



## WELCOMING THE NEW ALASKA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Theresa Clark has been hired in December to replace outgoing Alaska Executive Director Kelly Donnelly. Theresa Clark comes to the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council from recent employment with the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. Theresa is originally from Galena, and she is a tribal member of the Native Village of Loudon. She has previous experience working with Loudon as the General Manager, a former federal contracting business that was owned by the Native Village of Loudon. While employed there, Theresa contracted with the United States Air Force and other federal contractors to provide environmental remediation and building demolition services. Theresa also has many years of experience working with tribes, tribal organizations, and ANCSA corporations in executive leadership positions. Theresa has a wealth of land management experience, including working with federal and state land management agencies and departments. Theresa has worked with various types of boards, committees, and councils, including city, corporations, tribal, and schools. Theresa enjoys subsistence activities such as berry picking, fishing, hunting, and preserving foods. Theresa looks forward to returning to working and meeting with tribes on the Yukon River. We welcome Theresa to YRITWC and thank outgoing Alaska Executive Director Kelly Donnelly for her dedication and leadership she has provided to the YRITWC for the past five years.

*Welcome  
Aboard  
Theresa!*





## YRITWC CHANGES

By Kelly Donnelly

Just as the seasons change, so do we at the YRITWC. At the last Summit new representatives were voted to the Executive Committee, as others have stepped down. We would like to extend our gratitude and heartfelt best wishes to departing EC members David “Harry” Maillelle and Mary Ann Wiehl. Your contributions over the years have been instrumental to strengthening the YRITWC. On a personal note, I will miss you both and hope our paths cross again in the future.

We also welcome several new EC members. Josie Dayton was elected as an Alternate for the Middle Yukon; Carl Jerue Jr. was elected as the Primary for the Innoko Confluence; Ron Kruger Sr. was elected to the Alternate seat former held by Carl; and Roberta Murphy has stepped up to serve as the Primary for the Coastal Tribes. Welcome to you all! There is a vacant Alternate position for the Coastal Tribes, but an election among those tribes will be held after the New Year to fill that position. These are volunteer positions and fulfill an important part of the YRITWC mission.



Lastly, this is also my own farewell. It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve you for the past four+ years. I am excited to see where the Watershed Council goes under Theresa Clark’s leadership and have every confidence that she’ll take the YRITWC to new heights. Thank you for your support; it has meant the world to me. I have been and will always be a cheerleader for the YRITWC. Best wishes and good luck!

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# THE POWER OF DRONES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

By Maryann Fidel



Drone Pilot School hands-on training at the Dome in Anchorage. Pictured from left to right back row: Maryann Fidel, Floyd Green, Mike Brooke, Doug Huntman, Tal Shutkin, Ted Hamilton, Robert Sam, Charles Prince; front row left to right: Tasha Mockta, Ursula Prince, Ruben Henry, Bradley Pizzimenti, Antonio Sisto

YRITWC has recently initiated a project supporting communities in harnessing the power of drones, thanks to funding from the BIA's Tribal Resilience program. We hosted our first Drone Pilot School this last November, in partnership with K2Dronotics, and Delta Backhaul Co. (see photo). We are planning our second training for April 7 - 10, 2020 in Anchorage. Tribal Environmental Professionals are learning everything they need to know to include the use of drones in their work. Community members have expressed interest in using drones for many reasons including: monitoring landscape change, monitoring erosion, landfill management, outreach, forest inventory and emergency response.

This summer I will travel to four communities to provide hands-on support to get Tribal drone monitoring programs off the ground (pun intended). I will also be collecting drone imagery to create maps that will contribute to community vulnerability assessments for hydrology. The hydrologic vulnerability assessment will combine information that is already being collected (weather data, water quality, permafrost, erosion) with maps and imagery collected using a drone. These efforts will provide information about the challenges associated with landscape and hydrology changes, and will support Tribes in reducing risk to the environment and human health.

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Drones offer a world of possibilities. Taking high quality aeri- als is just one of them. Flight paths can be saved and repeated weeks, or years, later to capture change. 3D maps that are situated in real space (with latitude and longitude) can be created of the riverbank and infrastructure. In this way we can monitor, and understand the patterns and risks of erosion. YRITWC has recently acquired a sensor mounted on a drone that can detect vegetation stress from contamination. We plan to test the use of this sensor around landfills this summer. This can help us understand where contamination is flowing underground, which could be changing as permafrost melts and new flow paths are created. We can create detailed elevation maps of communities that can tell us where the water will flow. This could be useful during heavy rains, or flood events to protect drinking water. Images collected in the Villages can be sent to a central location for more in depth processing. Importantly, these images can be used for outreach, and shared with the outside world, to help obtain funding and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

You may have heard it before; Alaska Native communities are at ground zero for climate change. Contaminant pathways could be changing, erosion seems to be increasing, and melting permafrost is impacting important community infrastructure. Sometimes change happens quickly, even overnight, like big erosion events that happen at high water, floods, or lakes suddenly draining. In these cases, communities can't wait for outside help, but need to act now. Drones in the hands of Tribal members are a powerful tool to monitor environmental changes, share information and respond.

Contact [mfidel@yritwc.org](mailto:mfidel@yritwc.org) if you are interested in attending the upcoming Drone Training, or learning more about the project.





**THE YUKON RIVER INTER-TRIBAL WATERSHED COUNCIL WILL HOST A DRONE TRAINING IN ANCHORAGE, APRIL 7 - 10, 2020**

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**HARNESS THE POWER OF DRONES**

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Learn everything you need to know to include the use of drones as a Tribal Environmental Professional. Tuition: \$550

## RESILIENCE WORKSHOP REPORT

December 2, 2019  
By Maryann Fidel



On September 17, 2019 in Fairbanks, Alaska the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (YRITWC) hosted a Resilience Workshop. The Workshop brought together 14 participants from 10 Indigenous, rural communities within the Yukon River Watershed, and two urban centers. The purpose of the Workshop was to support community resilience.

First, we built an understanding of environmental changes from observations based in traditional knowledge, and the scientific understanding of current and expected changes. These two 'ways of knowing' were brought together, not to test one against the other, since we believe each stands on its own, but instead to build a more holistic understanding of current and future changes.

Second, we built on this understanding and discussed responses to change and resilience, with the goal of learning from each other. Alaska Native and Yukon First Nations are the first responders to environmental change due to their close relationship to the land and animals, and the fast rate of change we are experiencing in the north. People are responding to change now, because they have to. Often northern residents can't wait for scientific certainty and planning. We focused our discussion on what people are doing now, on-the-ground, and what actions communities

Thank you to those who attended YRITWC's Resilience Workshop in Fairbanks on September 17, 2019. The Workshop Report can be found at: [www.yritwc.org](http://www.yritwc.org), under 'Library' and 'Reports'

**USDA TAT FY19/20  
FROM THE DESK OF DRINKING WATER IMPROVEMENT  
COORDINATOR STAFF  
FALL, OCTOBER TO DECEMBER  
DRINKING WATER IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (DWIP) STAFF  
ACTIVITIES  
KATHERINE AND THOMAS BROWER**

**Conferences Attended**

YRITWC staff attended the ATCEM and BIA conferences in Anchorage and provided technical assistance to participants that had questions. There was a breakout session that Katherine presented about her work she conveys to the Tribes.

**Villages Traveled**

November 2019 - We have traveled to Koyukuk to provide technical assistance to the city council and staff on improving their Drinking Water Best Practice Scores. This will be a great focus by this department to help communities in the watershed improve their scores so that they may become eligible for grants or Mini-Grants that will help upgrade the facilities and improve operations thru trainings for the facility and administrative staff

December 2019 - We made an effort to go to Grayling Katherine was going to conduct a 40-hour HAZWOPER training and Thomas and Katherine was going to conduct a Drinking Water Improvement Training with the city council and staff for their Water facility and best practice scores. Due to the weather, the trainings were canceled until after the New Year.

DWIP Staff is asking the villages to submit in local traditional dialect from Yukon River Basin so we can have durable signage made for your community, "This river is our home; help keep it clean." These signs will be posted at each boat launch to encourage proper disposal of marine batteries, motor oil, and personal responsibility for trash.

Katherine R. Brower, Environmental Coordinator Desk

October 2019 - We have been collecting EPA Tribal Environmental Plans and Integrated Solid Waste Management Plans. As we receive them this helps the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council prioritize which communities we need to focus on to assist with technical assistance and trainings. YRITWC staff is still emailing and calling Watershed Tribes to send those to us for their benefit.



# IGAP UPDATE: CONFERENCES, PIZZA PARTY, AND A PLUS ONE

By Kari Young

A lot has happened through YRITWC's IGAP program since our last update. As IGAP Manager, I attended (and presented at some) conferences including River Rally, the North America Association on Environmental Education Conference (NAAEE), and the Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management (ATCEM). I felt inspired by these conferences from the environmental work that is happening and reenergized by environmental education ideas. ATCEM is one of my favorite conferences to attend because so many of the tribal personnel from the watershed attend.



This is one of the reasons that YRITWC has been hosting its annual IGAP pizza party during ATCEM. It is a small way to show appreciation to all those hardworking environmental professionals that we get to partner with. This year we had a great turnout at the pizza party with over 30 people and some learned how to do Freon removal. Thank you to all that stopped by! In other exciting news, YRITWC now has an IGAP Assistant. Tal Shutkin served as a summer intern for YRITWC this year, some of you may recognize him from the shuttle driving skills he displayed at the Summit. We are excited to have him on board as IGAP Assistant now! Tal and I have started working together on the FY 2021 IGAP grant and we look forward to what the future holds.

## MAKE GREEN RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Kari Young



Have you made your New Year's resolutions yet for 2020? To lots of people, the start of the New Year represents the promise and hope of a new beginning. These new beginnings come in many forms but it is typical for an individual's resolution to include being healthier, whether by eating more fresh veggies or to start working out. I'm going to encourage to think outside the normal health "box" and think about how you can change your daily actions to better improve the environment around you, which then typically comes back full circle to better the health of people, such as yourself. It makes sense; a healthier environment equals healthier people. Here are some resolution ideas for you to help make your 2020 a green year!

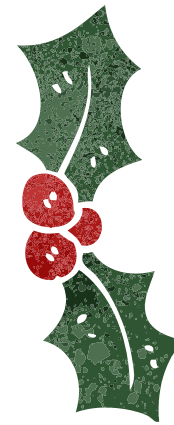
1) Recycle the best you can. Now I recognize that Alaska is not the most recycle friendly place but most communities at least recycle something. So make it a habit to put recyclables in a bin or box at home instead of the trash and then take it to your local recycle collection site. Once you make recycling a habit it will become second nature and you will not even think about throwing recyclables into the trash again!

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2) If you have items that you cannot recycle, see if you can come up with a way to reuse it. Perhaps that item that you considered trash can be transformed into a craft, decoration, or functional item for your household.

3) Make it a habit to bring a reusable water bottle and/or traveling coffee mug with you. That way you can just fill them up with delicious water and coffee instead of using plastic water bottles or throwaway cups that just land up in the landfill or become litter on the side of the road. Some other benefits include saving money by filling up with free water instead of purchasing water and keeping your beverage warm longer, perks that anyone would be happy to accept! Those are just a few ideas for you to turn your New Year's resolutions green; follow YRITWC on social media to get more ideas on you can help the environment!



Katherine & Gary Smith of Total Reclaim leading a freon removal demonstration

## ANNOUNCEMENTS!

**Join YRITWC's IGAP listserv to keep updated on trainings and other opportunities for your IGAP department. Email Kari at [kyoung@yritwc.org](mailto:kyoung@yritwc.org) to join!**

**The YRITWC will be hosting another drone training in April! If you have any questions, feel free to contact Maryann Fidel at [mfidel@yritwc.org](mailto:mfidel@yritwc.org)**

**If you have an announcement, newsworthy story, or would like to update everyone on your recent projects, please consider submitting content for our next newsletter!**

**If interested, contact Tasha Mockta at (907)258-3337 or by email at [tmockta@yritwc.org](mailto:tmockta@yritwc.org)**

**Also, keep the YRITWC staff members up to date with your community's current staff information, including current positions, emails, phone numbers, and any additional information you feel necessary! All information can be sent to Tasha! Thank you!**

## **2020 BROWNFIELD COMMUNITY VISIT'S**

By Floyd Green

Happy New Year's from the Brownfield Department. We are gearing up for our 2020 Community visits within the watershed basin and would like some feedback from your communities. We are able to visit two communities per region, (2)- Yukon Flats, (2)- Middle Yukon, (2)- Koyukuk River, (2)- Lower Yukon. If your community would like any of the following services, please let us know.

- Educational- overview of the brownfield program
- Potential Sites- (site specific) to review information and determine eligibility
- Follow Up- review previous work done by YRITWC, and give site updates.



## **2020 BROWNFIELD COMMUNITY VISIT'S**

By Floyd Green

We need some feedback from communities for training needs. Under our Tribal Response Program (TRP) agreement, we can provide 1 to 2 trainings per year for up to 20 Tribal Environmental Technicians (TET's). Still, this year we were also awarded additional technical assistance funding to provide any additional training. Also, please let us know if your community is willing to host one of the trainings.

- Brownfields 101- What isn't and is a Brownfield, Federal determination of a Brownfield, Expansion, Reuse and Redevelopment, Assistance for addressing a Brownfields, ADEC State response program
- Oil Spill Response-Four spill drills are required to be performed and documented annually. One of these must include full deployment of spill equipment.
- Home Heating Oil Training
- Community Brownfields Site Plan- Develop a community plan to address the goals and objectives to clean up Brownfields sites.
- Qualified Environmental Sampler Training- Principles of Representative Sampling; ADEC Field Sampling Guidance; Soil, Surface Water, Sediment, and Groundwater Sampling; Documentation, Packaging, Transport and QA/QC; Relevant State & Federal Regulations and Laws.



# Make 2020 your greenest year yet!

Circle what helps the environment.

Put an X through what would hurt the environment.



Bring a reusable bag when shopping instead of using the store's plastic bags.



Put trash in contained receptacles or in designated areas.



Burn trash in the most convenient location, even if it is on the ground with other items nearby.



Use less of single-use plastics such as plastic straws, cups, forks, spoons, plates, and such.



Leave lights on and appliances plugged in at all times, especially if you are not using them.



Answers: Numbers 1, 2, and 4 should have been circled as they help give the environment a hand. Numbers 3 and 5 should have been marked with an X. Instead one should burn trash in designated areas as well as turn lights off and unplugging appliances not being used to help save electricity.

# Disposal of Prescription Drugs



FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR DISPOSING PERSCRIBED DRUGS AT HOME WHEN A TAKE BACK PROGRAM IS NOT AVAILABLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

1) Remove the medication from the original container and mix with an unappealing substance. This makes the medication less appealing to children and pets or a person who is going through garbage. Some subsistences that can be used to mix with medication are:

- Cat Litter
- Coffee Grounds
- Dirt
- etc.

2) Put the mixture of the medication and substance into a container that you can close to avoid any leakage or spilling. Some containers that can be used are:

- empty cans or storage containers that are no longer being used
- storage bags
- etc.

3) Throw container into the garbage.

4) Scratch out any personal informatin on the empty medication container to protect your identity and privacy. Then throw away the container.

IF YOU ARE UNSURE, OR DO NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE GOING THROUGH THIS PROCCES, SOME COMMUNITES MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE DETERRA BAGS