

From: **Tricia Kent** <[tmkent@alaska.edu](mailto:tmkent@alaska.edu)>

Date: Tue, Apr 1, 2014 at 9:53 PM

Subject: regarding BAKLAP

To: [senator.pete.kelly@akleg.gov](mailto:senator.pete.kelly@akleg.gov)

Dear Senator Pete Kelly,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am a graduate student at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks in the Peace Corps Masters International program through the School of Natural Resources and Ag Science. I am currently in Mexico receiving training for my Peace Corps assignment, but I appreciate your help in allowing me to provide input. Please print out this email for your record, as I can not send postal mail at this time.

Though I am currently on assignment in Mexico, I spent all of my time at UAF working with BAKLAP (Boreal Alaska: Learning, Adaptation, Production) as a service learner, then as a student worker. As a service learner I aided in teaching K-20 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) Education to six local elementary and middle school classes. Last summer I became a student worker through BAKLAP funding and helped develop materials for the fall semester.

BAKLAP has also been an important funding source for my schooling and has allowed me to work on a project that marries my interests of engineering, natural resource management, and environmental education. I have a bachelor's degree in material engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and worked in industry for two years as a metallurgical engineer. I decided that I wanted to pursue a different career path in natural resource management and enrolled at UAF for graduate school.

At UAF I learned more about the resources available in interior Alaska, and current environmental education initiatives occurring in Fairbanks. I was able to participate in Tapping into Spring which is a workshop, funded by BAKLAP, that educated local K-12 students in the science and practice of making birch syrup. This was particularly interesting to me and I started looking for ways to expand upon this program.

Using funding from BAKLAP I constructed a reverse osmosis unit for use in the Tapping into Spring program. Reverse osmosis units are critical in the syrup making industry and provide countless opportunities for local students to learn about science, math, natural resource management, and engineering. Students are very excited to learn about science in a fun and hands on way, especially when they are allowed to do actual research projects. Additionally, spending time getting to know our local forests better increases their interest in our local ecosystem and pride in Alaska. This tool will be used, starting in the spring, to educate local students and expand upon the existing Tapping into Spring curriculum.

Though I will not be in Fairbanks for the next two years, I am finding ways of using my Peace Corps experience as a learning opportunity for local students. I am currently partnering with Chris Pastro of Randy Smith Middle School to bring the environmental education I am learning here into her classroom. Chris Pastro is one of the many teachers who participate in BAKLAP funded projects, and she is excited about the cultural and scientific learning opportunities that this partnership will provide.

I appreciate your time in reading this email and hope that you recognize the value in environmental education and decide to provide the rest of the funding to BAKLAP.

Thank you,

Tricia Kent