

# **Homer Adventurer Walks Across Spain**

The Camino de Santiago is a network of ancient pilgrimage trails that run throughout Europe, based on the tomb of St. James discovered in Galicia in the 9th century. Pilgrims have walked the Camino for over 1,000 years; today approximately 100,000 people walk it annually. Whichever of the numerous routes one starts along, all roads lead to the cathedral in Santiago, Spain.

Homer adventurer Christina Whiting walked across northern Spain on the Camino Frances, or the French Route, last fall. She began her journey in St. Jean Pied de Port, a small city in the French Pyrenees, and ended 40 days and 500 miles later in Santiago. Come join the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society at our annual membership meeting to hear the stories and see the images from her journey.

Stories of joyful surprises encountered along the way, from being emotionally resuscitated by a dog, to being gifted a rare jar of peanut butter, to finding the last box of Band-Aids in a small, rural village. And, oh, the challenges, from backtracking miles in rain and mud to feed a cat, to near-homicidal thoughts during the nighttime snoring frenzy, to being hit on by a "priest". And beautiful pictures of the people, places and paths along the way.

The Camino is as varied as those who walk it. In her inimitable style, Christina tells how: I passed through sleepy rural villages, quaint small towns, bustling large cities, along rolling countryside, flat farmland, traversing mountainsides, on roads of dirt, sand, gravel, cobblestone, grass, leaves, asphalt and mud, narrow pathways and major highways, skirting fields of corn and vineyards, pastures of cows, donkeys, horses and chickens, coming upon friendly and not-so-friendly cats and dogs, encountering farmers, hunters, children, families,

the elderly, the handsome and those who thought they were, the cautious, the flirty, the generous, the gentle, the assertive, the curious, the open, the grumpy, hippies, hippie wannabes, introverts, extroverts, runaways, professionals, students, stoners, the wealthy, the poor, cancer survivors, those walking in honor of loved ones, the scared, the brave, the wounded, the damaged, the famous, the desperate, religious people, atheists, the athletic, couch potatoes, Spanish, English, Irish, German, Japanese, French, Canadian, French Canadian, North American,

South American, Latin American, Native American, African, Italian and the rumor of another Alaskan, though I never did meet up with him.

As varied as the terrain and the pilgrims are, the individual reasons for setting out are even more so. I was motivated by a desire to explore my inner and outer world; that is, to move within a country I'd never been to, to interact with people from different cultures, to walk with all I needed on my back, and to create a physical distance from my daily life in order to re-evaluate my path. Nature has long been a spiritual path for me, so this was a wonderful way to reconnect with my Self.

Did I achieve what I set out to? In some ways, yes, and in some ways, not even close. Would I do it again? Absolutely! From funny to sad moments, the challenging times to the joyous, I hope you'll join me sharing some of the highlights from this amazing journey.



Christina Whiting, will share her adventure along the Camino Santiato trail at the KBCS Annual Membership Meeting on February 29 at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center. The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm

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## DNR Proposes Road Easement in KB State Park

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently proposing to grant a road easement through a section of Kachemak Bay State Park, in the Cottonwood-Eastland section (on the Homer side of the bay), to provide access to the 40-acre Shafford Heights subdivision, which is surrounded on three sides by parklands, below Old East End Road, near Maria Road.

The Preliminary Notice of Director's Determination regarding establishment of a public road easement in Kachemak Bay State Park is available on the DNR website http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic/pubnotfrm.htm. The deadline for public comments has been extended to March 12, 2012. Please point out to DNR that this park is best suited to public access through day-use trails. The proposed road easement should not be granted because it would likely lead to further subdivision into smaller lots in Shafford Heights, leading to more development and increasing road traffic through parklands. This would be detrimental to park resources and to the public interest of recreational enjoyment by members of the local community. Send comments to: Jack Sinclair, Kenai Area Superintendent, P.O. Box 1247, Soldotna, Alaska 99669, (907) 262-5581, ext. 1, Fax (907) 262-3717, jack.sinclair@alaska.gov. -Pamela Brodie

# There is No Place Like Homer

The quiet beauty of this town, its surroundings and the Kachemak Bay Watershed, hold a very special place in the hearts of the local residents and visitors. They voiced their opinion a decade ago when they voted against allowing personal water craft in the bay. These feelings have not changed.

The Personal Water Craft Industry Association (PWIA) claims some substantial improvements have been made to those machines, but no manufacturers have actually published numbers backed up by scientific data, and even if they did, this is not the answer to the problem. The annoyance created by those crafts is not proportional to the number of decibels they emit. A continuous sound of 90 dB is less disturbing than an intermittent one of 75 dB accelerating and decelerating while driving doughnuts and figure eights.

The problem lies in the way jet craft are operated. Even nature lovers on personal water craft endanger marine mammals and sea birds by virtue of their eagerness. Because of their ease

### Message from the President...

Hello all.

Though we had high hopes, we could not continue Hal Shepherd's position as acting executive director due to financial constraints. Early in 2011 we submitted a grant proposal to ACF for a \$20,000.00 grant. ACF awarded 6 grants statewide to environmental groups to support organization and administrations; sadly we were not one of them. However, ACF did grant us \$10,000.00 to produce a white paper and rule-making petition about Escopeta's Company (now known as Fury) drilling rig, Spartan 151, to drill for oil and gas in Cl (See Spartan 151 Article). Hal worked on the project for the duration of the grant, which ended 10-31-11. Hal continues his Director position for the Center for Water Advocacy which allows him to focus his passion for environmental work on water issues.

KBCS is currently working on some pressing issues the Alaska Board of Game has voted to approve the shocking proposal for aerial wolf killing in Areas 15A & 15C which includes the Homer Area (See Aerial Wolf Kill Article). The controversial Jet ski (PWC) issue has come back to haunt us. Kachemak Bay Coalition has been reactivated from the Jet ski issue ten years ago and is having regular meetings every month (See PWC Article). We are also commenting to Division of State Parks in regards to the proposal for the vehicular access through Cottonwood and Eastland State Parks (See State Parks Article). We again led the ever popular Overlook Park Hike at the annual Shorebird Festival. We also completed the sale of bear resistant garbage containers and the program netted us \$20,000.00. These funds are to be used for bear related issues (See article on F&W Land Purchase). We also continue to sponsor Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park.

KBCS continues to be very lucky in sharing office space with Cook Inlet Keeper and want to thank them for their continued generosity. We also want to welcome Wayne Jenkins as the new CEO of CIK. We look forward to working with him.

Linda Gorman and new B.D. member Cindy Birkhimer have developed a member E-mail list for *Action Alerts*. We are hoping you will assist us in our continued efforts to protect the beautiful environment on and around Kachemak Bay.

Sincerely, Roberta Highland, *President* 

in maneuverability and acceleration they can overcome marine mammals and sea birds much more quickly than if they were in a boat. The animals have less time to change their course.

Another problem lies in where personal jet craft are operated. Because they tend to be ridden in the shallow waters that hug the coastline, they have a similar effects on local residents and tourists. They harass non-motorized sport enthusiasts, kayakers, stand up paddlers, divers, surfers and motorized recreational boaters by quickly invading and monopolizing those areas.

As far as safety is concerned, personal jet craft represent 5% of all watercrafts in use in the U.S., yet they are involved in 38% of all watercraft related accidents.

There are not many places left on this planet where humans and wildlife can coexist peacefully and in harmony. In the future, we don't want to have to close our eyes, plug our ears, and click our heels and say, "There was no place like Homer."

—Pierre Ostor

### **Board of Directors**

Roberta Highland, *President* Laurie Daniel, *Vice-president* Linda Gorman, *Treasurer* Cindy Birkhimer, Secretary

### **Board Members at Large**

Sharon Baur Nina Lisowski Pierre Ostor



The parcel of land, just behind the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center site, is contiguous with wetlands critical to the healthof the Beluga Slough Estuary. PHOTO: COURTESY USFWS

### **KBCS** Assists in Purchase of Land with Bear Grant Funds

A long awaited celebration took place September 24<sup>th</sup>, National Public Lands Day. The celebration was held at Islands & Ocean Visitor Center, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, Homer Alaska. The celebration included "the Heart of Homer photo contest", a "Walk in Beauty" down the Beluga Slough Trail which was illuminated with Luminaries designed by the students at Fireweed Academy and music in by Sunrise Kilcher. Over 70 people attended the celebration.

What were we celebrating? After nearly five years, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges brought a group of Partners together to bring a private landholding within the Islands & Ocean Visitors Center site into public ownership.

It all began September 2006, when Poppy Benson, Public Programs Supervisor, for Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, asked for help from "Friends" to find a way to purchase .8 acres within the Islands & Ocean Visitors Center Site. This small piece of land is directly in the view shed of the visitors center lobby, is a wetland critical to the health of the Beluga Slough Estuary, and is prime moose habitat. The property had been unable to be purchased during the construction of Islands & Ocean Visitors Center and further attempts to purchase the property had been unsuccessful.

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges began the long and complicated search to secure funding for the purchase of the land. In 2009 CIAP (Coastal Impact Assistants Program) Grant became available. An agreement was reached with the owners of the property and the grant application started. When the appraisal value for the land came in well below the agreed upon purchase price, the entire process came to a halt.

Over the next several months, communication continued with the owners of the property. And in February 2011, a purchase price was agreed upon. Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges contacted three conservation non-profits organizations, with contributions from all three of the organizations the purchase price was met, purchase agreements were signed and escrow began.

A special thank-you to The Conservation Fund, for contributing the bulk of the funds and completing the paper work necessary for a successful transaction, thank you to Kachemak Bay Conservation Society and Kachemak Moose Habitat Inc. for contributing the balance of the funds needed to close escrow. This important land acquisition could not have been accomplished without their help.

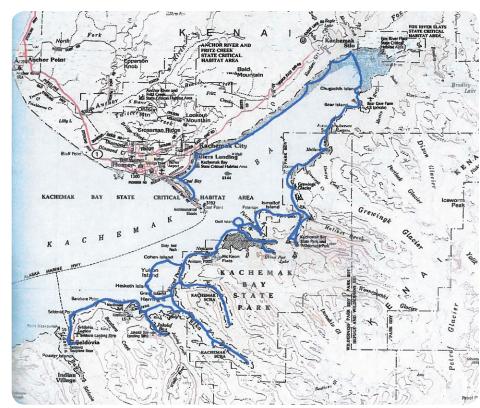
Thank you also to Poppy Benson, for her continued support and guidance, to Lisa Willis, Realty Specialist, USFWS for her direction and edits. Thank you to the board of Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges for their continued encouragement in a long and at times difficult process.

-Sharon Baur

### **Our Mission**

The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society's (KBCS') mission is to protect the environment of the Kachemak Bay region and encourage sustainable use and stewardship of local natural resources through advocacy, education/information, and collaboration.

KBCS is concerned with environmental protection of the Kachemak Bay region. The organization focuses on habitat and wildlife issues, wetlands protection, water quality, logging, oil and gas leases, energy conservation, sustainability issues, and land use planning. The Society monitors environmental issues locally and statewide. KBCS continues to be the sponsoring organization for Homer Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (HAYEA).



The blue line on the map follows the proposed water trail and will serve to bring people together in a fun, positive way.

# The Kachemak Bay Water Trail: 125 Miles of Scenic Boating from Homer to Seldovia

Conceived in the spring of 2011, the proposed Kachemak Bay Water Trail is maturing in concept. The newly formed Kachemak Bay Water Trail Association is working to develop a mission, a vision and a strategic plan. Utilizing information gleaned from public meetings in Seldovia and Homer, the steering committee has enthusiastically embraced the task of making the proposed trail into something real.

There are well over one hundred water trails that have been created across the country in the last twenty years. The Kachemak Bay Water Trail Steering Committee is looking at many of those water trail plans and hoping to utilize many of the same core principles.

Stewardship of the bay and our resources is at the top of the list. We will be promoting the Leave No Trace code of ethics for water trail users whether on the water or on land. Conservation of our resources through education, utilizing best practices, restoration and observing the conditions on and around the bay will also be a major focus. Education about the flora and fauna of the bay, utilizing interpretive signs at suitable locations and instructing water trail users on many related topics. Partnering with agencies, local businesses, environmental groups and individuals to make the long-term goal of a sustainable water trail a great

cooperative effort. **Cultural Awareness** and **Sensitivity** fostered through printed materials and various forms of media, involving native associations in the planning and development of the water trail. **History** of Kachemak Bay shared with trail uses and the local population. **Volunteer Opportunities** to develop and maintain the water trail. **Quality of Life** enhancement by providing world-class recreational opportunities, a chance to improve health, fitness and over all well-being. **Connections** from Homer to Seldovia and other people from around the bay.

The blue line on the map will serve to bring people together in a fun, positive way. We hope to see the water trail serve a wide and diverse group, from young to old, from here and far away, from able and disabled, from experts to novices. While still a "works in progress" we are striving to make the water trail a reality and can for-see it being a true "Adventure Beyond the End of the Road."

If you would like to be added to the data base of folks interested in the Kachemak Bay Water Trail, please send your contact information, email, phone number, address and specific areas of interest to George Reising, gbreising@ gmail.com.

—Dave Brann

Kachemak Bay
Conservation Society is
now on Facebook

Like us and get the latest on: projects volunteer activites events membership benefits and how you can help



### The Issue of Aerial Wolf Control on the Kenai Peninsula

Clearly, the AK Board of Game (BOG) aims to institute aerial wolf control to manipulate moose populations on the Kenai Peninsula, under their premise of abundance management. This in the face of data indicating predation is not a significant factor affecting these populations and local state biologists do not support the action. ADF&G identified habitat as the primary limiting factor for moose on the north Peninsula (GMU 15A) and a low bull:cow ratio on the southern Peninsula (GMU 15C). In neither area were wolves identified as a limiting factor nor will wolf control address current population management issues. Around Kachemak Bay specifically, the moose population is within agency objectives and continues to grow. Recent harvest restrictions need time to show affect, further action is biologically unwarranted and premature at this time.

Peninsula wolf numbers are not well known by ADF&G; recent surveys have not been conducted within 15C and the robustness of the data in 15A is questioned. Additionally, ADF&G has not assessed the winter carrying capacity of moose in these areas before taking action that would potentially exceed their habitat

sustainability. In fact, current agency objectives are based on historically high moose numbers from a past time after widespread wildfire, which is sustainable only by a habitat-managed ecosystem now. Geometrid moth infestation now on the Peninsula directly reduces habitat availability for moose and requires serious examination. Further, the significant and growing source of moose mortality from vehicular collision on the Peninsula has not been adequately addressed by ADF&G. Lastly, past aerial predator control in state demonstrate biological effects are far-reaching across ecosystems, ultimately affecting non-target species.

Both GMU 15A and C have human community living in both dense and scattered patterns and are heavily visited by recreational users. Aerial wolf control would increase conflict between user groups and potentially create a risk to human safety, especially due to the forested terrain. In fact, aerial control is precluded from the majority of land area in these units based on ownership, particularly federal lands where it is not a compatible use. Concentrating aerial control onto the small, remaining portion of the area

encompassed in these two units cannot be biologically justified.

Non-consumptive uses of wildlife were not even considered. Wildlife viewing and ecotourism are a significant and growing sector of the Peninsula economy and deserve equal footing in wildlife management decisions under consideration by ADF&G and the BOG.

In summary, aerial wolf control in GMU 15A and 15C is unnecessary, not supported by current data, and likely ineffective in achieving or sustaining moose population objectives. KBCS submitted these comments and further asked that BOG shift the overall approach of state wildlife management away from single-species to an ecosystem-based focus. BOG ignored prevailing public opinion opposing this action and chose to conduct aerial wolf control on the Peninsula. Efforts are underway to address the issue with the governor's office, before the proposal gets signed into action. Hopefully the sudden fall of Corey Rossi from (mis-)leading the Division of Wildlife Conservation at ADF&G will result in more scientifically based wildlife management and conservation efforts forthcoming.

-Laurie Daniel

# **Beach Cleanup Day**

On Saturday, Aug. 27, the community was invited by Kachemak Bay Conservation Society and Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies to participate in clearing garbage from the Anchor River area off the North Fork River and Kasilof beaches. Although, the Kasilof Beach is 60+ miles from Homer, it is a popular fishing area and has been identified as hosting hundreds of gill and dip netters over the summer months.

A total of six dedicated people met Saturday morning to drive to these beaches with bags and gloves in hand to remove the garbage left on the beaches, parking areas and grass uplands. Plastic, paper, duct tape, diapers, cigarette

butts, aluminum cans, glass bottles, gill net, fishing line, fishing pole, rope, tents, mattresses and numerous other items were removed from the Kasilof Beaches. We successfully removed approximately 500 pounds of trash.

One lone volunteer, Jack Wiles took on the Anchor Point River off the North Fork



Volunteers survey the trash collected from Kasilof beach. From left to right: Patrick Chandler, Hal Shepherd, Robert Archibald, Linda Gorman, Pat Cue. PHOTO: NINALISOWSKI

Road as his clean up area. He singlehandedly cleaned up a camp/dump site containing an enormous amount of trash. The most interesting item found was a lawn mower!

Most Alaskans and others enjoy fishing and camping, but a lot of us get so caught up in the moment of having a grand time, we forget to pick up our trash before we leave the beach or campground. One of the biggest issues when dip netting or fishing, is when you gut that fish, throw the guts and body way out into the ocean. Or you might just catch that fish again!

I had to ask myself what our beaches and oceans would look like if everyone who fished or camped in these areas or who harvested their catch from this ocean came to participate in cleaning these beaches. We certainly would not have had the poundage we did in our cleanup effort.

We have great resources on the Peninsula to play and fish. Let's all do our part when we leave those areas, and

leave them cleaner than we found them.

Do your part, PICK IT UP AND PACK IT OUT!

Thank you to the volunteers who participated.

—Pat Cue and Linda Gorman

# Escopeta or Furie: Different Name, Same Problems

Last August, some of you may recall seeing Spartan 151 jack-up oil rig parked in Kachemak Bay. Although it pulled away the following morning on it's way to Port Graham for the winter, this is not the last we will hear of Furie Operating Alaska (formerly Escopeta Oil Co.) in the Cook Inlet and the possibility of the rig reappearing in our bay.

In November, Escopeta reported that it had discovered a natural gas source in the Cook Inlet that exceeded all expectations. Although the Alaskan Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and the state's Division of Oil and Gas remain cautious about the volume of gas they claim, they are not discounting the claims entirely nor are they recommending that their efforts cease. Furie estimates they will continue drilling for the next eight years.

Anticipating this intrusion, KBCS and Hal Shepherd, drafted a rule-making petition calling for the ADEC to insist that Escopeta/Furie follow the best technological safety practices in the industry. To date, Furie's track record has not been exemplary as evidenced by their failure to comply with fundamental U.S. regulations. Just last week, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security upheld a \$15-million fine against Escopeta/Furie, for violating the Jones Act by not employing a U.S. Flagged vessel for transport between U.S. ports. They do not appear to be a company that crosses their Ts and dots their Is.

In the wake of the Gulf oil spill and public concern, Furie argues in it's oil spill and blowout prevention contingency plan that "the circumstances for such an event are unlikely." Not surprisingly, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supported that claim stating that the resurgence of exploratory oil drilling is "not likely to effect" declining numbers of Beluga whale in Cook Inlet primarily because of the low probability of a large spill. In a letter sent to the Corps, NMFS said that while "we may agree that there is a low likelihood of a large or catastrophic oil spill, the Corps has not demonstrated that the effects from such a spill are discountable ..."

NMFS' statement that in "light of our experience regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, we cannot discount oil spill risks without a thorough understanding of those risks and an analysis of oil spill responses capabilities and effectiveness," may have struck a nerve with Alaska politicians. According to a



Spartan 151 jack-up oil rig parked in Kachemak Bay for three days last August. PHOTO: DAVE WEBER

news release from Senator Mark Begich's office, for example, the senator requested that NOAA Director Jane Lubchenco sit down at a roundtable with Cook Inlet Oil & Gas "stakeholders." Unfortunately, these stakeholders were mostly oil industry representatives concerned with streamlining the permitting process for Cook Inlet oil and gas rigs, particularly relating to the permits issued by NOAA and required under the Marine Mammal Protection Act which protects Cook Inlet Belugas.

However, Alaska politicians still seem out of touch regarding "preparedness" and best practices. In fact, the day after Sen. Begich's discussion with Lubchenco and Cook Inlet "stakeholders," the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force held their Annual Meeting in Anchorage. The Vice-Chairman of the Deepwater Horizon Incident Specific Preparedness Review, Carlton Moore, cited a report on the Review's failure to cover what caused the incident instead of answering questions about what could have prevented or better controlled the drilling rig blowout. This left more than a few of those of us who attended the meeting, somewhat perplexed about the exact function of the task force, leaving us to ask, "What Have We Learned?"

Similarly, although blow out prevention practicalities clearly call for the drilling of a relief well immediately after, or at the same time, as the original well as part of the Best Available Technology (BAT) standard, any discussion of relief wells by Alaska regulatory agencies is noticeably absent. Even though, for example, the definition of "technology" under BAT includes "equipment, supplies, other resources and related practices," during

the 2004 BAT Conference in Anchorage, sponsored by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), relief wells were not even included in the list of technologies presented. Discounting of relief wells in preventing and controlling spills or blowouts seems contrary to ADEC's impression of the effectiveness of such strategies, particularly in Cook Inlet. This is best illustrated by the BAT Report which provides: "when all else fails, a relief well, drilled to intersect the blowout well, may be the only option" and in "some instances, the only practical way to control a well blowout, particularly for offshore platforms..., is to drill a relief well."

Meanwhile, Buccaneer Energy of Australia's jack-up oil rig, Endeavor-Spirit, is in transport from Singapore and due to arrive in Cook Inlet this Spring. KBCS anticipates that it too may seek harbor in Kachemak Bay in 2012-2013.

Once again, it appears that if we want to prevent a Gulf type oil spill crises in Alaska, we cannot depend solely on the politicians or government agencies. That is why the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society and others have called for ADEC to adopt a rule-making petition that will have public support clarifying that the use of relief wells is part of the BAT in Cook Inlet.

In our effort to hold the State to the rigor of best practices, the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society will continue to promote a rule-making petition. The Cook Inlet Keeper will resume its role as the lead organization in finalizing the petition. We remain united in our concerns about possible oil spills, blowouts, and leaks, in Cook Inlet and particularly in designated critical habitat areas.

—Hal Shepherd and Nina Lisowski

### **Board of Directors**

### **Thank You Exiting Board Members**

LeAnne Parker was the "youth" of our board and connected us to Facebook. However she had to return to Michigan to continue her teaching education. Patricia Cue has bon voyaged to live in Eagle River and work in Anchorage. Patricia was a board member for many years helping with newsletters, annual membership meetings (including bringing goodies), writing letters, and served as Treasurer for a year. Jack Wiles has taken to being a traveling man with his wife Michelle MiChaud. He rewrote the Karen Hornaday Park Management Plan and led the Friends of Woodard Creek and KHP forward. He wrote professional comments for KBCS in a blink of an eye and he will be sorely missed.

I'll support the

### **Slate of Board Nominees**

Sharon Baur was appointed to Pat Cue's seat. Sharon was a founding member of "Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges" and continues serving on that board. She has volunteered in the Grand Canyon National Park and advocated for the reintroduction of the gray wolf to E. Arizona. Sharon is interested in invigorating the membership, advocacy issues, and providing technical input. Cindy Birkhimer was appointed to Jack Wiles' seat. She brings an "I'll help with anything" attitude and cares about the future of Mother Earth. She has strong computer skills and is a "Jill of Many Trades." She is also a Kachemak Bay Equestrian Association Board Member and volunteers at the Homer Foundation. Laurie Daniel is our current vice-president and long-time board

member of KBCS. She is active in conservation issues, Overlook Park, and special projects. Her experience with oil spill issues makes Laurie an invaluable member. **Linda Gorman** is our present Treasurer. We could not have traveled this last year's road without her financial expertise. She is representing KBCS on the Kachemak Bay Coalition (Jet ski issue).

#### **Welcome New Board Members**

Pierre Oster was appointed to LeAnne Parker's seat. Pierre is "an Extreme Bicyclist" and has done the Iditabike to McGrath multiple times. Originally from France, he is married to Cheryl Oster, CIK's Finance and Office Manager. He is also on the KBC and brings strong research and computer skills to the board.

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If you have any questions or for more information email kbayconservation@gmail.

com or call 907. 235.8214.

**KBCS Annual Meeting Featuring Christina Whiting** 

Camino de Santiago: A Pilgrims Journey

Islands and Ocean Visitors Center Wednesday, February 29, 2012 Don't miss it!

6:30 pm

