

CURRENTS

Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Fall, 2000

High Above the Watershed

Cecil Rhode climb provides surprise, breathtaking view and plenty of pain

By Clark Fair

For years, Cecil Rhode Mountain had stood along the Sterling Highway, casting a cold shadow on the Snug Harbor section of Cooper Landing and appearing to eye me contemptuously, daring me to climb it. And for years I had scanned the mountain's thick, pyramidal base, its nearly vertical northern face, and its knifelike upper ridge, wondering how I could break through its swaths of hemlock, Devil's club and buck brush to reach its summit.

I knew that the view from up there—of Kenai Lake and the Kenai River valley, of the Quartz Creek drainage, of Cooper Lake and Cooper Mountain, and of Round Mountain across the way, acting as a gateway to the lowland flats and the freshwater lakes sparkling all the way to Cook Inlet—would be amazing, like the view from a balloon floating silently at 4,500 feet above the earth.

And then one day, Drew, a hiking buddy of mine, informed me that he had found a way to the top. A man he knew from Cooper Landing had followed the old Cooper Lake dam road, then carved a trail straight up the mountain's western flank to tree line. All we'd have to do, he assured me, was find the trailhead and be prepared to grunt our way to the top. Within a few days I was standing at the summit of Cecil Rhode Mountain, and the panoramic

view from there was every bit as spectacular as I had hoped. I had never seen so much of the Kenai River watershed from a single spot. Nearly every snow-capped mountain I could see, nearly every lake and every stream, drained into the Kenai River system.

I determined on that day that I would be back, and that the next time I would hike farther along the ridges behind the main peak. I had no idea, however, what a delightful yet difficult time I would be in for.

By the time I returned a year later, I had done my research. According to my maps and my calculations, my brother Lowell and I could ascend Cecil Rhode Mountain, then follow the razor-like ridgeline south toward a large communications dish located about a mile away. From there, we would hike along the horseshoe-shaped ridge until it began to turn north, forming the eastern flank of the mountain and the opposite side of the Shackleford Creek basin. Once on the far ridge, we could follow its hogback descent and then walk along Shackleford Creek

itself until we reached the road. Simple, or so we thought.

Our first surprise, on a day that seemed to constantly threaten rain without actually ever providing any, came near the
(*cont. on page 7*)



Looking down from 4,500 feet: Hikers who make it to the top of Cecil Rhode Mountain are rewarded with a view of the Kenai River as it snakes through the valley below.

WHO IS KWF?

The Key Players

Board of Directors

Charles Quarré — Chair
Lisa Parker - Sec./Treasurer
Ken Marlow - Vice Chair
Mona Painter
Sanne Berrig
Allan Baldwin
Benjamin Jackinsky
Dr. David Wartinbee

Advisory Board

Catherine Cassidy
Peggy Mullen
Dan Chay
Mike Sweeney
Dick Troeger
Warren Hoflich
Will Josey
Suzanne Little

Staff

Robert Ruffner
Kelly Shea
Ole Andersson
Micah Johnson

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The Kenai Watershed Forum is interested in hearing from you. Write, call, fax, e-mail, or stop by sometime. We're located on the second floor of the Blazy Mall in Soldotna.

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 2937, Soldotna, AK 99669
PHONE NUMBER: 907-260-5449
FAX NUMBER: 907-260-5412
E-MAIL: robert@kenaiwatershed.org
WEB PAGE: <http://www.kenaiwatershed.org>

The Kenai Watershed Forum is a citizens' nonprofit organization dedicated to working together for community vitality in a healthy watershed.

Introducing the KWF staff

As KWF grows, so does our staff. Many of you already know our director, Robert Ruffner, but you may not know the other people who make KWF run.



Kelly Shea

Kelly Shea wears many hats at KWF. In addition to being our membership coordinator, Kelly also keeps track of the financial books, organizes the Kenai River Festival, updates the web page and helps with the summer program and stormdrain stenciling. She is usually in the office from 4-7 p.m. weekdays.

Ole Andersson is our new volunteer coordinator. Before starting with KWF in July, Ole worked with the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust for two years. Ole's duties at KWF include managing volunteers for the water quality and storm drain stenciling program. He also is working on a hydrocarbon study of the Kenai River. Recently Ole secured a \$500 grant from the City of Soldotna for the water quality program.



Ole Andersson



Micah Johnson

Micah Johnson is our newest staff member and comes to us through a Bureau of Indian Affairs grant. Micah recently completed a three-week course on monitoring water resources and will use that knowledge to test waters in Slikok Creek, Beaver Creek and Soldotna Creek during the next year. The information will be shared with the Salamatof Native Association, where Micah also works.

FOCUS ON SOLDOTNA CREEK

The fight against pike

Earlier this fall, a pike was found on the banks of the Upper Kenai River near Jim's Landing. No one knows where the fish came from, but the discovery is alarming. Pike are voracious eaters of juvenile salmon and trout and have been disastrous to silver salmon runs in the Susitna River.

Pike were introduced into Derk's Lake near Soldotna in the late 1970s and have spread to Soldotna Creek and other nearby lakes. Little is known about these fish, including how many there are and how far they have spread. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed doing a survey along Soldotna Creek and other drainages with suitable habitat for pike, but funding is in doubt. KWF is urging USFWS to pay for the study.

Even with better information about the pikes' whereabouts, eliminating these problem fish in an open system such as Soldotna Creek is unrealistic. The best we can do is monitor and control their numbers. With that in mind, KWF is getting into the fish derby business.

To encourage more people to catch and kill these pesky pike, KWF will provide prizes in Soldotna Trustworthy Hardware store's winter ice fishing derby. Any angler who brings in a pike will receive a prize, with larger prizes going to the person who catches the biggest and most pike.

KWF also will hold another pike derby in the spring as the ice on the lakes is melting and the fish are easiest to catch.

Culvert obstructs young salmon

The culvert that allows Soldotna Creek to flow under the Sterling Highway may be acting as a barrier to juvenile salmon. To find out more, biologists say more studies are required.

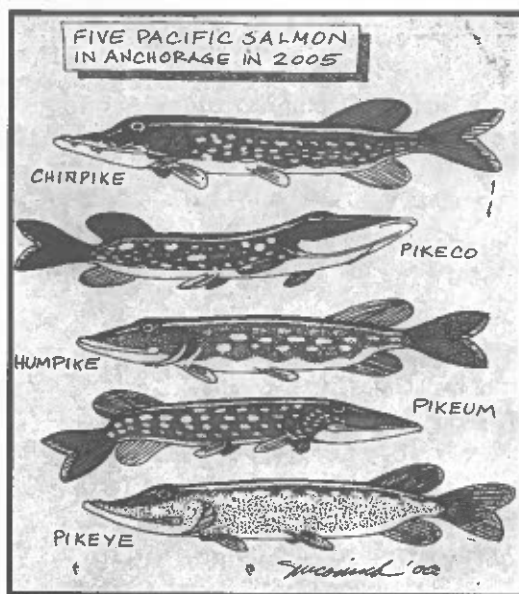
Road engineers and biologists have different ideas about how a culvert should work. Engineers want water to pass under the highway as quickly as possible to avoid problems caused by water under the road. Biologists, on the other hand, want the culverts to act as a natural part of the creek, allowing fish to swim back and forth freely.

In trying to strike the right balance between these divergent views, some steps already have been taken.

A few years ago, the Alaska Department of Transportation put baffles into the culvert to break up the artificially smooth and swift flow through the 160-foot culvert. Initial tests suggested success. Minnows caught in traps below the culvert were also caught in traps above. But cameras documented these small fish were squeezing their way between the baffles and the culvert edge rather than swimming over the baffles.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is concerned because the baffles are not working as designed, and because testing was done on a small

range of water flows. Fish and Game is asking DOT to conduct another study on the culvert's effectiveness.



Sponsor-A-School: KWF connects business with schoolchildren

The Kenai Watershed Forum's commitment to education continues with our new Sponsor-A-School program.

This new program links our business community with local school children. When a business sponsors a school of its choice, the money goes directly toward teaching kids about the importance of clean water and healthy watersheds.

Students learn about science and stream ecology with the curriculum and supplies sponsors provide. Activities,

hands-on science experiments in the classroom, and field trips to local streams allow the kids to have fun while learning.

Businesses will be recognized at the schools, in our newsletter and in other forums. Tax deductions are also available because we are a non-profit organization. But best of all, our business leaders will provide ways for children to learn practical skills and respect for the environment they live in.

There are two sponsorship levels: School Leader and School Benefactor.

SCHOOL LEADER - \$500

Your \$500 contribution trains and outfits a teacher with a stream monitoring educational kit used to teach hands-on stream ecology concepts and technology. In addition, you will allow our staff to lead field trips for local schools.

SCHOOL BENEFACTOR - \$250

Your \$250 contribution brings our Kenai Watershed mural to schools to be used as a teaching aid. You also will resupply classes with the curriculum booklets about the watershed and allow our staff to mentor students.

KENAI RIVER

Many thanks



AlaskaUSA
Federal Credit Union®



ADN
Anchorage Daily News



Major Sponsors

Kenai River Sportfishing Association - J~B Stor 'n Lok - Anchorage Daily News - ERA Aviation - Spenard Builder's Supply - Clarion - Kenai River King Salmon Fund - AlaskaUSA - Snug Harbor Seafoods

Sponsors

GCI - Copyworks - KDLL FM 91.9 - Cook Inlet Region Inc. - Carlile/K&W Shipping - Salamatoff Seafoods - KSRM/KWHQ

Contributors

Soldotna Professional Pharmacy - Alaska Communications Systems - Tesoro Alaska Co. - City of Kenai - The Nature Conservancy of Alaska - Soldotna Rotary Club - UNOCAL - Seekins Ford

Business supporters

Alaska Wildland Adventures - Princess Tours - River Quest R.V Resort - Bishop Lake Studio - Peninsula Sanitation - United Cook Inlet Drift Assn. - Freedom Realty - 1st Baptist Church of Soldotna - Phillips Petroleum - Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Church - Homer Electric Association - Harvest Traditions Bakery - Kenai Peninsula Borough and School District - Kenai Merit Inn - Foster Construction - Veronica's - Kaladi Brothers Coffee Company - Salamatof Native Association - US Fish and Wildlife Service



Carlile

Copy Works

Cook Inlet
Regional
Inc.

Salamatoff Se

FESTIVAL 2000

to our sponsors



spenard builders supply



Volunteers

Bunny Swan-Gease and Ricki Gease - Mindee Morning - Mary Beth Nearing - Brenda Stoops - Lori Landstrom - Pam Houston - Michelle Brown - Claire LeClair - Tara Ruffner - Amy McVee - Megan O'Neill - Jon Andrews - Jack Dean - Ann Garibaldi - Brenda Stoops - Paul Dale - Suzie Howard - Liz Burke - Robin Veluce - Peggy Mullen - Marge Mullen - Mary Price - Johanna Liszkowsky - Russell Lesterson - Jim Beeson and the Kenai Central High School Girl's Basketball Team - Salamatoff Native Association Summer Youth Program - Kelly Kasnikoff - Dave Segura - Robert and Tara Ruffner - Kelly and Curtis Terrill - Benjamin Jackinsky - Bill Nelson - Victor Dillon from Seekins Ford - Hal Smalley - John Andrews - Jack Dean - Emma Segerman - Susie Howard - Blake and Ty Schweigert - Alex Carter and The Beckman's with the Bird Treatment and Learning Center - Fritz Kraus and Gary Leipitz with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Brett Huber with the Kenai River Sportfishing Association - Jason Long - Bill Gronvold - Cathy Cline - Phil North - Emily Berizin - Bud and Sammy Crawford - Holly Stogsdill - Jason Daniels - Mark Larson - Judy Shields - Terri Carter - Dominique & Crystal Collet - Bill Holloway - Kris Schmidt - Ginger Drais - Michael Wykis - Joanne Kruegar - Judy, Brannon, & Lydia Ames - Jan Wallace - Eda Near - Laura Holly - Amy Warfle - Heidi Metteer - Cherie Boles - Venessa Bias - Mary Daly - Taylor - Chris - Deanna - Etta Mae Near - Christina Rockrise - Boys & Girls Club - Jerri Weagant - and many others.



our Supporters

**KDLL 91.9
FM**

oods



92 KSRM

WHQ

Volunteer Spotlight

Soldotna student Jason Long monitors streams while pursu- ing interest in insects

Ever since Jason Long was a little kid, he's been fascinated by bugs. So when the chance arose last year to help the Kenai Watershed Forum monitor a few local streams and learn more about the insects that inhabit those streams, the 16-year-old Soldotna student jumped at the chance.

Once a month for a year, Jason waded into Beaver Creek and Soldotna Creek to measure the water's ph, dissolved oxygen, temperature and turbidity. While on the job he kept an eye out for aquatic bugs, peeking under rocks to find caddis flies.

"This was my first experience with anything like this," Jason said. "I had



As part of a college entymology class, Jason Long monitored two local streams and started an insect collection.

fun."

He also earned college credit. His work with KWF was part of the coursework required of the homeschool student to pass an entymology class. He plans to pursue

his study of insects when he attends college.

Jason has lived in Soldotna for 13 years with his parents Dale and Carole Long and sister Alisha

THANK YOU * THANK YOU * THANK YOU * THANK YOU * THANK YOU

THE RIVER NETWORK - Donated \$3,000 to boost our membership drive. Also donated \$3,000 worth of dissolved oxygen meters that we loan to school teachers and use in our Water Quality Monitoring program.

MAYO CLINIC (Rochester, Minn.) - Donated eight Power Macintosh computers and two laser printers. Some of these are being used in our office while others are being given to the Kenai River Center to promote education.

ALASKA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION - Donated \$3,500 to develop our membership and produce a local radio program. The short radio spots will cover various aspects of the Kenai River Watershed and ecosystem.

CARLILE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS - Transported the computers and printers from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., to Soldotna.



Ole Andersson uses one of the dissolved oxygen meters donated by the Yellow Springs Instrument Company through The River Network. The meters will be used by volunteers for monthly spot checks at nearly 30 existing test sites. They also will be used to test areas that might have water quality problems and in school group presentations.

***THANK YOU * THANK YOU * THANK YOU**

Fair: What goes up, must come down

(continued from page 1)

communications structure. There, as I approached the large dish and a small array of other equipment, I heard a



Clark Fair and his dog Indigo take a break on Cecil Rhode Mountain's steep slopes.

clattering sound, similar to but louder than the sound a hiking boot might make clattering over loose shale. I looked down but saw nothing at my feet that might account for the sound. I even backed up and retraced my steps, hoping to somehow duplicate a sound I didn't feel responsible for.

Then I heard it again. Lowell was back down the ridge a ways, so I ran on ahead to investigate on my own. As I neared a large wooden crate, the clattering suddenly increased, and then a small mountain goat clambered up from inside the box, sprang free and bounded away down the ridge. For a

few moments, I just stood there, too stunned to speak. When Lowell caught up, I described what I'd seen, and he eyed me skeptically. "Let's go look in the box," I suggested, and so we did, finding its damp sides literally plastered with matted goat hair.

For about the next three hours, we saw goats. No more boxes, but plenty of goats, more than 40 of them, mostly munching in alpine meadows or sleeping on rocky ledges.

Later, as we made our way along the eastern ridge, we spotted a bald eagle riding rising air currents from down near Kenai Lake. Then we came across a hawk, perched atop a large boulder, picking at the remains of a recent kill; it flew off as we approached, leaving behind a golf-ball-sized gut pile, neatly speckled with blood and tiny gray feathers.

Then we were at the end of main ridge and ready for a descent. Below us lay thick rocky humps plastered with brush and gnarled evergreens, a long snaking climb down to the road where my wife, Karen, would be awaiting us. Lowell glanced at his watch; all the climbing and hiking had put us behind schedule. I doubted aloud that we would be able to make it out by our prear-

ranged meeting time. I suggested that we consider a detour: going straight down the mountain's west flank to the road, then walking up the road to Karen. And for some reason, Lowell took me up on my idiotic suggestion.

What followed was—without a doubt—the worst descent I've ever endured. I tried to cross a steep snow slide, using a thick stick as a brace; the stick broke and I shot like a rocket down the snow a couple hundred feet into a pile of rocks. Although I broke no bones, I found the snow had abraded much of the skin off my left forearm. Lowell and I treated the arm with an antibacterial cream, some gauze and an Ace bandage, then continued our descent.

Reaching the bottom from that point involved plenty of tumbling off small cliffs, dangling helplessly from limber alder branches, stabbing Devil's club stickers into our palms through wet leather gloves and Gore-Tex jackets, and falling, plenty of falling. Beaten up and emotionally drained, we still had two miles of hard-packed road to walk to reach my wife, who did not miss even for two minutes the fact that I had managed to hurt myself again.

I've been back twice, however.

The view is that good.

Clark Fair is an avid hiker and English teacher at Skyview High School.

KWF monitors hydrocarbons in Kenai River

During August of this year, the Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF), thanks to a \$56,000 grant from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), partnered with The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Auke Bay lab in Juneau to place two new types of water testing devices in the Kenai River. Semipermeable Polymeric Membrane Devices (SPMD's) and Low Density Polyethylene devices (LDPE's), were placed side by side in 9 different sites in the Kenai River and tributaries. In addition, LDPE's were placed in 4 additional tributary sites.

These new types of devices are left in the water for an average of 21 days and are designed to collect specific hy-

drocarbons, cumulatively. At the end of testing the devices are removed and analyzed for these hydrocarbons.

Many volunteers came forward to help with this project by donating their river spots for the placement of devices, or their time, or boat to help place the testing units. They include Roy Anderson, Nathan Bailey, Ken Hepner, Edna Lyons, Tara Ruffner, Chris Schrier and Lisa Schmitter, Snug Harbor Seafoods, and Bill and Lou Wirin. We appreciate their help since without it this project would not have been possible.

KWF is waiting for the results of the first test and will be repeating the test at the same sample sites in the spring of 2001. We will keep you up to date.

KWF MEMBERSHIP

Thanks to the following people for recently contributing to the Kenai Watershed Forum. If you would like to renew your membership or become a new member, please contact us at 907-260-5449.

RIVER STEWARD (\$100-\$499)

DAVID AND KATHLEEN
WARTINBEE
GEORGIA BRUCE
BOB CORREIA AND LIZ SCHMITT
CALVIN AND JANE FAIR
KIRK HOESSLE - ALASKA WILD-
LAND ADVENTURES
MITCH MICHAUD
PEGGY MULLEN
MARGE MULLEN
MIKE NAVARRE
PETER AND BERNADINE
RAISKUMS
BETTY B. SMITH
BRENDA STOOPS AND PAUL
DALE
COLLEEN AND JIM FASSLER
JANE AND JACK HANDY
CATHERINE CASSIDY AND ERIK
HUEBSCH
CHARLES QUARRE
ROBERT AND TARA RUFFNER
KEN AND JUDY MARLOW
RON AND KAREN MARTINELLI
DAG SAANUM & BRIT
HILLESTAD
KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE, IRA

CHINOOK (\$50-\$99)

JIM FISHER
TERRY RUDE AND LORI
LANDSTROM

ED BERG
JIM CLARK
SAMMY AND BUD CRAWFORD
DOROTHY LAW DOUBLEDAY
LYN AND TOM HODEL
JOHN AND CLAIRE HOLLAND
LECLAIR
MIKE AND SUSIE HOWARD
EDWARD JACKINSKY
BENJAMIN JACKINSKY
ROGER MEEKS
LAURA SIEVERT
BOB SHAVELSON
DOMINIQUE COLLET
JEAN AND CLAYTON BROCKEL

SOCKEYE (\$25-\$49)

WILLIAM NELSON
ROBIN WEST
LISA SCHMITTER AND CHRIS
SCHRIER
NATHAN BAILY
DAVID AND TERI BIRCHFIELD
DALE BONDURANT
ALFRED CLAYTON SR.
JOHN CZARNEZKI
JACK AND BETTY DEAN
JOE GALLAGHER AND FAMILY
DEBORAH GILCREST
BILL HUTCHINSON
TOM KNOCK
BILL AND SUSAN LARNED
STANTON LEVITT

MEGAN O'NEILL
WILL RAEMAEKER
JIM RICHARDSON
DON AND TRISH RODERICK
CHERYL SCHEY
PAUL SHADURA II AND FAMILY
CURTIS AND KELLY TERRILL
TERRIE STONE
FATHER RICHARD TERO
AUSTIN AND JEAN TERRELL
MARILYN AND GENE UECKER
MICHELLE BROWN
BYRON AND MARGUERITE MCCORD
MARY PRICE
MIKE AND SUSIE HOWARD
CHRIS DEGERNES
JERRY DIXON

SMOLT (\$5-\$24)

JEAN ROMIG
CHERI EDWARDS
TERRY LINEBARGER
HARRY SCHOLTEN
BILL MCDIARMID & ROBIN ROGERS

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS

CALVIN AND JANE FAIR
CHERI EDWARDS
AUSTIN AND JEAN TERRELL
MARGE MULLEN
CATHERINE CASSIDY & ERIK
HUEBSCH

Kenai Watershed Forum
PO Box 2937
Soldotna, Ak 99669

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Soldotna, Ak
Permit #40