ANNUAL REPORT
2008
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Appendix
HISTORY AND MISSION OF ORGANIZATION

History: Founding. In December 1997, Pamela Miller founded ACAT to respond to people who were asking for technical assistance with environmental contaminants. Pam came to Alaska in 1990 to work for Greenpeace as a research biologist where she focused on oil and gas issues (including climate change), and in 1994 she established for Greenpeace Alaska the Community Toxics Investigative and Advocacy Project. In 1997 when Greenpeace leaders closed the U.S. toxics campaign and switched the organization’s entire focus to climate change, Pam chose to leave Greenpeace in order to keep commitments she had made to people throughout Alaska who had asked for help with toxics.

Mission. ACAT is a growing, progressive organization that engages people to advocate for the right to live in a healthy environment. We work collaboratively with communities to facilitate environmental health and justice by holding corporations, the military, and governments accountable for their environmental practices. ACAT has a solid track record of base-building, organizing, and advocating for policy change. We have considerable experience organizing Indigenous peoples, as well as strong ties to other non-governmental organizations—more than twenty national and international groups, and more than forty Alaska groups. We assist communities in implementing effective strategies to limit their exposure to toxic substances and to protect and restore the ecosystems that sustain them and their ways of life. ACAT’s mission is to assure justice by advocating for environmental and community health. We believe everyone has the right to clean air, clean water, and toxic-free food.

Constituency & Precautionary Principle. ACAT engages successfully with tribes, other communities, and non-governmental organizations to bring about environmental justice by effecting policy and social change locally, statewide, nationally, and globally. We share the conviction that under conditions of scientific uncertainty, when evidence of the potential for harm to human health and the environment is scientifically compelling, precautionary measures that emphasize exposure prevention should be undertaken.

Strategies. ACAT uses three interdependent strategies that interact to result in sustainable change, which are to 1) Conduct community-based scientific investigations; 2) Educate and activate concerned individuals and organizations; and 3) Advocate for communities. We produce investigative reports and GIS maps, sponsor public educational events, organize with tribal villages and other communities, conduct biomonitoring tests, utilize the media, prompt policymakers, conduct grassroots democracy work, maintain an organic demonstration garden, work on national and international policy issues in collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, and bring legal suits to achieve environmental health and justice.

Diversity. ACAT engages a broad diversity of people. Seven of our ten-member governing board are ethnic minorities, six of whom are from the ethnically and culturally-diverse Indigenous peoples of Alaska (Alaska Natives). Seven of our fifteen permanent staff members are ethnic minorities, six of whom are Alaska Natives. ACAT staff spans a five-decade age range; four are sexual minorities. Youth work with us on a regular basis, as ACAT participates in high-school mentorship and college internship programs. ACAT is an environmental organization, yet at the same time, those in the mainstream of U.S. society who may not ordinarily think of themselves as environmentalists (physicians, nurses, clergy, teachers, students, horticulturalists, and attorneys) participate in our public events and actively contribute to our work.
History—List of Major Accomplishments for ACAT’s First Ten Years 1998-2008:

- **Regulatory Safeguards for Toxic Operations.** Led successful statewide opposition to legislation that would have removed regulatory safeguards for hazardous waste incinerators, oil production facilities, mines, and asphalt plants (1998).

- **Environmental Justice Documentary Film.** Created a documentary film that portrays the last words of Yupik Elder Annie Alowa urging the military to clean up toxic waste left behind on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. The video helped ACAT obtain multiple, long-term federal research grants to work in collaboration with villages in the Norton Sound region to conduct environmental and health studies that serve as a basis for cleanup of contaminated sites (1999-2009).

- **Nuclear Workers at Amchitka Island.** Was instrumental in obtaining an apology and reparation for nuclear workers who were sickened by Cannikin, a massive underground nuclear test conducted in 1971 on Amchitka Island in the Aleutian Chain (1996-2005).

- **Biomonitoring.** Measured body burdens of contaminants among the Yupik Eskimos of St. Lawrence Island (2002); the Inupiaq Eskimos in two villages affected by the Red Dog Mine (2006); and five high-profile Alaskans—in collaboration with the Coming Clean network as part of a national media effort (2007).


- **Hazardous Waste Cleanup Workers.** Sponsored survey (2002) of Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS) workers that demonstrates serious health effects caused by cleanup efforts. Sponsored fifteen Alaskans (scientists, fishermen, high school students, chemically injured worker) to go to Washington D.C. for the 15th anniversary of the EVOS, where ACAT served as lead organization in collaboration with six other groups to conduct a media briefing at the National Press Club, Congressional briefings, and public educational forums at D.C. venues (2004). Conducted community meetings with chemically injured EVOS cleanup workers (2006). Organized groups to request Congress to strengthen federal oversight of hazardous waste cleanup, and seek reparation for the injured EVOS cleanup workers (2007, 2008).

- **Statewide Conferences; Public Events.** Sponsored three successful statewide environmental health and justice conferences for leaders of affected Native villages and other communities throughout Alaska, hosting speakers and offering training workshops (1998, 2003, and 2005). Brought noted scientists to Alaska to speak publicly about environmental health issues in a variety of venues (at least yearly since 1997).

- **Alternatives to Pesticides in Homes, Lawns, Gardens.** Planted/maintained demonstration pesticide-free garden in yard of ACAT office (2000-2001) and, in collaboration with students at Steller Secondary School, on school grounds each summer 2002-2006. Conducted yearly gardening workshops, public events, and a stand at the Anchorage Farmers Market to promote alternatives to harmful chemicals (2000-2008).

- **United Nations Treaty.** Prompted the U.S. State Department to sign the Stockholm Convention, a treaty that eliminates some of the most deadly persistent organic pollutants (POPs) from production and use worldwide (1999-2001). POPs disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples in the Arctic. Participated in the Conference of Parties to the Stockholm Convention (2005-2007), and in annual meetings of the POPs Review Committee in Geneva (2005-2008) to assure strong implementation of the treaty.
• **Schools & Pesticides.** Prompted the Anchorage School Board to adopt a policy to keep pesticides out of the schools (2000); obtained stronger pesticide right-to-know regulations from the State administration for schools and other State facilities throughout Alaska (2001).

• **Hospitals, Incinerators, Clean Air Act.** Took legal action to prompt a major incinerator in Anchorage to comply with the Clean Air Act and use autoclave rather than incineration for medical wastes (2001). Recruited clinics and hospitals statewide to join a national effort to use environmentally-safe methods to dispose of medical wastes (2004-2005).

• **Pesticides Right-To-Know.** Improved right-to-know regulations for pesticides applied for the Municipality of Anchorage, and by professional applicators on private properties. Prompted similar right-to-know State legislation (2004-2005).

• **Settlement with U.S. Army.** Negotiated a settlement with the U.S. Department of Defense (establishing a national legal precedent) that provides significant protections to water quality, fish, wildlife, and human health at Fort Richardson where the Army has been using a 2,160-acre estuarine marsh at the mouth of the Eagle River on upper Cook Inlet for bombing practice. Set up monitoring procedures (2001-2008).


• **CHE-Alaska.** Founded Collaborative on Health & the Environment in Alaska and sponsored public teleconference seminars with environmental health scientists on a monthly basis (2006-2008).

• **Publications.** ACAT produced thirteen reports for the public, a scientific journal article reporting on our body burden work at St. Lawrence Island, and a reference packet to assist health care professionals:

  ➢ Eight reports about the activities of polluters at specified locations:
    • Amchitka Island (two reports—1996 published by Greenpeace, sequel 1998 by ACAT),
    • Fort Greely (2000),
    • St. Lawrence Island (2002),
    • Five military Superfund Sites in Alaska (2003),
    • Exxon Valdez oil spill (2003).
    • Red Dog Mine (2004),
    • Abandoned military sites in Norton Sound Region (2006),

  ➢ Five public, statewide reports about:
    • Spills by the petroleum industry (2001),
    • Dioxins (2002),
    • People’s right to know about exposures to contaminants (2002),
    • Environmental Health Bulletin: environmental reproductive justice (2007),

  ➢ The International Journal of Circumpolar Health (64:4, 2005) published an article by ACAT’s research team about ACAT’s biomonitoring work at St. Lawrence Island.

  ➢ Environmental Health Care Tool Kit for health care professionals (2008).
ADMINISTRATION

Pamela Miller (Executive Director), Shawna Larson Carmen (Environmental Justice Program Director), and Drew Phoenix (Managing Director/Development Director) comprise ACAT’s management staff. They have been with ACAT since 1997, 2000, and 2008 respectively.

Staff Members - Permanent (Chronological Order by Start Date at ACAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pamela K. Miller</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lorraine Eckstein</td>
<td>Research Anthropologist/Grant Writer</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia Darby</td>
<td>Organizer (Health and Wellness)</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawna Larson Carmen</td>
<td>Environmental Justice Program Director</td>
<td>Anchorage/Palmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Goloregen (part time)</td>
<td>Community Field Researcher in Savoonga</td>
<td>St. Lawrence Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Kava (part time)</td>
<td>Community Health Researcher in Savoonga</td>
<td>St. Lawrence Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola Waghiyi</td>
<td>Environmental Justice Community Coordinator</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Apataki (part time)</td>
<td>Community Field Researcher for Gambell</td>
<td>St. Lawrence Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Christopherson (part time)</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen Keane</td>
<td>Organizer (Environmental Health and Justice)</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Ungott (part time)</td>
<td>Community Health Researcher for Gambell</td>
<td>St. Lawrence Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Petras</td>
<td>Organizer (Environmental Health and Justice)</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Hannon (part time)</td>
<td>Student Intern (research, writing, organizing)</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Gallman (part time)</td>
<td>Student Intern (public outreach, reception)</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Drew Phoenix</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consultants – Permanent (Chronological Order by Start Date at ACAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Rudolph</td>
<td>GIS Mapping Specialist</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Reardon</td>
<td>Videographer/Geologist</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Carmen</td>
<td>Technology Consultant</td>
<td>Palmer (near Anchorage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy Bentley</td>
<td>Accountant/Payroll</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Katherine Springman</td>
<td>Research Scientist</td>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Ileen Weber</td>
<td>Database Consultant</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summer Intern – Temporary

Jessica Nu was hired as a summer intern in May 2008 to work full time as an organizer. She is earning a bachelor’s degree in biology and environmental studies at Brandeis University, where she expects to graduate in spring 2009.

Board Members 2008 (Alphabetical Order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine Celentano</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Kenai</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roxanne Chan</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalie Kalistook</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Bethel</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline Kohler</td>
<td>Co-Chair</td>
<td>Aleknagik</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Birgit Lenger</td>
<td>Co-Chair</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet Penayah</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Savoonga</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Peters-Zuray</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Tanana</td>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lydia Olympic</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Anchorage/Igiugig</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti Saunders</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet Yeaton</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Port Graham</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volunteers 2008

ACAT Research Team for Norton Sound Villages from New York State

David O. Carpenter, M.D.  Researcher  State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany
Ron Scrudato, Ph.D.  Researcher  SUNY-Albany
Jacqueline Scrudato  Researcher  Computer science consulting firm, Oswego
Jeff Chiarenzelli, Ph.D.  Researcher  St. Lawrence University, New York
Tom Holsen, Ph.D.  Researcher  Clarkson University, New York
Catherine Schrady, Ph.D.  Researcher  St. Lawrence University, New York
Jon Rosales, Ph.D.  Researcher  St. Lawrence University, New York

ACAT Research Team for Norton Sound Villages from Alaska

Ruth Etzel, M.D.  Researcher  Alaska Native Medical Center, Anchorage
Frank Von Hippel, Ph.D.  Researcher  University of Alaska, Anchorage
Carol Piscoya  Researcher  Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome

Physicians from the Natural Health Clinic, Anchorage

Adam Grove, N.D.  Testifies at Hearings/Writes Formal Comments to Regulatory Agencies
Hope Wing, N.D.  Writes Formal Comments to Regulatory Agencies

Other Volunteers, Anchorage

Audrey Collins  organizing ACAT library
Patricia Damon  editing and layout of Environmental Health Bulletins
Rodger Finley  organizing ACAT outreach materials
Inger Gilbert, Ph.D.  editing grant proposals, reports, etc.
Jean Riordan  videography

Funding Organizations 2008

Alaska Conservation Foundation  National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Bullitt Foundation  The New World Foundation
Common Stream/Currents of Change  Norman Foundation
Environmental Support Center  Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
Ford Foundation  Rasmuson Foundation
Harder Foundation  Tides Foundation Reproductive Justice Fund
The Leughty Foundation  True North Foundation
Marisla Foundation  U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
The John Merck Fund

Non-Governmental Organizations Support in 2008: Contributions, Stipends, Travel Funds

Alaska Center for the Environment  Cook Inlet Keeper
Alliance for Reproductive Justice  Funders Network
Anchorage Museum Store  International Indian Treaty Council
Anchorage Unitarian Universal Fellowship  International POPs Elimination Network
ARC of Anchorage  Native Movement
Arctic Division of AAAS  Physicians for Social Responsibility
Association of Village Presidents  Pesticide Action Network of North America
Center for International Environmental Law  United Nations Environment Programme
Coming Clean Network
Contributors 2008

Nancy Bale  
David Blockstein  
Mary Barrett  
Mindy Baum  
Klaus & Angela Beplat  
Julia Bevins  
Maryann Bozza  
Susan Braun  
Laura Bruce  
Abel Bult-Ito  
James R. Carter  
Roxanne Chan  
Marilyn Coppe  
Alan Colter  
Michael Cull  
Phyllis D’Argenio  
Katrina Daly  
Hazel Eckstein  
Lorraine Eckstein  
Nelta Edwards  
Shelby Eidson  
Alisa Elliott  
Rachel Epstein  
Halvor Erikstein  
Mei Mei Evans  
Eli Fleischer  
Ellen Frankenstein  
Sarah Elizabeth Frey  
Patricia Garoutte  
Linda Garvey  
Inger Gilbert  
Cathy Gleason  
John Hager  
Patricia Harris  
Richard Heacock  
Janeen Herr  
Gabrielle Hoessle  
Eleanor Hung  
Rosalie Kalistook  
Javek Kamali  
Joseph & Pamela Keane  
Dale Kelley  
Pauline Kohler  
Joseph Kotzin  
Lisa Lagowski  
Birgit Lenger  
Renee Lindow  
Becky Long  
Thomas Macchia  
Joan McPeek  
Karen McLane  
Jim McPeek  
Pamela A. Miller  
Peter Mjos  
David Monroe  
Nancy Moore  
Betty Morris  
Alpha Nybo  
Amy O’Connor  
Diane Olsen  
Susan Olsen  
Lydia Olympic  
Maryellen Oman  
Mike O’Meara  
Riki Ott  
Harriet Penayah  
Kathleen Peters-Zuray  
Caroline Plant  
Rebecca Pollack  
Paul Prebys  
Nathan Prince  
Chris Reichman  
Melanie Rieck  
Bonnie Robson  
Ann Rothe  
Colleen Rutledge  
Patti Saunders  
Ruth Sheridan  
Sylvia Short  
Martha Siebe  
Susan Sloss  
Roderic Smith  
Walt Sonen  
Jessica Speed  
Lan & Dorothy Thompson  
Ellen Vande Visse  
Francis & Christine Vecchio  
Joan Velikanje  
Arndt Von Hippel  
Claudia Wallingford  
Ileen Weber  
Christine Wilcox  
Ann WingQuest  
Violet Yeaton

Financial Information

ACAT was founded in December 1997 as an independent program sponsored by the Alaska Conservation Foundation. By July 2001, ACAT obtained 501(c)(3) status and established independence from sponsoring organizations. ACAT’s fiscal year begins January 1st, and from calendar year 2002 through 2005, ACAT spent approximately $550,000 each year. For the past three years, ACAT’s yearly expenses averaged $714,000. Our projected yearly budget for 2009 is over $900,000. Each year we put forward a budget that shows what we plan to spend, but we are flexible and allow for contingencies. If ACAT is not fully funded, we reduce support as needed to specified line items, postpone planned actions, postpone cost-of-living raises, and decrease hours of specified staff. We have contingency plans because of the vagaries of the stock market and political climate that may affect funders.

In 2008, ACAT had three federal research grants that support our collaborative work with rural Native Alaska villages: two from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and one from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). Although federal grants enlarge ACAT’s total income, most of the federal funding goes for analytical work and travel for scientific research. ACAT relies almost entirely on contributions from individuals and foundation grants for support of our grassroots organizing and advocacy work, which in 2008 comprised 69% of ACAT’s funding. Donations from individuals and other non-profit groups comprised 4% of cash received by ACAT in 2008—up two percent from 2007.
**2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Introduction.** In January 2006, ACAT staff members reorganized the way we visualize our programmatic work. We switched from focusing primarily on specific environmental issues under four broad categories (water/air quality, pesticides, northern contaminants, military toxics) and created five categories, instead, that more accurately reflect the manner by which we work toward our mission. We identify ACAT’s five overarching categories as “ongoing programs,” each with a long-term goal that inspires all of the shorter-term projects that are assigned to it. ACAT’s programs are broad categories containing multiple projects, and it is the projects (not programs) that bear the responsibility for specified goals, objectives, action plans, outputs (deliverables), and outcomes. The program titles and goals offer an overview of our vision, while the projects translate vision into action. The programs address generalities while the projects offer specifics.

In addition to projects within the five programmatic categories, ACAT has projects that focus on organizational development. This report addresses some of the major projects within the six categories—one category designated as “organizational development” and five ongoing programs.

**I. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ten volunteers currently serve on the ACAT board of directors with two co-chairs, Birgit Lenger (naturopathic physician from Anchorage) and Pauline Kohler (elder from the Native Village of Aleknagik). The board includes residents of rural Alaska Native communities, tribal environmental/community health leaders, health care providers, and an attorney who is the development director for an organization that serves developmentally disabled people. In 2008, the board was actively involved in development of a five-year fundraising plan. Board members also represent ACAT at meetings and support local events.
Below are summaries of some of the organizational development work conducted by ACAT in 2008.

- ACAT used to have eight board members, but in a teleconference meeting in December 2007 the board elected two additional members in order to increase their own capacity to serve ACAT. The board met regularly by phone throughout 2008, and two in-person meetings were held in Anchorage (April 10-12 & September 19-20).

- In January 2008, ACAT hired Rev. Ileen Weber (photo, right) as a consultant to work from her Seattle office to manage ACAT’s database and provide other administrative services that could be done electronically through email and telephone. She obtained pro bono licenses (worth $11,000) for ten computer stations for ACAT to use a powerful Internet-based database (www.salesforce.com/foundation) Salesforce, and she came to ACAT’s office for a week in May 2008 to train the staff on its various uses.

- In September 2007, ACAT hired a Utah-based consultant, Amy O’Connor, (photo, right) to work with ACAT’s leadership team comprised of two staff and two board members (Pamela Miller, Lydia Darby, Birgit Lenger, Patti Saunders) to develop a five-year fundraising plan. As part of her work with the leadership team, Amy produced a report in 2008 summarizing her interviews with ACAT’s staff, board, and major donors. In an April 4th email message to Pamela Miller, Amy commented on the results of her interviews with ACAT donors:

  I’ve been talking with ACAT donors and there is nothing but awe, appreciation, respect, and deep gratitude for the work you and everyone else at ACAT are doing. 😊

The leadership team and Amy conducted board-staff fundraising training sessions during the April board retreat. In May 2008, we produced ACAT’s Comprehensive Development Plan for Fiscal Years 2008-2011.

- When interviewing donors, Amy O’Connor learned that ACAT supporters feel that we should ask more frequently for financial assistance. She suggested a schedule by which we mail an appeal letter each quarter to ACAT constituents. In 2008, Amy wrote two appeal letters that were sent through the U.S. mails (June & December) to our constituents, resulting in donations of approximately $1,500 and $3,415 respectively.

  [Photo: ACAT organizer, Lydia Darby, assists the executive and managing directors.]

- In March 2008, ACAT hired an Anchorage-based consultant, Morgan Grey, to work temporarily with ACAT’s Lydia Darby to help improve our system for managing and tracking grants, especially our multiple federal grants. She also helped improve our personnel procedures.

- In June, ACAT began advertising for a Managing Director. We posted a comprehensive job description on our Website, placed ads in the Anchorage Daily News, started a word-of-mouth campaign, and listed with both universities in Anchorage. Within a month, ACAT had three viable candidates, and our interviewing committee met with each through teleconference, interviewed two a second time, and brought the top candidate, Rev. Drew Phoenix, from the East Coast for a series of interviews. Drew began work at ACAT on October 27th.

  [Photo: Rev. Drew Phoenix, Managing Director.]

- In November 2008, Drew Phoenix attended a communications workshop conducted by Tom Ahern, a Seattle-based marketing consultant. As a result, we hired Tom to meet with ACAT staff and review our communications documents (ACAT brochure, newsletters, website, fact sheets, etc.). We worked with Tom to generate a list of ideas for improving our current methods of communication which will serve as a base on which to build a communications plan in 2009 to augment ACAT’s Comprehensive Development Plan for Fiscal Years 2008-2011.
II. ALASKA RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

Projects that focus on Alaska Native villages in rural Alaska are assigned to this ongoing program, which has the long-term goal: To eliminate environmental contaminants that affect the water, traditional foods, health, and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of Alaska. Some of the projects for this program are described below.

A. NORTHWEST ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

Leaders in sixteen Indigenous villages in the Norton Sound region have asked ACAT to provide them with technical assistance. The people of the region are suffering from health problems that are likely to be linked with environmental contaminants from local and distant sources. In 2008, much of our work for this project has focused on collaborating with the villages to offer training, community-based environmental sampling, advocacy, and strategic planning to address problems with contamination from military sites, mining, and long-range transport of industrial chemicals into the north/Arctic.

1. Community-Based Field Institute

In July 2008, ACAT staff organized an intensive three-day training program in Nome titled: Community-Based Environmental Research: A Field Institute. The Field Institute featured ACAT scientists as well as faculty from the University of Alaska; State University of New York (Albany); University of California Davis; Clarkson University (New York); and St. Lawrence University (New York). Participants in the university-credited field and classroom course included twenty-four tribal leaders and community activists from the villages of Elim, Brevig Mission, Golovin, Nome, Stebbins, St. Michael, Savoonga, Gambell, and Diomede. The Institute offered classroom lectures, discussion, and field trips with the purpose of providing participants with tools to conduct their own independent community-based assessments of the effects of contaminants on water quality, air, sediments/soils, fish, and human health. Participants received training about “cutting edge” research tools—such as the use of semi-permeable membrane devices (used to detect pesticides and other industrial chemicals in water) and ways to determine the presence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in fish—and implications for human health. [See Appendix for essay written by student & published by Anchorage Daily News, which cites ACAT as a source for her understanding about environmental contaminants in Nome.]

Photos. Left: Michael Apatiki from Gambell taking environmental samples in a stream near Nome. Right: Classroom mapping project to show where contaminants are located in local villages. They are using ACAT’s Environmental Health Care Toolkit (See section III.D. below).
2. Community-Based Environmental Sampling
During our July 2008 field trip to the Norton Sound region, ACAT sponsored environmental sampling with the villages of Nome, Mary’s Igloo, Teller, Brevig Mission, and Stebbins. Each of these communities is off of the road system, so ACAT’s research team travelled from Nome by boat or small plane. ACAT staff and university faculty members trained residents in a variety of environmental sampling methods. The samples taken have been shipped to laboratories for analyses, and when we receive the results we will report them to the communities and assure that the people have ownership of the data. Village leaders will make decisions about how to use the information.

Photo: Dr. Frank Von Hippel, Professor at University of Alaska, training community residents to collect stickleback (small fish) from local streams. Fish were caught and prepared for shipping in villages and sent to UAA laboratory to assess the presence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in the water by analyzing for PCBs, chlorinated pesticides, and heavy metals in stickleback.

B. ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND PROJECTS
Annie Alowa was a health aide in Savoonga, a Siberian-Yupik village on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska located in the Bering Sea forty miles from Russia. In 1952, the U.S. Army established a base at Northeast Cape on the Island; about ten years later Annie began to notice serious problems with the health of residents—including her own family—who harvested greens, berries, fish, and wildlife from that area: cancer, low birth weights, and miscarriages. When the Army personnel vacated Northeast Cape, they left at least thirty-four contaminated sites in a nine-square-mile area. Contamination includes 220,000 gallons of spilt fuel, as well as heavy metals, asbestos, solvents, and PCBs which are known to cause cancer. One of several barrel dumps in the area contained over 29,500 buried drums. There were also buildings and other structures, as well as large bales of copper wire, which had trapped and killed reindeer by starvation.

Photos: Aerial View of Abandoned Military Buildings at Northeast Cape & Reindeer Caught in Copper Wire Left by Military.
Annie Alowa attempted for twenty years to get the Army to clean up the site to no avail. She was sent from one governmental agency to another without a hearing. Eventually Annie met Pamela Miller in spring of 1997 at a Greenpeace-sponsored environmental health conference coordinated by Pam. That summer, Greenpeace flew Annie and Pam from Savoonga by helicopter to Northeast Cape to examine the abandoned military site and to take environmental samples and photographs.

Photo: Annie Alowa at Abandoned Military Site at Northeast Cape, 1997

In 1998 after Pam founded ACAT, she went with Annie to meet with the Alaska Colonel of the Army Corps of Engineers to urge him to do something about the site. Seventy-three year old Annie spoke quietly but eloquently about the thirteen people in her village who had died of cancer in the previous decade, all of whom had spent time at and ate wild foods from the Northeast Cape area. But Colonel Jahn was inattentive and dismissed Annie’s concerns about, indicating that St. Lawrence Island was low on the list for cleanup. His hostile attitude served to strengthen the women’s resolve. Before Annie returned home to Savoonga, she and Pam discussed strategies to get the abandoned site cleaned up.

During a December 1998 conference sponsored by the Alaska Women’s Environmental Network, Annie spoke about the plight of her people. She became ill at the conference and had to leave, and a week later at an Anchorage hospital was diagnosed with liver cancer. Preparing to go home to die surrounded by family, Annie realized she probably would never return to Anchorage so she asked Pam to interview her about her concerns. Pam videotaped the interview but was unwilling to accept that Annie was going to die so she put the tape in a drawer. She pulled it out again when two weeks before Annie’s death, she received a call from Annie from Savoonga who gave Pam a pep talk and urged her to produce the video.

With contributions from concerned individuals and groups as well as pro bono work by videographer Jean Reardon, ACAT produced a short video by spring 1999. At that time we distributed fifty copies of the tape, and ACAT staff spoke to members of a variety of federal agency staff members in Washington D.C. using the video to get attention to community health and environmental issues in Alaska. As a result by 2000, 1) the tribes on the Island were empowered to pass resolutions to support the advocacy work of ACAT; 2) the Army made cleanup a high priority; 3) other tribes sought assistance from ACAT; 4) the Special Assistant to Secretary of the Interior was inspired to support the U.N. treaty to eliminate POPs; 5) Leslie Campbell of the Center for Disease Control began using the video in training agency staff on environmental justice issues; and 6) the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences awarded ACAT a four-year grant under their program entitled *Environmental Justice Partnerships for Communications* to establish a partnership with the people of St. Lawrence Island who currently live in two villages, Savoonga and Gambell.
Before the U.S. military took over Northeast Cape and occupied Gambell, the people of St. Lawrence Island also lived at Northeast Cape. Although these Northeast Cape families now live in Savoonga, they maintained their association with the site by continuing their subsistence activities at summer hunting/fishing camps. ACAT continues to work with the people of St. Lawrence Island. We have four Yupik part-time staff members who live in the two villages. ACAT’s body burden research with the people of St. Lawrence Island indicates that all of the people on St. Lawrence Island have levels of PCBs and pesticides in their blood that are six to nine times higher than those who live in the lower-48 states, and those people in Savoonga who are also associated with Northeast Cape have significantly higher levels than their neighbors on the Island.

1. Suqi River Gathering
In August 2008, ACAT sponsored a community gathering of elders, tribal leaders, youth, and researchers at Northeast Cape to develop a restoration plan for the Suqi River, gather information about the military impacts, conduct training for youth, and collect water samples. It took three trips in a small chartered plane to get all of the people and equipment from Savoonga to the site. During the course of the three-day camp, we talked about the cultural history and importance of Northeast Cape, conducted a walking tour of the watershed, and reviewed sites harmed by the military occupation.

Photos: Savoonga youth preparing to place minnow traps in Suqi River to catch stickleback to test for contaminants in the water. At the Northeast Cape camp, ACAT researchers trained them in water quality sampling, fish sampling, & video/film documentation.

Photo: August 2008, Savoonga elders sit on beach near Northeast Cape camp. During the two-day camping trip, the elders told stories about the importance of the Suqi River and passed on cultural heritage to the youth. The elder with the mosquito netting on her head, is Harriet Penayah—an ACAT board member.
Photos: ACAT planned to fly elders from Savoonga to the village site at Northeast Cape (a sixty-mile trip) by chartering a Bering Air plane. ACAT staff, youth, and camping gear were scheduled to be transported by whaling boats. The seas, however, were too high at the time, so Bering Air flew between Savoonga and NE Cape to carry all of the people and gear.

Men drove four-wheelers from Savoonga to NE Cape to provide transportation at the site for the elders who had flown there.
2. Northeast Cape Village Restoration Project

Because of our collaborative efforts with the people of St. Lawrence Island, the military has removed much of the debris at Northeast Cape in the past six years. However, the group at the Suqi River gathering was deeply concerned about the many areas of contamination ignored and neglected by the Army Corps of Engineers. We talked about the long-term consequences for the health of the people of St. Lawrence Island if the military is not held accountable for the cleanup of Northeast Cape. The military has not fulfilled the commitment made to the tribe to remove debris and contamination in order to leave Northeast Cape clean and healthy. The water is no longer safe to drink. At every step of the way, the Army Corps of Engineers has been attempting to avoid the written commitment made to the tribe when the military first occupied Northeast Cape (1952)—that they would restore the site so that the people could live there again.

At the time of ACAT’s Suqi River gathering, the Army Corps of Engineers was attempting to close the site to further cleanup. As part of this effort, the Corps was proposing to cap a hazardous waste dump. The leaders of St. Lawrence Island asked ACAT to make formal comments in response to the Corps’ proposal. Pam Miller and Viola Waghiyi responded with a two page document part of which is quoted here:

We strongly disagree with the Corps’ conclusion that “The proposed remedy is protective of public health, welfare, and the environment.” We find it ludicrous that the Corps would assert that 18-24 inches of “dermal cover” would provide any measure of protection. Further, it is unconscionable that the landowners “will be responsible for implementing the institutional controls and ensuring that no excavations occur within the final capped area.” The landowners must not be burdened with a responsibility and financial liability that must be assumed by the Corps... Capping is not a solution and will only require extensive long-term maintenance and monitoring. Capping is a poor alternative that will result in surfacing of additional buried materials, erosion of the cap material, damage/invasive penetration by burrowing animals, and inevitable leaching of contaminants into the surrounding environment. This is not an acceptable alternative and we insist that excavation and removal is the only alternative that will prevent further mobilization of contamination and consequent hazards to the health of the people of St. Lawrence Island. [August 6, 2008].

Then in October 2008, the leaders of St. Lawrence Island were planning to attend the annual meeting of Alaska Federation of Natives in Anchorage, so they asked ACAT to arrange a series of meetings with officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The St. Lawrence Island leaders who attended the October 22nd meetings in Anchorage were youth and elders from Savoonga, as well as adult leaders from the tribal government, city government, village corporation, and Norton Sound Health Corporation (health care provider for the region’s villages). The leaders had an opportunity to provide documentation about the military impacts at Northeast Cape/Suqi River watershed and to discuss plans for restoration with the agency officials. Our group presented a short video (filmed during our Suqi River gathering) that includes testimonies and visual documentation about the effects of military contamination at Northeast Cape.

At the same time, Pam Miller was interviewed by reporters from The New Republic about Governor Palin environmental stance in Alaska. The article published October 10, 2008, headlined as Sarah Palin’s Alaskan Wasteland, quotes Pam and members of the ACAT team, (Dr. Kathrine Springman and Dr. Ruth Etzel), concerning the failure of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Palin Administration to assure clean up the site at Northeast Cape.

Palin was pushed by environmental activists and Alaska Natives to pressure the military in its cleanup of one of the most contaminated sites in Alaska—but the state didn’t act. This was the old Northeast Cape Air Force base on remote St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea—one of the state’s closest spots to Russia... One federally funded study still in progress by the state’s premier watchdog on chemical pollutants, Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT), tested the local water and got a reading that was more than one thousand times the level that the EPA considers safe. “If the Corps of Engineers want to fill up their canteens in there, they are welcome to it,” says Kathrine Springman, the toxicologist who did that study, “Actually, I wouldn’t want them to drink it... anymore than I would ask them to drink Drano.”... According to Pamela Miller, ACAT’s executive director, Palin should have used her powers as governor to forge
a better cleanup plan. “Certainly this was also a pattern in the Murkowski administration, but under Palin, it’s gotten worse,” she said. “Her administration has done nothing to work with the military to avoid possible contamination.”  [See Appendix for copy of complete article.]

As a result of ACAT’s advocacy, the determination of the Yupik leadership, and (perhaps) the article in The New Republic; agency officials are beginning to capitulate to the will of the people of St. Lawrence Island.

- Corps officials stopped pressing to close the site and invited the tribe at Savoonga to apply for federal assistance through the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) to remove harmful debris at Northeast Cape. Savoonga leaders requested ACAT’s assistance in applying for the first round of NALEMP funds, which were awarded in November 2008. Savoonga will receive $115,000 to conduct an assessment of what needs to be done at the site to make it safe once more for the people to return to live at Northeast Cape, and it is likely that NALEMP will award future grants for the people to oversee further cleanup. The leaders of St. Lawrence Island are eager to take on these tasks.

- The Corps also agreed to conduct a pilot study using chemical oxidation methods to neutralize fuel and other contaminants within the Suqi River watershed. At the request of the community leaders, the Corps will consider a focused suction dredging of highly contaminated sediments within the Suqi River below the main complex in order to prevent re-contamination and re-suspension of PCB-contaminated sediments. Elder Eugene Toolie reported about an area at Northeast Cape that has buried transformers and the Corps responded with interest in addressing the problem in summer 2009.

- ADEC understood from the meeting with St. Lawrence Island leaders that greater regulatory oversight was needed from the State in order to restore ground- and surface-water sources for drinking water, as well as fish and wildlife habitat. ADEC Commissioner Larry Hartig invited the group to meet with him again in February 2009 in conjunction with meetings of the State of Alaska and the U.S. Department of Defense to address unresolved issues about the military cleanup and establish a Statement of Cooperation.

- At the meeting, we also discussed the need for the U.S. EPA to ensure that the Corps is meeting obligations under CERCLA and for review of Northeast Cape as a National Priorities List or Superfund site.

- ATSDR agreed to work with community leaders to re-evaluate the health assessment conducted by the Agency in 2001 and address health concerns of the community.

3. St. Lawrence Island Traditional Food Study
The people of St. Lawrence Island requested that ACAT determine the safety of the foods that they eat for subsistence, so ACAT is conducting a study to determine 1) contaminant levels in the range of traditional food eaten regularly, 2) how preparation of the foods for consumption influences contaminants levels, and 3) the amounts of traditional foods eaten in the community. This information is critical to the Island residents as they work to maintain a traditional lifestyle while also minimizing their exposures to environmental contaminants that cause disease. In 2008, laboratory analyses of samples from a broad range of foods show that some important foods have unhealthy concentrations of contaminants, so our field researchers on the Island are obtaining a larger sample of those foods. The elders/leaders of the villages want to be certain of our research results (by repeating the tests with more samples), before discussing the implications with the community.

Photo: Annie Alowa’s daughter splitting a walrus hides to make into a boat. The people of St. Lawrence Island hunt sea mammals, fish, herd reindeer, and gather sea bird eggs as well as berries and tundra greens.
C. ALASKA URANIUM MINING PROJECT

1. Northwest Alaska Proposed Uranium Mine
ACAT has an eight-year relationship with leaders from the Inupiat village of Elim, so they asked us for technical assistance when they learned that a multi-national corporation is planning to develop a large-scale uranium mine in areas where they hunt and fish. In 2007, ACAT staff members arranged for the Elim tribal president and vice-president to meet with key governmental organizations (including the U.S. EPA and two state agencies, Alaska Departments of Environmental Conservation, and Natural Resources), as well as the public interest environmental law firm, Trustees for Alaska. At that time, we also facilitated a teleconference for all of the members of the Elim tribal council with an Indigenous expert from Acoma Pueblo, Manny Pino, who has been fighting uranium mining in the southwest United States and internationally.

In March 2008, we noticed that the people of Elim used the Iditarod dogsled race to draw public attention to this issue, after which ACAT was invited to participate in a teleconference strategy call (April 2008) of groups concerned about uranium mining near Elim. When ACAT’s Pam Miller, Shawna Larson Carmen, and Viola Waghiyi joined the call, they were surprised to learn that none of the village leaders had been invited to participate. ACAT staff insisted that the affected tribes be included in all strategy meetings and actions and offered to sponsor an on-going series of monthly meetings—thus assuring that local tribal leaders have been present to guide the action plans. Meetings include:

- Council members, teachers, and students from the Native Village of Elim;
- Council members from the Native Villages of Koyuk, Golovin, White Mountain, and Council;
- Center for Water Advocacy (based in Utah);
- Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (based in Philadelphia, branch in Alaska);
- REDOIL (a network of Alaska Native grassroots leaders);
- Alaskans for Responsible Mining;
- Alaska Inter-Tribal Council;
- Southwest Research and Information Center; (based in Albuquerque)
- Manny Pino from Acoma Pueblo (Scottsdale Community College, Arizona);
- Northern Alaska Environmental Center (Fairbanks);
- Pacific Environment (based in San Francisco with office in Anchorage).

We are developing strategies to prevent development of the proposed mine, which include a legislative strategy to ban uranium mining in Alaska.

Photos. Elim’s Iditarod Demonstration (March 2008).
2. Southeast Alaska Proposed Uranium Mining

ACAT has a long-standing relationship with the people of Hydaburg, a Native village on an Island in Southeast Alaska. Since 2008, our collaborative efforts have been blocking aerial spraying of harmful herbicides by the timber industry in forests in Alaska. In September 2008, Hydaburg requested ACAT’s assistance with another issue of concern—the proposed reopening of an old uranium mine and development of a new mine in a nineteen-square-mile area on Bokan Mountain on Prince of Wales Island in the Tongass Forest. ACAT began by including the people of Hydaburg and nearby Kasaan in our teleconference meetings concerning the proposed uranium mine near Elim in Northwest Alaska, and the strategic plans have expanded to include both proposed uranium mines in Alaska.

Map: Southeast Alaska. The Bokan Mountain project covers a 19-square mile area located on the southern end of Prince of Wales Island. The Native Villages of Hydaburg and Kasaan are concerned about the proposed mines which would affect their traditional fishing, hunting, and gathering areas in the Tongass Forest.

Photos: ACAT Staff Working on the Alaska Uranium Mine Project. Left to Right: Viola Waghiyi, Coordinator for Northwest Alaska Environmental Justice Projects; Pam Miller Executive Director, and Shawna Larson Carmen, Environmental Justice Program Director.
D. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CARE TOOLKIT

In April 2008, we launched the first version of ACAT’s *Environmental Health Care Toolkit* at the annual statewide forum held in Anchorage for the Community Health Aides Program (CHAP). The Toolkit is a hands-on packet of materials that provides information for health-care professionals and their patients. ACAT staff members conducted training sessions with the CHAP participants about the link between environmental contaminants and health. CHAP consists of a network of 550 community health aides/practitioners in more than 170 rural Alaska villages. Since the 1950s, health aides have been serving as the “front line” health care providers in rural villages in Alaska that do not have doctors or nurses. St. Lawrence Island elder, Annie Alowa, had been a health aide for twenty-five years, and it was she who first saw the connection between an abandoned military site associated with her village and health conditions in her people, such as cancer and reproductive problems. ACAT presented the Toolkit to the health aides because we value their feedback as to what would be useful (or not) as they see patients in their villages.

*Photos: ACAT training sessions (April 2008) during statewide forum held in Anchorage for the Community Health Aides Program.*

At the end of the CHAP workshop at our request, the health aides evaluated the Toolkit, and four of them volunteered to serve on an *ad hoc* committee to review the materials and make suggestions for change. ACAT’s Sarah Petras facilitated four teleconferenced meetings to discuss the materials. Both the workshop evaluations and committee discussions indicated that the Toolkit’s format and contents are helpful, and the only substantive change recommended was the addition of more fact sheets about specified contaminants. Examples of fact sheets offered in the Toolkit pertain to mold and mycotoxins, bisphenol-A, phthalate, polybrominated diphenyl ethers, cyanide, polychlorinated biphenyls, uranium, and cyanide. The Toolkit also contains posters for the village clinics—each one on a different topic with photos, such as solvents; lead; mold and mildew; pesticides; plastics; tobacco and secondhand smoke; incineration, burn boxes & landfills; and oil, gas, & fuels.

Section II.A.1. above, describes ACAT’s community-based field institute (July 2008) where we used the revised version of the Toolkit. The *Environmental Health Care Toolkit* is one of ACAT’s “publications” that we provide on request. Sarah Petras, Environmental Health and Justice Organizer, took the lead on this project (photo right).
E. DONLIN CREEK MINE PROJECTS – REGIONAL ACTIONS

In January 2006, Shawna Larson Carmen was invited to make a presentation about environmental justice and mining at Akiak, a Yupik Eskimo village on the Kuskokwim River, a large river in Southwest Alaska that empties into the Bering Sea. An international company (Barrick Corporation) is seeking permits to develop a large open-pit gold mine at Donlin Creek that would adversely affect the hub city of Bethel and numerous Indigenous villages along the Kuskokwim River. Shawna introduced the people to what ACAT had learned at the Democracy School Training Institute about the misuses of corporate power. In July 2006, ACAT sponsored a leader from one of the Kuskokwim villages to attend ACAT’s two-day Democracy School workshop in Anchorage.

In April 2007, the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) requested technical assistance from ACAT. They are leaders from fifty-six, remote, federally-recognized tribes in the Kuskokwim watershed, and they are concerned about the proposed Donlin Creek mine. The AVCP requested that Pam Miller speak at a two-day conference in Bethel entitled Mining Impacts to Native Communities. She told them about the harmful effects of open-pit gold mining, including the threat of mercury emissions and cyanide heap-leach operations. She suggested methods by which village councils could separately and together work to defeat mine development.

Bethel Ordinance. Bethel is a small ethnically-mixed city off the road system 425 air miles from Anchorage in Southwestern Alaska. Bethel serves as the main seaport of the Kuskokwim River and regional hub for surrounding Native villages. A federally-recognized tribe is located in Bethel, the Orutsararmuit Native Council. In July 2007, leaders of the City of Bethel requested that Pam participate on a panel that included mining industry representatives and elected officials to discuss a proposed City ordinance to ban the barging of cyanide through the Bethel port. Pam provided information about the toxic effects of cyanide and other contaminants associated with gold mining. The proposed ordinance had been hurriedly put together by Bethel assembly members and was unable to deflect attacks by the mining industry, so it was not accepted by the Bethel assembly at that time.

In September 2007, ACAT sponsored attorney Thomas Linzey (founder of the Daniel Pennock Democracy School1) to travel with ACAT staff (Pam Miller, Shawna Larson Carmen, Lydia Darby) to the Bethel area to hold workshops about methods employed by other U.S. communities to block harmful mining practices in their regions. We worked with local people and Thomas to produce a draft of a cyanide ordinance designed to stand up to scrutiny by the mining industry, so the people of Bethel can ban the transportation of cyanide on the Kuskokwim River when they feel the time is right to introduce the proposed ordinance.

Women’s Discussion Circle. In May 2008, ACAT board member, Rosalie Kalistook [photo left], who is the Tribal Environmental Coordinator for Orutsararmuit Native Council in Bethel, asked ACAT staff members to organize and sponsor a woman’s discussion circle in Bethel concerning women’s environmental health issues, including the impacts of mining. We felt that this was important to do because women in particular have been intimidated to speak out about their concerns regarding the proposed mine. Some of the men in the villages in the region who want the gold mine have been attempting to intimidate those women who oppose the mine.2 Rosalie reports that women speak with her about the mine secretly or hold conversations in whispers if others are nearby. Pamela Miller, Shawna Larson Carmen, and Colleen Keene went to Bethel to conduct an evening discussion circle with women under the auspices of ACAT’s Environmental Reproductive Justice Policy Project. Rosalie quietly circulated flyers to key women to invite them. Here is the wording for the invitation:

**WOMEN: PROTECT OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN!**
**Discussion Circle about Women’s Health and the Environment**

We are getting together to talk about ways we can keep ourselves and our children and our children’s children safe from harmful chemicals in our homes and in the environment. First we will identify those chemicals and other dangerous materials that threaten the health of people where we live. Our discussion will include information about proposed mining activities and the effects of cyanide and mercury on pregnant women and infants. We will also talk about harmful chemicals in our everyday products, such as cosmetics, plastics, toys, and furniture. After we identify sources of toxics that are polluting the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the foods that we eat, then we can develop ways to protect the health of ourselves and our families.

**YOU ARE INVITED**

**Come to the ONC Multi-Purpose Building**

Monday May 19, 2008 from 7:00 to 9:00 in the Evening

Sponsored by Alaska Community Action on Toxics

Eight courageous and thoughtful women attended and participated actively in the discussion. They asked that ACAT organize a larger meeting in the future in Bethel to include more villages that may be impacted by the proposed Donlin Creek Mine.

Forum on Health Impact Assessment. At the same time in Bethel, the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council sponsored a two-day forum (May 20-21) which was hosted by the Orutsararmuit Native Council and funded by the U.S. EPA. The forum was focused on the proposed Donlin Creek Mine and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which is required of mine developers by the U.S. EPA under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of the EIS, the U.S. EPA is promoting something new—the Health Impact Assessment (HIA), which is designed to help local people threatened by development (such as mines) to feel as if they are participating in the process.

The unspoken purpose of the EIS and HIA process is to establish a sense of ownership and empowerment in residents affected by developing projects such as mining, so residents will not challenge the establishment of the project. Please note the title of the conference: Mining and Tribal Well-being: Building Capacity for Effective Tribal Participation in the Regulation and Permitting of Large Mines. The purpose of the conference was to enlist tribal participation in the regulatory system which never questions the establishment of a mine, itself, but “builds capacity” of the people to participate in regulating the mine, after it is “a done deal.”

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2 This is true also with those who are opposing the proposed Pebble Mine near Lake Illiamna. One of ACAT’s board members, Lydia Olympic, worked against development of the Pebble Mine. She served for seven years on the Igiugig Village Tribal Council (two years as president), but in 2006 she moved to Anchorage and took a job with the Wilderness Society, because of the pressure she was receiving from those in her village who were embracing the development corporation that is attempting to open the area to a huge open-pit gold mine.
The president of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council invited Pamela Miller to make a presentation at the forum to describe the effects of open-pit mining on the environment and human health. However, when a staff member of the U.S. EPA saw ACAT on the schedule to make a presentation, she insisted that Pam’s invitation to speak be revoked. She said that ACAT opposes mining, and she did not want us to speak against developing the mine at the forum. So instead of speaking at the forum, ACAT staff (Pam, Shawna, and Colleen) attended the meeting with the other participants to take the opportunity to network with them and distribute ACAT literature. People were eager to receive our information—fact sheets about cyanide and other toxic materials associated with mining, our report about the Red Dog Mine, and copies of ACAT’s PowerPoint presentation about mining impacts on communities.

Mining 101 for Tribal Environmental Coordinators. A week after the forum, Roberta Chavez called Pam Miller at our Anchorage office. Roberta was one of the women who had attended ACAT’s discussion group in Bethel on May 19th. A Native from one of the tribes in Southwest United State, she lives in Southwest Alaska now and is active in the Association of Village Council Presidents. She serves, also, as a NEPA coordinator and is responsible for training the IGAP3 Tribal Environmental Coordinators throughout the region. A team of U.S. EPA staff members was scheduled to fly from Anchorage to train the IGAP Coordinators at a Mining 101 workshop to be conducted in Bethel on June 3rd. At the last minute, the EPA’s training team cancelled, leaving Roberta with thirty Coordinators arriving in Bethel from remote villages with nobody to train them.

Roberta turned to Pam for assistance and asked ACAT staff to come to Bethel to take the place of the U.S. EPA training team. Pam pointed out that the Anchorage officials of the U.S. EPA had censored ACAT for the Forum just the week before, but Roberta knew about that already and felt that ACAT had something important to teach the Tribal Environmental Coordinators. Pam Miller and Shawna Larson Carmen went to Bethel, and to round off the ACAT training team, they took one of ACAT’s colleagues, Dr. Kendra Zamzow, an expert in mining from the Alaska office of CSPP—the Center for Science in Public Participation (based in Bozeman, Montana). Their presentations were well received, thus establishing ACAT and CSPP as credible sources of information about mining for tribal leaders in the Kuskokwim region.

Photos: Eddie Ungott and Morgan Apatiki (two of ACAT’s Community Field Researchers) attending our Community-Based Field Institute in Nome mapping contaminated sites in Gambell, their village on St. Lawrence Island (Left). Jane Kava, Community Health Researcher at Savoonga (center). Jesse Gologergen taking core sample from Suqi River at Northeast Cape on St. Lawrence Island (Right). These are ACAT’s four permanent, part-time employees who live on St. Lawrence Island and serve on ACAT’s research team.

3 The Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (IGAP) is a National program of the U.S. EPA that funds 175 of the 229 federally-recognized tribes in Alaska to develop and implement environmental protections programs. Average amount per tribe is over $110,000 per year.
III. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY AND SOCIAL CHANGE PROGRAM

ACAT’s projects that focus primarily on changing policies and/or bringing about social change are assigned to this ongoing program, which has the long-term goal: *To motivate a broad range of public support to implement local, national, and international policies to protect the health of people, wildlife, and the environment from environmental contaminants.* ACAT is working to eliminate the production and use of industrial chemicals that accumulate in the bodies of fish, wildlife and people living in the north/Arctic. Some of these chemicals include currently-used pesticides such as lindane and endosulfan, toxic industrial chemicals such as brominated flame retardants, and chemicals used in stain-resistant fabrics and cookware. For logistic purposes, those policy-change projects that focus completely on Alaska Native rural villages are assigned to the Alaska Rural Environmental Justice Program.

A. CHEMICALS POLICY REFORM PROJECTS: INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

1. **Stockholm Convention: Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**

Since 1999, Pamela Miller and Shawna Larson Carmen have been active at United Nations meetings first to establish an international treaty that bans specified POPs worldwide, and now to implement it. ACAT supports the treaty (identified as the Stockholm Convention) as a means by which to decrease the long-range transport of POPs to the Arctic. ACAT collaborated with other northern nations to assure that the Preamble of the treaty explicitly expresses concern over the impact of POPs on Arctic peoples and the environment. ACAT was likewise instrumental in prompting the U.S. State Department to sign the treaty. The Stockholm Convention, signed in 2001 by more than 100 nations, bans twelve deadly chemicals worldwide and offers precautionary provisions for adding new POPs to the ban. It is a global treaty that has been ratified by more than 165 nations (although not yet ratified by the U.S.) and designed to eliminate the world’s most toxic and persistent pesticides and other industrial chemicals.

Since 2005, the Conference of Parties has been held annually to implement the treaty with delegates from nations that have ratified the treaty. One of their implementation tasks is to add to the original list of twelve POPs to be phased out globally. To advise them in this task, a POPs Review Committee (POPRC) was formed comprised of scientists from participating nations who meet annually to review specified POPs which have been requested by various countries for listing. The POPRC follows the scientific and social criteria mandated by the Stockholm Convention to recommend which POPs should be eliminated globally.

- In June 2008, Pam Miller served as speaker at a conference sponsored by the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production and the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN): *Advancing Alternatives Assessment for Safer Chemicals Policy*. Her talk was entitled: *Global Campaigns at the POPRC on Pesticides*.

- In August 2008, Shawna went to India for a meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from forty countries who participate in the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), where she made a presentation at a workshop about community-based monitoring of pesticides in the Arctic.

*Photo: IPEN Meeting in India (August 2008).* The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) is a global network of more than 600 public interest non-governmental organizations working together for the elimination of persistent organic pollutants, on an expedited yet socially equitable basis. ACAT’s Shawna Larson Carmen was given travel assistance by IPEN to participate.
In September 2008, Bjorn Beeler, International Coordinator of IPEN, recommended Pamela Miller to the United Nations Environment Programme to receive support for her travel to Geneva for the next meeting for the Stockholm Convention. In an email message to a U.N. official, Beeler recognizes Pam’s expertise:

IPEN recommends Ms. Pam Miller as our NGO expert to receive a full travel grant to participate at POPRC4. Ms. Miller has exceptional scientific and field experience with many of the candidate POPs, and has contributed to both past POPRC meetings and inter-sessional work/submissions.

In October 2008, Pam and Shawna went to Geneva for the fourth annual convening of POPRC to participate in the meetings as official observers. POPRC-4 convened for five days and focused mainly on arguments to consider listing the agricultural pesticide endosulfan as a POP to be considered for elimination. There were twenty-eight POPRC delegates in attendance, scientists from various nations throughout the world, and more than a hundred observers. Only seven observers were from community-based NGOs such as ACAT, all of whom were sponsored by IPEN.4 In addition to the seven IPEN observers, there were thirty-six observers present representing the chemical industry and another thirty or so officials from countries supporting the chemical industry—mainly India, China, Japan, and the United States, which sent four staff members from the U.S. State Department and two from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Endosulfan. During POPRC-4, the delegate from India was particularly disruptive of the proceedings, as the Indian government owns the industry that produces endosulfan. In collusion with China and the U.S. State Department, the Indian delegate attempted to block consideration of endosulfan by the POPRC by claiming (erroneously) that the chemical is not a persistent organic pollutant. The scientific data that India presented in support of his argument was antiquated, so he used bullying tactics instead of science in an attempt to prevent endosulfan from coming to a vote. However, in working groups where delegates and observers collaborated to review the science, the up-to-date literature brought by Pam Miller was well received and incorporated into the documentation considered by the plenary session of the POPRC.

ACAT submitted more than thirty documents representing scientific studies that clearly indicate that endosulfan is a POP which is causing health problems for those who handle the chemical, as well as those who live far from agricultural fields in the Arctic. Pam also offered an intervention during one of the plenary sessions to note that endosulfan has been found in Arctic air, water, snow, fish, and animals. She cited several studies on biomagnifications and bioaccumulation of endosulfan. On the last day, twenty-one of the twenty-eight delegates voted that there is sufficient evidence that endosulfan meets the criteria to establish it as a persistent organic pollutant with the potential for long-range transport and adverse effects.

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4 This year Pam Miller’s name was submitted by IPEN to serve as the NGO observer receiving travel support directly from the U.N., whereas usually her expenses have been supported by ACAT with assistance from IPEN.
A working group was established to prepare a draft risk profile for endosulfan to be considered at the POPRC-5, and delegates and observers were invited to provide information to the working group.

**Short Chained Chlorinated Paraffins.** During one of the plenary sessions, Shawna offered an intervention by speaking briefly about short chained chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs), which have a wide range of industrial applications, such as flame retardants and plasticizers, and as additives in metal working fluids, in sealants, paints and coatings. Shawna asked that the POPRC permit SCCPs to move to the next stage in the process toward listing as a POP to be eliminated globally. She pointed out that SCCPs are found in the Arctic environment, in the breast milk of Arctic women, and in the food chain that “we in remote regions are so dependent on.” She stated that SCCPs are a possible carcinogen linked to lung tumors, and “can impact our body’s enzymes and affect the functioning of our livers which is so important to our ability to detoxify the range of POPs chemicals we are assaulted with.” The POPRC-4 delegates agreed to consider SCCPs again during POPRC-5.

![Photos: Norwegian Delegate, Shawna, & Pam in POPRC-4 Working Group; Shawna & Pam Listening to Translation at Plenary](image)

After five days of meeting, the 2008 POPRC concluded its work. In addition to moving endosulfan, SCCPs, and a variety of other POPs from one stage to the next of the POPRC process, the Committee prepared recommendations to the Conference of Parties to list nine new chemicals under the Stockholm Convention, including lindane and its isomers. We are especially pleased about the recommendations to list lindane and its related isomers (alpha and beta HCH), as Pam Miller has been working since 2003 to eliminate both agricultural and pharmaceutical uses of lindane—first as a member of the Lindane Task Force of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation representing grassroots groups throughout Canada, Mexico, and the United States; and then as an IPEN-sponsored observer for the 2006 and 2007 POPRC of the Stockholm Convention.5

2. **North-South Indigenous Network Against Pesticides**
This Network was formed in 2001 as a program of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). The Network is comprised of Indigenous communities impacted by pesticides—farm workers in tribes in Mexico and Guatemala and subsistence hunters/fishers in Alaska and Canada. Shawna Larson Carmen is a founder of the Network, and ACAT collaborates with the IITC to provide technical assistance to the Network. The farming peoples in the south are exploited laborers on their own land, and the residents of their communities are sick from heavy pesticide exposure foisted upon them by multi-national corporations based in the United States. The Indigenous peoples of the north suffer similar health conditions from the long-range transport of agricultural pesticides that contaminate their traditional foods.

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5 ACAT also worked collaboratively with PANNA for two years to prompt the U.S. EPA to announce (August 2006) withdrawal of all agricultural products in the U.S. containing lindane. At that time the EPA acknowledged the excessive exposures faced by northern peoples.
In the past three years, Pam and Shawna have been participating in workshops held in farming communities in Mexico and Guatemala with Indigenous farmers from local villages, Indigenous leaders from North and Central America, scientists, and other organizers from NGOs. Pam has been training the local people about water quality and water sampling techniques. Some of the villages in Mexico have taken actions by creating right-to-know policies that place some limitations on the chemical industry.

In July 2008, Shawna travelled to Guatemala to speak at a conference hosted by the Network about the reproductive health effects of pesticides and the shared concerns/strategies among southern and northern Indigenous peoples.

3. The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations

Proposed Resolution. In November 2008, ACAT’s Pamela Miller collaborated with the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) to write and submit a proposed resolution to the eighteen tribes in Canada that make up the treaty-six First Nations confederacy. ACAT and IITC requested this Confederacy submit a formal resolution to 1) the Canadian and U.S. governments that directs Health Canada and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), respectively, to ban pharmaceutical uses of lindane; and to 2) the Conference of Parties of the Stockholm Convention to ban production and use of all forms of lindane.

Summary of Major Points of Proposed Resolution. The proposed resolution notes that the “pesticide lindane in pharmaceutical treatments for head lice and scabies causes harm to Indigenous Peoples, especially our children.” The document points out that a single treatment of head lice or scabies contains enough lindane to contaminate six million gallons of drinking water above safe water quality standards, and that lindane is a toxic chemical associated with serious health effects, such as damage to the developing brain, harm to the central nervous system, seizures, blood disorders, and cancer. The American Academy of Pediatrics clinical report recommends against the use of lindane because it is not very effective in killing pests and poses a large health threat to children. Furthermore, six to ten tons of dangerous toxic waste products (known as alpha- and beta-HCH isomers) are produced with every ton of lindane manufactured. In addition to its effects on children and others who are directly exposed, lindane and associated HCH wastes threaten the health and livelihood of communities in the Arctic where it is transported via wind and ocean currents. These toxic chemicals accumulate in Arctic food sources, “violating our right to healthy traditional foods, and are found in elevated levels in the blood and breast milk of Indigenous Peoples in the Arctic region.”

Resolution Passed. During the January 2009 conference (13th–15th) the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations passed the resolution. The Confederacy will work with ACAT, IITC, and Alaska tribes to develop a strategy about presenting the resolution to Health Canada, the U.S. FDA, and the Conference of Parties of the Stockholm Convention.

B. CHEMICALS POLICY REFORM PROJECTS: NATIONAL ACTIONS

1. Endosulfan Issues

In 2008, ACAT collaborated with Pesticide Action Network of North America (PANNA) to respond to the U.S. EPA’s request for public input for the Agency’s review of the chemical endosulfan, an antiquated, widely used, and dangerous pesticide. Used in the U.S. on tomatoes, cotton, and other crops, endosulfan harms the hormone system, and low levels of exposure in the womb have been linked to autism, male reproductive harm, and other birth defects. Endosulfan endangers workers who handle it directly and those who work in endosulfan-treated fields. It travels great distances, accumulates up the food chain, and poses risks to aquatic ecosystems.

Petition U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In February 2008, ACAT and PANNA released an action alert offering the opportunity for individuals to petition the U.S. EPA to “demand an end to endosulfan.” We pointed
out that the European Union has already banned endosulfan and that alternatives are available. The petition was signed by 13,000 people throughout the U.S. and submitted to the EPA. Additionally, Pam Miller submitted a formal comment letter to the U.S. EPA emphasizing endosulfan’s deleterious effects on the Arctic. Miller concluded that given the inherent persistent and bioaccumulative properties of endosulfan and its presence in Arctic air, water, and biota, continued use of endosulfan poses “too great a health hazard” to the northern Indigenous peoples who are reliant on traditional diets of fish and marine mammals.

**Organizations Request U.S. EPA to Ban Endosulfan.** In May 2008, PANNA and ACAT worked together to organize 111 organizations to sign onto a letter submitted to the U.S. EPA calling for the Agency to “cancel all remaining uses of the organochlorine pesticide endosulfan.” At that time, Shawna Larson Carmen and Pam Miller also prompted five Indigenous organizations to send a letter to the U.S. EPA requesting that the agency ban endosulfan: the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, Indigenous Environmental Network, International Indian Treaty Council, Native Movement, and REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands). In addition, the following Alaska tribes supported the effort by sending a letter of their own to the U.S. EPA:

- Orutsararmuit Native Council
- Native Village of Kwinhagak
- Native Village of Eek
- Native Village of Eyak
- Native Village of Brevig Mission
- Inupiat Community of Arctic Slope
- Native Village of Port Graham

**Lawsuit Filed Against the U.S. EPA.** In July 2008, a coalition of farmworker, public health, and environmental groups filed a lawsuit against the U.S. EPA to stop the continued use of endosulfan. The coalition is demanding action from the EPA to protect children, farmworkers, and endangered species. The lawsuit was brought by Earthjustice and Farmworker Justice on behalf of: Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Beyond Pesticides, and Center for Environmental Health, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO), Natural Resources Defense Council, Pesticide Action Network North America, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United), United Farm Workers, and Teamsters Local 890. In a joint news release, ACAT’s Pam Miller stated:

> The U.S. has fallen far behind the rest of the world in protecting its children from harmful toxins. We must act now to reduce the toxic imprint that endosulfan will leave on future generations. We are particularly concerned that endosulfan is increasing in the Arctic, and that northern ecosystems and Indigenous peoples are especially vulnerable.

**2. National Pesticide Forum: DDT and Endosulfan**

PANNA and Beyond Pesticides requested Shawna and Pam to present at the National Pesticide Forum—*Reclaiming Our Healthy Future: Political Change to Protect the Next Generation* at the University of California Berkeley in March 2008. Shawna introduced keynote speaker Marla Cone, L.A. Times journalist and author of the book *Silent Snow* about the effects of POPs in the Arctic. Shawna and Pam facilitated strategy sessions on alternatives to DDT and endosulfan, respectively. Shawna presented as a panelist in the workshop “Taking the Lead at the Local Level.” Pam presented at two workshops on Global Pesticide Politics and Priorities and New Tools to Help Communities Prevent Pesticide Exposures.

**3. Invasive Plants in National Parks**

In October 2008, ACAT’s Pam Miller, Sara Hannon, and Ryan Gallman wrote formal comments regarding the Environmental Assessment for the proposed Invasive Plant Management Plan of the National Park Service, Alaska Region which would allow the use of harmful pesticides within the national park system in Alaska. The ten-page document concluded that the use of herbicides to manage non-native plants is contrary to the National Park Service Mission.
Herbicides such as glyphosate, 2,4-D, triclopyr, imazapyr, and other herbicides have been linked to deleterious effects on the health of humans and animals. The effects of inert ingredients have not been considered by the National Park Service, but they may increase the toxicity and environmental impact of the proposed herbicides. Also, the persistence and low attenuation rate of herbicides in cold climates should be considered in an environmental impact statement.

They urged the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt a least-toxic pest management policy. Officials from NPS responded by stating that they take ACAT’s comments seriously, and that they are rethinking their plan to use herbicides.

4. Obama Transition Team

Pam Miller serves as co-director of the Body Burden Working Group of Coming Clean, a network of organizations addressing the health consequences of pollution in the human body, especially as they pertain to chemicals policy. ACAT has been active with Coming Clean allies since 2001, when viewing parties were set up throughout the nation to watch *Trades Secrets* a PBS documentary by Bill Moyers who took viewers “behind the closed doors of the chemical industry.” ACAT held a viewing party at the Anchorage Museum and has been active in the Coming Clean network for the past seven years.

Photo: Coming Clean delegation in Washington D.C. Pam Miller is in the front, right with red folder.

In response to a sign-on letter submitted by several Coming Clean members in November 2008, the Coming Clean Policy Working Group received an invitation to arrange a meeting with the Barack Obama’s Presidential Transition Team (PTT). The Policy Working Group organized a broad-based delegation of twenty public interest advocates, selected six speakers on three key themes, and made arrangements for communicating their joint recommendations. The result was a deep discussion among the Obama team and advocates that lasted for nearly two hours. ACAT’s Pam Miller was chosen to speak on “international opportunities,” specifically the Stockholm Convention and the effect of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) on the Indigenous peoples of the north. The advocate from the Breast Cancer Fund reported about briefing by email, commenting particularly on Pam’s interchange at the meeting:

The PTT staff and volunteers…were attentive and quick to ask probing follow-up questions concerning legislative and regulatory details, timing and strategy… It was clear to all that they understand the magnitude of the problems and are looking for opportunities for immediate and longer-term action on environmental health. One brief exchange helps capture the feeling in the room. Just before her presentation on POPs, Pam Miller took a moment to look around the room with big saucer eyes, taking in everything and everyone, then said: “It is such an honor to be here, at this meeting with all of you, I can’t tell you how excited I am…” and one PTT expert on EPA put down her computer, on which she had been typing furiously, to return the full circle gaze and say – with a level of humility and sincerity that took our breath away: “No, it’s our honor.”
5. Briefing New Alaska Senator
Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich defeated U.S Senator Ted Stevens in the November election, and ACAT was invited to participate with a group of environmentalists to brief the new Senator from Alaska. Shawna Larson Carmen spoke about environmental justice and toxics indicating that tribes and rural communities continue to be disproportionately impacted by military and industrial developments statewide. She spoke also about the POPs that come to Alaska from all over the world, and that she hears from tribes that “everyone is concerned about cancer.” She asked the Senator to consult with tribes, to provide independent oversight of industry, and for Congress to ratify the Stockholm Convention to eliminate the worst chemicals that are working their way into the Arctic “in polar bears and our children.”

C. ALASKA STATE CHEMICALS POLICY REFORM PROJECTS: STATE ACTIONS

1. Legislative Session (January-February 2008)
Flame Retardants. In 2008, ACAT was successful in ensuring the introduction of state legislation that would ban the manufacture, sale, and distribution of products containing polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs)—including deca-BDE, which is used as a flame retardant chemical in furniture and consumer electronics such as computers. In 2007, Alaska State Representative Andrea Doll (D-Juneau) had contacted ACAT to request our assistance in the drafting of a bill. We provided scientific data about the environmental and health effects of PBDEs, and arranged a teleconference call with ACAT’s environmental health colleagues in Maine and the legislative sponsor for the Maine PBDE law, so they could brief Representative Doll and her staff about effective strategies for the successful passage of a deca-BDE bill.

Before introducing the bill, Representative Doll sent her proposed bill to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) for routine review. Kristin Ryan, Director of the Environmental Health Division of the ADEC, attempted to discourage Representative Doll by stating that the ADEC could not back her bill because it dealt with just one class of chemicals while there are numerous other chemicals of concern. However, ACAT encouraged Doll by helping her to change the bill to include additional language that would require the ADEC to implement a comprehensive action plan to phase out products and other sources of persistent bioaccumulative toxics (PBTs). We added language to the bill that defines PBT chemicals to include those that are carcinogens, mutagens, reproductive toxicants, developmental toxicants, neurotoxicants, and endocrine disruptors.

Representative Doll introduced her chemicals policy bill (HB 271) in January 2008—a bill that would ban the manufacture, sale, and distribution of products containing PBDEs. However, Governor Palin redirected the legislature’s attention to oil and gas issues, so bills such as HB 271 had to be tabled in 2008. In her Constituent Update (February 2008), Representative Doll thanked ACAT specifically for our help, mentioned the support of firefighters (which we had arranged), and expressed her expectation that such a chemicals policy bill will be passed in a future legislative session.

Children’s Environmental Health Projects. In 1999-2000, ACAT was successful at collaborating with youth and teachers to prompt the Anchorage School Board to end the use of toxic chemicals in local schools by endorsing a new least-toxic pest management policy and pest control plan, which at the time was one of the most progressive policies in the nation and served as a model for school systems throughout the United States. ACAT worked also with the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to prompt the outgoing Governor in 2001 to institute a policy that required public notification for pesticide applications in public schools throughout the state.
In 2004-2005, ACAT collaborated, once again, with Alaska Youth for Environmental Action to improve right-to-know regulations for pesticides applied for the Municipality of Anchorage, and by professional applicators on private properties.

We also inspired and supported similar successful pesticide right-to-know State legislation submitted by Republican Kevin Meyer in 2005 which requires notification in public places and apartment buildings throughout the state. Representative Meyer’s concern about environmental health issues arises from his own struggle with asthma.

In March 2008, we received feedback from governmental officials about the effectiveness of ACAT’s chemicals policy reform efforts. Pesticides Specialist for the ADEC, Rosemarie Lombardi, told Pam Miller the statewide regulation requiring notification of pesticide use in Alaska schools has resulted in substantive changes. Now pesticide applicators are taking preventative measures and conducting more monitoring. These successes provide added justification for our current work to prompt statewide legislation that would go beyond simply requiring notification. Our successful right-to-know measures are providing a foundation for the smooth implementation of least-toxic methods of pest management in all of Alaska public schools.

Another indicator that there is a growing public concern about pesticides and children’s health came during the 2008 election within the Municipality of Anchorage. Two progressive candidates for the Assembly successfully used the right-to-know ordinance (2004-2005) that ACAT had achieved as a measure of ethical leadership. Both candidates won the election, one of whom was Elvi Gray-Jackson who defeated a sitting assembly member chair by exposing her opponent’s lack of support for community health. Two of her campaign flyers pointed out that the Chair and his cronies on the Assembly had tried “to weaken the pesticide law.” They would have allowed “pesticides to be sprayed in neighborhoods without notification.” The 2008 election turned the Assembly around so now there is a majority of thoughtful and progressive members serving the public. Half of the population lives in Anchorage, so local policy change influences statewide chemicals policy reform.

In 2008, ACAT provided technical assistance to Senator Bill Wielechowski who sponsored a chemicals policy reform bill, the Children’s Health Act, which is based on the Children’s Health Initiative championed by ACAT in 2005-2006. The Act would require least-toxic methods of controlling pests at public schools and licensed day-care facilities in Alaska. It would also eliminate exposure to harmful chemicals in toys and other children’s products, including phase out of specified chemicals such as lindane (used for head lice), bisphenol-A (used in plastic baby bottles), phthalates (used in soft vinyl toys), PFOS (used as a stain repellent), and PBDEs (flame retardants). The legislature did not have time to consider this bill in 2008, but these issues have been presented to state legislators for the 2009 legislative session.

2. Preparation for Legislative Session 2009
Colleen Keane, Sarah Petras, Sara Hannon, and Pamela Miller are the working group within ACAT that focuses on statewide chemicals policy change, which includes our efforts described in this section and in Section III.E. (below) Environmental Reproductive Justice Policy Projects. The team researches the best models from legislation and chemical policies in other states to form chemicals policies suitable for Alaska.
Coming Clean, and SAFER. ACAT has been participating in meetings of two national networks of groups concerned about environmental health—Coming Clean and SAFER (State Alliance for Federal Reform of Chemicals Policy), both of which work to establish a “new precautionary federal chemicals policy by 2015” by working on state-based campaigns in order to “win a critical mass of comprehensive policy measures in key states to tip the balance for achieving reform at the national level.” Formed in 2005, SAFER is composed of diverse coalitions in eight states (California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Minnesota, New York, and Washington) and is developing connections to groups and coalitions in an additional six states (Oregon, Vermont, New Jersey, Alaska, Maryland, and Illinois). Example of ACAT’s involvement with these networks:

- Colleen and Pam spoke at a Coming Clean strategy meeting on phasing out brominated flame retardants (BFRs) in Portland, Oregon in November 2008. ACAT’s working group also participated in regular teleconference meetings of the BFR Strategy Group for Coming Clean.

- Pam participated in a three-day meeting of the SAFER coalition in Portland, Oregon in November (after the Coming Clean meeting) to discuss ways to reform chemicals policy on a state and federal level.

- Pam participated in a Coming Clean meeting in Washington D.C. in a December 2008 to address the science about bisphenol-A (BP-A) science and develop strategies to phase out BP-A on a state and federal level.

- While she was in Washington D.C., Pam also participated in a national conference of the American Association for Intellectual and Development Disabilities (AAIDD) to discuss a collaborative biomonitoring project which is being facilitated by Coming Clean. Pam is the co-chair for the Body Burden Working Group of Coming Clean in collaboration with the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative of the AAIDD. They also discussed a need for chemicals policy reform on a state and federal level to address neuro- and developmental toxicants.

Briefing Paper for State Legislators. Through our research, as well as information gathered through the collaborative meetings we have been having with SAFER and Coming Clean, ACAT has developed a package of chemicals policy reform proposals for Alaska legislators, which includes proposed bills 1) Preventing Toxic Exposures [PBDE’s and PBTs]; 2) Healthy Babies and Children’s Products [phthalates, bisphenol-A, etc.]; 3) Creating Healthy Schools [pesticides, cleaning products, head lice shampoo, playground equipment]. See Appendix for a copy of the briefing papers which offers a complete description of each proposed bill.

Meetings with State Legislators. The Legislative Session for Alaska in 2009 is January 20 through April 19. Our ACAT working group began meeting in December with Alaska State House and Senate members to inform them about our legislative ideas and to urge sponsorship. We met with each legislator individually with his/her staffs (D=Democrat; R=Republican):

- Representative Sharon Cisna (D),
- Senator Bettye Davis (D),
- Senator Johnny Ellis (D),
- Rep. Anna Fairclough (R),
- Rep. Berta Gardner (D),
- Rep. Max Gruenberg (D),
- Rep. Beth Kertulla (D),
- Senator Kevin Meyer (R),
- Senator Bill Wielechowski (D),

These ten legislators are interested in our proposals. At this juncture it looks as if Senators Kevin Meyer and Bill Wielechowski will co-sponsor both the Preventing Toxic Exposure bill and the Children’s Products bill. Senator Bettye Davis will sponsor the Creating Healthy Schools bill.
All ten legislators said that they would sign onto the bills as they are introduced. At our meeting with Beth Kertulla, she said that these bills are especially important to her, because she, like Kevin Meyer, suffers from asthma. Alaska has a Republican majority in both houses, so ACAT is seeking bi-partisan support. We learned in 2005 from our success with Senator Kevin Meyer that Republicans can be motivated to support chemicals policy change, and bi-partisan support is necessary for the chemicals policy reform that we seek.

D. CHEMICAL POLICY REFORM PROJECTS: LOCAL ACTIONS

1. Municipality of Anchorage and Pesticides
In 2004-2005, ACAT collaborated with the Alaska Youth for Environmental Action to prompt the Anchorage Assembly to improve existing right-to-know regulations for pesticides by passing an ordinance that notification be required before and after pesticides are applied for the Municipality of Anchorage (Muni), and when professional exterminators apply pesticides on private outdoor properties. Because the progressive Mayor, Mark Begich, carried out the intent of the ordinance, we observed general compliance with “ACAT’s” ordinance—in spite of the fact that in 2005 the Assembly majority had switched from progressive to reactionary.

In spring 2008, Pam Miller received a call from Kay Brown, a former state legislator, who four years earlier had turned to ACAT for technical assistance when she was first diagnosed with cancer. As a result, she began volunteering for ACAT to speak at public events about the connection between chemicals and cancer. Her phone call was to tell us that the Muni ordinance was working. She had received a public notice that her neighbor intended to have an exterminator spray pesticides in his yard, but she had been able to convince the neighbor to change his mind and not use pesticides after all. Kay Brown currently works as a political consultant and confirmed our observation that the newly elected Assembly may be amenable to considering the next step toward mandating a ban on pesticide use in the Municipality.

We asked ACAT’s student intern, Sara Hannon (photo left), to research other cities that have established ordinances banning pesticide uses. She documented the revolution in Canada concerning pesticides, and found Canadian model ordinances on which to base ACAT’s suggestions to the Anchorage Assembly.
On October 30, 2008 ACAT staff (Pam Miller, Drew Phoenix, Lydia Darby, Colleen Keane, and Sara Hannon) met with two Anchorage Assembly members, Mike Gutierrez and Elvi Gray-Jackson. Elvi is the Chair of Budget and Finance, and Mike chairs Public Safety. We suggested to them that the Muni use the Canadian ordinances as a model to phase out pesticides by first passing an ordinance that bans the use of harmful pesticides on Muni properties including public parks. Later a second ordinance would be passed making it against the law to use harmful chemicals just to beautify one’s lawn. Our requests were well received by the Assembly members, and another meeting will be held in 2009 which will also include Kay Brown.

2. Kodiak Island Wildlife Refuges

Alaska Survival, a small non-profit organization based in Talkeetna (2-hour drive north of Anchorage) has been working with ACAT since 1993 on pesticide issues to block uses of harmful herbicides 1) along rights of way—roads and rail beds, and 2) for control of invasive species in parks and wildlife refuges. We collaborate to assist agency and corporate officials in seeking alternatives to pesticides. In 2008, Alaska Survival and ACAT filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service for using herbicides illegally at Kodiak Island in Southcentral Alaska, specifically in and near the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, and the Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuge System.

At the same time, a concerned citizen in Kodiak contacted ACAT after reading an article in the Kodiak Daily Mirror concerning the spraying of herbicides over the Kodiak Island Refuge. She and other birders in Kodiak have been observing a major decline in the numbers of birds, and beak deformities of birds at their feeders for the past three years. She has been taking photos of the birds and sending them to the U.S. Geographic Survey. (She sent photos to ACAT, including this one of a crow with a curved bill.) In her email, she asked ACAT if the problems with birds that she has been documenting on Kodiak could be caused from the herbicide spraying at the Refuge.

Pam Miller responded to her email message with appreciation for the “careful documentation you have been doing concerning the bird bill deformities.” Pam told her that we have been concerned about Kodiak because of the deformed birds, as well as reproductive malformations in Kodiak deer, and she sent her a copy of our legal brief against the spraying of herbicides within the Kodiak Refuge. Pam mentioned that we are also concerned about the military toxics on Kodiak Island and contaminants such as PCBs there.

On January 13, 2009, the Fish and Wildlife Service responded to our lawsuit by ceasing the use of herbicides completely on or adjacent to Alaskan Refuges, because the Service had failed to follow the requirements of the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) that mandates environmental impact statements with opportunities for public comment before using herbicides.
E. ENVIRONMENTAL REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE POLICY PROJECTS
From 2006-2008, ACAT staff worked on our Environmental Reproductive Justice (ERJ) Project to inform the public about the link between environmental contaminants and reproductive health. Since 2000, we have been working (through a variety of ACAT projects) to bring about chemicals policy reform. ACAT initiated the ERJ Policy Project in 2008 by incorporating our successful public education work about environmental reproductive health and justice, and by building on our extensive work for chemicals policy reform. Through ACAT’s ERJ Policy Project, we are motivating a broad range of public support to instigate local, national, and international policies to protect the reproductive health of people from environmental contaminants.

1. Women’s Summit: Understanding Environmental Reproductive Justice
In February 2008, ACAT co-sponsored the Women’s Summit in Juneau with the Alaska Alliance for Reproductive Justice which included a luncheon in Anchorage. Participants included representatives from:

- Alaska Civil Liberties Union,
- Alaska Women’s Aid in Crisis (AWAIC),
- Alaska Women’s Lobby,
- Alaska Women’s Political Caucus,
- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault,
- Kachemak Bay Family Planning Clinic,
- Planned Parenthood,
- Rural Community Action Program,
- SisterSong,
- Standing Together Against Rape (STAR),
- University of Alaska,
- YWCA.

ACAT’s Colleen Keane (photo, right) presented a workshop with Loretta Ross, National Director of SisterSong, entitled: *Reproductive Justice 101: Basic Information and Examples from Alaska*. Colleen’s presentation emphasized how environmental exposures that are linked to infertility, malformed reproductive organs, and other reproductive health problems relate to reproductive rights and justice. She also discussed the importance of three bills that were being considered at that time by the Alaska legislature that pertain to environmental reproductive justice, HB 271 (phasing out of toxic polybrominated diphenyl ethers in products), and other persistent bioaccumulative toxics), SB 288 (preventing use of pesticides in schools), and SJR 18 (prevention of toxics in toys). For each of the bills, ACAT provided supporting testimony and research at the request of the legislators.

2. ERJ Policy Working Group Develops from ERJ Roundtable
ACAT has been conducting outreach and educational activities to build a diverse network of organizations and individuals interested in environmental reproductive justice. Seventy individuals representing forty organizations have already expressed interest in participating in the ACAT-sponsored ERJ Network. In May 2008, ACAT sponsored an Environmental Reproductive Health and Justice Roundtable attended by thirty-five people from twenty-five organizations. Some of the organizations are listed here:

- Alaska Abused Women’s Aid in Crisis (AWAIC);
- Alaska Community Health Aide Program (serves Indigenous villages throughout the state);
- Alaska Native Health Board (promotes well-being and pride of Indigenous peoples of Alaska);
- Alaska Nurse Midwives;
- Alaska Reproductive Justice Alliance;
- Alaska Women’s Political Caucus;
- Alaska Women’s Resource Center;
- Anchorage Reproductive Health Clinic;
- March of Dimes;
- Native Movement (statewide Indigenous peoples action group);

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6 Based in Atlanta, SisterSong is building a movement for reproductive justice by bringing women of color together and mobilizing women around lived experiences. ACAT is a member of SisterSong.
In addition to these organizations, the roundtable included nursing and public health students, individual registered nurses, two Alaska State legislators, and a staff member for one of Alaska’s Congressional candidates. A working group emerged from the roundtable meeting to develop a chemicals policy reform strategy for the 2009 Alaska legislative session. This working group includes: Planned Parenthood, YWCA Women’s Health Program, Southcentral Foundation (provides health care to Alaska Native peoples), AWAIC, and ACAT.

3. **ERJ Policy Network Develops From ERJ Network**

In 2008, for our environmental reproductive justice work, ACAT staff and board made presentations that included information about environmental reproductive justice at statewide conferences of health care professionals:

- Alaska Public Nurses Association (April 2-3, 2008),
- Alaska College of Nurse Midwives (April 18, 2008),
- Alaska Community Health Aide Program (April 21-25, 2008),
- Alaska Nurses Association (October 2008),
- Alaska Public Health Association (December 2008).

ACAT also created and distributed fact sheets and bulletins, as well as sponsored strategy meetings in multiple rural Alaska villages, Anchorage, and Juneau. At every public event, people are signing up to receive information from ACAT. For the ERJ Network, ACAT created a list-service \(^7\) of seventy people, representing about forty-five organizations. In addition, we host the list-service for the Alaska Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE-Alaska) with more than 300 email addresses. Another email list contains over 600 people who receive our newsletters and action alerts. ACAT is using these three email lists to build the ERJ Policy Network.

On August 25, the Anchorage Daily News published an article written by ACAT’s board member Roxanne Chan and organizer Sarah Petras entitled *Chemical pollutants likely culprits in rising birth defects.* (See Appendix)

For the December 2008 Health Summit for the Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA), Pamela Miller served as one of three panelists (with Lori Verbrugge of the State of Alaska Department of Health, and Juliana Grant of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) to present *Current Alaska Issues in Environmental Health,* which included information about our environmental reproductive justice work. One significant outcome was that ALPHA adopted a resolution unanimously that had been written and submitted by ACAT entitled *Reform of Chemicals Policy to Protect Public Health.* In the resolution, the ALPHA:

- Supports and urges the Alaska Legislature to take action to protect the health of Alaska citizens from unnecessary exposures to toxic chemicals by requiring the phase out of toxic, persistent, bioaccumulative chemicals in products and production processes;

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\(^7\) ACAT uses the services of Constant Contact, a management system that allows us to interact with networks using e-mail.
• Advocates and advises the Alaska Legislature to establish a chemicals policy that is comprehensive and an integrated hazard-based approach;

• Supports and urges Alaska to become a leader among states in innovation and education in the area of cleaner technology, such as Green Chemistry.

IV. ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

ACAT projects that focus primarily on environmental health are assigned to this overarching continuing program, which has the goal: To eliminate environmental contaminants that affect the health of fish, wildlife, and people in Alaska. Those environmental health projects that focus entirely on Alaska Native rural villages, or those that center primarily on effecting policy change are assigned, respectively, to the Alaska Rural Environmental Justice Program, or to the Environmental Health Policy and Social Change Program. Projects for this program focus primarily on education of the general public and health-care professionals.

A. ALASKA COLLABORATIVE ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT (CHE-ALASKA)

As part of the Alaska Conference on Health and the Environment (sponsored by ACAT), we established CHE-Alaska in 2006 as a regional partnership of the national Collaboration on Health and the Environment (www.healthandenvironment.org/working_groups/alaska). ACAT sponsors and facilitates CHE-Alaska, fostering collaboration to address issues that are important to Alaska, yet have wider ramifications.

ACAT now has a list of over 330 people who asked to receive our email announcements about the CHE-Alaska teleconferenced seminars, with thirty to ninety people participating in these monthly partnership calls such as health aides and tribal leaders throughout Alaska (from Barrow to Ketchikan); physicians; nurses; professors and students from university and college campuses in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau, and Sitka; as well as environmental health advocates, health-affected individuals, and conservationists. They join the calls to hear short summaries of cutting-edge research from nationally-renowned scientists and from policy or environmental justice experts about their work on environmental health issues.

Two to four experts speak at each hour-long seminar that includes questions and answers from those in attendance. All of the speakers volunteer their time for the seminar. We also post MP3 audio recordings of the teleconference seminars on our web site to make the information available to a wider audience.

One of ACAT’s researchers, Sandra Christopherson (photo, right), takes the lead in producing these monthly seminars, and ACAT organizers moderate them. The 2008 seminars are listed below; the titles provide an overview of ACAT’s environmental health education work:

- February 4, 2008. The War on Cancer: Examining the Need for a Shift in Our Priorities. An interview with author and scientist Dr. Devra Davis, Director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University Of Pittsburgh Graduate School Of Public Health.

- March 5, 2008. Breast Milk Monitoring and the Science of PBDEs (Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers). Dr. Kim Hooper, Environmental Chemistry Laboratory of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

- March 25, 2008. Worker Health and the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill: What Have We Learned About the Effects of Oil on Human Health? Dr. Riki Ott, marine toxicologist and author of Sound Truth—Corporate Myths; and Amanda Hawes, Harvard Law School graduate, Center for Occupational Safety and Health board member, and partner in the law firm of Alexander, Hawes, and Audet, specializing in cancer and birth defects claims for chemically-exposed workers and their children.
- April 15, 2008, Toxics in Everyday Products: How the Regulatory System Has Failed to Protect Our Health and What We Can Do To Fix It. The seminar was held as a discussion with investigative journalist and author, Mark Schapiro.

- May 28, 2008. The Global Transport of Persistent Pesticides to the Arctic: Research and International Actions. Speakers included: Dr. Don Waite, research biologist with Environmental Canada (Regina, Saskatchewan) currently investigating atmospheric transport and deposition of herbicides to water surfaces; Dr. Hayley Hung who manages the air sampling program under the Canadian Northern Contaminants Program; and ACAT’s Shawna Larson Carmen.

- July 15, 2008. Human Fertility and the Environment: Looking at Links in both Women and Men. Drs. Linda Guidice of the University of California at San Francisco and Shanna Swan of the University of Rochester are conducting research about environmental contaminants and female reproductive health, and male mediated factors of environmental links to fertility, respectively.

- August 20, 2008. Environmental Justice for Alaska Native Communities Affected by Military Contamination: How Sociological Research Illuminates the Disparities and Solutions. Drs. Chad Smith of Texas State University and Nelta Edwards of the University of Alaska discuss their research concerning environmental inequalities among the Indigenous peoples of the U.S., the limits of science in understanding health effects, and the use of the precautionary principle to protect all people from environmental pollutants.

- October 1, 2008. The Science and Policy of Endosulfan: How an Agricultural Pesticide Affects Farmworkers, Children, and the Arctic. Speakers include: Dr. Jennifer Sass, scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council; Shelly Davis, Deputy Director of Farmworker Justice; and ACAT board member Violet Yeaton, Tribal Environmental Coordinator with the Native Village of Port Graham, AK.

- October 31, 2008. Uranium Mining and Community Health: Environmental and Health Concerns about Proposed Uranium Mining in Alaska. Speakers include: Paul Robinson, Research Director of Southwest Research and Information Center; Manuel Pino, professor of sociology and Director of American Indian Studies at Scottsdale Community College, Arizona; Emily Murray, with the Aniguin School in the Inupiat village of Elim, Alaska, where she works with students to conduct research/presentations about the effects of uranium on community health.

- November 19, 2008. Hardrock Mining and Community Health: New Opportunities for Community Involvement. Speakers include: Amy Crook, British Columbia program coordinator for the Center for Science in Public Participation; Catherine Coumans, Research Coordinator and responsible for the Asia-Pacific Program at MineWatch Canada; Dr. Kendra Zamzow, environmental geochemist serving the Alaska representative for the Center for Science in Public Participation.

- December 18, 2008. Community–Based Participatory Research: How Communities Assess Environmental Exposure and Make Positive Changes. Speakers include: Dr. Phil Brown, Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies at Brown University; Dr. Rebecca Gasior Altman recent graduate in sociology from Brown University; Viola Waghiday, bilingual St. Lawrence Island Yupik Eskimo Environmental Justice Community Coordinator for ACAT.

**B. Lecture Series**

ACAT sponsored a lecture series featuring scientist and author Dr. Devra Lee Davis (September 4-12, 2008). We organized public lectures in Fairbanks, Nome, and Anchorage entitled: Causes and Prevention of Cancer: How Decisions Today Shape the Health of Future Generations. Dr. Davis is the Director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh and author of The Secret History of the War on Cancer. The lectures drew a total of 500 people or so and were held at universities and the Providence Hospital Cancer Center in Anchorage.
V. ALASKA YOUTH AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

We assign projects to this category that enhances ACAT’s relationships with the general public or those that work primarily with youth. The program’s long-term goal is: to inspire youth and the general public to engage in environmental health issues and eliminate contaminants in their homes and communities. If and when one of these grassroots projects emerges with policy-change objectives, we reassign it to ACAT’s Environmental Health Policy and Social Change Program (See III. above).

A. ANCHORAGE FARMERS MARKET
ACAT is developing a small mission-related business at the Anchorage Farmers Market. Our outreach includes individuals and families who come to the weekly summer market to purchase healthy produce and other Alaska-based products. Over the course of our first two summers (thirty weeks total in 2007 and 2008), we have had more than 2,000 direct contacts with people, approximately sixty to eighty people per market day who stop by to talk with ACAT staff members at our booth and to purchase our organic vegetable starts and compost tea. We produce and distribute quality compost tea, an organic alternative to chemical fertilizers, and organic herb starter plants grown in ACAT offices and at staff homes. See photo (right) of ACAT’s 55-gallon compost tea brewer

In 2008, ACAT hired Ryan Gallman to produce the compost tea. He took the lead working at the market with other ACAT staff to research, create, and distribute fact sheets about the harmful chemicals found in commercial pesticides as well as to produce literature advising community members how to practice safe garden and lawn care techniques. In the winter, Ryan has been meeting with students and teachers at Steller School to plan the summer garden, seeking greenhouse space for our vegetable starts, attending meetings about invasive species and herbicide issues, and conducting pesticides research for ACAT.
B. ACAT DEMONSTRATION GARDEN
The ACAT Pesticide-Free Gardening Project is one of several projects within our Alaska Youth and Community Outreach Program, which provides an opportunity for youth and adults to learn about alternatives to harmful pesticides and helps feed people through community service organizations such as the Alaska Injured Workers Alliance. Each spring since 2000, ACAT has planted a successful demonstration garden on grounds near our offices, offering gardening workshops, tending the garden with youth and adult volunteers and ACAT staff members, conducting harvesting parties, and providing food for those in need. Sometimes we collaborate with students and educators at Steller Secondary School to sponsor and produce a pesticide-free garden on school grounds which is behind the ACAT office. Other times (when students and teachers are occupied elsewhere), we plant the ACAT demonstration garden at the nearby community gardens.

C. RACHEL CARSON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Every year in May, ACAT sponsors a public celebration of Rachel Carson’s birthday. We offer live entertainment, refreshments, an activity table for children, products and fact sheets about alternatives to pesticides, and a variety of information tables from environmental and health groups. Sometimes we have these events at Town Square in downtown Anchorage—a location that highlights the mayor’s 2006 decree that parks and public facilities in downtown Anchorage will now be pesticide-free, a triumph in ACAT’s long involvement with attaining this status for all of Anchorage’s parks. Other times we have the fair indoors at city parks.
VI. ALASKA WELLNESS AND HEALING PROGRAM

We assign projects to this program that are focused on healing as individuals and communities from the deleterious effects of environmental contaminants, including worker-health issues. The goal of the program is to facilitate physical, emotional, and spiritual healing from the effects of environmental contaminants and the efforts required to work toward environmental health and justice.

WORKERS HEALTH: EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL

ACAT is working with labor and environmental health organizations to prompt Congress to investigate the long-term health effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on cleanup workers with the intent of reforming the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) to protect all workers from harmful chemical exposures. ACAT’s Wellness and Healing Organizer, Lydia Darby, coordinates this project and serves as liaison to the Alaska Forum for Environmental Responsibility (AFER) and Alaska Injured Workers Alliance.

In 2008, ACAT facilitated strategy sessions with a core group of labor and environmental leaders to build the case for Congressional oversight hearings on the human health effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill cleanup and the need to amend OSHA. As part of this strategy, ACAT produced a letter that was sent (July 4, 2008) to the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee, and the U.S. House Committee on Government and Reform. The core group of labor and environmental leaders circulated the letter to gain support and signers from their respective constituencies. We expect that our collaboration will lead to Congressional action. Thirty people signed the letter representing organizations throughout the U.S., including Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, Global Community Monitor, Farmworker Health and Safety Institute, Friends of the Earth, Institute for Children’s Environmental Health, Worksafe (a coalition to protect worker health and safety), Breast Cancer Fund, Physicians for Social Responsibility, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and Environmental Health Fund.

The letter provides evidence of the long-term health effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill documented by ACAT and AFER over the past several years. We seek a Congressional investigation about the health of Exxon Valdez oil spill workers with the intent of reforming the law to protect all workers from harmful chemical exposures. The problems we identify for the EVOS cleanup workers are only symptomatic of a larger problem that affects workers in chemical manufacturing, refining, oil shipping and port facilities. Without Congressional action, workers will continue to suffer preventable health effects and injustice. The letter calls upon Congress to remedy this through actions that would benefit workers who face on-the-job chemical exposures, and requests oversight hearings on the human health effects of the EVOS cleanup for the following purposes:
1) Improve OSHA and NIOSH oversight during and after hazardous waste cleanups by taking measures to recognize chemical-induced illnesses.

2) Revamp U.S. EPA procedures for testing and listing chemical cleanup products to include realistic tests and protection for humans.

3) Provide redress to injured EVOS cleanup workers, which cannot be readily obtained through the legal system.

ACAT also responds to and supports individual workers who call for information and referrals to physicians and attorneys who can help with environmental health issues.

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Photo: ACAT’s Lorraine Eckstein serves as research anthropologist, and grant & report writer.

Photo: ACAT researcher, Sandra Christopherson and organizer Lydia Darby, Planned and cooked the meals for ACAT’s Community-Based Field Institute in Nome. [See page 10 above.]
Seems strange that there's no warning about PCBs in Nome

COMPASS: Other points of view  By KACI FULLWOOD  Published: Anchorage Daily News - August 9th, 2008 02:29 AM

NOME -- Sure, I'd heard of PCBs before. I knew they were supposed to be bad for you, but since I live way up here in the sub-Arctic, where no industrialization or factories produced nasty black smoke from tall chimneys, I figured PCBs were for other people to worry about.

Beyond that, I didn't have any idea what they would actually do besides probably cause cancer. Surely I would recognize a PCB problem if I saw one; I trusted my common sense and went about my daily life, as all good Nomeites do.

With the increase of gold mining in our area and the subsequent importation of toxic chemicals such as sodium cyanide (used to separate ore from dirt), my concerns about our community's clean drinking water were piqued. I thought a class on environmental research sponsored by Alaska Community Action on Toxics would be just the thing to help me sort through the conflicting information one hears in a mining town.

As it turns out, common sense won't protect me from toxic chemicals such as PCBs. Polychlorinated biphenyls, commonly known as PCBs, are now banned, thankfully, in the United States and some other countries, although, unfortunately not in Russia or China. PCBs that have already been unleashed in our environment are considered "persistent," meaning they do not easily break down. The toxic molecules can move through the air, land, water and bodies of animals for many years, perhaps even centuries. Air and water currents deliver poisonous chemicals all over the world.

No one is free of them, but the Arctic gets an unfair share of toxins, which accumulate in the fat of fish, seals and bears. When we eat those critters, we ingest their toxins and then we become the new PCB host. As these toxins build up in a mammal's body, they not only can cause cancer, they can also alter the hormones of their offspring, causing reproductive and genital disorders. This process is known as endocrine disruption and it can be fatal to any organism, including humans.

The PCB problem doesn't merely exist in the foods we eat. It can be in the ground where we walk. Perhaps it's under the site where we choose to build our homes, or at the place we go to pick our berries.

There are Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) all across Alaska. In the Norton Sound region we have about two dozen, including Nome's White Alice site that still holds the legacy of hundreds of gallons of chemicals that were spilled, allowing toxic molecules to leach into the surrounding environment.

PCBs readily travel around on the soles of our shoes. They flow into the streams and the groundwater and the seemingly crystal clear pools of surface water that appear on the tundra.

When the military vacated Anvil Mountain, it left behind more than the Stonehenge-like towers. According to the Alaska Community Action on Toxics, an Air Force preliminary assessment in 1981 found "500 gallons PCBs, 12 contaminated transformers, sulfuric acid drums, battery acid, spray paint cans, radioactive tubes, klystron tubes (with beryllium dust)."

After 10 years of remedial cleanup and soil testing efforts, it was determined that "PCBs have been dispersed through traffic and site grading," according to ACAT 2006. This means that every time you or I take a visitor up Anvil Mountain to see the great view of Nome and the Bering Sea, we spread the PCBs with our car tires, track them home on our shoes and perhaps even ingest some if we snack on berries, or sniff a flower.

No sign or fence warns the public of the hazard.

I've eaten the berries on Anvil Mountain. I've drunk surface water from its tundra pools. I've taken many guests to enjoy the view, and even climbed upon the towers.

PCBs used to be for someone else to worry about. But now I know PCBs are hiding in plain sight in some of my favorite places, perhaps causing not only cancer but potentially altering the reproductive organs of many species, including humans.

Common sense tells me someone isn't worried enough.

Kaci Fullwood lives in Nome
As public health professionals, we are concerned about the high rates of birth defects in Alaska and possible links to environmental contaminants. As reported last month in the Daily News, the fact that "Alaska infants are twice as likely to be born with major birth defects as infants in the U.S. as a whole" cannot be explained simply by cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, maternal age and diet. The article did not discuss the growing body of scientific evidence that suggests environmental contaminants are linked to birth defects and other harmful reproductive health effects in both males and females.

Even though many people think of Alaska as pristine, Alaska has over 2,000 toxic waste sites. They include over 700 formerly used military defense sites, countless open dump sites throughout rural Alaska, and five major military sites that are designated among the most hazardous sites in the country (known as Superfund sites) -- two of which are in Anchorage. These sites contain hazardous materials that are linked to a range of adverse health effects, including birth defects.

Alaska and the circumpolar Arctic are also subject to pesticides and industrial chemicals that originate from thousands of miles away, traveling northward via oceanic and atmospheric currents and eventually settling in cold climates. These chemicals accrue in the north because the cold climate and fat-based food web favor retention of these persistent toxics.

Even toxic chemicals that have been banned in the U.S. (such as the insecticide DDT and class of industrial chemicals known as PCBs) continue to accumulate in the Arctic and sub-Arctic. Contaminants threaten the health of northern peoples who rely on traditional diets of fish and marine mammals.

Research demonstrates that industrial chemicals, pollutants, and pesticides cross the placenta as readily as residues from cigarettes and alcohol.

A review of scientific studies revealed contaminants such as solvents, heavy metals, and pesticides are linked to birth defects such as heart abnormalities, oral clefts (lip and/or palate) and neural tube defects (incomplete development of the brain, spinal cord and/or protective coverings of these organs).

Exposure to plasticizers (used in consumer products) is linked to feminization of baby boys. PCBs and fine particulate matter are linked to low birth weight. A recent study in Alaska found that women from villages with "hazardous" open dump sites were more likely to deliver preterm or low birth weight babies.
High levels of man-made chemicals in the blood of pregnant women may also contribute to the newly discovered gender imbalance in the Arctic. Nationwide, the number of males being born is declining. Twice as many girls than boys are born in some Arctic villages in Greenland and Russia, and in some Greenland villages near the Thule American military base no boys are being born at all.

We call upon Governor Palin and our public agencies to protect public health by:

• Phasing out persistent, bio-accumulative chemicals, especially those that cause cancer, genetic harm, endocrine disorders, immune and neurological damage;

• Enacting laws that prevent the release of toxic chemicals from military and industrial sources;

• Establishing protective standards for environmental cleanup;

• Preventing the use of harmful pesticides in schools, hospitals, parks, and neighborhoods;

• Establishing purchasing policies that eliminate use of PVC plastics and chlorine-bleached paper; and

• Establishing bio-monitoring and health tracking systems.

To ensure the future health of Alaska's peoples and environment, it is imperative that we act now to prevent exposure to chemicals that harm the most vulnerable population -- developing children.

Roxanne Chan, RN, MS is on the board of Alaska Community Action on Toxics in Anchorage. Sarah Petras, MPH, is environmental health and justice organizer for the same group.
Northern Exposure: Sarah Palin's toxic paradise

Sheila Kaplan and Marilyn Berlin Snell, The New Republic  Published: Wednesday, October 22, 2008

There's no reason to doubt Sarah Palin's sincerity when she talks about her commitment to family and--more specifically--special-needs kids. When she introduced her son, who has Down syndrome, to the audience at the Republican convention, the family tableau drew cheers. And she issued a promise. "To the families of special-needs children all across this country, I have a message for you," she told the crowd. "For years, you've sought to make America a more welcoming place for your sons and daughters, and I pledge to you that, if we are elected, you will have a friend and advocate in the White House."

Unfortunately, as governor of a state with a birth-defect rate that's twice the national average, and which has the gloomy status as repository of toxic chemicals from around the world, Palin has pursued environmental policies that seem perfectly crafted to swell the ranks of special-needs kids. It's true that Alaska's top leaders have placed industry wishes over environmental protection for years. But, instead of correcting this problem, she's compounded it. Peer into her environmental record, and Palin ends up looking a lot like George W. Bush.

In the past 20 years, research has shown that exposure to some metals and to chemicals such as pesticides, flame retardants, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) can cause birth defects and permanent developmental disorders both prenatally and in the first years of childhood. And Alaska is vulnerable to some of the worst environmental pollutants out there. In a state whose wealth depends on the exploitation of its natural resources, the toxic byproducts of mining and energy development, such as arsenic, mercury, and lead, are particular problems. Alaska Natives, such as the Inuit people, eat a diet that is heavy in fish, seals, and whales--animals that are high on the food chain and therefore more likely to be contaminated with high doses of PCBs and mercury. And the state is vulnerable not only to homegrown pollution, but also to industrial pollution: Trace gases and tiny airborne particles are contaminating the polar regions, carried there on atmospheric and oceanic currents, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The mess of pollutants in Alaska has clearly taken its toll. In general, the state has double the national average of birth defects. While the causes are unknown, environmentalists point to the region that includes the North Slope, an area slightly larger than Minnesota, where most of Alaska's oil is produced. The byproducts of oil production can cause serious nervous system disorders, and the North Slope and its environs, home to Alaska Natives and itinerant oil workers, has the highest prevalence of birth defects in the state--11 percent--compared with 6 percent statewide and 3 percent nationwide.

Palin, however, has not addressed these concerns. Her administration irked environmentalists in February 2008, when it opposed legislation that would have given parents at least 48 hours' notice before schools were to be sprayed with pesticides and other toxic chemicals. Currently, parents get 24 hours, which the bill's proponents say is not sufficient for parents who want to arrange to keep kids out of school for a few days after the chemicals are applied. Palin's administration argued that the bill was too restrictive and would force schools to notify parents before cleaning toilets with disinfectant--which, supporters say, is not true. In the same month, members of Palin's administration testified against language in legislation that would have banned polybrominated diphenyl ethers--a flame retardant that, studies show, harms the developing brain.

Then, in the summer of 2007, Palin allowed oil companies to move forward with a toxic-dumping plan in Alaska's Cook Inlet, the only coastal fishery in the nation where toxic dumping is permitted. The Bush administration initially OK'd the companies' request to increase toxic releases, but the permits could not be issued without Alaska's certification that the discharges met the state's water-quality standards, says Bob Shavelson, executive director of Cook Inletkeeper, an organization founded to protect the area's watershed.
Palin complied. "Palin's Department of Environmental Conservation issued that certification [based on] the long-discounted notion that 'dilution is the solution to pollution'--turning the federal Clean Water Act on its head and actually increasing toxic pollution," Shavelson says.

Palin next took on the Clean Water Initiative, also known as Proposition 4, which appeared on the Alaska ballot on August 26. The measure would have limited the runoff of toxic metals--known to cause developmental and birth defects, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention--from all mining operations, but it was aimed at stopping the proposed Pebble Mine, a huge mining proposal that was controversial for its potential impact on Bristol Bay, the world's largest commercial wild salmon fishery (for which Palin's oldest daughter was named). The project had been in the works for years, and, when she ran for governor in 2006, Palin told the Alaska Journal of Commerce that, if the mine was green-lighted, "there will be remediation from now to eternity." Once in office, though, environmental concerns took a backseat. In a TV interview six days before the vote, Palin said, "Let me take my governor's hat off for just a minute, and tell you personally, Prop 4--I vote no on that." Alaska's mining industry parlayed Palin's face and words into an advertising blitz--and came from behind to defeat it.

Palin's latest anti-environmental effort also came in August, when she attempted to block California's plan to curb its air pollution. The Golden State is trying to reduce its toxic emissions with a port fee that would pay for pollution-reduction projects around the state. Arguing that it would hurt Alaska's economy, Palin asked California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to veto the proposed legislation.

Finally, Palin was pushed by environmental activists and Alaska Natives to pressure the military in its cleanup of one of the most contaminated sites in Alaska--but the state didn't act. This was on the old Northeast Cape Air Force base on remote St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea--one of the state's closest spots to Russia. When the military closed its operations in the 1970s, it left thousands of barrels of toxic waste, containing solvents, fuels, heavy metals, pesticides, and PCBs, a group of toxic organic chemicals that have persisted in the environment.

For the past few years, the Army Corps of Engineers has been slowly cleaning up parts of the site and claims it will leave it safe. (One federally funded study still in progress by the state's premier watchdog on chemical pollutants, Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT), tested the local water and got a reading that was more than one thousand times the level that the EPA considers safe. "If the Corps of Engineers want to fill up their canteens in there, they are welcome to it," says Kathrine Springman, the toxicologist who did that study. "Actually, I wouldn't want them to drink it ... anymore than I would ask them to drink Drano.")

But critics say the Army is taking too long, and that its plan will leave too many untreated chemicals, PCBs in particular, at the site. According to Pamela Miller, ACAT's executive director, Palin should have used her powers as governor to forge a better cleanup plan. "Certainly this was also a pattern in the Murkowski administration, but, under Palin, it's gotten worse," she said. "Her administration has done nothing to work with the military to avoid possible contamination." Scientists have also opposed the Army's plan, saying it will leave the area dangerous.

Supporters note that Palin did boost school spending for children with the most severe disabilities, but, in general, the Alaskan government under Palin has done nothing to protect those children and future generations from the toxic stew that the state has become. "She doesn't have a good understanding of the science," says Ruth Etzel, who until recently was research director at the Alaska Native Medical Program in Anchorage. "What she tends to do is talk about personal responsibility as the key to good health."

Andrea Doll, a Democratic state representative from Juneau, says she tried to get Palin interested in her bill on flame retardants early on: "I told her about the bill. She totally was not interested in any way, shape, or form. It was that look on her face--that 'don't even go there' look."

Sheila Kaplan is an investigative reporter who divides her time between Washington, D.C., and Northern California. Marilyn Berlin Snell is a San Francisco-based investigative journalist. Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.
Chemicals Policy Reform Proposals for Alaska

The primary law in the United States that regulates industrial manufacture and use of chemicals, called the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), is now 30 years old and has proved largely ineffective in restricting problem chemicals in commerce or in minimizing or mitigating their harm to humans and the environment. Toxic chemicals are found at levels of concern in the food supply, wildlife, workers, and even in newborn babies. Disease rates of cancer, learning disabilities and other human health problems with an environmental link are rising at a very high cost to society. Highly toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead, phthalates, and toxic flame retardants (PBDEs) are in everyday consumer products. The system that regulates toxic chemicals in products, workplaces, and communities is broken and in urgent need of repair. While federal reform is clearly needed to adequately address chemicals in commerce, a number of states have begun to move forward reforming chemicals policy on a state level in order to fill the gaps left by the lax federal system.

Below are three proposals for chemicals policy reform legislation for Alaska:

Preventing Toxic Exposures
Over 82,000 chemicals are currently registered for use in the US, but the EPA only requires toxicity testing for fewer than 200.

A type of flame retardant known as polybrominated diphenyl ethers or PBDEs are one of many chemicals that are linked to adverse health effects. Flame retardants are widely used in a variety of products to prevent and slow the spread of fire. While fire retardancy is important, some flame retardants used in electronic and other products, such as PBDEs, are leaving a lasting toxic legacy in human beings and the environment.

PBDEs are intrinsically hazardous because of their chemical characteristics: (1) they are stable, meaning that they are persistent in the environment and do not break down easily; (2) they are lipophilic, meaning that they accumulate in fatty tissues of living organisms; and (3) they have toxic properties, including the potential to act as endocrine disruptors.

Their persistence and fat solubility allow them to both bio-magnify and bio-accumulate, meaning that they build up in the bodies of animals and humans as they move through the food chain.

Over fifty million pounds of the toxic flame retardant decaBDE continue to be built into TVs, mattresses, and other products annually in North America, even though it is a developmental toxin and possible carcinogen.

Levels of PBDEs in U.S. women’s breast milk are 10-100 times higher than levels in European women, and concentrations of PBDEs have increased over the years in marine mammals due to atmospheric transport and bioaccumulation.

Exposure to PBDEs has been linked to a variety of adverse health effects including reproductive effects in both males and females, changes in the thyroid, cancer, and developmental effects.

This bill would phase out the manufacture and sale of products containing penta- and octa-BDEs by January 1, 2010. The bill would also:

• Phase out the manufacture and sale of electronic products, furniture, textiles, and mattresses containing deca-BDE by 2009. Allows continued use of deca-BDE in wire and cable and other applications.
• Exempt transportation vehicles; products or equipment for industrial and mining use; products or equipment used in a manufacturing process; electronic wiring; resold items; and items brought into the state before the effective date.
• Empower Alaska State Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to ban other products containing flame retardants if it is determined that it is harmful to public health or the environment, and if reasonable safe alternatives exist.
• Require several state departments to complete a review of the risks of PBDEs, possible alternatives, and the findings from other U.S. and European agencies. They will then prepare a report on their findings every two years.

• Requires ADEC to develop a list of “chemicals of concern” that are persistent bioaccumulative toxics, including those that are cancer-causing, mutagenic, developmental or reproductive toxicants, neurotoxic, or endocrine disruptors. ADEC will then develop an action plan to reduce and phase out these products.

**Healthy Babies and Children’s Products**

A number of toxic chemicals commonly found in consumer products (such as baby products, toys, car seats, personal care products, cleaning products, clothing, electronics, and furniture) have been associated with adverse health effects, including cancer, birth defects, and reproductive and developmental damage.

Although thousands of toys have been recalled because they contain lead paint, other chemicals found in products designed for children also pose health risks. For example, phthalates and bisphenol-A stand out as a particular threat because exposures are widespread and they are established hormone-disrupting chemicals:

• Exposure to phthalates has been linked to adverse effects on reproduction and development, as well as respiratory problems and organ damage.
• Even at low exposure levels, bisphenol-A is a potent endocrine disruptor that stimulates prostate and breast cancer cells and is linked with decreased sperm production, miscarriage and adverse effects on behavior.

Vulnerable populations (including children, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and workers) are particularly at risk of exposure to these hazardous chemicals.

With cost-effective and equally fire-safe alternatives available, it’s time to phase out PBDEs!

Chemicals with potential for exposure to vulnerable populations and that are determined by credible scientific evidence to be persistent, bioaccumulative, carcinogens, mutagens, teratogens, reproductive toxicants, developmental toxicants, neurotoxicants, immunological toxicants, and endocrine disruptors should be phased out of manufacture and use in consumer products.

Chemicals with inadequate safety data should be phased out of manufacture and use in consumer products.

Manufacturers should be required to prove their chemicals are safe for vulnerable populations before use in consumer products.

Manufacturers of consumer products that contain chemicals of high concern should be required to disclose information on their chemical use and replace the chemical with a safer alternative when available. Given the availability of safer alternatives, these chemicals should be phased out to protect the health of young children, who are especially vulnerable to their effects.

Biomonitoring of human tissues and fluids should be conducted on a regular basis to determine what chemicals are present in people and at what levels.

Alaska should participate in an interstate clearinghouse to share information and cooperate with other states to promote safer chemicals in consumer products.
Creating Healthy Schools
There is a clear need for children to be protected from toxic chemicals in school, where they spend a large portion of their time.

A survey school nurses from New York State showed that that 71% reported that they knew students at school whose learning, breathing, or behavior are being affected by indoor environmental pollutants at school, such as bus fumes, cleaning products, pesticides, or scented products.iv

A US Department of Education 2004 study linked poor indoor environmental quality caused by pollutants to adverse health outcomes which can ultimately lead to reduced attendance and impaired performance by students.v

The Healthy Schools Act would reduce the exposure of Alaskan children to toxic chemicals in the school building or on school grounds. Sources of exposure to toxics include:

- Pesticides used on lawns or in buildings.
- Cleaning products.
- Art and hobby supplies. Some clay contains poly-vinyl chloride (PVC).
- Head lice shampoo containing lindane and other pesticides.
- Playground equipment made from copper-arsenic treated lumber.

The act would require that schools take these actions to reduce the exposure of children to toxics:

- Eliminate the use of products and building materials that contain chemicals that are acutely toxic or proven to cause cancer, hormone disruption, birth defects, reproductive damage, immune system damage or nervous system toxicity.
- Use products which have been tested and are least toxic.
- Apply the precautionary principle to decisions about products used in schools: prevent harm to children’s health by not using products containing chemicals that have not been fully tested.

Educate children and school personnel about sources of toxic chemicals, their health effects and ways to reduce exposure.

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