

# Matanuska Watershed View

Castle Mountain Coalition Newsletter

Promoting ecological integrity, economic sustainability, and quality of life in the Matanuska River watershed.

## Wishbone Hill – Will the Saga Never End?

### Our citizen's complaint to the Office of Surface Mining

We are still waiting for a response to our citizen's complaint to the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM). In our complaint, we objected to a DNR determination regarding the validity of the Wishbone Hill permits. We contended that DNR simply reaffirmed its prior incorrect determination. We also argued that DNR's determination conflicts with the federal court decision in this case as well as relevant OSM decisions.

In response, DNR submitted a letter to OSM raising a couple procedural objections to the citizen's complaint and basically saying there is no mining going on so what's the problem.

So far, nothing else has happened.

### Mining Permits

If, in fact, DNR is considering these invalid permits to be valid and renewable, Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc. must file a request for a permit renewal sometime in early June. We are watching for it. When the request is filed, we will call on all of you to register your objections to renewal of this now-29 year-old permit, which has been, in our view, improperly renewed several times. Please watch for our emails notifying you of the renewal request and let DNR know that renewal of this permit is not only contrary to law, but also damaging to the quality of life in the Valley.

## OUR STORY

Several years ago, a Chickaloon resident noticed a small ad in the local newspaper announcing a public hearing on a new coal mine proposal in the area. She called her neighbors and no one had heard this alarming news.

That moment was the catalyst that inspired a handful of determined citizens to form Castle Mountain Coalition. Today, CMC remains committed to protecting the quality of life in the Matanuska River watershed and preserving the long-term health of this beautiful place we call home.

## OUR STORY

## BOARD MEMBERS

Kirby Spangler (President)  
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Shawna Whaley (Member)  
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Interested in joining our board of directors?

Phone 907 746-3703

[www.castlemountain.org](http://www.castlemountain.org)

# Another Informative Winter Speaker Series

This winter our Speaker Series was highly informative and very well-attended. We thank all who joined us at the warm and friendly Sutton Library. And we especially thank the CMC supporters who put this series together—Pat Owens, Kendra Zamzow, and Frankie Barker.

## Coal Mining History:

We kicked off the Series with our annual party and a presentation by Warren Keogh, who showed us fascinating historical photos taken in 1932 at the coal operations from Moose Creek to Chickaloon. Most of us were surprised to see how much was going on back then and how many structures existed in an area where almost no trace of mining remains today. Truly, coal is our past, not our future!



## The Castle Mountain Fault:

Coming as it did just months after the November 7.0 earthquake, Peter Haeussler's talk perhaps seemed the most timely. He discussed the Castle Mountain Fault, which runs almost through our backyards. We were happy for the information, but perhaps a little uneasy as well, though there was some comfort in learning that there is a low probability of a large earthquake on the Fault. And the talk was not without humor.



## Spruce Bark Beetle Infestation:

Also timely was Jason Moen's talk on the spruce beetle infestation wreaking havoc in the Valley. He provided information about the beetle life-cycle and also practical steps we could take to protect the trees around us. Basically, get rid of infested trees, as Jason is telling a CMC supporter after the presentation.



## Climate Change in the Mat Valley:

Finally, our own Kendra Zamzow closed the series with a topic of overarching importance—climate change and how it affects the Valley. Kendra provided lots of solid information about what changes we can expect here in Alaska, including possible shifts in population and changing growing seasons.



## The Sutton Library Easter Basket Silent Auction



Each year the Friends of the Sutton Library auctions Easter baskets prepared by various individuals and organizations in the area. As we have for the past few years, CMC donated a basket. This year, our theme was “Morning Trails” and included a fleece vest and Costa Rican coffee. Apparently when we filled the basket, we were longing for spring and early morning hikes.

## Chickaloon Spring Road Clean-up

We were out on our Adopt-A-Highway section of the Glenn Highway on May 18<sup>th</sup> picking up trash. Our section is from milepost 76 to 78, which runs through the main part of Chickaloon—past the King Mountain State Recreation Site and the post office. Additionally, some of our members cleaned up other roads throughout the area. Although there was not an inordinate amount of trash, we picked up about 140 pounds from the highway alone, with help from several members and friends as well as a couple of our youngest members, Raven and Wren. Keeping our roadways clean is our small way of meeting one of our missions: improving the quality of life in the Valley.

We also extend our congratulations to the Chickaloon Community Council on their new pavilion, which was also dedicated that day. Good job!



**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
CONTINUING  
SUPPORT.**



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