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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GROW STRONG: Growing a Healthier Haines Through Local Foods

Takshanuk Watershed Council partners with community to build a nourishing local food system.

Haines, Alaska –

Food security and self-reliance are critical components to building sustainable communities in Southeast Alaska. Southeast communities' characteristic remoteness and isolation make transport and delivery of important resources such as food or fuel more difficult. Recognizing the importance of working toward community self-reliance and increasing community food security, the residents of Haines voiced a desire for access to more locally produced foods. The Takshanuk Watershed Council listened to this request and responded with the development of their Grow Strong food security program.

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Food prices in Southeast communities carry a shipping cost that can be seen in the higher price tags on grocery store shelves. A dependence on the delivery of food from outside sources leaves community food supplies vulnerable to fuel shortages, weather conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances.

Takshanuk Watershed Council (TWC), a non-profit community based resource management organization is working to address community food security concerns in Haines by providing community members the education, training, and skills to grow nutritious food locally and by building a local foods network creating more avenues to connect local producers with consumers.

TWC's Grow Strong program is a comprehensive community food security program that promotes the development of a locally based food system in Haines. Grow Strong includes four components:



Starvin' Marvin/Marvin's Garden is a composting and gardening program that incorporates garden-based curriculum into Haines Middle School. Students compost lunch scraps, office paper and sawdust from the school shop throughout the year to be used in the school garden that students plant each may. The following fall, students harvest the produce that is sold to the school cafeteria with proceeds helping to pay for the Grow Strong project. In the 2011/12 school year, over 2,000 pounds of compostable material was removed from the school waste stream and from this over 200 pounds of produce was served in the school cafeteria.

Permaculture & The Science of Gardening are regionally recognized courses offered to the community, and to high school students for credit. Participants learn the principles of permaculture, and design and maintain a permaculture demonstration garden at Marvin's Garden.

Fish to School brings local commercially caught fish to the school lunch menu. A sustainable fisheries curriculum is integrated school wide to inform students of the importance of ocean resources and the meaning of sustainable use. In the 2012-2013 school year over 1,400 lbs. of local seafood was served in school lunches.

Garden Gate to School Plate works with community gardeners to supply locally grown produce to the school cafeteria. Local gardeners sell their raw produce for market value. TWC acts as a produce liaison to establish the connection between community gardeners and the school cafeteria produce needs.

Working through these program components, Takshanuk Watershed Council supports the community of Haines in working toward self-reliance and sustainability, inspiring community members to participate in developing community food security and growing a network of local foods.

Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire Southeast Alaskans and support community organizations working toward the wise management of our region's watersheds.