



Kenai
Watershed
Forum

44539 Sterling Hwy
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Soldotna, AK 99669
907 260-5449

Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula

2/25/10

Dear Governor Sean Parnell,

The following sixteen entities represent diverse interests that share a common concern over our natural resources on the Kenai Peninsula. The collective fisheries of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers are spectacular natural and economic resources vital to fishing lifestyles, road accessible to nearly half of Alaska's population within a half-day drive.

We are writing now because the personal use fishery located at the mouths of the Kasilof and Kenai River need your attention. This popular fishery is attracting growing numbers of Alaskans from around the state, yet to date, there has been little state effort to address habitat and water quality concerns, particularly on the Kasilof River. As a result, our broad coalition is requesting your leadership in addressing fish habitat and water quality protection along both banks at the mouth of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

The coastal dunes at the mouth of these rivers are unique habitats on the Western Kenai Peninsula. The vegetation on these dunes is being destroyed by undirected, unmanaged vehicle access. If the vegetation on these dunes is eliminated, so will the dunes. The City of Kenai and the Kenaitze Indian Tribe have made significant progress toward managing responsible access on the Kenai River, but no one is addressing the Kasilof access; State and private lands are suffering.

Water quality concerns consist of human waste, garbage and fish carcass management. The State of Alaska has recently addressed contamination from gasoline in the Kenai River, and the City of Kenai has some facilities to address human waste and trash. In contrast, the Kasilof has not had any water-quality monitoring; the bathroom and dumpsters at the Kasilof have been pieced together on an annual basis. The limited facilities at the Kasilof have been possible through cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the Department of Natural Resources, the latter of which manages most of the impacted land. A more permanent and comprehensive solution for the Kasilof is needed.

While both river systems demand attention, our most immediate concerns are the impacts at the mouth of the Kasilof River. Some organizations and individuals may desire additional action, and will likely make individual requests of the State agencies and government officials, as a group we are only asking for attention to habitat degradation and water quality concerns.

Within these two concerns we respectfully request the following actions at the Kasilof to address short-term concerns (this year):

- Identify and charge a single point of contact within a State Agency with responsibility for on-the-ground management of access that does not continue to destroy wetlands and coastal dunes. Ideas include signage, fencing, brown shirt patrols (or other enforcement options), and supporting volunteer efforts. The point of contact would coordinate all state agency efforts related to water quality and habitat protection, and would serve as a liaison to all federal agencies and other entities with natural resource interests or jurisdiction in the area.
- At a minimum the state should ensure adequate funding is available for the required bathroom facilities and proper trash disposal at the mouth of the Kasilof River. Last year's funding was \$16k, and it was very inadequate.

To address the long-term issues at both the Kasilof and Kenai River mouths, we respectfully request the following actions:

- Identify sustainable funding sources to manage these fisheries in a way that reduces the impacts over current levels.
- Introduce legislation that makes it illegal to willfully destroy wetland or coastal dune vegetation in the Kasilof and Kenai River mouth.
- Establish a strategic planning process.

To facilitate this effort, we respectfully request that you direct the State's point of contact convene and attend a public workshop with ADFG, ADNR, and ADEC within 30 days of receipt of this correspondence, prior to the adjournment of the 26th Legislative Session.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter,



Robert Ruffner
Executive Director

On behalf of the following organizations:

Alaska Fly Fishers – Mark Huber
Alaska Sportfishing Association – Phil Cutler
City of Kenai – Mayor Pat Porter
City of Soldotna – Mayor Peter Micciche
Cook Inletkeeper – Bob Shavelson
Kasilof Historical Society – Brent Johnson
Kenai Area Fisherman's Coalition – Ken Tarbox

Kenai Peninsula Borough – Mayor Dave Carey
Kenai Peninsula Fisherman’s Association – Paul Shadura
Kenai Peninsula Marketing Tourism Council – Joe Connors
Kenai River Professional Guides Association – Dave Goggia
Kenai River Sportfishing Association – Ricky Gease
Kenai Watershed Forum – Kristy McCullough
Kenai/ Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee – Mike Crawford
Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee – Stephen Darilek
South Central Alaska Dipnetters Association – Ken Federico
United Cook Inlet Drifters Association – Roland Maw

cc:

Commissioners

Tom Irwin - Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Denby Lloyd - Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Larry Hartig - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

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Senator – Tom Wagoner

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Representative Gatto
Representative Johnson
Representative Neuman
Representative T. Wilson
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Senator Wielechowski