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- * **Making the Moment Count**
- * **What We Love About Alaska in Spring**
- * **Geography of Hope Series Explores Tongass Brown Bears ... and More**
- * **The League's Commitment to the Way of the JEDI**
- * **Warmly Welcoming Two New Board Members**

Making the Moment Count

By: Adam Kolton, Executive Director

President Biden ran and was elected on the most pro-climate action and conservation agenda of any successful presidential candidate in history. This included specific commitments to phase out new oil and gas leasing and protect America's public lands and waters, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Executive orders signed on day one of the Biden administration not only reentered the U.S. in the Paris Climate Agreement and halted the Keystone XL Pipeline but set in motion legal reviews of a wide range of Alaska rollbacks by the previous administration, including examining the Arctic Refuge leasing program, the exemption of the Tongass National Forest from roadless protections and expansion of drilling by ConocoPhillips in the Western Arctic.

One week later, he committed the U.S. "to the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and oceans by 2030" and placed "a pause on entering into new oil and natural gas leases on public lands or offshore waters to the extent possible."

Meanwhile, the president's environmental appointments

represent a strong combination of seasoned experience and new visionaries. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack served in the same role for the entirety of the Obama administration, shepherding along plans to phase out the logging of Tongass old-growth, while Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American to hold any cabinet post, has been a fierce advocate for clean energy, public lands and Indigenous rights. This has included joining the Standing Rock Sioux's protests of the Dakota Access Pipeline and speaking out in solidarity with the Gwich'in in defense of the Arctic Refuge coastal plain — the "sacred place where life begins."

These early actions, when combined with Biden's broader agenda that calls for an all-government approach to climate action, represents a truly transformative vision of what must happen to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises while advancing environmental justice.

With such a positive sea change from the last four years, it might be tempting to relax believing that we're in good hands. But as history has shown us too often, politicians don't always fulfill political promises without a determined

and focused constituency willing to prod, encourage and bring necessary pressure.

That's why it's critical for the Alaska Wilderness League family to seize this moment. We cannot assume that the recent shift in political winds alone will save the places we love and cherish. Already, Senator Murkowski of Alaska is trying to leverage her position as a swing vote to her advantage; the American Petroleum Institute has launched a multimillion attack campaign against Biden appointees that favor the phase out of fossil fuels; and, the State of Alaska has set aside millions of dollars to fight the Biden Alaska conservation agenda.

Our job is clear: We must ensure that the Biden administration continues to take strong decisive action to protect Alaska's wild places. With your continued financial support and activism, we can not only undo the damage wrought by the Trump administration but set the stage for more enduring and durable protections for some of our nation's wildest and most iconic landscapes. *



Adam Kolton
Executive Director

Alaska Wilderness League is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1993 to further the protection of Alaska's incomparable natural endowment. Our mission is to galvanize support to secure vital policies that protect and defend America's last great wild public lands and waters.

Board of Directors: Former President Jimmy Carter, Honorary Co-Chair, The Honorable Robert Mrazek, Honorary Co-Chair, Tom Campion, Chair Emeritus, Pat Pourchot, President of the Board, Brian O'Donnell, Vice President of the Board, Betsy Loyless, Treasurer, Jody Juneby Potts, Secretary, Toni Armstrong, Midy Aponte, Steve Barker, Chad Brown, Kit DesLauriers, Ellen Ferguson, Chris Hill, Gareth Martins, Debbie S. Miller, Lorraine Netro, Richard Spener, John Sterling. For questions about our newsletter, please email us at info@AlaskaWild.org or call us at 202-544-5205.

Cover photo: Castilleja, commonly known as Indian paintbrush or prairie-fire, in the Tongass National Forest, Alaska. © [Amy Gulick/ AmyGulick.com](http://AmyGulick.com)

What We Love About Alaska in Spring

By: Hilary Stamper, Online Director

Did you know: After March 20, Anchorage has more hours of daylight than anywhere in the lower 48 states (and Hawaii)? Here are a few sights we love to celebrate as the days grow longer:

Polar bear cubs emerging! In the late fall and early winter, pregnant polar bears build their dens — in snow drifts along the coast, in hills near sea ice and under snow out on Arctic Ocean sea ice. Then — though few humans get to see it — polar bear cubs are born in December and nurse with their moms in their dens through February. In March and into early April, they begin emerging and heading toward the sea ice. Newly born youngsters will largely wait for mom to return from a hunt, replenished and ready to nurse, but mothers of yearlings should be teaching hunting skills as they prowl for seals.

But polar bears aren't the only ones to emerge: Brown bears and wolves are also starting to appear from their dens with young ones in tow — possibly a bit easier to spot before the leaves return to the deciduous trees.

Gray whales return along Alaska's coast. Grays migrate longer than any of the other whales in Alaska — 5,000-7,000 miles from their feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi seas to their calving lagoons in Baja California, Mexico. The whales return north in February, passing through the waters of Southeast Alaska to the Gulf of Alaska during the months of April and May, and finally arrive back at the Bering and Chukchi seas to feed in the shallow waters for the summer months.



Rough-legged hawk and nestlings.

© Florian Shultz/FlorianSchulz.org

Migratory birds flocking back to Alaska. Get ready bird lovers, because birds from all over the world begin to arrive as the snow melts in spring. Robins and thrushes begin to fill treetops while cranes, geese and ducks fill coastal areas. Alaska supports the entire U.S. breeding population of gyrfalcons as well as snowy and northern hawk owls, plus more than 75% of the breeding populations of bald eagles. North American breeding populations of gray-headed chickadees, Arctic warblers, bluethroats, yellow and white wagtails, and red-throated pipits nest entirely or almost entirely within Alaska. And, unlike anywhere else in North America, all five species of loons breed in Alaska: red-throated, Arctic, Pacific common, and yellow-billed loons. Pretty honkin' amazing! (And yes, we have geese too.)*



A mother polar bear nurses her cubs on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain.

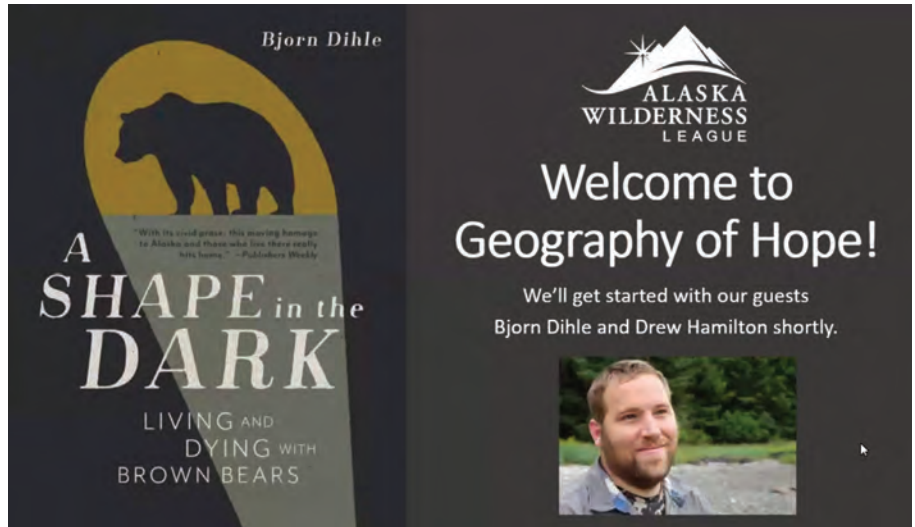
© Jennie Gosché

Geography of Hope Series Explores Tongass Brown Bears ... and More

By: Hilary Stamper, Online Director

So far, our new season of the interactive online series Geography of Hope has been a winter treat for all of us cozied up at home during colder weather. We first featured Alaskan Debbie Clarke Moderow, author of *Fast into the Night: A Woman, Her Dogs, and their Journey North on the Iditarod Trail*, as she shared stories about her lifelong connections to animals and wild places, and her relationship to personally sacred landscapes in the context of climate change and the threat it poses to wild Alaska.

We also were joined by Drew Hamilton and Bjorn Dilhe, who offered a unique chance to experience Alaska's brown and black bears of the Tongass National Forest and learn from Bjorn's lifelong experiences with and passion for these animals. Bjorn is



Screenshot via Alaska Wilderness League

the author of the new book *A Shape in the Dark: Living and Dying with Brown Bears*.

We then traveled with veteran and professional photographer (and League board member) Chad Brown through the Arctic Refuge

and learned about his visits with local Indigenous communities, the humbling impact of moving silently through a vast open space, and how immersing himself in wilderness has helped him to treat his post-traumatic stress disorder related to military tours in Iraq and Somalia.



Bjorn Dilhe searches for brown bears in the Tongass National Forest.

Pack Creek Bear Tours



Chad Brown (and Axe) on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Chad Brown, Soul River Inc.

And finally, we were joined by guests Lindsay Carron and Polly Andrews as they described the special qualities of Alaska’s land and people, how our lands speak to one another through ice melt, erosion, migrations and changing climate, and how the connections between humans and the land influence the future of our existence.

You can visit our Geography of Hope page (AlaskaWild.org/geography-of-hope) to watch past recordings and sign up for future events, or check us out on YouTube (YouTube.com/c/KeepAlaskaWild).

Three not-to-be missed upcoming events include:

April 21 at 7 p.m. (ET), **How Grassroots Efforts Have Protected the Arctic Refuge:** We’re excited to feature activist and film producer Miho Aida, author and Trent University professor Finis Dunaway, and

social media influencer Alex Haraus. Just this winter, Alex and a group of young activists led a viral campaign on social media site TikTok that resulted in millions of public comments flooding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in opposition to seismic exploration!

May 4 at 7 p.m. (ET), **The Salmon Way:** Virtually join photographer and author Amy Gulick in travels throughout Alaska to explore the web of human relationships that revolve around these extraordinary fish. This is Amy’s second trip to

Geography of Hope, and she’s also the author of *Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska’s Tongass Rain Forest* — the recipient of an Independent Publisher Book Award and two Nautilus Book Awards.

June 8 at 7 p.m. (ET), **Silences So Deep with composer John Luther Adams:** Hear about John’s special connection with Alaska, what it’s like to live alone in the frozen woods, composing music by day and spending one’s evenings with a raucous crew of poets, philosophers and fishermen. *



Photographer and author Amy Gulick explores the connection between fish, forest and people on May 4.

© Amy Gulick, AmyGulick.com

The League's Commitment to the Way of the JEDI

By: Lois Norrgard, National Field Organizer

Alaska Wilderness League works to keep Alaska's wildest places protected for generations to come, but we also recognize that threats to the environment often have disparate impacts on marginalized communities, and that the conservation movement itself must be more inclusive internally while seeking external solutions that are more just and equitable for those communities.

That's why the League is working toward finalizing our own JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) plan, setting our sights on implementing JEDI concepts in all aspects of our work, both internally and externally. Our commitment to JEDI includes a commitment to confronting our own biases and privileges — both organizational and personal — and actively working to dismantle them.

So, what is JEDI? Well, according to our colleagues at The Avarna Group, it can be broken down like this:

- **Justice:** Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals & communities can live a full and dignified life. These barriers are essentially the “isms” in society: racism, classism, sexism, etc.

- **Equity:** Allocating resources to ensure everyone has access to the same resources and opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers — the ‘isms’ — exist. Equity is the approach & equality is the outcome.
- **Diversity:** The differences between us based on which we experience systemic advantages or encounter systemic barriers to opportunities.
- **Inclusion:** Fostering a sense of belonging by centering, valuing and amplifying the voices, perspectives and styles of those who experience more barriers based on their identities.

The JEDI journey is key to our ability to effectively broaden our own understanding and expertise of Alaska subsistence and tribal rights issues and reimagine conservation as a tool for justice, which is critical because, in the end, we share many of the same values as Alaska Native communities struggling with the impacts of climate change and concerned with the preservation of land and wildlife that their cultures have relied on for generation after generation. ✨



keepalaskawild Are you fired up about protecting the Arctic Refuge? If so, please join these young activists and explorers in supporting H.R. 1146, the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act. The House is set to vote tomorrow on this important piece of legislation, which would restore protections to the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain. Today, tomorrow, and every day—we #standwiththegwichin to #protectthearctic.

Huge thanks to @thenorthface and this amazing crew of explorers for their work on the Hill supporting H.R. 1146!



Liked by maiareillyw and 372 others

SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

The League teamed up with The North Face in 2019 to bring young activists from all walks of life to D.C. to advocate for the Arctic Refuge.

Warmly Welcoming Two New Board Members

By: Chris Konish, Director of Development

Though we were not able to meet in person at our board meeting this past March, we were excited to welcome two new members to the Alaska Wilderness League board: Chad Brown and John Sterling.

You might recall seeing Chad in a past edition of the *North Star News* highlighting one of the League’s advocacy weeks in Washington, D.C. As a military veteran, professional photographer and founder of the nonprofit Soul River Inc., Chad has been an effective advocate for the protection of Alaska’s public lands and waters, sharing his personal story with audiences and lawmakers alike to advance the cause. Soul River brings together at-risk youth with military veterans as mentors and takes them into threatened wild spaces — they’ve made multiple “deployments” to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain — providing mission-driven experiences where advocacy and outdoor education meet. He has since founded Love is King, a non-profit that focuses on access, safety and healing in the outdoors for BIPOC communities and all underserved voices.

John also has had a tremendous impact on Alaska conservation work as well as land and water conservation as a whole, especially during his time as executive director of The Conservation Alliance



Chad Brown

Chad Brown, Soul River Inc.

where he retired from after 17 years. Overall, John has spent more than 25 years working at the intersection of business and conservation, working as director of environmental programs for Patagonia prior to joining The Conservation Alliance.

Learn more about Chad and John at [AlaskaWild.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/](https://www.alaskawild.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/) and join us in welcoming them aboard! *



John Sterling

John Sterling

Hope to see YOU soon on:



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A Legacy of Protecting the Places You Love



By planning today, you can ensure you have the final say on how your hard-earned assets can benefit the people and causes you care about most. When you include a gift to Alaska Wilderness League in your will, you help provide lasting and impactful resources to aid in the long-term protection of irreplaceable Alaskan landscapes.

To learn more, please contact Chris Konish at 202-266-0415 or Chris@AlaskaWild.org, or visit AlaskaWild.org/Planned-Giving.

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