

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE KENAI WATERSHED FORUM STAFF!

A letter from our Executive Director to reflect on 25 years of the Kenai Watershed Forum

By the time you read this appeal letter, it would have been 25 years since Jane and I arrived in Alaska with two very small children ages 3 and 1. A lot has happened in 25 years. At that time, my office mate gave me sage advice: first, he encouraged me to attend Gravel Pit work sessions in Anchor Point to see a collaborative process take place between different stakeholders; second, the wonders of subsistence dip-netting; and third, an upstart conservation group called the Kenai Watershed Forum with an incredible director, Robert Ruffner. Of course, Phil said I also needed to become a member of KWF.

I was later invited to a monthly coffee meeting at the precursor to Odie's, in what is now Papa Murphy's. The group included the young mayor Mike Navarre, sport fishing and conservation biologists, USFWS Refuge staff, Robert Ruffner, commercial and sport fishermen, school teachers, etc. The topics were current events and issues. Of course, we talked about Spruce Beetles. From what I remember, most discussions focused on the future condition. Many things we live with today were unpredictable. Some things just keep coming back, like beetles and gravel pits. One thing that is constant is the influx of new people with a passion for conservation and longtime supporters, residents and annual visitors who are willing to support, protect, and improve this wonderful place we live in. Your continued support of the Kenai Watershed Forum is greatly appreciated. Please stop by to visit us. We'd like to hear from you.



Mitch Michaud
Executive Director



**KENAI
WATERSHED
FORUM**

Happy Holidays
& Warmest Wishes
Brandon



All the Best!

- Maura

Cheers!
Katy Shedd

See you out
on the river!
- Ben



See you in the
new year!
Sara Aarnach

Comfort
& Joy!
- Candace

Let it snow!
Let it snow!
Let it snow!
Happy
Holidays
- Melissa

M. Tol

Reflecting on the Kenai Watershed Forum's 25 years, I can't help but think of all the boldness/blood, strength/sweat, and time/tears that has gone into building such an integral institution within this community. I'm so thankful for those that came before me to create an organization that has done so much to fill gaps in education, answer important questions about the health of our rivers, and to find solutions to problems affecting the health of our river. Within KWF's 25th year, the Invasive Species Program continued to support peninsula-wide efforts to deter the spread of the most harmful invasive plants, planned for future infestations of aquatic invasive species, and coordinated on a state-wide level to implement invasive species education and outreach strategies. KWF's Invasive Species Program looks forward to 25 more years of working towards a sustainable and healthy watershed for all.



Maura Schumacher, Invasive Species Program Coordinator



In 2022 I've had the chance to explore new corners of the Kenai River watershed, from the toe of the Skilak Glacier down to the headwaters of Beaver Creek to places in between. At KWF I've met new friends and collaborated with new partners in our research. It's exciting to grow and branch out. I know that no matter how many more years I explore the Kenai and how many more people I meet who care about their home, there will always be more to discover. To get to know this place as my vocation is both a pleasure and a calling.

Ben Meyer, Environmental Scientist

With Stream Watch Coordinator as my first full-time job, I've been able to experience so many amazing things over this year. Seeing what the Kenai Watershed means not just to locals, but to everyone that has a chance to experience it, has shown me what community really is. Nothing makes me feel more fortunate than being able to work and play in a place that amazes me every time I walk out my front door, whether it's the mountains reaching the clouds, the fish in the rivers, or the volunteers that work so hard to protect it all.

Brandon Drzazgowski, Stream Watch Coordinator



Growing up my family would take vacations to Alaska to escape the Texas summers. Exploring the Peninsula and hearing my Dad's childhood stories no doubt had a major influence on the path that led me here. After a summer of volunteering with Stream Watch, I knew I wanted to do something that allowed me to interact with people in this stunning environment. Becoming the Membership Coordinator at KWF was the perfect fit. Connecting with the people of this community and working in the place that I love is a lifelong dream come true.

Sara Aamodt, Membership Coordinator

I am blessed that every single day I can wake up and look at the Kenai River. In its wintry slumber to its rushing thaw to its slow flowing fullness, it sustains all life. I am reminded why I joined the Kenai Watershed Forum - to support an incredibly passionate group of scientists whose forward-thinking and optimism helps to nurture an ecosystem precious to the community, to the flora and fauna, and to human history on the Peninsula.

Here's to another 25 years! Let's celebrate!

"We forget that the water cycle and life cycle are one" - Jacques Yves Cousteau

Candace Nakagawa, Accounts Manager



I was first introduced to the outdoors at a young age. Spending time camping, swimming, hiking, and riding my bike through the forests of Texas are some of my fondest childhood memories. This early introduction to nature was crucial to the development of my environmentally conscious mind. My own enjoyment and happiness found in the outdoors is what led me to my role as the Education Specialist here at KWF. When I'm working with students, in the classroom or outdoors, I know that my work truly matters to the future of the Kenai Watershed. My professional motto, "you can't care about something if you don't know it exists" has followed me through the years and continues to inspire me every day.

Katey Shedden, Education Specialist

I started as the new Coordinator for the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership in late November. I was born and raised in Alaska and have always enjoyed the bounty of the State's natural resources, from backpacking in the Kenai Mountains to filling my freezer with the most pristine fish and game meat on the planet. I've worked in various positions in natural resource management which has fostered a strong sense of connection to and concern for the sensitive fish habitat on the Kenai River and surrounding salmon streams. I am excited to take on this new role for KWF so that I may continue to protect and enhance fish habitat through partnerships that actively seek to foster fish habitat conservation on the Kenai Peninsula.

Melissa Smith, Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Coordinator



We appreciate the opportunity we have to continue working for healthy watersheds. As this year comes to a close, please consider supporting our mission with a tax deductible donation or membership.

