

CURRENTS



Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Winter 2009

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Focusing on Fish Habitat

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership is a conservation partnership developing on the Kenai Peninsula. This partnership is working with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan to protect, restore, and enhance our area's fish and aquatic communities. The purpose of the KPFHP is to create and foster effective collaborations to maintain healthy fish, healthy people, healthy habitat, and healthy economics in the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

This emerging partnership began with a letter from the National Fish Habitat Action Plan Board accepting our request to be considered a Regional Partner. Since that time an ad-hoc committee representing various interests have come together to begin working on a strategic plan addressing the needs of fish habitat across a "region". The group has conducted several public outreach meetings

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Ruffner Awarded Person of the Year

“When words like integrity, leadership, and collaboration are used to describe an individual, you know that you have the privilege to walk this earth with someone who has earned a great deal of respect.” Those words were the opening to a bevy of complimentary descriptions of the Kenai Watershed Forum’s Executive Director, Robert Ruffner, as the Soldotna City Chamber honored him with the 2008 Person of the Year Award.

The Soldotna Chamber recognized Robert for his “vision that this world is tied to the balance of economic and ecological health” as well as his “uncanny ability to turn advisories into allies and earn the trust of both government and private party interests” through an “emphasis on solid science rather than emotion.”

Those of us at KWF couldn’t be prouder to have Robert selected to represent our city as the Person of the Year – Bravo, Robert!



Working together
for
healthy watersheds
on the
Kenai Peninsula.

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KWF Launches New Websites

<http://www.kenaiwatershed.org>

<http://office.kenaiwatershed.org/KPECE>

<http://office.kenaiwatershed.org/KPFHP>

<http://www.caringforthekenai.com>

The Kenai Watershed Forum is excited to announce the launch of our new and improved website at www.kenaiwatershed.org. The new site offers a fresh look and feel that is more focused on KWF programs. The site features our Education, Restoration, and Research programs. As always, we welcome feedback.

Also check out the new sites for Kenai Peninsula Ecological and Cultural Educators, Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, and Caring for the Kenai.

Visit www.kenaiwatershed.org today!

Mark your calendar...

Caring for the Kenai Oral Presentations coming April 17, 2009

Caring for the Kenai finalists will be presenting their ideas to a panel of judges at Kenai Central High School's Little Theatre. Come help support your favorite contestant!

Kenai Birding Celebration coming May 22-24, 2009

New this year... Skilak Lake float trip, Skilak Lake Loop land tour, Peeps Art Contest, Backyard Birding, Field Trips, and much, much more! Visit our website and local visitor centers for more information.

Kenai River Festival coming June 13 & 14, 2009

Come help celebrate our great river! Lots of new children's activities and plenty of great music and food. Don't miss the fun at this year's big event.

Run for the River 5K & 10 Miler coming June 13, 2009

On-line registration is open... visit www.active.com to register today! This is a fun, family walk/run on a loop course to benefit the Kenai River and the Kenai River Festival.

BIG PFD NEWS!

For the first time ever, and for a limited time, you can donate a portion of your dividend to the Kenai Watershed Forum!

The newly established Permanent Fund Dividend Contribution Program allows Alaska residents to donate to non-profit groups, educational institutions, and other similar organizations. The program will "sunset" after three years, and KWF is one of 337 organizations qualified to receive dividend funds!

Online applicants for the 2009 PFD can simply "check off" Kenai Watershed Forum and select the amount they would like to donate, starting with a \$25 minimum. This is the perfect way to support KWF, without taking a hit to your monthly budget!

Kenai Visions... and Wildlife Viewing

In the spring of 2003 a National Science Ocean Bowl team from Skyview High School proposed an economic development plan for the Kenai River estuarine areas. This plan focused on maintaining the estuary and adjacent wetlands in a natural state with infrastructure to promote bird and wildlife viewing. Tourist facilities would be created along the waterfront to promote river side use in the City of Kenai. Students made presentations to the City of Kenai and the Kenai Peninsula Borough as part of their project.



Concurrent with this effort a group of local citizens were promoting a Kenai Peninsula Wildlife Viewing Trail. Today that trail is a reality with 65 sites on the Kenai Peninsula designated for wildlife viewing. A guide has been prepared to highlight these sites and is available from the KWF.

These two efforts came together when Conoco Phillips Alaska Inc, the KWF, the Keen Eye Birders, the City of Kenai, and the State of Alaska Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Game combined efforts to build a bird/wildlife viewing platform along the public access road to the City of Kenai Public Boat Launch.

The platform is presently under construction and will be completed for the 2009 spring birding season. It is located in a prime viewing area for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Over 120 species of birds can be seen on the Kenai River flats. In addition marine mammals like harbor seals and occasionally beluga whales can be viewed from the platform. Caribou roam the flats and of course moose wander all season long.

The platform was designed to handle a school class and the sponsors hope to encourage the local schools to use the platform for educational purposes. Efforts are underway to prepare materials for the local schools.

A huge thanks goes to Conoco Phillips for funding most of the cost, the City of Kenai for making the land available and taking on the project, and of course the students from Skyview for having a wonderful vision.



Thank You!


ConocoPhillips

KPFHP Partners

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association

Kenai River Sportfishing Association

Kenai Area Fisherman's Coalition

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Kenai Watershed Forum

U. S. Forest Service

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance

City of Soldotna

City of Seward

Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Alaska Department of Transportation

ConocoPhillips

Cook Inletkeeper

The Nature Conservancy

City of Kenai

Kenai River Professional Guide Association

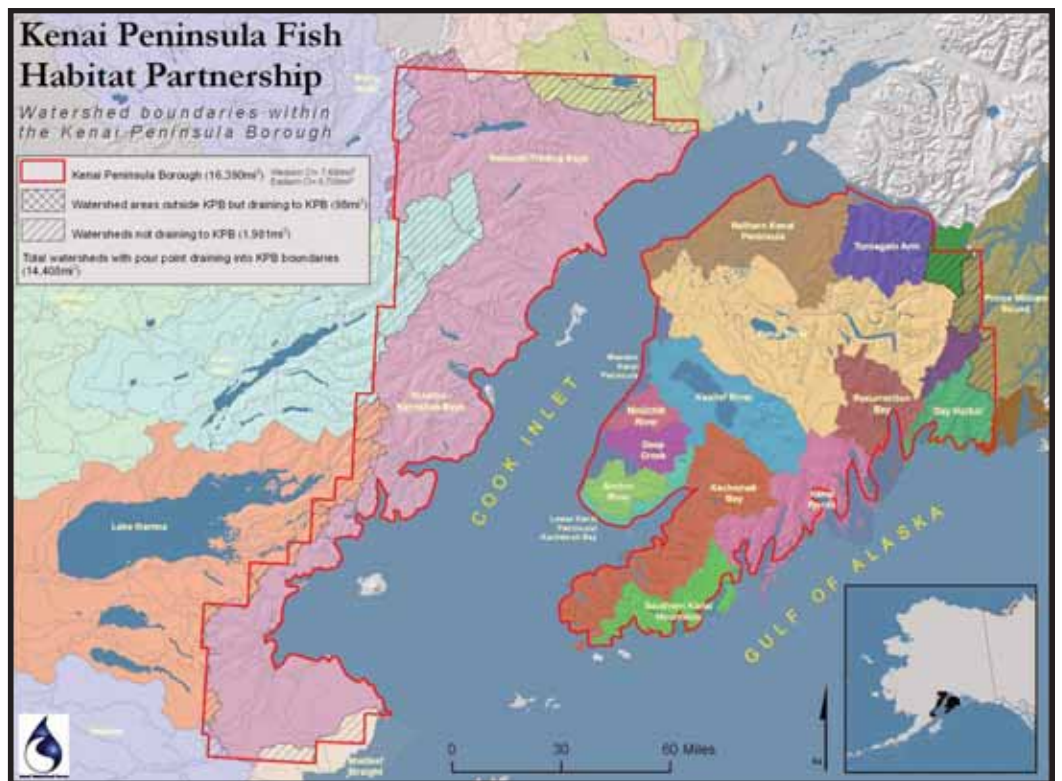


across the Kenai Peninsula and will continue to seek input throughout the development of the strategic plan.

There are currently six Fish Habitat Partnerships throughout the country, three from the State of Alaska. There are currently 14 “Candidate” Fish Habitat Partnerships that have stated their intent to apply for recognition as an official partner. KPFHP is the senior candidate on that list and is the next up for consideration.

Developing the strategic plan under the guidance provided by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is our first step in being accepted as a regional partner. Several key components to the Strategic Plan have already been discussed, such as the mission, vision, and geographic scope.

Mission: The mission of the KPFHP is to protect, maintain, restore and enhance fish habitat.



Vision: The vision of the KPFHP is for future generation to have healthy, sustainable fish aquatic ecosystems.

Geographic Scope: The geographic scope of the partnership closely flows the boundaries of the Kenai Peninsula Borough (see map at left).

Goals, implementation, evaluation and reporting are next to be discussed. Meetings and work sessions will continue through May 2009, which is the target date for submitting the final application to NFHAP for full partnership status.

KPFHP Partners are listed on the left. If you would like more information or would like to participate in this exciting partnership, please visit the website at <http://office.kenaiwatershed.org/KPFHP/> or call our office, 907-260-5449.



WORKING TO PROTECT FISH HABITAT ON THE KENAI PENINSULA SHOULD BE A GOAL ALL INTERESTS COULD AND SHOULD SUPPORT.

About NFHAP

KPFHP is one of several partnerships developed concurrently with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, designed to raise awareness of fish initiatives, assign priorities, and generate annual congressional support to improve aquatic habitat.

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is the most comprehensive effort ever attempted to treat the causes of aquatic habitat decline and fix the nation's most pressing fisheries problems. The Action Plan is a science-based investment strategy to conserve waterways and make conservation dollars stretch farther by combining federal and privately raised funds to build regional partnerships.

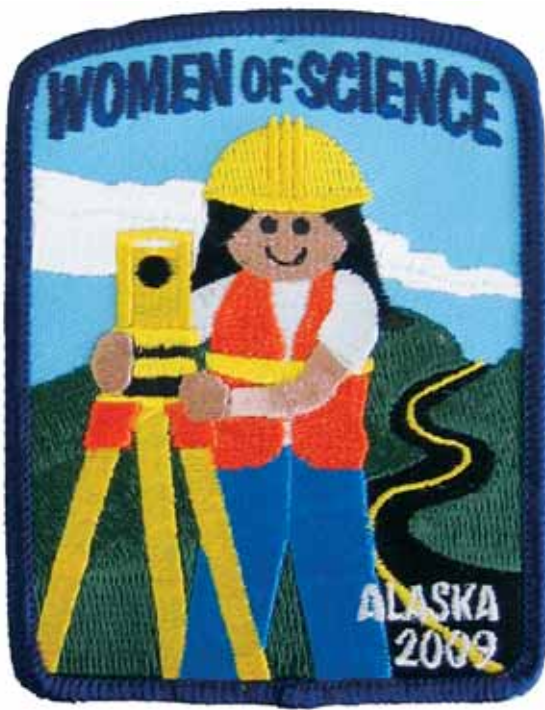
The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is all about locally-driven efforts that build private and public partnerships to improve fish habitat. Fish Habitat Action Plan partnerships are self-identified, self-organized, and self-directed communities of interest formed around geographic areas, keystone species, or system types.

These partnerships are...

- Non-regulatory and voluntary
- Locally and regionally based, driven by grassroots partners
- Focused on protection, restoration and enhancement in key watersheds
- Science based
- Linked nationally
- Sustainable and accountable
- Non-allocative

Visit NFHAP's website to learn more... www.fishhabitat.org.





KWF Women work with Girl Scouts

The Kenai Watershed Forum has 11 employees, 7 of which are women, which made participating in the Girl Scouts 17th annual Women of Science & Technology Day on Saturday, February 21 a snap! The 2009 Women of Science & Technology Day, sponsored by BP and the Kenai Peninsula College, allowed girls in kindergarten through eighth grade the chance to attend “hands-on” workshops by women in science-related careers. Over 100 young girls from our community descended upon the KPC campus Saturday afternoon, eager to touch, feel and see the different dimensions of science-related careers.

The girls were divided into age groups, and then assigned to three of the five workshops being hosted. In addition to KWF, workshops were hosted by: Challenger Learning Center, FAA – Air Traffic Control, Alaska Sealife Center, and Ninilchik Family Dentistry. Each workshop was 45 minutes long and gave the girls the opportunity to experience some real life, hands-on work related activities.



KWF was represented by four “women of science” – Stephanie Kobylarz, Jennifer McCard, Jan Yeager and Rhonda Orth. The plan of attack was to break the assigned group into 4 smaller groups, allowing the girls the opportunity to participate in several activities during our workshop sessions.

Stephanie hosted a table of strange and ominous fluids, which the girls tested for acidity, using pH strips. Upon discovering the level of pH, the girls discussed and determined whether or not that liquid would be an appropriate living environment for fish. As you can imagine, bleach, Dr. Pepper and lime juice were NOT approved environments!

Jan’s table involved water density experiments. Discovering that a paper clip will float on water due to surface tension was one lesson learned. Girls also used an eye dropper to see how many drops of water a penny will hold. The record for the day – 41!

Jennifer utilized her time with her small group to build a four-foot section of stream with butcher paper, construction paper, Swedish Fish candy (masquerading as salmon) and gummy worms. This construction allowed Jennifer to address the habitat needs of salmon.

Rhonda reviewed the life cycle of a salmon, from egg to spawning adult, using a storyboard format illustrating a 5,000 egg population winnowing down to 2 returning adult salmon. Following the story, each girl experienced life as a salmon, drawing sticks of “chance” to see if they survived beyond the pitfalls in “fish life” beginning as an egg.

A good time was had by all – women AND girls of science! KWF is proud to support the Girl Scout’s motto of “building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place” by participating in their annual Women of Science & Technology Day.



KWF MEMBERSHIP

Thank You! The following people have recently contributed to the Kenai Watershed Forum.

\$1000

Ron & Karen Martinelli

\$500

Kenneth & Sara Hepner

\$250

Lisa Parker & Steve Horn

Jay Parker & Peggie Bensch

Sanne Berrig

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George Kapolchok

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Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's
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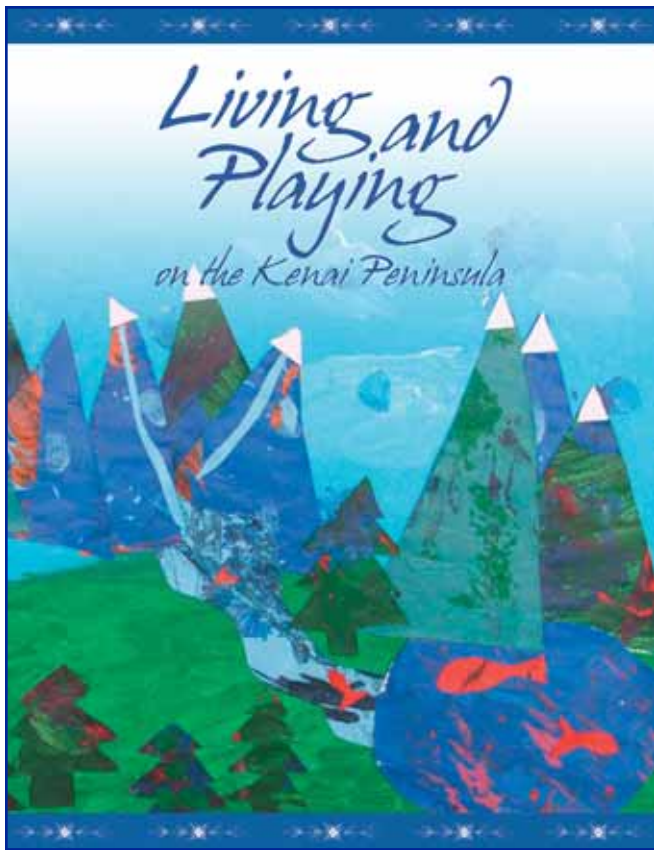
Building Fund Contributions

William & Barbara Burke Family
Fund

Peggy Mullen

River City Books

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Now Available...

Living and Playing on the Kenai Peninsula

What makes the Kenai Peninsula special to you? The Kenai Peninsula is a unique place for its natural beauty and abundant wildlife. Those of us fortunate enough to live here enjoy world-class opportunities for recreation all year long. Our communities depend on the economic benefits of our natural resources. Fascinating forces of natural history and human history combined to shape the peninsula as we see it today. This booklet, now available in its second edition, describes many of the geological, ecological and historical factors and suggests strategies for maintaining the magic of the Kenai Peninsula for the future. Written by Catherine Cassidy, this is a great publication for locals as well as visitors.

Please contact our office for your copy.

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