

CURRENTS

Our Mission: Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

FALL 2003

Forum's Funding Future

No doubt most of you have read or seen news related to the decision of Commissioner Ernesta Ballard of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) not to support efforts of the Kenai Watershed Forum for monitoring water quality of the Kenai River. We've received much support from the local community related to this short-sighted decision and thought we would take this opportunity to give our members and supporters an update on where the organization is headed in the next year or so by highlighting our key projects.

Right: GPS marks the spot of a baseline sample

Below: Bud Crawford, volunteer monitor at No Name Creek



Kenai River Water Quality Monitoring MOU Partners

City of Kenai
City of Soldotna
Kenai Peninsula Borough
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
Chugach National Forest
The Nature Conservancy of Alaska
Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc.
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association
Northern Testing Laboratory
Kenai Watershed Forum

Water Quality Monitoring Program

This program has received a great deal of press since ADEC's decision was announced in July of this year. To recap, in March ADEC issued a request for proposals. KWF staff prepared a grant proposal in April, which we emailed to Commissioner Ballard with a Memorandum of Understanding that had been signed by fourteen partners in 2002.

These fourteen partners had agreed in February of 2002 that it would be more efficient to pool our resources and collect baseline data on a regular schedule for at least five years in a systematic and scientific manner. Commissioner Ballard responded, through the division (Continue on Page 3, Funding)

-Mission-

Citizens working together for community vitality in a healthy watershed.

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We're interested in hearing from you. Write, call, fax, e-mail, or stop by! We are located on the 2nd floor of the Blazy Mall in Soldotna.

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You're Invited! **KWF Member/Volunteer Party & Barbecue** **Sunday, September 21** **2:00 - 5:30pm** **at the Kenai River Center**

This is our way of saying thanks for all your support in the past year. Stop by and join us for an afternoon of good food and great company! Robert will be presenting an update on current activities and upcoming projects, as well as a fantastic slideshow from one of his past adventures! This is a great opportunity to visit with the board and staff, in addition to other volunteers and members. We look forward to seeing you there!



Spotlight on Volunteers

Kristy Price

Kristy Price has been an active member and volunteer with KWF since January 2003. During that time she has been monitoring the Kiley River and has helped calibrate our electronic instruments, as well as helping out with the Kenai River Festival.

Kristy is a chemist in the Greater Prudhoe Bay oil production lab and has recently started her own business, North Slope Scientific, which performs environmental sampling/testing consulting and training. Kristy is also on the Prudhoe Bay fire team and hazmat team.

Kristy, thank you for your support and dedication to our efforts. It is truly folks like you that help make our jobs that much more enjoyable.



Kristy timing at the Kenai River Festival's Run for the River

(Funding, from page 1) director, that ADEC was "happy to support the understanding." KWF's proposal was then forwarded to a committee of four state agencies and scored and ranked against other proposals from across the State of Alaska, just as indicated in the grant application. KWF's proposal received the second highest score across the state. These scores were forwarded on to Commissioner Ballard, who came up with a different set of scoring criteria. This new criteria rendered our proposal invalid while those that scored #1 and #3 were fully funded. The basis for denial of our proposal was an ADEC document that was based on data collected prior to 1996. The decision was made to only

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work on waterbodies that had not been meeting state water quality standards prior to 1996. Since that decision, the City of Soldotna, the City of Kenai, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough have all passed resolutions objecting to ADEC's decision to abandon monitoring of

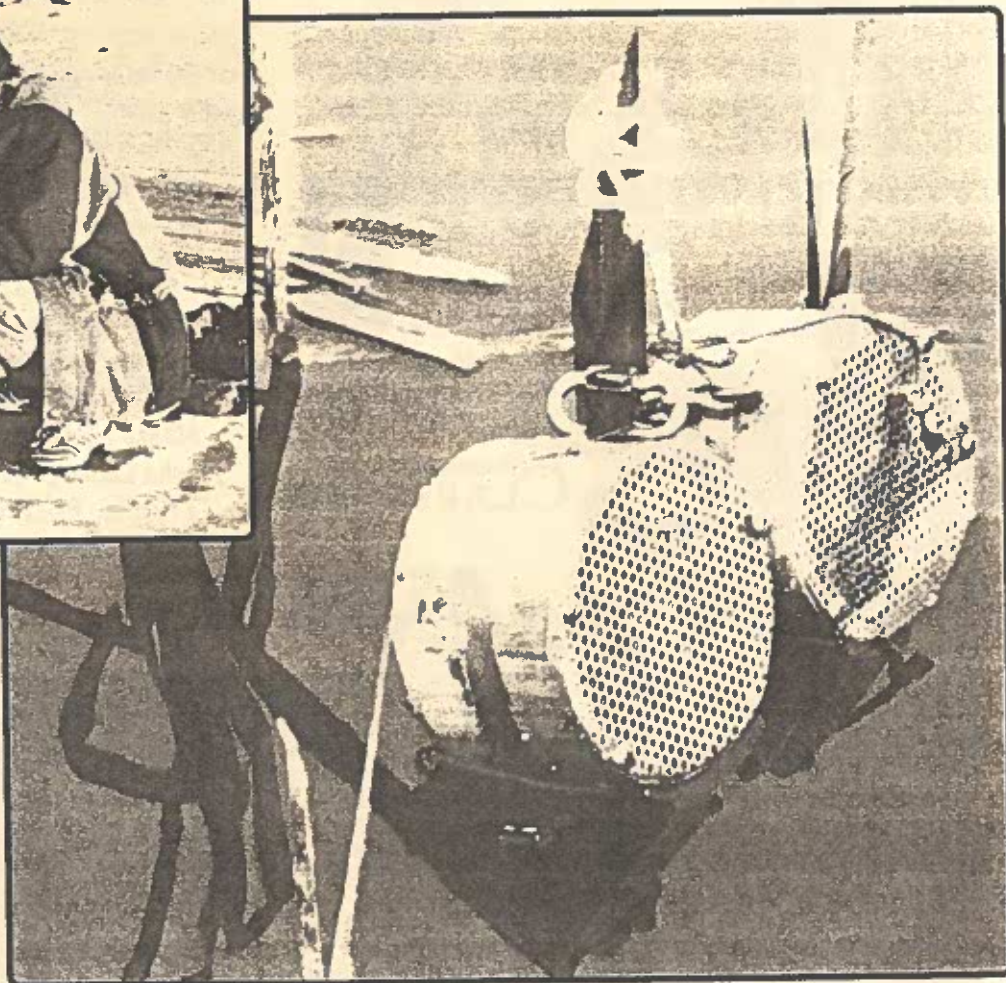
the Kenai River.

If this were the end of the matter, KWF would suffer a loss of \$65,000 in water quality programmatic funds compared to the previous year – but this is not the end of the matter. The funds in question originate from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and were authorized as expenses by the state legislature as grant funds in the amount of \$1.7 million. Neither the EPA nor our local legislators are satisfied with the handling of the funds, and discussions are continuing. As of the date of mailing this newsletter, the (Continue on page 5, Funding)



Above: Martina, an office and field volunteer, helps take samples.

Right: Hydrocarbon pucks, water monitoring equipment



THANK YOU!

We couldn't have done it without your help!



Kenai River Festival 2003

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AK Dept. of Fish & Game • U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Kenai River Property Owners Association
Kenai Peninsula Puppeteers • Kenai Coop Preschool
AK Division of Emergency Services • UNA-USA
Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District • KDLL

(Funding, from page 3) matter has not been resolved.

In the meantime, KWF will continue to do the work that needs to be done without interruption. We are confident that our efficient handling of public funds and cost saving measures put in place have resulted in a reduction of redundant and unnecessary independent studies. Through these measures, we will provide the public with much needed baseline water quality data for future use with the support of our local governments.

Without support from ADEC, KWF collected samples in July in accordance with our five-year plan. We hope the funding issue will be resolved in time for the next scheduled sampling, which will take place in April 2004. In the meantime, we thank all our partners for their extraordinary efforts this summer towards our common goals.

Kenai River Center - Research and Education Funding

Thanks to Senator Ted Stevens, the Kenai River Center has been the recipient of \$500,000 per year since 2000. These funds are for research and education to support the mission of the Kenai River Center. The Kenai Watershed Forum administers these funds to help ensure that the highest percentage of the funding possible goes to on-the-ground quality research and edu-

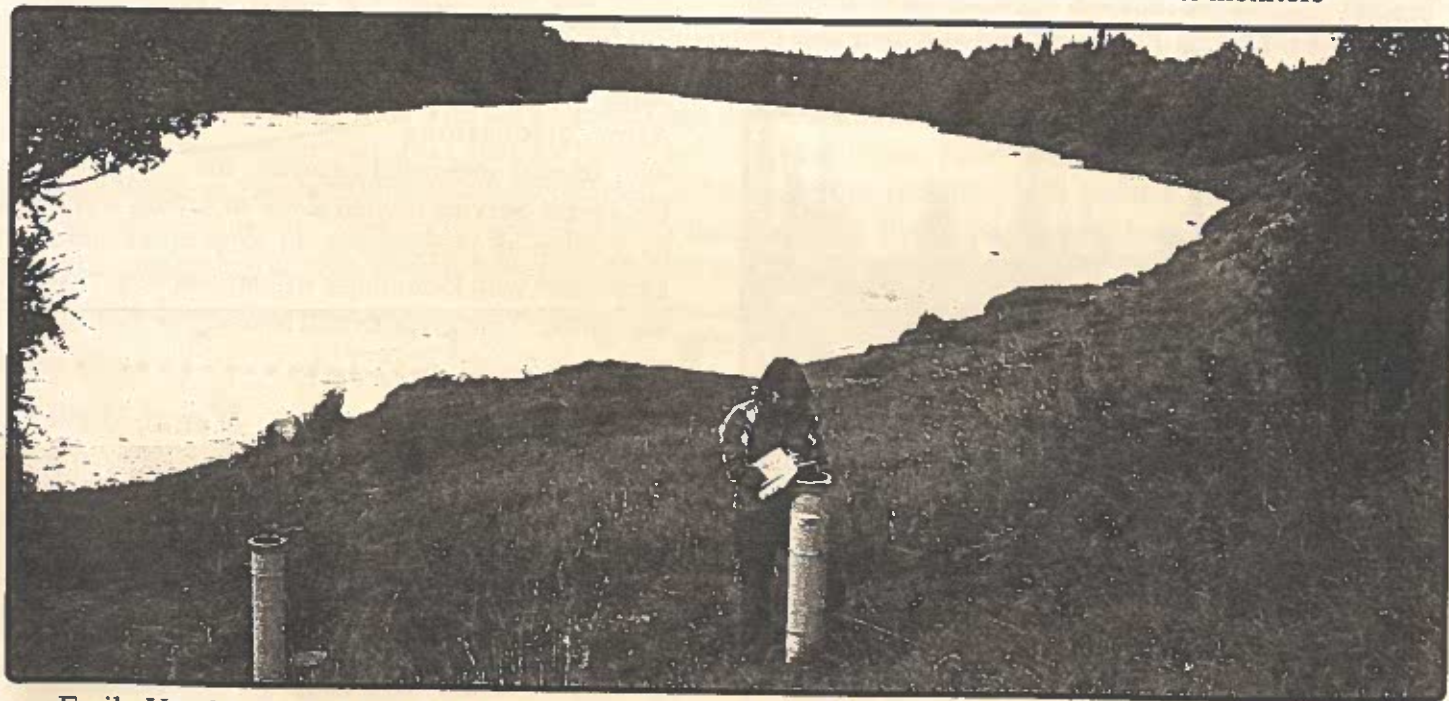
cation. KWF meets periodically with Kenai River Center staff to decide priority needs and then to implement these needs. To date, we have supported the development of a wetlands classification system and mapping project that will aid resource managers in the permitting process.

We have also installed monitoring wells adjacent to the river at the pillars and at the former ADOT maintenance yard (now an expanded Soldotna Creek park) to evaluate the interaction of groundwater with the Kenai River. A third location has now been selected at the confluence of the Moose River with the Kenai in Sterling.

With this funding, we have also helped the River Center by hiring a full-time education coordinator to be available at the center. A small portion of the funds will also be used to help offset some of the funding lost for water quality monitoring efforts. (Continue on page 6, Funding)



Ole trains our volunteer monitors



Emily Youcha taking ground-water measurements at Soldotna City Park Hydrologic Monitoring Station



Damage to Silver Salmon Creek after Fall floods of 2002

(Funding, from page 5)

Restoration From Flooding Damage

Last Fall's floods created some significant habitat alteration when several roads washed into salmon streams. We have secured funding to conduct rapid habitat assessments on six of these streams and have completed a detailed assessment on one of the worst cases. In the next year, we will complete a major restoration project on Silver Salmon Creek, where Oilwell road failed. The new conditions caused by this road failure now block eight miles of habitat for juvenile Coho salmon and five miles for juvenile Chinook. The project requires the removal of two-to-three thousand cubic yards of road fill from the flood-plain and the



Field trip to Silver Salmon Creek earlier this Summer to assess damage from Fall floods of 2002

construction of a new channel that best mimics the pre-flood conditions. We will attempt to reconnect the stream to its original flood-plain and restore the associated wetlands.

Insect Guide

Even before the first Willows of Southcentral Alaska by Dominique Collet was run through the printing press, the technical reviewers were already asking for more information on the insects as illustrated on the first few pages of the guide.

After discussions with several interested agencies, the US Forest Service invited KWF to submit a proposal to develop an insect guide. In August, we signed an agreement with Dominique to start working on the insect guide. This guide should be ready by Spring 2005.



Many thanks to the Kenai River Sportfishing Assoc., Inc. for a \$1000 donation to the Sponsor-A-School Program. This program uses a hands-on approach to teaching children in our area about the importance of a healthy watershed. See page 7 for more details on the program.

Summer Program Series in Review

This year's Summer Program was filled with fascinating workshops, hikes, and paddle trips that took us from Kenai Lake all the way to Capt. Cook Recreation site! Our local experts discussed topics such as willows, birds, wetlands, beetles, frogs, salmon, geology, loons, and mushrooms. Each workshop offered an interesting look at the environment in the Kenai Watershed.



Backyard Birding at the Marlows' Home

KWF's Summer Program series has been around for six years, each year improving on the last. This year was certainly no exception, offering one of the most diverse programs yet. The Summer Program grew out of a desire to bring free workshops to the public that cover topics unique to our area. This program would not be possible without the help from our local experts. These folks truly make the Summer Program special. Many thanks to Ted Bailey, Dominique Collet, Ken Marlow, Mike Gracz, Mike Fastabend, Jordan Stout, Debbie Burwen, Dick Reger, and Liz Jozwiak for donating their time and leading workshops in this year's Summer Program.

If you would like to learn more about our Summer Program or have any suggestions for topics for next year, we would like to hear from you. Feel free to call (907) 260-5449 or email us at josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org.

KWF Connects Business With Schoolchildren

From its inception, KWF has highlighted education as one of our most important programs. We asked ourselves: "How do we keep the Kenai River Watershed healthy and strong?" Our answer: "Teach our children how to take care of it." One way we are reaching the youth in our watershed is through the Sponsor-A-School program. This program is a partnership that takes a hands-on role in creating a healthy social, economic, and ecological future for the Kenai River Watershed by giving us the support we need to go into area schools and work with the children and teachers.

Last year we spent time with the 6th grade class from Soldotna Elementary. Each month during the school year, we met the class at Soldotna Creek for hands-on science activities. Following our field trip, we went back to the classroom and analyzed the data just collected and discussed its relationship to healthy watersheds.

We are currently working to raise \$4,000 for the Sponsor-A-School program. These funds will be used to continue working with area schools through field trips, watershed curriculum, and teacher training. There are two sponsor levels: School Leader \$500 and School Benefactor \$250.



Fieldtrip last winter with Soldotna Elementary 6th grade class

Business sponsors will be recognized at the schools, in our newsletters, and in other forums. In addition, we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit; all donations are tax deductible. If you would like to learn more about our Sponsor-A-School program, please call 260-5449 or email us at josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org.

KWF MEMBERSHIP

We thank the following people for recently contributing to the Kenai Watershed Forum. If you would like to renew your membership, become a new member, or send a donation, please contact us at 907-260-5449 or send a check to KWF, PO Box 2937, Soldotna, AK 99669.

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Will Raemaeker

SMOLT (\$10-\$24)

Harry Scholten

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Austin & Jean Terrell
Cheri Edwards
Peggy Mullen

In memory of Les Anderson ...

for his making the Kenai River famous for its great fishing.

Many thanks to Bill Schweitzer and the Alaska Fishing Club for making a sizable donation in Les Anderson's name to the Kenai Watershed Forum. These funds will be used specifically for Kenai River education.

**Kenai Watershed Forum
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Soldotna, AK 99669**

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