This past year marked a critical time in the history of the Alaska SeaLife Center. The economic downturn, decline in cruise ship visitation and limits on aquarium access to stimulus funding posed major challenges. However, in the face of great adversity, the Board of Directors and Scientific Advisory Committee members, staff and volunteers, members and supporters of the Center dug deep to ensure that we continue to be a key force in marine research and education in the North Pacific.

I could not be more proud of what our team accomplished in partnership with many national, state and local organizations in a very difficult operating year. We went back to basics to define our core organizational values and from those developed a shared set of priorities that guided our organizational focus. We tightened our belt in many areas of operations and concurrently implemented new risk management procedures that make us a more robust organization.

We doubled our membership. We engaged more than 30 new donors and implemented successful “friend and fundraising” events by hosting “Fish for the Future” and building support for the first “Alaska Marine Gala.” And we implemented a range of innovative new management practices and demonstration projects that make our operations even more resilient going forward. One of these, the seawater heat pump project using thermal energy from Resurrection Bay, has captured statewide attention. That project, implemented in partnership with the City of Seward, showcases a new renewable energy technology for Alaska that not only saves a lot of money, but also significantly reduces our carbon footprint.

Throughout all the challenges in 2009, our staff and volunteers continued to deliver cutting-edge science and education outcomes, and we began to diversify with new programs addressing invasive species, climate change and harbor monitoring.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to your SeaLife Center in the past year – we look forward to working even more closely with you in the year ahead, particularly as we begin to implement Deep Blue 2020 – our strategic planning process for the next decade.

 Ian M. Dutton, Ph.D.
 President and CEO

Ian’s blog, sealifeceo.blogspot.com, gives an insider’s view of operations and special events at the Alaska SeaLife Center.
THE ALASKA SEALIFE CENTER
is dedicated to understanding and maintaining
the integrity of the marine ecosystem of Alaska.

We achieve our mission through research, rehabilitation, conservation, and public education.

2009 HIGHLIGHTS

• The dive team and program were accepted into the American Academy of Underwater Sciences, a privileged accreditation that allows Alaska SeaLife Center divers to share research methodologies with other diving scientists.

• “Round Up for Rehab,” a new program that invited guests to donate their change at ticketing and the gift shop, collected over $11,000 during the summer season to support the Center’s rehabilitation program.

• In summer 2009, the first rhinoceros auklet egg hatched at the ASLC. The female chick was successfully reared by her first-time parents and is now a part of the exhibit collection.

• “Fish for the Future,” the Center’s summer fundraiser, was a successful weekend event that included a behind-the-scenes open house, a day of fishing, and an evening of entertainment with noted Alaskan humorist Mr. Whitekeys.

• The ASLC became actively engaged with the Alaska Governor’s Climate Change Sub-Cabinet, the Alaska Coastal Communities Compact, and a national coalition of aquariums educating the public about climate change.
Since 2003, the Eider Research Program at the Alaska SeaLife Center has managed the only captive research flocks of Steller’s and spectacled eiders in North America. Both species are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. After a single duckling hatched at the ASLC in 2007 became the first Steller’s eider bred in captivity, scientists and staff members were thrilled to welcome nine more Steller’s ducklings that hatched at the Center in summer 2009.

“We are watching the eider flock at the Center very closely, and have been able to observe some unique events for the first time, such as a hen laying an egg or a duckling hatching from that egg,” says eider program manager and biologist Dr. Tuula Hollmén.

Under the direction of Hollmén and the Center’s avian curator Heidi Cline, these hatchlings offer a multitude of research opportunities, from perfecting hand-rearing protocols to learning about the breeding behavior and biology of this rare species. The ASLC works closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners as part of an Eider Recovery team, whose Recovery Plan has focused on identifying threats to Steller’s eiders, such as predation and ingestion of lead shot. With possible re-introduction of breeding eiders on the Yukon Delta as a long-term goal, the research flock has provided vital information on disease, diet, causes of egg infertility, and techniques to enhance egg survival.

NEW HOPE for a Threatened Species

THREE EIDER SCIENTISTS AWARDED MASTER’S DEGREES

Dr. Tuula Hollmén mentored three graduate students who earned their master’s degrees in science from the University of Alaska in 2009.

As part of a larger study to investigate the role of disease in sea duck population declines, MARY BOZZA developed species-specific assays to quantify immune status in Steller’s eiders, and to determine baseline values for use in captive and free-ranging eiders throughout their seasonal cycles. The study will contribute to the understanding of population-level virus immunities in Alaska’s sea ducks.

ABIGAIL ELLSWORTH developed a non-invasive method to monitor reproductive physiology in spectacled eiders by measuring metabolites of estrogen and testosterone found in bird excrement. She found that commercially available radioimmunoassay kits reliably measured excreted sex steroids in spectacled eiders, and her data suggested these steroids can be analyzed to monitor endocrine profiles and define eider breeding seasons.

REBEKKA FEDERER evaluated the use of stable isotopes (naturally occurring elements in the environment) in the tissues of spectacled eiders, such as those found in eggshells and feathers. Stable isotopes help scientists answer ecological questions such as the birds’ feeding ecology and allocation of nutrients to reproduction. These data may be important in measuring fitness and reproductive success for the species.
**SEA LION BREEDING**
The ASLC launched its first attempt to breed the ASLC’s captive female Steller sea lions with our iconic male, Woody. Scientists confirmed Kiska’s pregnancy in late December. If all goes well, ASLC researchers and their collaborators will conduct studies on the energy requirements of pregnancy and pup-raising.

**THERMAL IMAGING**
Jeanette Nienaber earned her master’s degree in marine science by using infrared imaging technology to complete a database for determining skin surface temperature and thermal window patterns in seals and sea lions. This non-invasive method has the potential to monitor pinniped health in the field, and is related to groundbreaking use of thermal imaging in human medicine. Dr. Jo-Ann Mellish served as Jeanette’s advisor.

**RESEARCH IN FAR EASTERN RUSSIAN**
Dr. Russ Andrews continued a long-term project on the population dynamics and foraging ecology of Steller sea lions and northern fur seals in far eastern Russia. Andrews is collecting critical data on survival, reproductive rates and the factors that affect them across eight Steller sea lion rookeries with varying population trends. His collaborators include North Pacific Wildlife Consulting, the National Marine Laboratory and the Russian Academy of Sciences.

**WHALE TAGGING**
Dr. Andrews developed revolutionary satellite tags and attachment techniques that allow scientists to track killer whales without the need for risky captures. Over 50 mammal-eating orcas now carry tags that offer novel insights into their foraging ecology. With funding from the Office of Naval Research, Dr. Andrews also refined techniques for remotely tagging smaller odontocetes like beaked whales, providing data on six species that had never before been tracked via satellite.

**CHISWELL ISLAND VIDEO MONITORING PROJECT**
The Chiswell Island research team completed its tenth season of remote video observations, and have now recorded more than a half-million observations on the behavior, movements, and reproductive history of hundreds of individual Steller sea lions in Kenai Fjords National Park and Prince William Sound.

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**Alaska SeaLife Center Scientists’ PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Sections</td>
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<tr>
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<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publications in Progress</td>
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</table>

**Alaska SeaLife Center Scientists’ PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS**
COOK INLET BELUGA MONITORING
ASLC biologist Justin Jenniges deployed “hydrophones,” acoustic monitoring devices designed to detect marine mammals, in the waters of Cook Inlet. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages the study, with a primary objective of learning more about the seasonal distribution of endangered Cook Inlet belugas.

CAN BLUE MUSSELS HELP DETERMINE WATER QUALITY?
In aquatic environments, fecal coliforms can indicate microbial levels that may affect marine organisms. Working with Dr. Tuula Hollmén, Jared Guthridge is trying to determine whether filter-feeding blue mussels can be used as bioindicators of water quality problems. His findings will help resource managers identify whether a reduction in water quality has contributed to habitat loss for Cook Inlet beluga whales.

HARBOR SEAL POPULATION STUDIES
Scientist Anne Hoover-Miller continued research on the population trends and ecology of harbor seals in Kenai Fjords National Park. With the support of the Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center and the National Park Service, she combined the use of remotely controlled video cameras in Aialik Bay with information obtained from aerial and boat surveys.

TRAUMATIC DEATHS Suggested for Young Steller Sea Lions
Why have Steller sea lions in western Alaska disappeared from the population before reaching adulthood? For the past eight years Alaska SeaLife Center scientists have been developing and testing new technologies to study population declines in juvenile Stellers. The ASLC dive team helped capture groups of wild sea lions. Then Dr. Jo-Ann Mellish, Dr. Markus Horning and their colleagues held each group in our quarantined “South Beach” facility for three months of study before releasing the sea lions back into the wild, carrying a variety of high tech tracking devices. Half of the animals carried implanted Life History Transmitters (LHX), which store information on the diving behavior and core body temperature of each sea lion up to the time of its death, allowing researchers to deduce the probable cause of mortality.

Of the eight data sets Dr. Mellish has received, seven showed a dramatic drop in body temperature that suggests traumatic death, most likely by a large predator such as a mammal-eating transient killer whale. These preliminary data show that scientists must consider predation to understand all of the forces impacting this population.

Dr. Mellish credits the ASLC’s unique capabilities and staff expertise as reasons for the unsurpassed amount of detailed information collected. For example, Mellish notes that, “Twice now we’ve seen animals on the Chiswell Island Video Monitoring System just prior to uplinks from the internal tags, including one on camera just hours before it died. These sightings confirmed their good condition and reinforced our conclusion of a traumatic death.”

27 wild Steller sea lions were released with implanted “Life History Transmitters” that log their diving behavior and core body temperature for up to 10 years. Released from the carcass after death, the tag floats to the surface and transmits stored data to researchers via satellite.
HOSTING PROMINENT SCIENTISTS

DR. ROGER TSIEIN, a pharmacology professor from the University of California at San Diego, shared the 2008 Nobel Prize in chemistry for his revolutionary work developing and expanding the uses of a fluorescent protein found in sea jellies. He had never seen living members of the species carrying the protein until he visited the ASLC in August. Aquarium curator Richard Hocking and his crew discovered and collected a number of the elusive water jellies from Resurrection Bay just in time for Dr. Tsien’s visit, then became temporary assistants as Tsien attempted to trigger fluorescence while he photographed the invertebrates with a special camera.

INVASIVE SPECIES MONITORING

With the backing of an Alaska Coastal Marine Resources grant through the National Park Service Alaska Region, the Center has deployed 24 crab pots, as well as numerous tunicate plates, around Seward to monitor for the European green crab and several varieties of tunicates. These invasive species are particularly adaptable and aggressive, which means they may outcompete native species for the same ecological resources should they reach Alaska’s waters.

ALASKA HARBOR OBSERVATION NETWORK

Last summer, the Center collaborated with Dr. Orson Smith of UAA’s Civil Engineering Department to install an observation station in Seward’s small boat harbor. The equipment monitors wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, humidity, solar radiation, water temperature, tide level, and wave conditions. If it becomes part of a proposed larger network in Alaska, archived data will help track effects of climate change, guide coastal development, and reduce possible impacts on marine ecosystems.

CAN COLD WATER MAKE A WARM BUILDING?
The Center took a major step toward a greener future in October 2009, when the Denali Commission awarded the ASLC with a 2009 Emerging Energy Technology Grant for the construction of an innovative “heat pump” system. This technology will allow us to “lift” latent heat from raw seawater and transfer this energy into building heat. A real-time public display will help show ASLC visitors and other communities the benefits and mechanics of the system.

STEWARDSHIP

In Action

The Alaska SeaLife Center has embraced its conservation mission by implementing new practices and building new programs to help maintain the integrity of Alaska’s marine ecosystems. For its first 10 years of operation, the ASLC used oil-fueled boilers to heat the building. Late in 2008, however, we purchased an electric boiler to provide a more energy-efficient heating solution during the late spring, summer and early fall months. Ninety percent of Seward’s electrical power is generated by natural gas turbines, so the conversion to an electric boiler has reduced our annual carbon emissions by approximately 130 tons, according to estimates by ASLC General Manager Darryl Schaefermeyer.

DR. BILL STREEVER became a celebrity when his newly published book, Cold: Adventures in the World’s Frozen Places, vaulted onto the New York Times best seller list this past summer. In early September, the ASLC hosted a presentation and book-signing by Dr. Streever, the Environmental Program Studies Director for BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc. Dr. Streever also recently became a member of the Center’s Scientific Advisory Committee.

CONSERVATION
On a Monday morning in March, a classroom full of second graders “dialed in” from eastern Pennsylvania. Without donning jackets or mittens, without stepping outside their school, they traveled over 4,000 miles and across four time zones to meet with their ASLC educator, Laurie Stuart.

While watching Steller sea lions interact in the tank behind Stuart, the students described the adaptations these pinnipeds use to stay warm and move quickly in cold Alaskan waters. After examining harbor seal, sea otter, and polar bear pelts through the magnifying lens of the document camera, students calculated how many heads of human hair (with roughly 100,000 hairs apiece) they would need to combine in order to create one square inch of sea otter fur (containing nearly one million hairs).

The 55-minute class ended with a hands-on activity. Stuart guided the Pennsylvania class in making their own clay harbor seals – complete with the appropriate flipper sizes, round girth, hydrodynamic shape, and facial adaptations necessary for survival. The clay kits, as well as a teacher’s guide, had been mailed to the Pennsylvania teacher one month before.

After answering questions and waving goodbye to the second graders, Stuart received a visit from a high school biology class through the videoconference unit. These students were visiting the SeaLife Center to talk about how researchers have been studying the diets of endangered Steller sea lions. They had received thoroughly cleaned and dried scat samples from the ASLC Education department, and they couldn’t wait to pick through the odd-shaped bits and pieces to make determinations about what the sea lions had been eating.
In a summer survey, the king eider in our seabird exhibit was cited as our visitors’ favorite species more often than any other animal, including Woody.

**PROGRAM SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nocturnes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adults</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>412</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day Programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>737</td>
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<tr>
<td>adults</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Distance Learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>youth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>980</td>
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<tr>
<td>adults</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exploritas</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,031</td>
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<tr>
<td>adults</td>
<td></td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

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<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Attendance</td>
<td>138,499</td>
<td>162,985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behind the Scenes Tours</td>
<td>1,822</td>
<td>1,227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puffin Encounters</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammal Encounters</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octopus Encounters</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interest in marine ecosystems—and the desire to learn more—often begins with a personal connection to marine animals, and the ASLC has allowed more than a million visitors to enjoy Alaska’s ocean wildlife from mere inches away. During a year in which many Alaskan tourism companies saw visitor revenues decline, the Alaska SeaLife Center’s special “Encounter” programs, especially the new Marine Mammal Encounter, bucked the trend by showing dramatic gains over 2008. Encounters were designed for those visitors whose passion for marine life runs deeper than the average guest’s.

The Marine Mammal Encounter joined the Puffin Encounter and Octopus Encounter on the ASLC’s menu of immersive programs in late summer 2008, and by the end of our 2009 summer season it became one of the most popular offerings. Participants meet members of the ALSC husbandry staff for a lesson on marine mammal biology and adaptations, then they accompany the mammalogist for a feeding and training session with one or more of the Center’s harbor seals.
Rescuing, treating, and releasing stranded birds and mammals, the staff at Alaska’s only permanent marine rehabilitation facility also collects samples from dead stranded animals to gain valuable insight into conditions that may affect populations at large.

**Stranding & Rehabilitation Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitated &amp; Released</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harbor seal pups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammal Call Responses</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marine mammals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>number of species</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bird Call Responses</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of species</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On September 14th, 2009, on a remote coastal section of northwest Alaska, a U.S. Geological Survey crew made a grim discovery: 131 dead walruses, the majority of which were young animals. The response demonstrated how Alaska SeaLife Center biologists work closely with others to gather samples and valuable information from stranded marine mammals, even those that are found dead.

Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages walrus populations, convened a team that included personnel from the ASLC, USGS, and the North Slope Borough to determine the extent and cause of the die-off, which aerial surveys showed was limited to the Icy Cape region. Additional funding and technical support came through the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Veterinarians and biologists from the ASLC, USGS, and NSB overcame logistical and weather challenges to reach the isolated area, with Native hunters from Wainwright and Barrow traveling along to ensure their safety. The team examined 71 carcasses and performed nine necropsies (animal autopsies) to identify the cause of death, and to gain insight into population-level conditions or processes. The bodies showed extensive bruising and all of the carcasses were calves or yearlings, so the investigators concluded that the cause of death for all 131 victims was consistent with trampling by other walruses.

According to Bruce Woods of the USFWS, “trampling-related injuries and mortalities are not uncommon at coastal walrus haulouts, especially in large herds with a mix of walruses of different ages and genders.” Investigators found no evidence of other recent human activities near the carcasses.

MARSHMALLOW
A rescue team helped a trumpeter swan named Marshmallow whose wing was pinned to her body by a target arrow. Veterinarians removed the arrow, treated the wound and released the otherwise healthy swan to rejoin her mate. She later proved unable to extend her wing and fly, so she was moved to a Washington waterfowl farm for long-term rehabilitation.

SKITTLE
For the first time in our history, staff moved a non-releasable sea otter pup named Skittle from rehabilitation to an exhibit habitat. Skittle became a star during his stay, and though his story ended tragically when the pup removed part of a drain cover and became trapped, his time at the Center—and even his loss—provided valuable lessons for staff and visitors.
In 2009, the Alaska SeaLife Center recognized exceptional employees, volunteers and partners with six new awards.

**BOARD AWARDS**

**PRESIDENT’S AWARD**
Jilian Chapman
Research and Grants Coordinator
• For outstanding individual contribution to the mission of the ASLC.

**NED SMITH AWARD**
The ASLC Dive Team
• For outstanding team work.

**UNSUNG HERO AWARD**
Donna Talamantes
Accounts Payable Technician
• For making a consistently important contribution to ASLC’s day-to-day operational effectiveness.

**“PLANET BLUE” AWARDS**

**OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER SERVICE**
Julie McCarthy

**PARTNER CONTRIBUTION**
Dr. Peter Armato
Ocean Alaska Science & Learning Center
• A partnership between the National Park Service and the Alaska SeaLife Center.

**STAFF**
Howard Ferren, John Skinner and Justin Jenniges
• For exceptional contribution to the sustainability of Alaska’s marine ecosystem.

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**STAFF STATS**

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
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<td>Employees</td>
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<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interns</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Hours</td>
<td>12,181</td>
<td>13,530</td>
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**STAFF, INTERN, AND VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS**

- Brought our portable touch pool and interactive exhibits to four off-site events, including the Alaska State Fair, where we welcomed at least 30,000 visitors to our exhibit tent.
- Participated in three Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission seal culture camps that involved Alaska Natives in projects ranging from scientific sample collection to cultural activities, including skin sewing and food preservation.
- Held the 11th annual Wildlife Rescue 5k Run, which attracted 172 participants.
- Conducted a five-day Salmon Camp, in which Alaska Native children from Nanwalek and Seward came together to raise awareness of the need to maintain healthy estuaries and spawning grounds for Alaskan salmon.
- Gathered together for the first staff retreat, held in Kenai at the Challenger Learning Center.

Professor Tuff Ted Puffin, a.k.a. “Tuffy,” made his debut as the Center’s mascot at the Anchorage Kids’ Day celebration in April. He spent his summer welcoming visitors to Seward and attending several special events, including the Wildlife Rescue Run in August.
**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

*Portfolio Financial Report 2008-2009*

### Revenues

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<th>Source</th>
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<th>%</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>70%</td>
<td>9,117,672</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<td>Visitors</td>
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<td>2,400,048</td>
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<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>214,046</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>Fiscal Agent Fees</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>262,079</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments &amp; Other</td>
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<td>1%</td>
<td>144,842</td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenue Sources</strong></td>
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<td><strong>12,138,687</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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### Expenses

**Mission Programs**

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<th>%</th>
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<td>Research</td>
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<td>4,328,957</td>
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<td>Conservation</td>
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<td>386,762</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>332,286</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>327,453</td>
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<td>Facility Operations</td>
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<td>3,717,545</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,534,435</td>
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<td>Visitor Services</td>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>647,012</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>Animal Care</td>
<td>902,126</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>965,396</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,549,322</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>13,239,846</strong></td>
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*The ASLC has received “clean” financial audits for nine straight years, including federal grant compliance audits. Our finance department also provides fiscal and grant management services to two other organizations.*
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Todd Allen
Chairman
Chantilly, Virginia

Steve de Albuquerque
Vice-Chairman
Anchorage, Alaska

Willard E. Dunham
Secretary
Seward, Alaska

David R. Gottstein
Treasurer
Anchorage, Alaska

Denis Wiesenburg, Ph.D.
University of Alaska Designee
Fairbanks, Alaska

Pat Pitney
University of Alaska Designee
Fairbanks, Alaska

Phillip Oates
City of Seward Designee
Seward, Alaska

Don Bauermeister
Anchorage, Alaska

Kevin Brown
Anchorage, Alaska

Chris Harrold, Ph.D.
Monterey, California

Tom Tougas
Seward, Alaska

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