

KENAI WATERSHED FORUM

The Way Forward: Action Plan for 2016-2020





The Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) strategic plan was first developed in 1997. This most recent update represents the fourth version, approved by the Board of Directors in March 2016. Our plan is a living document that is revisited and updated as conditions change.

Vision for the Future:

Kenai Watershed Forum envisions a future where the Kenai Peninsula community works together effectively to protect and improve our watersheds, producing rivers rich with life.

MISSION: Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

GEOGRAPHIC AREA SERVED: Geography covered by the Kenai Watershed Forum is diverse, including approximately 25,000 square miles, roughly the size of West Virginia. The Kenai Peninsula encompasses 14 major watersheds, and contains over 20,000 miles of stream habitat as well as more than 350,000 acres of wetland habitat. The Kenai Peninsula is one of Alaska's premier destinations for both residents and out-of-state visitors and is known for its world-class sport fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.

PEOPLE WE SERVE: All of the communities throughout the Kenai Peninsula Borough have strong ties to salmon fishing, and their economies depend on healthy salmon populations. Consequently, KWF programs are designed to protect, maintain, and restore fish habitat to ultimately serve the 50,000-plus residents throughout the borough. Doing our work locally, we are striving to be a model for other similar organizations.

In addition to our primary service to Kenai Peninsula residents, we also serve the more than 400,000 people who visit the Kenai Peninsula each year. Our visitors come to the Kenai Peninsula for a wide variety of reasons, many of which are tied to our vision of healthy watersheds.

RESOURCES OF INTEREST: The peninsula's salmon stocks and resident fish species like rainbow trout, Arctic grayling, and lake trout support vital commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries. Together they serve as important sources of food for brown and black bears, bald eagles, marine mammals and a variety of other animals, and are a key source of nutrients for both terrestrial and aquatic environments. The national importance of these resources is particularly evident when compared to habitats and fish populations elsewhere in the nation, where many resources have been severely impacted.



HISTORY OF KWF: In 1995 a group of concerned citizens began meeting informally to discuss the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. Initially, the Nature Conservancy of Alaska provided information and support to these individuals, resulting in a community gathering called Forces of a River. The consensus from one working group at the event was to form a local non-profit that would focus on bringing together diverse interests for the health of the local watersheds. From this idea, Kenai Watershed Forum was born.

Over two decades later, KWF has matured into a balanced, well-respected community organization. We have played a critical role in bringing science to local decision-makers and watershed education to kids and adults. The water quality of the Kenai River has been dramatically improved as a result of our research and restoration efforts. Namely, hydrocarbon pollution has been reduced by more than 80%. We have restored dozens of miles of fragmented habitat by replacing culverts that blocked anadromous fish migration. We have established our own building headquarters at the confluence of Soldotna Creek and the Kenai River, located in Soldotna's premier community park, and run a highly successful summer camp program for kids in our community.

STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD: The Kenai Watershed Forum remains committed to the waterways of the Kenai Peninsula for generations to come. Sustaining a long-term, dynamic organization takes thought and planning. The KWF Board reflected on the needs of the surrounding community and how we can achieve the KWF mission of "working together for healthy watersheds." The goals set within this document are intended to assist our staff's planning and project efforts in producing quality research and programs addressing healthy watersheds throughout the Kenai Peninsula. This plan is expected to be frequently referenced and was organized in an easily comprehensible bulleted format to facilitate its use as a living document. We thank all our supporters and our outstanding staff for helping Kenai Watershed Forum achieve the success it has seen so far, and we look forward to continued opportunities to pursue our mission.

David Wartinbee
2016 Board President



GOAL 1: Increase the community's awareness and knowledge about water and our environment.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

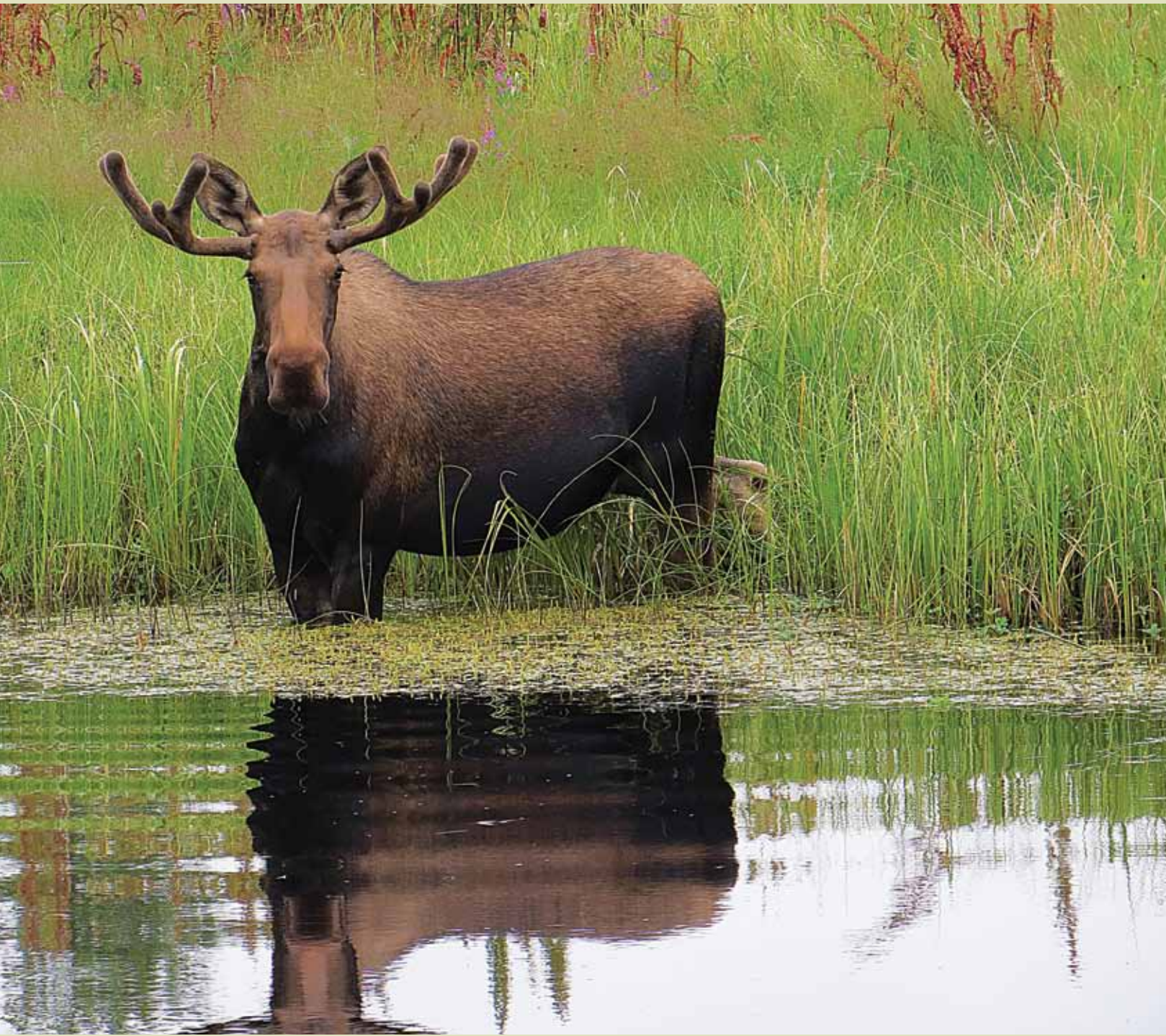
- Continue and expand coordination with other environmental educators.
- Continue and expand technical and informational workshops and publications for local businesses and individuals; this includes utilizing and working with the Donald E. Gilman River Center.
- Continue developing educational programs for the Kenai River Festival, with a strong emphasis in programming for a spectrum of activities that engage all school-age groups, K-12.
- Continue special events that promote environmental awareness, with internal programs and external partners.
- Form a committee to assess potential for a Kenai Watershed Science Center, near Soldotna Creek Park.
- Expand relationships with policy-makers.



GOAL 2: Establish and maintain comprehensive research programs to provide quality data.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

- Maintain open access to water quality/quantity and geographic map data, ensuring it's in a usable format for the scientific community and the general public.
- Increase strategic partnerships with other area agencies, academic groups, and organizations studying watershed issues including water quality/quantity and invasive species.
- Utilize remote sensing technology, as needed.
- Evaluate opportunities for expanding winter research, when aquatic communities are poorly understood.
- Support and partner with research that increases our understanding and resilience under changing climatic conditions.



GOAL 3: Work to protect, restore and repair conditions for the long-term health of the watershed.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

- Maintain and protect intact habitats for both aquatic and terrestrial habitats where landscape-scale connections are necessary to support native fauna.
- Restore and reconnect both aquatic and terrestrial fragmented habitat.
- Continue work with and support other agencies and groups to eradicate or minimize the effects of invasive species.
- Identify important watershed land areas that have been disrupted or damaged and work with communities and agencies to restore habitat to its natural potential, with particular emphasis on species that migrate across different habitat types.



GOAL 4: Lead collaborative efforts with others to address challenges and create opportunities to benefit our watersheds, based on the values of solid science, transfer of knowledge, integrity, and leadership.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

- Continue to foster and provide leadership for the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership.
- Work with the diverse groups interested in local fisheries to ensure the area habitat is maintained.
- Expand relationships with local businesses and industries.
- Increase presence in the Donald E. Gilman River Center, home to various agency personnel.
- Seek opportunities to partner with communities throughout the Kenai Peninsula.



GOAL 5: Work to ensure long-term viability of the organization and programs.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:

- Increase our organization's financial stability by diversifying revenue streams.
 - o Develop staff in the areas of grant research and proposal writing.
 - o Increase the percentage of unrestricted revenue to 30% of our annual operating expenses.
- Identify or develop tools to measure success in staff retention. Attract, retain and nurture staff to maintain consistency in the delivery of services.
- Increase membership (target 10% annual membership increase over the next five years).
- Enhance our Planned Giving program.
 - o Provide training for staff and board to improve our understanding and sophistication of Planned Giving.
 - o Maintain and grow an endowment fund.
- Improve marketing and solidify branding.
- Develop and maintain transition plans for all critical staff.



KENAI WATERSHED FORUM

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Photos courtesy of Clark Fair, the Kenai Watershed Forum and Greg Daniels.
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