

Alaska Native tour coalition forms

The Nature Conservancy of Alaska, an independent, nonprofit conservation organization with offices in Anchorage and Soldotna, together with several Alaska Native Corporations and ecotourism operators, is seeking input from Native communities to help create an Alaska Native Ecotourism Coalition. The coalition will foster ecotourism-related development for Alaska Native villages and corporations by Native individuals and other entrepreneurs interested in ecotourism.

An initial meeting and plenary session, funded by the Environmental Protection

Agency, will be held in conjunction with the 4th Annual Conference of the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA) in Fairbanks from March 20-22. The meeting is open to attendees of the conference and interested members of the public. Those interested in being part of the first meeting are asked to contact Ellen Maling at AWRTA.

Tentatively titled "Designing an Alaska Ecotourism Coalition," the workshop will be interactive and inclusive. Participants will help develop the coalition and its

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goals and identify initial projects. Panelists with expertise in indigenous ecotourism programs around the world will guide the process and share their experiences in the field. Scheduled speakers include Kirk Hoessle of Alaska Wildland Adventures, Ken Leghorn of Alaska Discovery, Inc., and Jim Sinnett from Chugach Heritage Association. Ray Ashton, of Applied Technology Management, Inc., and Deborah McLaren from the Rethinking Tourism in Washington, DC, keynote speakers at the AWRTA Conference will also participate in the coalition meeting.

The coalition is part of the Conservancy's Ecotourism Program, which was initiated in 1994, and is designed to help protect the ecological values of Alaska lands while encourag-

ing sustainable and economically viable approaches to management of those resources. Last year, the Conservancy published an *Ecotourism Guide for Alaska Native Landowners*, and held a workshop in the subject at the 1995 Alaska Federation of Natives Conference.

"Our ultimate goal," said Susan Ruddy, the Conservancy's Alaska Director, "is to help find ways to protect some of Alaska's most beautiful and biologically significant places, while at the same time providing incentives for enhancing the economies of the people who live in those places."

For more information on the Alaska Native Ecotourism Coalition, contact Michelle Brown at 907/262-6377. To obtain materials on the Alaska Wilderness, Recreation and Tourism Association Conference, please call Ellen Maling at AWRTA, 907/463-3038.