

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center****Federal Tax ID: 92-0170600****Project Title:****Project Type: New Construction and Land Acquisition**

# Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center - Bear Education Awareness Research Sanctuary Phase II

**State Funding Requested: \$2,500,000****House District: Anchorage Areawide (16-32)**

Future Funding May Be Requested

**Brief Project Description:**

Phase II of the Bear Education Awareness Research Sanctuary (B.E.A.R.S.) provides immediately needed support facilities for ongoing educational programs. The amenities include an outdoor covered amphitheater style seating area suitable for outdoor classroom activities and restroom facilities for 250,000 annual visitors, students and Alaskans.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$7,000,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$1,720,400)
FY2013 State Funding Request:	(\$2,500,000)
Project Deficit:	\$2,779,600

*Funding Details:*

*The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center began an aggressive campaign of working toward fulfilling funding that continues to develop. To date the majority of funding has been through State Capital granting of 1.4 million since 2009. Additional funding has been through in-kind donations and fund raising for a total of \$321,400. The continued course of funding is to pursue foundation grants, Federal programs, and corporate sources of funding both in and out of state.*

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Phase II of the B.E.A.R.S. project is the completion of key elements of the project, which includes construction of the public covered outdoor auditorium and restroom facilities, and installation of utilities in preparation of the future construction of the primary education / interpretive building.

The development of the B.E.A.R.S. facility will be a significant enhancement to the tourism industry in South Central Alaska by offering a more in depth look at North America's largest carnivore and complex omnivores in the species taxa providing the visitor an exciting, memorable and comfortable Alaskan experience. The B.E.A.R.S. facility will also support an expansion of year round educational opportunities for Alaskans.

Education programs conducted in conjunction with the Anchorage School District, University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Bear Trust International have already begun at AWCC. As a result of these "Teach the Teacher" educational programs, Anchorage high school students are currently being exposed to a STEM curriculum based on the scientific study of bears. The proposed project will provide the facilities these educational programs need to offer the

most opportunities to Alaska's youth. These educational programs have ongoing educational partnerships with ADF&G as well as communities in Kodiak.

The development of the phase II is a key component of the project, providing the needed support facilities while connecting the site with the boardwalks through the bear enclosures. Additionally this will allow the Bear Education Program, outdoor facilities to conduct education to further new offerings to programs within ASD and UAA.

**Phase II Funding:**

Approximately 10% of the funding request is needed for completing design and permitting of phase II and III leaving 90% of the funding for phase II facility construction.

**Project Components:**

An approximately 8,000 square foot patio for bear viewing and interpretive presentations, covered amphitheater style seating area suitable for outdoor classroom activities with a living roof and water recovery system, restrooms to accommodate visitors and education programs with associated engineered water and sewer system, design and permitting of the above mentioned components referred to as phase II, and design development of phase III components including galleries, classrooms, theater, and support spaces.

**Project Timeline:**

Summer 2012: Bid and Build Outdoor Spaces. Summer/Fall 2012: Design Development main facility, Additional emphasis on year round educational programs will be incorporated into building design.  
Fall 2012: Permitting Phase II including AWCC master plan update, Winter 2012: Bid Documents.  
Spring 2013: Solicit bids for remainder Phase II construction. Late Summer 2013: Construction Start  
Spring 2014: Phase II construction compete

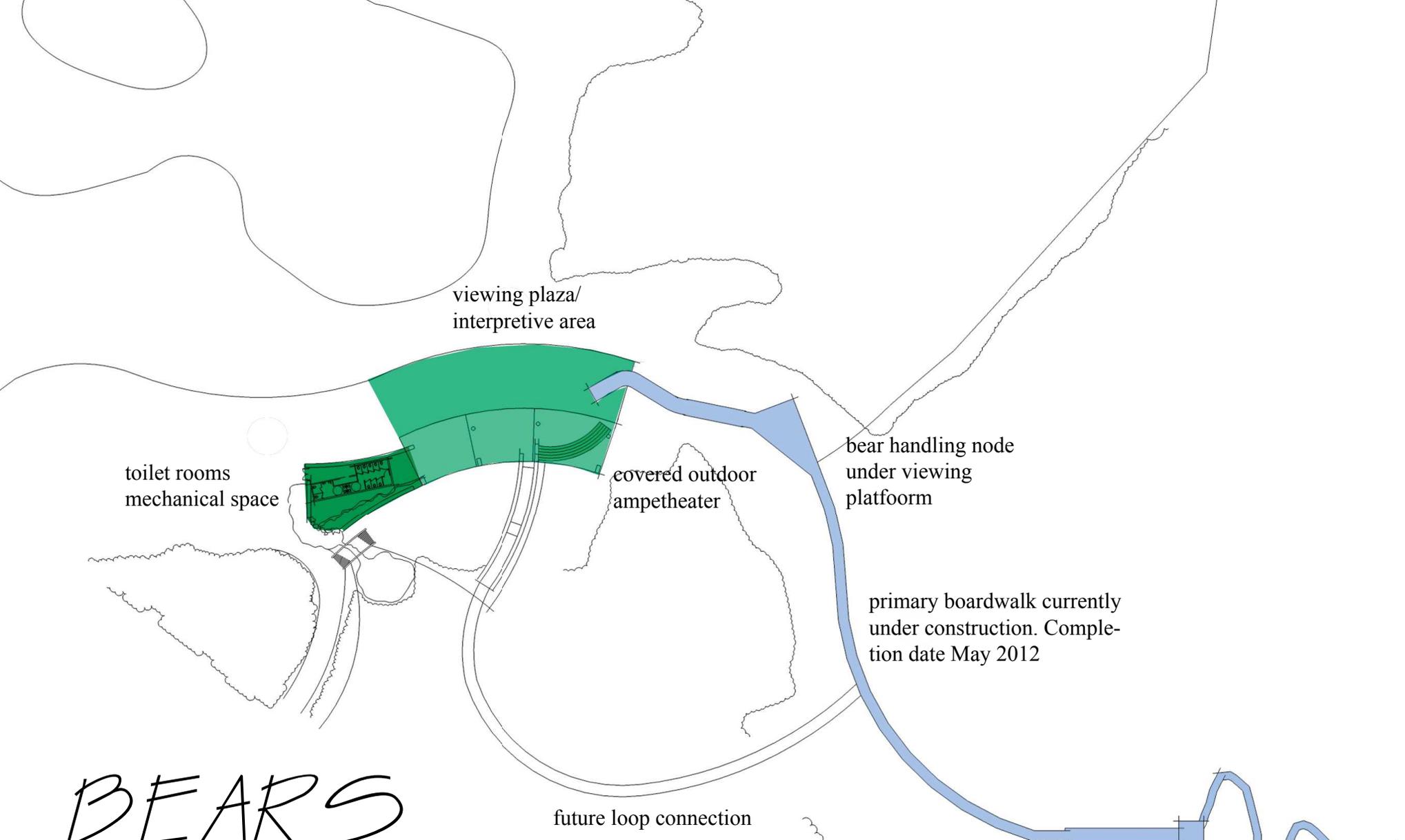
**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority?  Yes  No



# BEARS

Facility Develpoment Phases

## *phase II*

- Outdoor Covered Amphitheater
- Toilet rooms/ Mechanical Spaces
- Viewing plaza hardscape



## BEARS Interpretive Facility Narrative Summary

A W C C

B D S

Z A r c h i t e c t s

The existing bear exhibit at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center is like no other, it offers a powerful experience of an almost personal wild encounter with a bear. AWCC has a unique and exciting opportunity to make an already successful bear exhibit become a much larger catalyst for education about Alaska's bears and the importance of habitat conservation. The design for this new facility helps to further those goals through the integration of site development into the natural landscape and by providing a coherent and varied experience for the visitor that can properly showcase the viewing of these magnificent carnivores.

The Bear Education Awareness Research Sanctuary (BEARS) will be a new highlight of the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) in Portage Alaska. BEARS will broaden the region's offerings to tourists and provide unique educational opportunities for year round residents to learn more about Alaska's three bear species. The architecture of the BEARS facility strives to orient the visitor to this unique biodiversity in the state and to educate visitors about how human actions can help sustain habitats for these bears in Alaska and beyond.

Travel within the AWCC campus is possible by vehicle or pathway, but the experience of the BEARS facility focuses on an experience of interaction with Alaskan bears and the wealth of educational information that AWCC can provide. Pedestrians approach along Black Bear Mountain on an elevated boardwalk within the bear enclosures. The approach experience creates a sense of suspense and excitement for the upcoming bear encounter.

The side of the building facing the approach is a bermed slope with native vegetation green roofing system. The entry point is framed by flared rock walls jutting into the bermed slope and a water feature integrated throughout the building and site. Pathways around and through the building are designed to give first time visitors a clear path and sequenced experience, while allowing visitors who have come before to find new ways to explore the interpretive message.

From the entry point, one can see through the building to the vista beyond and get the first hint of the bear viewing opportunities within. As the visitor passes the threshold of

the main curved rock wall, they are welcomed at point at the center of the upper tier of interpretive space and offered an orienting view of the space below and the expansive bear viewing along the glass wall on the tier below. The tier below is only two steps down, divided by a row of structural trees that extend into the landscape and exterior bear viewing area. The lower tier of exhibit space offers a world-class bear viewing experience with an optimal view of the bear pond and natural bear habitat that is the location the bears are most fond of and tend to linger at.

The interpretive spaces are organized into themes relating to the BEARS goals and mission statement and bring visitors through the space in sequence that maximized the educational and conservation goals of AWCC. Adjacent to the exhibit and viewing gallery is a triangular hearth gallery. This is a space of gathering, warmth, and relaxation; a transition point for those waiting for the auditorium experience and an opportunity for bear stories to be told with a range of multi media exhibits, education programs. The point of the hearth room juts out into the bear enclosure at a point where the brown bears can be viewed below through the windows and through a glass floor.

The auditorium will offer a large high definition screen with 153 seats. This space supports indoor education programs currently done through the Anchorage School District, University of Anchorage Alaska and the surrounding region. It will provide much needed indoor education space. Exiting the auditorium back through the hearth gallery. At the rear of the hearth gallery is a tromb wall used as one of the strategies to increase energy efficiency. The wall of water is heated by the sun, then radiates back into the space reducing the need for conventional heating. This is one of the many sustainable strategies integrated into the facility.

Opposite the Brown bear viewing is an amphitheater built into the side of Black Bear Mountain. The amphitheater affords additional tiered seating for bear viewing and a location for talks and special bear viewing events. The amphitheater is covered by a series of roofs stepping down toward the entry; these roofs collect the rainwater and form a cascading fountain that flows into the entry water feature. From the outdoor brown bear viewing area, guests can take an elevated boardwalk through the black bear enclosure and loop back around to the entry point. These elevated boardwalks include interpretive displays to educate visitors and give them a feeling of being with the bears.

The development of the BEARS facility will help AWCC achieve its goals of educating residents and visitors alike on the unique characteristics of Alaska's three bear species, and how to safely and responsibly travel and live in bear country.

# BEARS Phase II Construction Schedule Overview

updated February 5, 2012

Summer 2012

***Bid and Build Outdoor Spaces***

Bear viewing patio  
Outdoor amphitheater  
Canopies for Gathering areas

Summer/Fall 2012

***Design Development main facility and Phase II support spaces***

Support spaces will be designed and sized for the final building completion.  
Additional emphasis on year round educational programs will be incorporated into building design.  
Design of structural and foundation systems for entire facility.

Fall 2012

***Permitting Phase II including AWCC master plan update***

AWCC campus master plan needs update prior to building permitting.  
Easements and agreements for utility tie in will be required.

Winter 2012

***Bid Documents ready for remainder of Phase II***

Foundation and building component design of restrooms and mechanical areas.  
Utilities to building site.

Spring 2013

***Solicit bids for remainder Phase II construction***

Late Summer 2013

***Construction Start for remainder Phase II***

Spring 2014

***Phase II construction compete***

***Total Construction Cost for Phase II \$2,200,000***

## **Project Title: The Alaska Wildlife Conservation Interpretive and Research Center**

**Project Cost: 7,000,000 estimate**

### **Project Description**

Simply stated, the Interpretive and Research Center will be a sustainable, 12,000 square foot interactive immersion experience offering world-class wildlife viewing in a natural environment. Part of an overall effort of AWCC to build a culture of conservation in Alaska through a facility focused on conservation, the four-phase project will result in a conservation campus with a multi-functional structure, which will include renewable “green” resources.

Planning and construction of the center will be the result of a development of a solid Business Plan for Sustainability.

The building will include a large interpretive hall for educational themed topics and enhanced outdoor wildlife viewing, educational classrooms in a theater setting, a conference room, an outdoor viewing deck, animal holding areas, a catering kitchen, public rest rooms, staff office space, and a small gift shop.

**Educational Interpretive Exhibits** - Alaska is the only state in the union that is home to all 3 species of bears. Interactive exhibits will engage the visitor in topics such as Bear Safety, Bear Management and Conservation in Alaska, Global Climate Change and its effect on Bears, the Differences Between Polar, Brown and Black Bears, Bear Communication and Bear Viewing in Alaska. Bear artifacts and life sized models of the three bear species will also be featured. Photographs will line the hallways from various well-known wildlife photographers and will be accompanied by wall-sized window viewing of the centers Brown Bears.

**Educational Classroom Area/153 Seat Theater**- A 20-minute documentary film presenting bears of Alaska will be displayed. This theater will also be used as a classroom. This area would be used for various educational classes, community meetings and revenue generating events.

**Conference Room**- A conference room will be created with a large viewing window of the breath taking Chugach National Forest and a small catering kitchen will also be included in this area for special event use.

**An Outdoor Viewing Deck**- From the safety of the outdoor viewing deck, visitors will be able to witness and photograph brown bear behavior up close. Outdoor interpretive panels along with mounted binoculars offer the visitor the opportunity to gain further insight into these magnificent animals.

**Animal Holding Area**- Four 15’x15’ indoor dens will allow the bears to be safely restrained for medical treatments, research projects, or ground

maintenance. These dens will also provide an area for hibernation. Bears will be able to be viewed during their winter slumber.

**Animal Food Preparation Kitchen and Walk-In Freezer-** Staff will prepare the daily meals for the bears of AWCC in this kitchen while educating the public. A glass window into the kitchen will allow spectators and visitors to watch the food preparation process. The kitchen viewing will educate visitors on the diet of Alaskan bears through interpretive displays when it isn't feeding time. Learning about the nutritional value of Alaskan salmon, the total calories an adult brown bear consumes, and feeding adaptations they have developed are all topics that will be presented. All of the food will be donated from salmon and trout hatcheries, canneries, and fish processing facilities, Alaska Railroad, and grocery stores.

**Gift Shop Area-** A small gift shop area will be designated to generate revenue to help support the educational programs of the center. Bear themed products will be sold along with educational materials.

### **Partnerships**

With Construction of this premier bear facility, AWCC has the opportunity to reach out to the public and provide necessary bear education. Teaming up with Bear Trust International (BTI), the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center has assisted in implementing a program that provides education to school teachers who then pass this on to their students. AWCC & BTI continue to work together to move forward bear education in Alaska and throughout the country.

### **Other Additional Information**

The AWCC Board and staff are actively involved in developing a comprehensive Business Plan for a Sustainable AWCC Interpretive Research Facility. Working with The Foraker Group, the business plan for this sustainable is being developed during the Spring of 2012 – it will be completed by the close of the legislative session, but included here are highlights of the Business Plan as developed so far, including a brief description of the AWCC organization, the need support the development of the facility, social return on an investment in the facility, and concepts targeting development of a highly sustainable infrastructure to support the facility.

**The Organization:** Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) is a federally recognized 501c3 non-profit incorporated in December 1999. The AWCC is dedicated to preserving Alaska's wildlife through conservation, public education and quality animal care. AWCC is a wildlife park with a gift and souvenir shop on the premises. The park is situated on approximately 170 acres of raw land. The current souvenir shop is housed in a two-story log building that has a loft area above the second floor. The 18 acre fenced brown bear exhibit and one acre Wildlife Habitat Incentive Pond are part of the 170 acres currently in the park. The park, which provides education and interpretive programs to visitors and school groups, contains nearly one hundred various animals, which include: brown bears, black bears, elk, caribou, musk ox, moose, deer, bald eagles, lynx, wood



bison, plains bison, and owls. The Center is approximately 50 miles south of Anchorage on the only highway leading out of south Anchorage. One of the most visited attractions in Alaska, Portage Glacier, is just 5 miles further south from AWCC.

### **The Vision for the Future**

Development of a Business Plan is solidly rooted in the vision of the AWCC board for the future, and a forward looking long-term goal based on building a culture of wildlife conservation, and making Alaska a recognized leader in bear ecology and bear science.

#### **AWCC's Long-Term Goal for 2017**

*“By 2017, The AWCC will be a fully functioning “Education Campus” centered around bear ecology, bear science and STEM.”*

#### **AWCC's Long-Term Goal for 2016**

*“The AWCC is host to the 2016 World Bear Conference sponsored by the International Bear Association for Research and Management, in partnership with the Alaska’s visitor industry”.*

In pursuit of both long-term goals, AWCC leadership and management will be actively working towards achieving short- and mid-term goals relating to three over-arching issue areas:

- 1) Ensuring organizational health and financial resilience for the AWCC.
- 2) Development of the physical and programmatic infrastructure to support the Long-Term goal for a STEM-based “Campus Culture”
- 3) Solidifying AWCC’s role as “the” recognized resource in the state and across the globe for stewardship of wildlife resources, respecting all wildlife user groups, such as subsistence, hunting and watchable wildlife groups...

During 2012, the most relevant short-term goal will be completion and presentation of this Business Plan for Sustainability.

### **The Need Driving the AWCC Mission**

The work of the AWCC is based on three over-arching and inter-related needs with respect to preserving Alaska’s wildlife resources – research and conservation, education and accessibility. Each is identified briefly below:

**Community Need One:** *There is no “place” in Alaska where people are thinking about bears all the time, with a conservation focus. Similarly, there is no place in Alaska where genetic research on bears can be undertaken, particularly with regard to polar bears.*

**Community Need Two:** *There is no place in Alaska providing an accessible, safe, affordable bear experience. The reality is that people want to view bears – people who live here and people who visit here. The AWCC is a popular destination for Alaska residents looking for a place to spend a day, and it has been documented as one of the top five destinations in the state for visitors, with over*



250,000 annually. When it comes to interpretive centers, glaciers, native history, art and marine wildlife are of interest and well represented, but Alaska has not yet established a facility to present the subject that draws hundreds of thousands to this state. The AWCC campus will fill that void.

**Community Need Three:** *There is no Alaska facility focused on the interplay of wildlife conservation and education.* The AWCC is uniquely positioned, with active school partnerships to be able to provide an outdoor classroom experience with an indoor component, rather than the standard inside classroom experience with an outdoor component. With a new facility, AWCC will be able to provide its important programs all the time, year-round.

### **AWCC Programs & Services: Social Return on Investment**

In meeting the needs identified in the prior section, the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center provides a slate of programs. The centerpiece of the AWCC is the wildlife park.

**Conservation:** A program focus area within conservation is the Wood Bison Recovery Project. After more than 100 years of extinction in Alaska, wood bison have found their way back to the state of Alaska. The AWCC herd arrived in November 2003 from the Yukon Territory in Canada and is part of a wood bison recovery program designed to reintroduce the species to Alaska. AWCC is home to the only wood bison herd in the United States and are working closely with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to reintroduce them into the wild. The first wood bison calves born in the state of Alaska in over 100 years were born at AWCC in 2005, and since then dozens more have been born at the Center. As of the writing of this business plan, the herd now numbers well over 100, and many more are expected in the spring of 2012.

A significant part of the conservation work at AWCC involves conducting research on bear populations.

**Education:** At the AWCC, and beyond, one of AWCC's core programs involves education at all levels – from K-12 to adults and researchers. The AWCC has developed a Bear Book, Volume 1 and 2, which is used in many different educational venues. The AWCC also conducts in-class programs around other species. Apart from the specific programs and locations, it is important to point out the focus of a curriculum built around STEM – Science, Technology, and Math. For educators the AWCC offers a way to provide continuing education credit for teachers, and expand their professional careers, pursuing “expert teachers.” For students, the educational opportunities provide a unique way to link Alaska's wildlife resources with STEM. For school districts, teachers have a place where they can demonstrate their “expert teacher” status.

**Quality Animal Care:** Some of the most practical work that goes on in the AWCC involves quality animal care, and helping to ensure the health of animal ambassadors, their habitat and their species. Sharing that information and process with visitors is an important part of building a culture of conservation in Alaska and beyond.



## **The Future – Sustainability and the AWCC and the Interpretive Research Facility**

The future of AWCC, and its ability to provide meaningful programs and impacts targeting conservation, education, and research, is dependent on the development of a sustainable facility that will meet the needs of AWCC far into the future.

## **Benefit to the Community – The Social Return on Investment**

There is significant return on an investment in the AWCC Interpretive Research facility, including the following:

- **Increase awareness of and reduce Human/Brown Bear conflicts**
- Fill the Void and Satisfy the Need for a World Class Wildlife Facility in Alaska.
- Provide an Educational Center for South Central Alaska School District Students.
- Getting kids invested in Science with an exciting, relevant curriculum.
- **Helping Build Alaska’s Economic Engine around Tourism**
- **Promote Alaska’s Tourism Economy Both Large and Small.**

## **Stakeholder Analysis**

Stakeholders are individuals and organizations who believe in AWCC’s mission and have made a commitment to help the organization achieve its goals. Our major stakeholders include:

- US Forest Service
- AK Dept. of Fish and Game
- Girdwood 2020
- Residents of Girdwood and Anchorage
- The visitor industry
- School districts across the region
- The University of Alaska system and campuses
- Alaska Native Regional Corporations

## **Community and Stakeholder Support**

AWCC has worked in partnership with many local and regional organizations and enjoys a significant level of community and stakeholder support for its efforts. The following actions concretely demonstrate this high level of support:

- AWCC Board of Directors unanimously approved a resolution in support of a new facility.
- Representatives of various Girdwood and Anchorage groups, organizations and special interests were invited to a community meeting with our interpretive consultants to gather input on what the Center should include.
- U.S. Forest Service is in the process of negotiating a memorandum of understanding with AWCC.
- Community fundraisers have already raised initial planning dollars.
- Sourdough Development Services, Inc. signed a fixed price to lease the land to AWCC for 20-years with option to purchase.
- Construction materials for Phase I have been donated.
- AWCC board members have made cash donations.



## **AWCC and Sustainable Infrastructure**

As part of the development of a solid Business Plan for Sustainability, the AWCC board and staff are working to ensure the creation of a sustainable infrastructure that will support the mission of the facility, and be self-sustaining. Developing that sustainable infrastructure will involve concentration on several important areas:

- Sustainable Human Resources
  - To ensure a solid staff is in place to conduct programs and manage and maintain the facility
- Committed Governance and Leadership
  - A strong board with committed Alaskans who will provide strategic direction and fiscal oversight for the project and the facility
- Solid Management
  - To manage the day-to-day operations of the organization and the developing facility
- Sustainable Revenue
  - To make the AWCC and the new facility completely self-sustaining on its own revenue.
  - Most of the revenue will be earned through park fees and gift/souvenir sales, coupled with other grant income and donated support.
  - Solid financial projections going out three –five years will be a critical component of the business plan.

