

# Georgetown Tribal Council

## E-Newsletter



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**Conferences, Reports and Tribal gatherings all agree: The natural resources that allow for a subsistence way of life are important....but what happens to the agreement when those resources are in jeopardy?**

With the BIA Providers conference this week, ATCEM a few weeks ago, AFN a few weeks before that and AFE just two months away - conferences and meetings seem to be on my mind.

Whether it is an environmental conference or not, there seems to be a common talking point: subsistence. Whether the conference is focused on subsistence resources, talking about how to protect subsistence resources, or simply has a presentation about the collection of tribal ecological knowledge.....it's always there, somewhere.

What IS subsistence?

According to library.com, subsistence can have many meanings: 1. the state or fact of subsisting; 2. the state or fact of existing; 3. the providing of sustenance or support; 4. means of supporting life; a living or livelihood; 5. the source from which food and other items necessary to exist are obtained.

I think we would get a better definition from those people around the world who depend on natural resources to get by, to live...what does it mean to THEM?

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game does their best to document just that kind of information for people living in rural Alaska.

Just a couple months ago, GTC received a technical report, entitled Subsistence

Harvests in 6 Communities in the Lower and Central Kuskokwim River Drainage, 2010.

The study and report were completed by ADF&G Division of Subsistence, and the report edited by Caroline L Brown, Hiroko Ikuta, David S. Koster, & James S. Magdanz. The study was conducted between 2009 and 2011, and the report was published in July 2013. It can be found at <http://www.subsistence.adfg.state.ak.us/download/Technical%20Papers/TP%20379.pdf>

This report summarizes results of research conducted on subsistence harvest and use of wild foods in the following six communities along the Kuskokwim River: Akiak, Kwethluk, Oscarville, Tuluksak, Georgetown and Napaimute.

Or we can go to ANILCA for a definition... Subsistence uses are defined as "the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of inedible by products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade" (ANILCA §803)

My point? Yes, It is important to hold meetings so that we can talk about subsistence issues; it is helpful to understand

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trends, document stories and realities, and it's even important to have a solid definition for subsistence....but let's not forget about the most important thing here: the heart of a subsistence way of life, the natural resources themselves. And maybe just as important, our need to put aside both political and property lines, work together, and protect those resources.

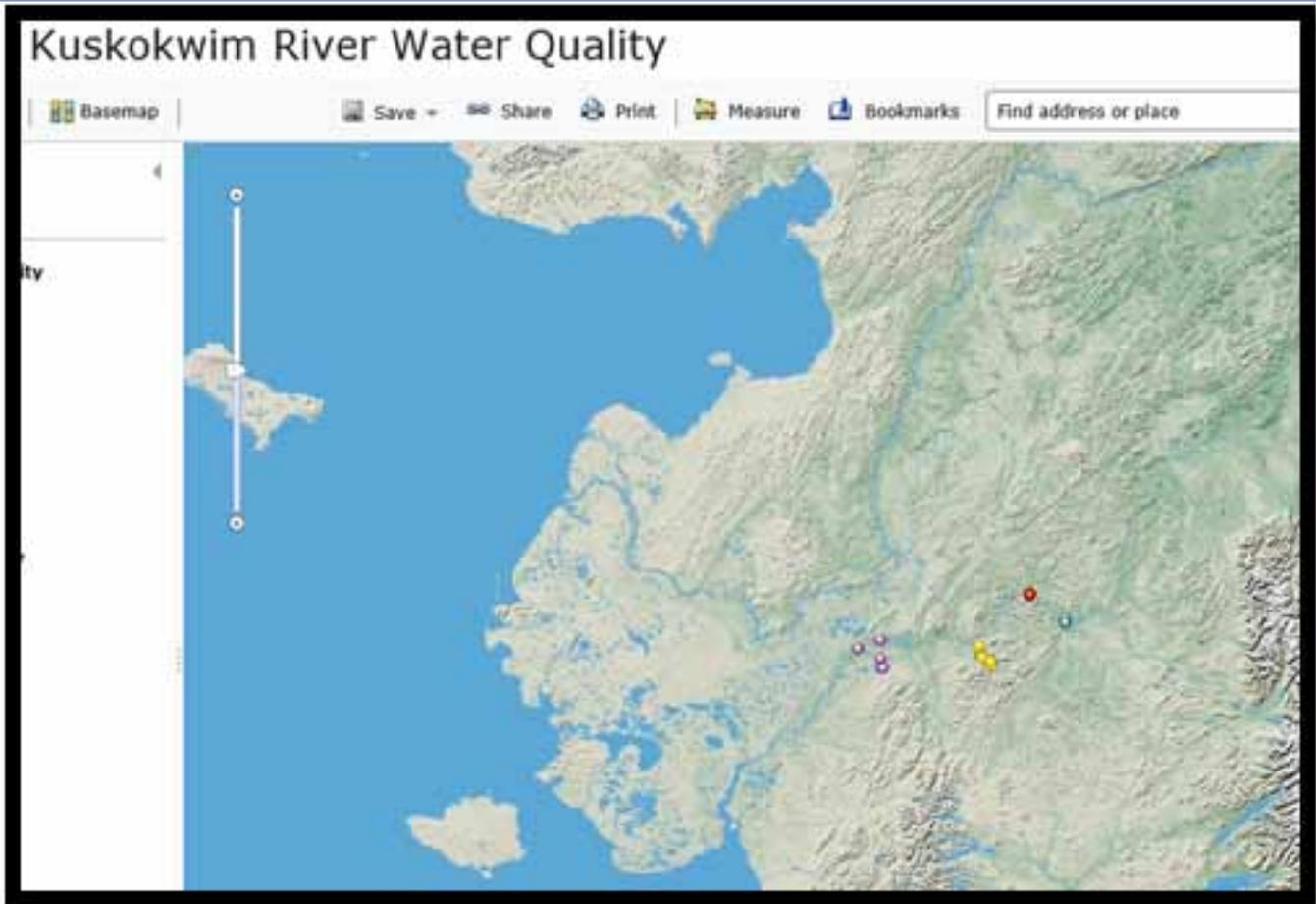
Because without the health of the salmon, the river, the moose, the berries, whatever it is your family depends on....where would you be?

The answer will be different for everyone, but I guarantee that one thing will be the same: it won't have a pretty ending.

So let's think about that as we attend conferences and meetings this winter - yes, things are changing, water quality is being impacted by development, salmon numbers are in decline...we can all agree on that...now, what are we going to DO about it?

By: Kate Schaberg

# Middle Kuskokwim River Baseline Water Quality Spatial Database - Online Now!



As part of the GTC's IGAP program, we are establishing a water quality baseline for the groundwater and surface water surrounding Georgetown. Many villages along the Kuskokwim River are conducting similar projects. In 2007, the GTC received funding from the EPA to create a database for such projects along the middle Kuskokwim River. With the support of several villages and consortia, the program began. Five years later, with many changes to technology, the GTC is happy to present a new and improved web-mapper that houses data for Napaimute, Kalskag, Sleetmute, and Georgetown. To access the data spatially, follow this link: <http://bit.ly/1bh5hIG>. Quality Assurance Project Plans are available for all villages who have submitted data. If you know of any other baseline water quality programs out there, please pass the word along. With the potential development of an open pit gold mine and the recent decline in Chinook salmon runs on the Kuskokwim, water quality data collection is becoming more common and an important source of information—this database and mapping system offer a place to store that information so that it can be viewed as a collective source of data, giving a big picture view of the health of the Kuskokwim River.

Parameters such as pH, temperature, salinity, specific conductivity, total metals, and dissolved oxygen are included, among others.

Please contact Kate Schaberg at [kate.schaberg@georgetowntc.com](mailto:kate.schaberg@georgetowntc.com) with any questions or if you have data you would like to include in the database.

# Food For Thought: What are you doing with YOUR moose meat?



## Here are some ideas!

Pictured above, Ronnie Vanderpool (Aniak) with his moose. Bottom from left to right: "Ronnie Dean" Vanderpool having some fun; Grinding up last year's

moose meat in my garage; and the product of the Vanderpool's moose meat: jalapeño cheddar dogs! Photo credits to Emily Vanderpool.



# Red Devil Mine Clean UP -Update



## WHAT IS CERCLA?

First it is important to understand that the cleanup at RDM is being conducted under the CERCLA process. The basic outline of events are as follows:

A Remedial Investigation (RI) is conducted to outline what is taking place at the site of interest. Studies are conducted and the problem is identified.

Next a Feasibility Study (FS) is done, identifying 4 possible ways to clean up the RDM site. Once these are complete, a Proposed Plan is issued to the public, basically describing the RI/FS process and outcomes in an understandable manner.

Public comment and community meetings take place following the proposed plan, and once comments are taken into consideration along with all of the other findings, A Record of Decision (ROD) is issued with the final decision on how to proceed with cleanup at RDM.

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The draft FS was sent from BLM to EPA in April. BLM, EPA and DEC will be conducting meetings soon to discuss comments on that document. Following that, the Final FS will be issued, and that is expected out next summer.

BLM already has a contractor on board to do the proposed plan and Record of Decision (ROD) following the issuance of the FS. Public commenting and community meetings are expected to occur in Feb/March of 2015, prior to the issuance of the ROD.

In the Feasibility Study, there are 4 differ-

ent alternatives of dealing with the site as a whole that they will need to decide between:

- 1.No action
- 2.Leave tailings where they are, and put up signs and fences around the site, thus reducing the risk of exposure to wildlife and human populations
- 3.Remove the tailings in and next to creek where water leaches tailings – build a repository up above the creek where there is a flat area, move the tailings there and cover it with something to prevent leaching
- 4.Excavate the tailings the same as #3 but barge it out instead of moving it to another location on site.

As part of alternative #3, there are tailings on site that have high concentrations of Mercury, Antimony and Arsenic. There is a procedure called TCLP (toxicity characteristic leaching procedure) that allows you to determine if a particular substance is said to have a “toxicity characteristic”.

This was done to the tailings at RDM and the tailings to the south side of the creek where not a lot of stuff is growing, failed for Arsenic. On the north side of the creek, no samples failed. The tailings that failed this test are now considered hazardous waste and must be handled under RCRA.

Since some of the tailings are now considered hazardous waste, BLM is doing a treatability study as part of the FS: BLM took samples of that material last summer, and are looking at solidify-

ing or encapsulating it with a cement type mixture then re-running for TCLP. If it passes, it makes the tailings easier to handle and they wouldn't need to be disposed of as hazardous waste or given special status under RCRA. If alternative #3 is the route that is chosen, and this proves to be a good way to go, then this is what would be done to all of those tailings.

## EARLY ACTION

While working on the site wide strategy, if there is an obvious part of the problem that you can do something about you are allowed to say – here's the problem right here, we don't have to wait to do something about this specific issue. This is called an early or interim action. In this case the immediate problem is that the tailings are moving into the creek out into the Kuskokwim River and they need to do something to stop that from happening.

So next summer they plan to move tailings away from the creek. They are focused on the creek and material next to creek to prevent movement to the river. Early action would not move tailings OFF SITE, just move them away from the creek.

In order to complete the early action, BLM needs to complete a risk assessment, and develop a document called an engineering evaluation cost analysis (EECA) – which is like a mini RI/FS focused just on that action. BLM is developing an EECA now and in January, plans to talk with communities and the early action plan.

# News From Around the Kuskokwim

## A Call for Nominations for Georgetown's Environmental Committee

The GTC is now accepting nominations (self nominations allowed) for the Georgetown Environmental Committee. Our hope is to get 3-4 Georgetown members who are interested in the environment surrounding Georgetown, for a year long commitment. Fun trips, meetings with pizza, and an opportunity to work on some environmental projects included! Please contact our office at 274-2195 or e-mail at [kate.schaberg@georgetowntc.com](mailto:kate.schaberg@georgetowntc.com). For more information, check out our brochure at <http://www.georgetowntc.com/pdf/EnvCommitteeBrochure.pdf> Nomination deadline has been extended through December.



Photos from GTC Photo Collection

### **Local Environmental Observer (LEO): The Eyes, Ears & Voice of Environmental Change**

"We are tribal professionals who apply traditional knowledge, western science and technology to document unusual plants and wildlife, extreme weather, erosion, flooding, droughts, wildfire and other events that can threaten food security, water security and community health." Check out the LEO website at <http://www.anthc.org/chs/ces/climate/leo/>

OR visit their youtube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/LEOalaskan>

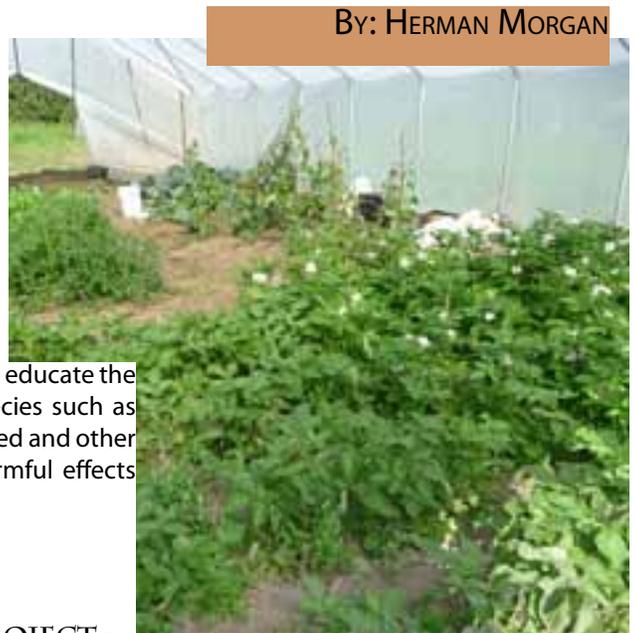
### **NTOC Ballots Due December 16, 2013: What's it all about?**

In order to improve communication and build stronger partnerships with the tribes, EPA established a National Tribal Operations Committee (NTOC) in February 1994. EPA is now accepting votes for one of seven nominees for the Alaska state representative seat on NTOC. Billy Maines from Dillingham holds one of two AK seats and the other is up for grabs. Billy Jean Stewart, IGAP coordinator for Kalskag, is one of the nominees. Billy Jean currently serves as an alternate, and fills in for seat members as needed. According to Billy Jean: "NTOC members meet two times a year, and we bring concerns that the whole state has to different agencies i.e. water, land, mining, agriculture, etc."

Each Alaska Tribe is limited to a maximum of one vote for this position. Ballots are due December 16, 2013. For more information on how to submit your vote, please contact Diana Boquist, Tribal Coordinator for the EPA at [boquist.diana@epa.gov](mailto:boquist.diana@epa.gov).

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MID YUKON KUSKOKWIM SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT?

BY: HERMAN MORGAN



The Mid Yukon Kuskokwim Soil and Water Conservation District (MYK/SWCD) is one of the largest of the 13 Conservation Districts in Alaska. We are based out of Aniak and serve 8 villages along the Kuskokwim from Stony River to Lower Kalskag, and four villages along the Yukon (Grayling, Anvik, Shageluk and Holy Cross).

We are focusing on completing the following deliverables at this time:

## FOREST STAND ASSESSMENTS -

We are in the process of working with landowners to determine the age, condition, species type, seedling count and approximate lumber yield per acre of the trees on their land.

## WATER QUALITY / AQUATIC HABITAT STUDY -

MYK / SWCD is in the process of completing a study to determine if there are any possible detrimental effects on aquatic species in the rivers, where effluent from sewage lagoons is being discharged into the river.

## INVASIVE PLANT IDENTIFICATION / ERADICATION -

Through grant assistance from the Scott Paper Co. and NRCDB, MYK is working with land owners to identify plants that are not native to this region. We are also working with land owners to enact eradication procedures for invasive species such as narrow leaf hawk's beard and hemp nettle here in Aniak. We are

also refocusing our efforts to educate the public of invasive plant species such as Elodea and orange hawk weed and other species that could have harmful effects on the local environment.

## HIGH TUNNEL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT -

MYK /SWCD, Aniak Traditional Council, Kuskokwim Native Association and the Natural Resource Conservation Service are working cooperatively to operate a 20' x 40' high tunnel in Aniak (pictured above).

Warm climate crops such as corn and cucumbers are being grown in the high tunnel as well as other vegetables that benefit from the season extending properties of a high tunnel. We are also in the process of fencing in an area by the high tunnel to possibly operate a facility to process fish waste to be used as fertilizer, as was done in the past. We also work with gardeners to store potatoes from their gardens properly, to be used as seed potatoes for next year. These efforts are to assist gardeners to become more self reliant in producing their own food.

## RIVER BANK EROSION SURVEY

MYK/SWCD is also doing a river bank erosion survey to determine the rate and extent of erosion along areas of the Kuskokwim River.

Markers are placed along the eroding sites to measure the amount of bank being washed into the river.

For more information, please contact:

Herman Morgan

District Manager / Coordinator

MYK SWCD

Box : 88

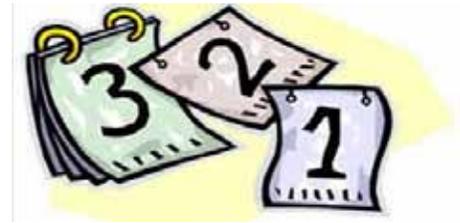
Aniak, AK 99557

Phone: 907-675-4578

<http://midyukonkuskokwimswcd.com/index.html>



40 cucumbers were harvested from 7 plants in the high tunnel. Cucumbers were made into pickles for elder meals program & local residents.



# Calendar of Events

December 9 Deadline for EARLY REGISTRATION for the ALASKA MARINE SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM to be held in Anchorage at the Hotel Captain Cook on January 20 - 24. Early Registrants will receive an abstract book upon request. For more information, go to [www.alaskamarinescience.org](http://www.alaskamarinescience.org).

December 10 PALMER - ALASKA WILD HERB STUDY GROUP will meet from 7 to 9pm at Turkey Red, 550 S Alaska Street, to explore the healing properties of Wormwood (*Artemisia tilesii*). The meeting is geared towards beginners and advanced learners alike. For more information or to RSVP contact Rachel Bobka at 907-715-5570 or email [rachelbobka@gmail.com](mailto:rachelbobka@gmail.com). And for more information, go to <http://www.akapothecary.com/alaskas-wild-herbs-study-group/>.

December 11 STAND UP TO SPEAK OUT: YOUR CHANCE TO BE HEARD ON THE SILENCING ALASKANS ACT (HB77) will be held from 6 to 8pm at the Alaska Experience Theatre, 333 West 4th Avenue. The Department of Natural Resources will be attending this forum to share information about the Silencing Alaskans Act (House Bill 77) and answer questions about the implications of the bill on our wild salmon, water, and natural resources. This is your chance find out more about HB77 and express you opinions. RSVP at <http://www.akcenter.org/hb77forum/>. For more information, contact Kylee Singh at (907) 793-8629 or [kylee@akcenter.org](mailto:kylee@akcenter.org).

December 19 Deadline for submissions to the KEEP THE SEA FREE OF DEBRIS STUDENT ART CONTEST. The NOAA Marine Debris Program annual art context is for grades K-8. to <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/outreach/artcontest.html>

February 3-7 Anchorage: Alaska Forum on the Environment: topics covering climate change, emergency response, environmental regulations, fish and wildlife populations, contaminated site cleanup, mining and others.

Members of the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group have been meeting over the fall and will continue to do so throughout the winter to discuss the Kuskokwim salmon management plans in 2014. Please stay involved...upcoming meetings include the following (Contact working group co-chair Casie Stockdale at [cstockdale@avcp.org](mailto:cstockdale@avcp.org) with any questions)

December 13 KYUK Chinook conservation and management radio show with host Shane Iverson and guests Mark Leary, Megan Leary, and Glen Lindsey 11 AM; 543.5985 or 543.2756

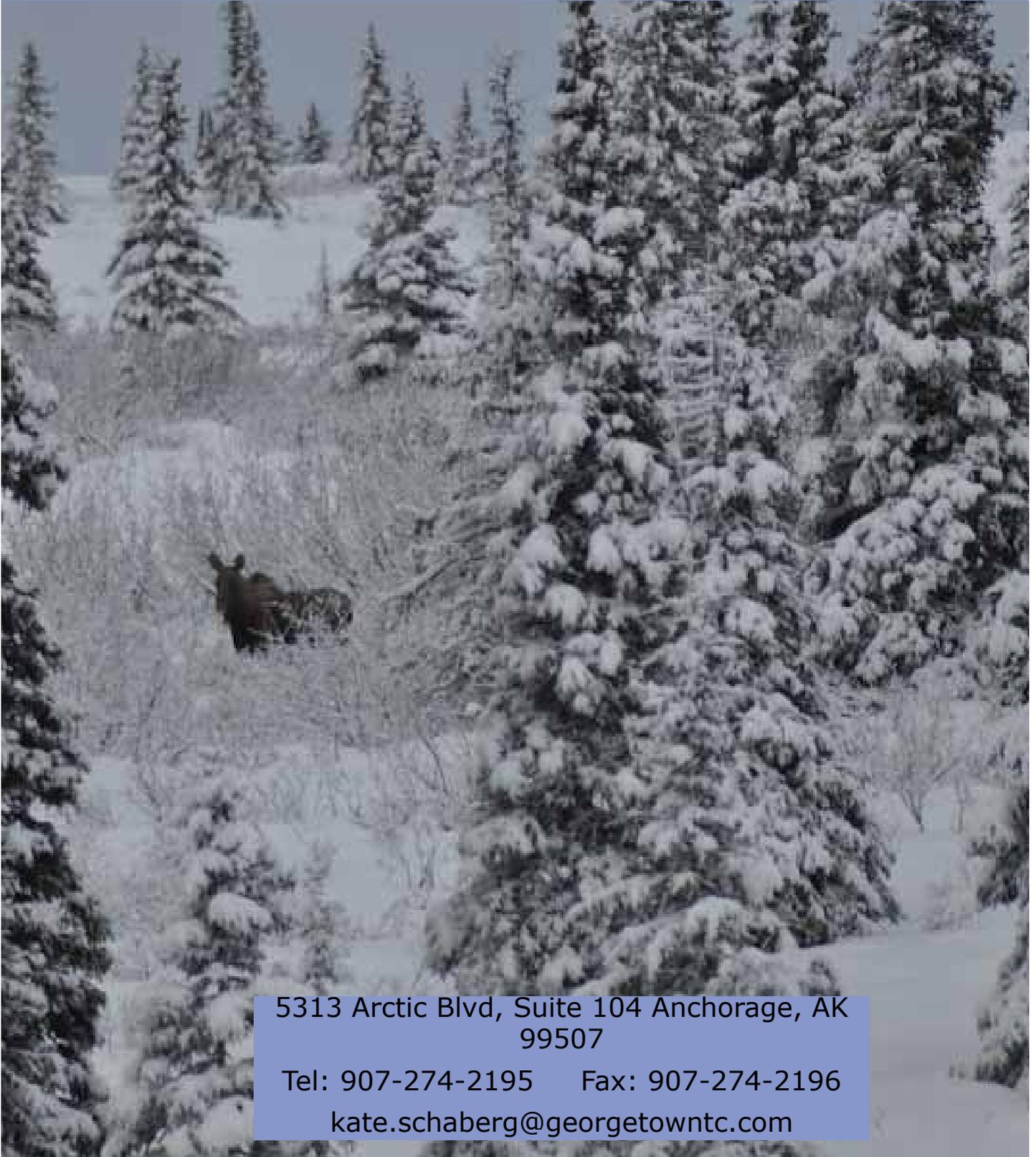
December 17: Bethel: Full Meeting of the KRSM Working Group - management strategy discussion

Dec. 19 KYUK - Sophie Evan will host a call in show on subsistence issues with guests Myron Naneng and possibly Zack Brink all in Yup'ik; 543.5985 or 543.2756

January 6 KYUK Chinook conservation and management radio show with host Shane Iverson and guests Travis Elison, Robert Sundown, and Working Group member TBA 11am 543.5985 or 543.2756

Jan. 8-9: Bethel: KRSM Working Group Meeting – Presentations from ADF&G/what happened in 2013 and how do we avoid this in 2014/management strategy for 2014

[www.georgetowntc.com/Environmental.html](http://www.georgetowntc.com/Environmental.html)  
<http://gtcenvironmental.blogspot.com>



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