

AYEA Teens Tackle Politics for a more Sustainable Alaska

2010 Civics & Conservation Summit Report



What a week! High school students from around the state of Alaska converged in Juneau March 15-19 to learn about the legislative process, to demonstrate the power of youth voice, and to take action for a more sustainable Alaska. Highlights from the week include meeting our Senators and Representatives, getting an incredible introduction during the Senate Floor Session, meeting with our priority “focus” Bill sponsors, and even testifying! We wrapped up the week with a celebratory community dinner where we announced the winners of

AYEA’s annual Legislator Awards and ate an amazing meal complete with fresh Alaskan halibut.

The **Civics & Conservation Summit** is an annual, week-long training where Alaskan teens come together in Juneau (not accessible by road) to learn about the political process, focus on current environmental issues and legislation, and take action on issues they are passionate about. This year’s training brought together twenty-three high schoolers from thirteen different communities, including Anchorage, Denali Park, Dillingham, Elim, Fairbanks, Healy, Homer, Kenai, Koliganek, Juneau, Palmer, Napakiak, and Stebbins.

Legislator Environmental Action Awards – At our annual Community Dinner Celebration teens presented Environmental Action Awards to four legislators who have been doing impressive work on critical environmental issues. The award winners were selected by the Summit’s Youth Trainers. Congratulations to Senator Bettye Davis (D), Anchorage; Reps. Alan Austerman (R), Kodiak; Paul Seaton (R), Homer; Beth Kerttula (D), Juneau.



Focus Bills – The group picked three pieces of environmental legislation to focus their political education



around: SB 150 – Establishing an Emerging Energy Technology Fund, SB 152- Regional Transit Authorities, and House Joint Resolution 40 Opposing Unnecessary Critical Habitat Designation for Cook Inlet Beluga Population. Participants researched their bills, met with bill sponsors and issue experts, and then met with their Senators and Representatives to discuss their positions on the bills. Tiaya Waggoner from Palmer testified before the Senate Transportation Committee on behalf of SB 152 – Regional Transit Authorities!

Cultural Sharing – The group learned Polynesian Dance and Native Youth Olympic events like the Seal Hop and the Stick Pull; heard bird calls from Stebbins teen Fabian Pete; listened to spoken word poetry and singer/songwriting; saw photographs of Napakiak and Anchorage; and presentations about Elim Students Against Uranium, Rebels to the Pebble, as well as the Palmer, Homer, Anchorage, and Juneau AYEAs Chapters!



Peer Leadership – AYEAs has Youth Trainers at all of our Summits, who help develop the agenda, and plan and facilitate sessions at the Summit in partnership with Adult Mentors. This method of peer leadership enhances participants' ability to learn, stay engaged, and relate to the issue. Teens are eligible to be a youth trainer (i.e. "Peer Leader") after they have attended the training once previously and demonstrated strong leadership potential. This position allows youth to step into a larger leadership role with greater responsibilities.

More photos from the training are available on Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ayea/sets/72157623687556420/>

Huge thanks to all of the volunteers, donors, and supporters who made the CCS happen! Special thanks to the training team: Alli Harvey, Brian Lyke, Liz Hodges-Snyder, Justice Sky, Aviva Hirsch, Elena Dolitsky, and Zoe Fuller.