

# CURRENTS

Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Fall, 2001

## Water Quality Monitoring

New data expected to raise good questions (See Data on pages 3, 6 & 7)

When the founding members of the Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) met in 1997, they came to an agreement that knowledge of and attention to the water quality of the Kenai River was severely lacking.

KWF set out to address these concerns by offering free training and supplies to area residents and schools to monitor the small streams that flow into the Kenai River. You may recall that one of our early successes was to demonstrate with data that the DOT sand/salt pile on Soldotna Creek was causing harm to the creek. The state and federal agencies involved reviewed our data and agreed to move the salt away from the creek.

Another visible part of this program related to painting the storm drains in Soldotna and Kenai to let folks know that what goes down those drains winds up in the river, one way or another. The City of Soldotna and State of Alaska have taken important steps to help clean runoff at many of their drains adjacent to and along the Sterling Hwy, but as we saw this fall in September when someone allegedly drained diesel fuel from their tank onto the grounds of the Soldotna Tesoro gas station, some of the drains still provide a straight shot to the Kenai River. This fuel not only ran straight to the river creating an oil sheen, but also contaminated soil along the way with a "bathtub ring" effect. This means that when it rains, we can expect this fuel to continue working its way to the Kenai River - something no one wants to see.

Clearly our work is

needed to educate the public about how our actions affect the water quality, and we need to continue to figure out creative ways to do it more effectively.

Beyond this, we've also been working hard to engage and coordinate work among various agencies to evaluate the water for the types of contamination our volunteers can't evaluate. It might seem like a simple task to get folks together to pay attention to water quality in one of the most productive and economically important rivers in Alaska, but this is often not the case.

Beginning in 1998, folks started to come together to design a study. What should we measure, where should we monitor water, how should we pay for the monitoring? The result was a plan that had acceptance from just about every agency and governmental body in the local area - all that was left was to get some funding. We are happy to report that the plan has not just been collecting dust but has been put to work with the help and financial support of many groups, most notably the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. We are dedicating a

major portion of this newsletter to show our members and supporters some of the preliminary results from this part of our water quality monitoring program. These results raised some good questions and started some needed discussions with the various state and federal agencies.



*Vicki Davis (US Fish and Wildlife Service) works with Rick Wood (City of Soldotna) to calibrate a monitoring instrument. KWF is bringing local, state, and federal agencies together.*

# Of Special Consideration..

Like yours, our hearts go out to the families affected by recent tragedies in the U.S. and our thanks go out to the thousands involved in relief efforts. Sadly, it is hard to focus on much else these days. It is important, however, not to forget about other important work that is going on, especially in our own communities. This good work can be a source of inspiration and strength through these difficult times.

Today, as always, our faith for the future belongs to those who work to better our communities for future

generations. We at the Kenai Watershed Forum will continue to work diligently for the health of the Kenai River Watershed. We know this work benefits the people and businesses of the fine communities it encompasses. We are "citizens working together for community vitality in a healthy watershed." These citizens are your neighbors who have joined KWF as our members, board, and volunteers. They have shown a dedication to our organization that inspires the best in people. We hope you will take a minute to look at some of our accomplishments and decide to join us in this effort by becoming a new member or renewing your current membership. Thank you.

## Spotlight on Volunteers



Pauline Simmons

Pauline does it all for KWF. She edits our newsletter and grants, monitors the water quality of Upper Slikok Creek and helps monitor hydrocarbons in the Kenai River. Since 1981, Pauline annually has co-authored a multi-volume water law treatise. She is licensed to practice law in Nevada.

Pam has been an active KWF volunteer for the past 3 years, working at the Kenai River Festival. This summer, Pam organized the food booth at the River Fest buying supplies, cooking the food, and managing volunteers. When she's not volunteering for us, Pam works as a sales representative at the Soldotna State Farm office.



Pam Houston

### Wish List

We need a few office items:

- office desk
- 2 office chairs
- large office filing cabinet
- misc. office supplies (staplers, etc)
- 2 office dividers
- conference table
- bookshelf



### Join our E-MAIL list.



E-mail is the cheapest and most effective way of reaching our members and those interested in our work. If you join our list, we promise not to spam you with unnecessary mail. Instead we will keep you up to date on current issues affecting the Watershed and current events that we sponsor. Join our e-mail list by e-mailing Kelly at [kelly@kenaiwatershed.org](mailto:kelly@kenaiwatershed.org) or find our e-mail links at our web site [www.kenaiwatershed.org](http://www.kenaiwatershed.org).

## WHO IS KWF? The Key Players

**Board of Dir.** Charles Quarre -Lisa Parker -Ken Marlow -Mona Painter -Benjamin Jackinsky -Dr.David Wartinbee -Dr.Todd Boling

**Adv. Board** Catherine Cassidy -Peggy Mullen -Dan Chay -Mike Sweeney -Dick Troeger -Warren Hoflich -Will Josey -Sanne Berrig

**Staff** Robert Ruffner -Kelly Shea -Ole Andersson -Elyse Williams

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

We're interested in hearing from you. Write, call, fax, e-mail, or stop by; we're located on the 2nd flr 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](mailto:robert@kenaiwatershed.org)  
WEB PAGE: <http://www.kenaiwatershed.org>

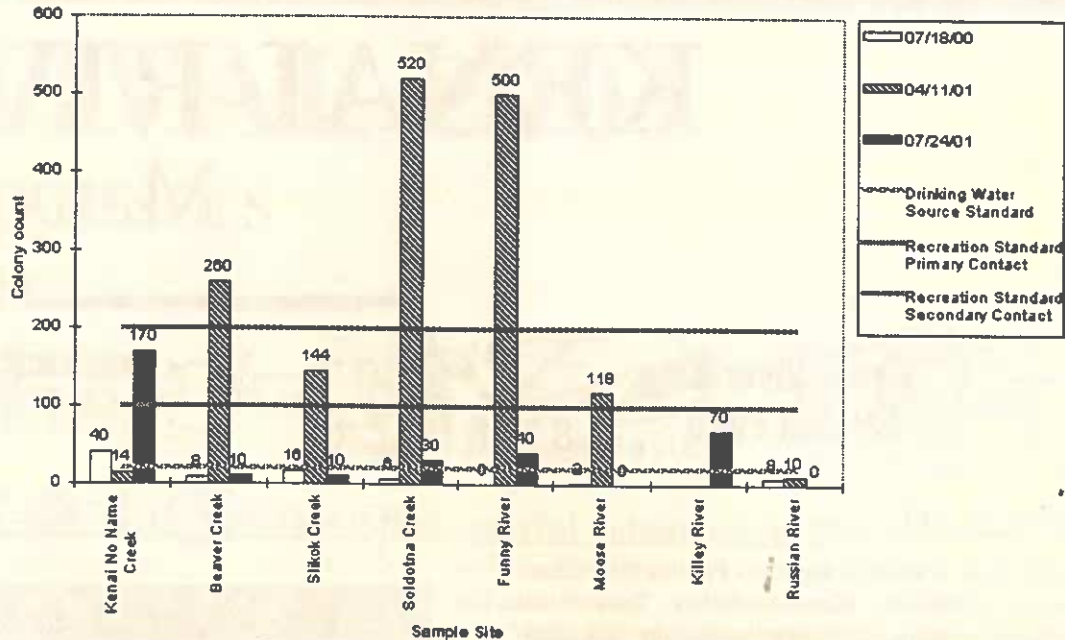
## Introducing new KWF staff



Elyse Williams

Elyse is our newest staff member. She will be working part time for both KWF and the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust. Elyse came to Alaska through the US Fish and Wildlife Service as an Intern. Apparently the Alaska bug has bitten her, as she has no plans to go back to Media, Penn. and we're happy to have her on board!

## Fecal Coliform in Tributaries



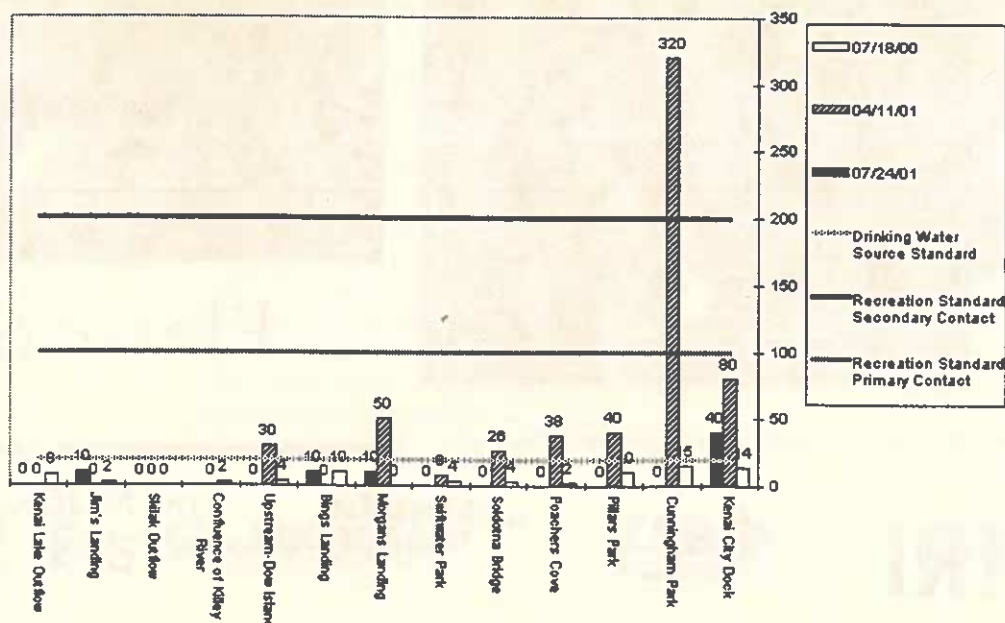
## Fecal Coliform Studies

Fecal Coliform is a bacteria that comes from warm-blooded animals and from some bird species. While there are no standards for the amount of colonies that will affect fish, there are standards for the amount that humans should be concerned about coming in contact with. More important, Fecal Coliform is a good indicator of how much "stuff" is running off the land and into the streams. Our data shows that in April, you shouldn't be out there swimming around! Since there are not too many outdoor swimming events in April, the actual numbers don't really mean too much. It may indicate that some of the streams and certain parts of the river are more vulnerable to runoff than others or perhaps some other event is happening at these sites.

At this time, the data can only give us a baseline of information to highlight areas that we may want to look at more closely in the spring.

There are two spots on these graphs that are worth pointing out. On the Kenai River, the area on the lower river near Cunningham Park seems to have an unusually high bacteria count. In the tributaries, Soldotna Creek and Funny River have high spring values - but No Name Creek at the Kenai City Beach shows higher colonies present in the summer rather than in the spring. Again, at this point, it just raises some curiosities. KWF has spoken to local agencies that are interested in following up on these first studies. We will keep you informed of future information that comes to light.

## Fecal Coliform - Kenai Mainstem



# KENAI RIVER

Many thanks

Major Sponsors



**Kenai River King  
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## Contributors in 2001

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- ACS - Seekins Ford - Salamatof Native Association - Soldotna  
Professional Pharmacy - The Nature Conservancy of Alaska

## Business supporters in 2001

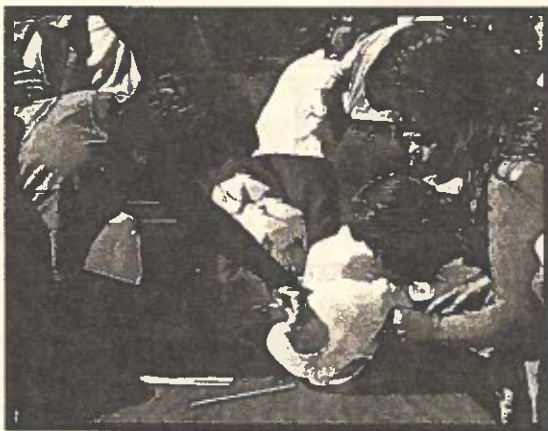
Alaska Wildland Adventures - Princess Tours - Bishop Lake Studio -  
Peninsula Sanitation - UCIDA United Cook Inlet Drift Association -  
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River Lodge - Mackey Lake Company, Laser Engraving - Mykel's  
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The Fishing Hole - Angler's Lodge

## Additional Support in 2001

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## Over 100 Wonderful Volunteers in 2001!



Brenda Stoops - Paul Dale - Pam Houston - Marge Mullen - Catherine Cassidy - Dominique Collet - Barbara Jewell - Jan Wallace - Zori Wallace - Beverly Dean - Stephen Mailluex - April Boles - Betty Obendorf - Mona Painter - Peggy Mullen - David Rhodes - Betty Smith - Tara & Robert Ruffner - Lori Landstrom - Diane Bagley - Kevin Schrier - Ron & Karen Martinelli - Jesse Schafer - Kenai Elks Lodge - Coach Jim Beeson, Jamie, Erin & Erica of the KCHS girl's basketball team - Georgene Cheeks - Mary Discoll - Sasha Scroggs - Sharmon Bremond - Danielle Scroggs-Tolliver - Angelea Smith - Bill Holloway - The Chase is Over - Lori Chase - Joe Ray Skrha - Mary Daly - Dan Bevington - Charles Quarre - Dennis Randa - Barbara Steckel - Ivy Danker - Alyson Stogsdill - Natasha Johnson - Billie Daly - Anita LeDoux - Kelly Keating - Geri Litzenberger - Jack Dean - Gerald Brookman - Jean & Clayton Brockel - Glenda Landua - Cheryl, Ty & Blake Schwiegert - Cliff, Stephanie & Margo Bouchard - David Wartinbee - Hal & Susan Smalley - Judy Shields - Dick Troeger - David Gibbs - Abby Popp - John Czarneski - Sandra and Tony Lewis - Pat Porter - Robin Veluce - Cheryl Sotello - Anne Pfitzner - John Mohorcich - Marge Hayes - Jocelyn O'Neill - Schaeffer - Terri Carter - Carol Ford - Holly Willie - Stephanie Cox - Susan Saupe - Brett Huber - Kenai River Sportfishing Association - Jerie Best - Dave & Betty Lowery - Mike Boyle - Kenai Coop Preschool - Boys & Girls Club - Ken



r Supporters

2001

Marlow - Jane Handy & Ole Andersson - Byron & Seth McCord - Bill Nelson - Allen Auxier - Bunny Swan-Gease - Mindee Morning - Todd Boling - Pauline Simmons - Linda Story - Lisa Parker - Kelly Shea & Curt Terrill - Chris See - Vivian Newby and More - our apologies for those that we missed.

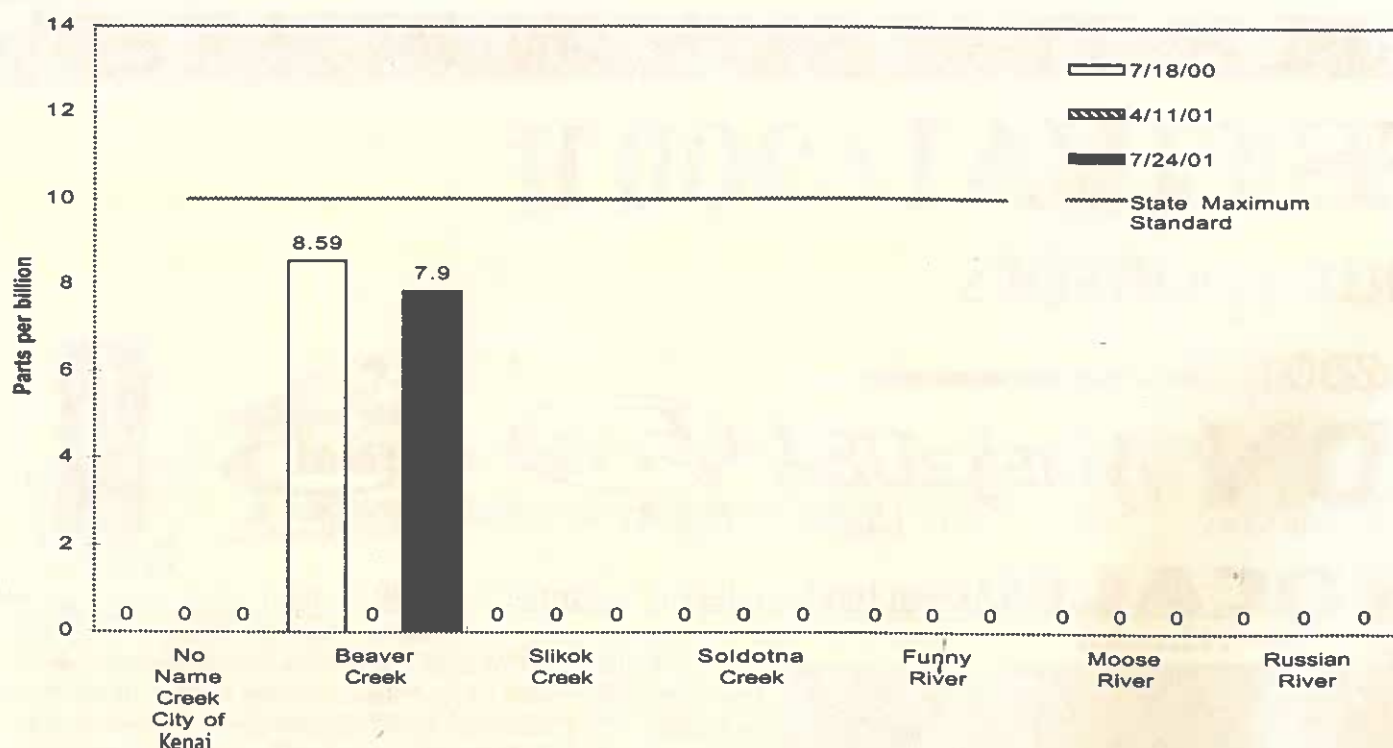
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## Total Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Tributaries



## Hydrocarbon Sampling in the Kenai River and its Tributaries

The graphs at the top of pages 6 and 7 summarize the results of sampling for several specific compounds (known as hydrocarbons) that primarily originate from oil and gas. For each of the sites listed on both graphs, there were 3 sampling periods: July 2000, April 2001, and July 2001. The goal of this sampling strategy is to help get a general overview of how much contamination might be present in the Kenai River Watershed.

Indicated on the graphs is the State of Alaska standard for concentration of these compounds, which is set at 10 parts per billion. The good news is that all sites sampled in April were below the detection limits of the instruments available to us. We were surprised by this result, because we all know how messy it is around here during break-up. All of the frozen drips and spills of the winter are headed toward the river, and we didn't see any of it.

There were no hydrocarbons present in any of the tributaries at any time, with the exception of Beaver Creek, where we detected about 8 parts per billion during both of the summer sampling events. Almost everyone who has seen this information asks - "where is this contamination coming from?" To which we can answer - "we don't know at this time." However, we know more now than we did before this project began. Now we know that if we were to further investigate one stream for hydrocarbons, we would want that stream to be Beaver Creek. Nevertheless, at this time, the contamination on Beaver Creek is not of highest priority, because it falls below the standard set to maintain waters for fish and shellfish.

The news was not quite so good for the Kenai River. Again, it was surprising that our samples did not detect any

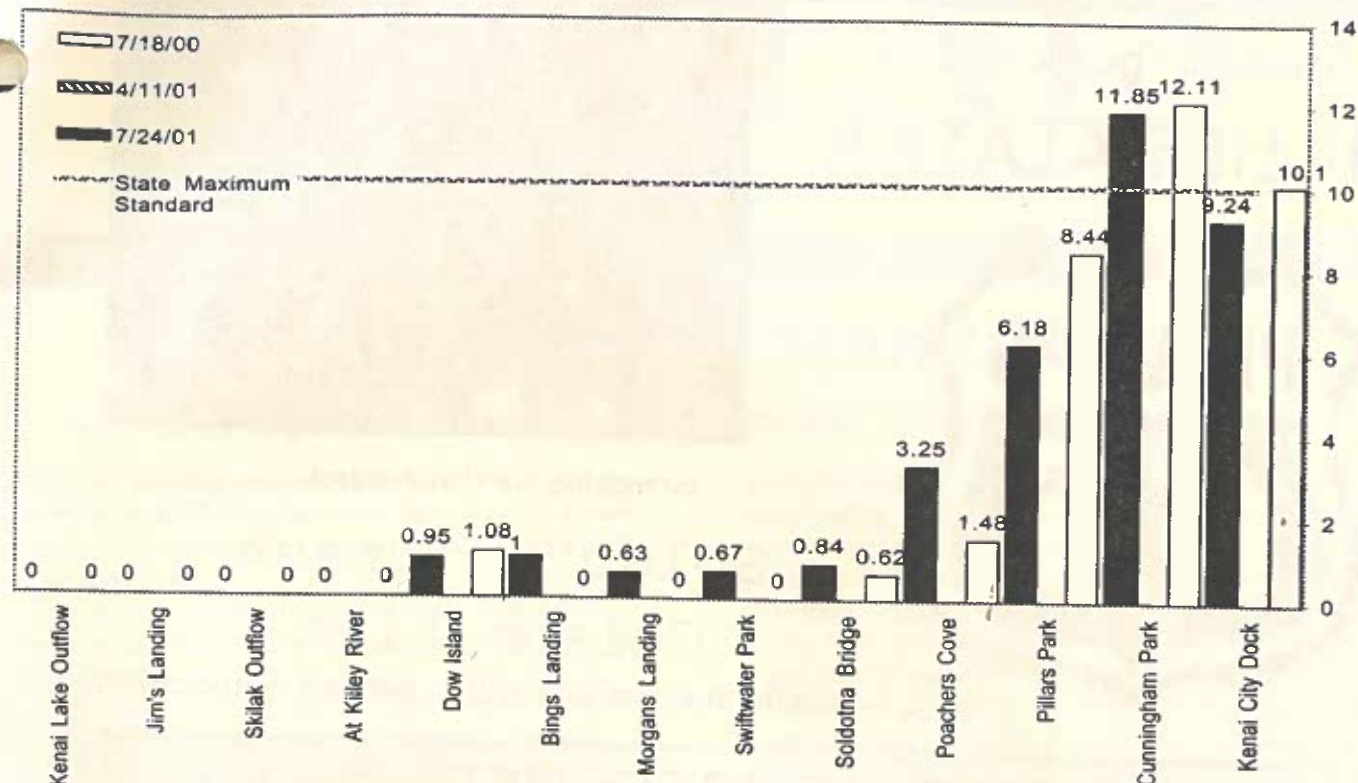
hydrocarbons in the river during spring break-up. Across the board, at all sites, from Kenai Lake to the Kenai City dock, no oils were detected in April of 2000.

In summer (during high river use and high increase in population) our goal was to get a better idea of how hydrocarbon concentration in the river might change. As one heads downstream from Kenai Lake on the Kenai River on this hydrocarbon graph, things seem very good until Dow Island in Sterling. At that point, the concentration of hydrocarbons increases from Dow Island to the mouth of the Kenai River. The summer numbers seem pretty consistent between 2000 and 2001. This consistency suggests that we were able to get a decent snapshot of the amount of hydrocarbons in the Kenai River during the summer.

Given the high level of activity both on the river and in the towns, these summer results are not especially surprising. However, the relatively high numbers near the mouth of the river need some attention. These samples demonstrate that the water is **not** meeting the minimum water quality standards for fish. It is important that we work quickly and do something to get these numbers down. At this moment, however, we need more information to address effectively this problem of high hydrocarbons. Just knowing that the total aromatic hydrocarbons (TAHs) are high, doesn't tell us where they are coming from.

Anticipating the high TAHs on the Kenai River that were predicted by many experts prior to this study, the Kenai Watershed Forum, partnering with the National Marine Fisheries Service, has another study underway, which has a technique to "finger-print" the TAHs. Within the next 6 months, we should know if the types of hydrocarbons found are caused by oil dripping onto parking lots that runs off into the river, 2-cycle or 4-cycle engines in the river, small spills, or

## Total Aromatic Hydrocarbons in the Kenai River



fuel tanks leaking from homes along the river. All are potential sources for hydrocarbons.

Our plan, at this point, is to first and foremost continue the hydrocarbon monitoring program. Without monitoring, the first sign we might have of poor water quality could be a decline in salmon or other more sensitive species. Monitoring is important as a means of discovering and heading off future problems before they become too big to solve. Our next step is to share this information with others, which includes sharing this data with you in this newsletter. Additionally, the Kenai Watershed Forum will be presenting this data to all of the partners involved which include:

Cities of Soldotna and Kenai  
Kenai Peninsula Borough

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
US Forest Service

Since all aspects of the fishing industry have a vested interest in maintaining good water quality, KWF staff will be meeting with them to discuss the need to take a closer look.

It is our hope that with broad cooperation we can make sure that the long-term trend of water quality in the Kenai River will be improved rather than degraded. If water quality continues to degrade, it will be up to the State to come up with regulations to improve the water. We would like to have the community try to solve this concern first.

## Citizen Environmental Monitoring

*(Participants and Sampling Locations)*

Bean Creek & Juneau Creek - Dave Westerman  
Beaver Creek - Don Markowitz  
East Mackey Lake - Margaret Spahn  
Flat Sloping Crk (No Name/ Kenai Beach) - Bud Crawford  
Lower Slikok Creek - Gary Leiter  
Lower Soldotna Creek - Cliff Bouchard  
Moose River - Cathy Cline  
No Name Crk (Cook Inlet Aquaculture) - Heidi & Dan Chay  
Quartz Creek & Cooper Creek - Pat Dye  
Skilak Lake (Caribou Island) - Betty Essick  
Upper Slikok Creek - Pauline Simmons  
Upper Soldotna Creek - David Birchfield

## Volunteer Opportunities

One or more volunteers are needed to monitor Killey River, off of Funny River Rd. Water Quality Monitors are trained by us and need to monitor once per month. Please call Kelly or Robert at 260-5449.

# A Special Thank You to PHILLIPS ALASKA



## for making the First Annual Soldotna Creek Celebration

a wonderful success with music, artisans, and activities

### 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)

Theo Lexmond & Janette Cadieux  
Calvin & Jan Fair  
Great Alaska Fish Camp  
Sandra & Tony Lewis  
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Jean Romig  
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Terry Shea  
Gary Sonnevil  
Pete Sprague

Gary Stackhouse  
Austin & Jean Terrell

#### SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Cheri Edwards  
Austin and Jean Terrell

#### ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Margaret Mullen  
Kelly Shea  
Pauline Simmons

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