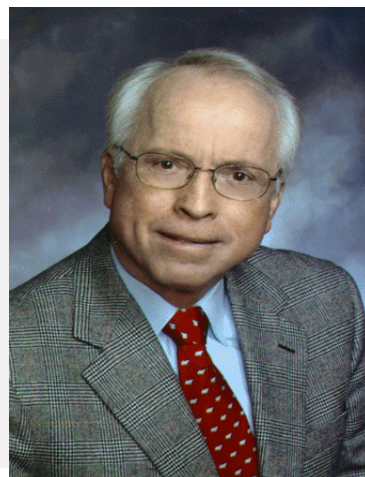
The urgency of the project is driven by the collapse of commercial wild salmon prices, which has been ongoing since 1988 and is impoverishing the local Native population of the re-

gion. The livelihoods of these commercial fishermen have been hit by a market crash in wild salmon that ranges from 50 percent to more than 90 percent depending on the species of fish. The ex-vessel price paid to fishermen for sockeye has fallen 77 percent, pink salmon 92 percent, coho 78 percent, chum 81 percent and chinook 54 percent.

The value of commercial fishing boats, nets, limited-entry fishing permits and other assets have plummeted accordingly. Since Native Alaskans own over 95 percent of the private land in Southwest Alaska, the correlation between growing poverty and property owners is almost one to one. Something has to give and the disposition of land assets – from local sellers who have owned the land for generations to outside interests - is underway amid some legendary hunting and fishing destinations.

Looming Loss of Access

Conservation Force supporters



JOHN J. JACKSON, III
Conservation Force

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Attack on Nonresident Hunting And Fishing Renewed and Stepped Up

■ In the new 109th Congress, legislation has been introduced in both the Senate (S.339) and House of Representatives (H.R. 731) to give states unlimited authority to discriminate against nonresident hunters and anglers. The Senate bill was introduced on 9 February 2005 by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, who is the ranking Democrat in the Senate. It was co-sponsored by Senators Max Baucus (MT), Benjamin E. Nelson (NE), John Ensign (NV) and Ted Stevens (AK). The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The House resolution was introduced by Representative Mark Udall of Colorado and co-sponsored by (Butch) Otter of Idaho. It has been referred to the House Committee on Resources, which has 12 members from the Western states behind the legislation, including four members from Arizona.

In a press release the Senators plainly state that they introduced the

legislation “to protect the state’s ability to distinguish between residents and nonresidents when issuing hunting and fishing licenses.” In fact, the legislation will authorize states to discriminate against nonresidents in both hunting and fishing license allocation and price on all federal land. Congress is delegating to the states the authority the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has said was reserved to Congress. States’ rights to regulate game is not the true issue. States’ regulatory authority to discriminate against a class of citizens (people not wildlife regulation) is the issue.

The only way to stop this divisive legislation is for nonresidents to contact their personal representatives and senators to protect their rightful access to federal lands, waters and migratory species. The legislation is expected to move quickly. Your Congressman can help you now, but you will have no voice again once the law passes.



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who have visited Southwest Alaska know the grandeur of the region. Many of us have hunted brown bear, moose and caribou or have fished for salmon, steelhead, rainbow trout and grayling on streams and rivers unmatched for their abundance. Some of the best big game guides and the finest lodges operate in these areas.

What few visitors know is that these undeveloped landscapes stretching as far as the eye can see are being steadily impacted by private cabin and lodge construction within prime wildlife areas. The pace will only increase. A natural side effect of this land ownership transformation is rising trespass enforcement by the remaining original land owners as they become less tolerant of the increasing visitation and as new non-local owners restrict the public from key access points for floatplanes, boats and rafts necessary

“Conserving wild salmon habitat has been chosen as the Southwest Alaska project’s cornerstone objective in rallying support for the purchase of these critical properties ”

to operate in remote wilderness areas offering the best hunting and fishing opportunities.

“The parallels for the piecemeal settlement of a wild region over time are well known in the Lower 48 states but still rare in Alaska,” says Glenn Elison, state director for The Conservation Fund. “But modern travel and the growth in the numbers of upscale sportsmen who are using Southwest Alaska is putting the remote areas within the reach of more people. The region can handle that pressure but not if everyone starts wanting their own private retreat and they all end up along rivers and lake shores.”

Salmon are the Cornerstone

Conserving wild salmon habitat has been chosen as the Southwest Alaska project’s cornerstone objective in rallying support for the purchase of these critical properties. Salmon are the key-

stone of the region’s ecology, economy and culture. An estimated 75 million salmon return annually to spawn in Southwest Alaska rivers such as the Nushagak, Kvichak, Naknek, Alagnak and Wood River, to name a few. The fish greatly enrich the region’s land and water with nutrients that become the mainstay in the diets of many mammals and birds.

Brown and black bears, wolves, foxes, wolverines and other furbearers are direct predators and consumers of salmon. Bear population density and size clearly depend upon salmon abundance. Raptors such as bald eagles, owls, hawks, as well as countless gulls, terns and other birds join in the annual feast on salmon carcasses.

Caribou and moose are less obviously connected to salmon, yet their migratory corridors and home ranges



overlap thousands of miles of Southwest Alaska’s salmon rivers, streams and nameless tributaries. As discussed above, the Native lands in the region overlap many of the key access points and best fishing and hunting areas, but a larger threat to the resource is the certainty that development harms productivity of salmon and other habitat.

The destruction of once prodigious Atlantic and Pacific salmon runs from California to British Columbia is a well-known story. Salmon spawning and rearing habitats are highly vulnerable to human-caused changes in water quality.

By targeting the most salmon-sensitive habitats that are the most frequently used by visiting anglers, the project can conserve salmon viability and public access through the purchase of land or easements.

Coalition Leadership and Funding is Broad-based

The team of partners tackling the inholding acquisition campaign is operating as the Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition. The group involves core regional stakeholders, expanding out to businesses in Alaska, non-profit organizations, major foundations and Congress.

Joining The Conservation Fund on the board of the coalition are Bristol Bay Native Corporation; Alaska Professional Hunters Association; General Communications, Inc.; ConocoPhillips Alaska; the Nushagak/Mulchatna-Wood Tikchik Land Trust; and well-known guides. Major foundations such as the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (named after the co-founder of Intel and his wife) have already contributed or pledged \$4.5 million. In the past two budget cycles, the US Congress has allocated about \$6 million in federal coastal wetland grants, and funding from the National Marine Fisheries Service in the Department of Commerce, the Forest Legacy Program at the Department of Agriculture and the Land and Water Conservation Fund through the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

These large foundation and congressional funding sources often require other donors to match their support, especially member-based organizations, who contribute their funds, thereby validating public support for the coalition’s goals and objectives.

Among the donor groups have been Royal Caribbean Cruises, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Dallas Safari Club, ConocoPhillips Alaska, Vital Ground Foundation, Donner Foundation, Columbia Sportswear, Orvis, The Huntsman, Wildlife Forever, Woolrich, Inc., Rapala, Pure Fishing, Alaska Sportsmen’s Lodge, and Boardwalk Lodge, Charles C. Brandt Construction, and hundreds of individuals.

Given the growing scarcity for conservation funding in the federal government, the track record for Southwest Alaska and the matching support look to give the project a leg up in future congressional budget cycles. The State of Alaska Parks Division has the ap-

proval of Governor Frank Murkowski for proceeding with targeted conservation purchases that leave a private land base for local Native and rural residents while capitalizing their ANCSA corporations. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are strongly supportive.

What Others Say

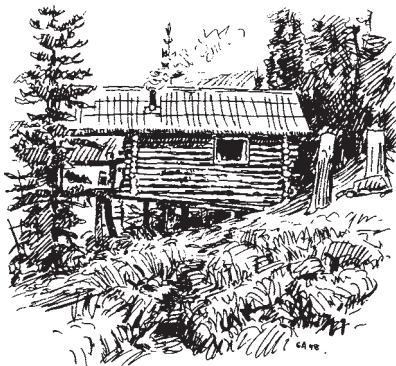
Third-party endorsements are nice to have in any large conservation project and the Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition is attracting opinion leader support. Former Alaska Governor, Jay Hammond, the famed ‘Bush Rat Governor,’ who is also a former pilot, hunting guide and commercial fisherman from Southwest Alaska, strongly supports the project, stating: “I can think of no other region where the interplay of a species like salmon has shaped the region’s culture, commerce and ecology.”

International big game consultant Bert Klineburger (Founding Conservation Force Board Member) has vast experience in expanding global hunting opportunity and sportsmens’ access. He opened up several countries, including Soviet satellite states during the Cold War. Bert likes the local buy-in apparent in Southwest Alaska conservation, “The Southwest Alaska project is wisely working with the local landowners and people to achieve their objectives. In my experience, I’ve always worked to benefit local people by strengthening the incentives they have for conserving outstanding habitat. No lasting successes are possible where the interests of hunters and big game are at odds with local people.”

Dr. Richard Allen of Kerrville, Texas, and a past president of both the Dallas Safari Club and Dallas Ecological Foundation (both Conservation Force supporting organizations) floated the remote King Salmon River in 2004 as part of a project evaluation effort for DSC/DEF. “The ecology of the area is one of the last truly wild areas left in the United States. To see this habitat lost would be one of the major tragedies of our time. We must preserve this area intact for future generations and that is one thing that I truly, truly believe. Southwest Alaska Native

leaders would rather sell to conservation buyers to protect salmon habitat and perpetuate their subsistence lifestyle,” says Allen. “Conservation purchases are the only way to keep fish and wildlife at peak levels, compensate landowners *and* allow historic public access for world class hunting and fishing. The good news is, most of the region is still intact with healthy wildlife populations.”

Allen and his wife, Suzie, success-



fully hunted the Alaska Peninsula for caribou and enjoyed the outstanding fishing of this area in the 1990s. Their outfitter was Alaska Professional Hunter Association president, Joe Klutsch, who now serves as a board member of the Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition. APHA recently

passed a resolution supporting the coalition’s goals and objectives, as has the influential Alaska Federation of Natives, forming an important alliance between wilderness-based user groups like big game hunters and the landowners in the region.

Wildlife Forever President and CEO Douglas H. Grann floated the Kwethluk River in 2002 and became an early advocate of the coalition’s project, “Anyone who has experienced the region knows it is unmatched for salmon and rainbow trout fishing in North America and the world actually,” Grann says. “The opportunity for our members to help purchase small tracts that conserve much larger areas provides an enormous degree of leverage when looked at per dollar spent or per acre conserved for fish and wildlife.”

Getting it Right in a Last Great Place

Supporters of Conservation Force have wide personal experience of the world’s foremost hunting and fishing destinations. All of us have favorite places burned into memory, and it would be a kind of torture to have to choose one of our favorite places over others. Conservation Force strives to make sure we don’t have to lose any of the last great places but we are all aware of the political, social and economic cross currents that put many awesome wildlife regions in jeopardy, leaving some permanently ruined.

There is only one Alaska Peninsula in the world and only one Bristol Bay. The subcontinent of rivers that is Southwest Alaska is not equaled anywhere for wild salmon productivity. Nowhere do wild salmon populations have a greater likelihood to be conserved in their original bounty. The Initiative is the best hope for bears and other wildlife in the region. Conservation Force is accepting earmarked contributions for the *Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Initiative*; or you can direct your donation directly to *The Conservation Fund*, Alaska State Office, 6400 Andover Drive, Anchorage, AK 99516. E-mail: glennelison@alaska.com. Tel. 907-868-7974. For more information visit www.swakcc.org or www.conservationfund.org. - John J. Jackson, III.

Conservation Force Sponsor

The Hunting Report and Conservation Force would like to thank International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife (IGF) for generously agreeing to pay all of the costs associated with the publishing of this bulletin. IGF was created by Weatherby Award Winner H.I.H Prince Abdorreza of Iran 25 years ago. Initially called The International Foundation for the Conservation of Game, IGF was already promoting sustainable use of wildlife and conservation of biodiversity 15 years before the UN Rio Conference, which brought these matters to widespread public attention. The foundation has agreed to sponsor *Conservation Force Bulletin* in order to help international hunters keep abreast of hunting-related wildlife news. Conservation Force’s John J. Jackson, III, is a member of the board of IGF and Bertrand des Clers, its director, is a member of the Board of Directors of Conservation Force.



International Foundation for the Conservation of Wildlife