

CURRENTS



Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Fall 2009

50' Habitat Protection Gets a Closer Look

The protection and sustainability of salmon habitat has been a long-term goal and need of the people of the Kenai Peninsula since long before the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) existed. To that end, the Kenai Watershed Forum received a grant from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to evaluate the effectiveness of the KPB's salmon stream Habitat Protection Ordinance (HPO). The purpose of this Borough law is to protect salmon habitat while also recognizing private property rights. To fulfill our grant obligations, we agreed to document the history of the code, review the structure and content of the code, summarize code compliance and enforcement, and research permit activity.

The habitat protection code is often referred to as the 50-foot setback. Since its adoption in 1996, activities have been regulated within the "setback" of the Kenai River. In the year 2000, another 24 salmon bearing streams were added to the setback code, using the same set of regulations as were in place for the Kenai River. Within the KPB, there are over 1,000 known salmon streams, so it doesn't cover all of them, but many of the well known streams on the western side of the peninsula are on the list.

In addition to the fifty foot setback from the ordinary high water line, the HPO code features a list of allowed uses, provisions for conditional use permits, and grandfathering for

(Continue on page 6)

KWF receives \$10,000 grant from Wells Fargo

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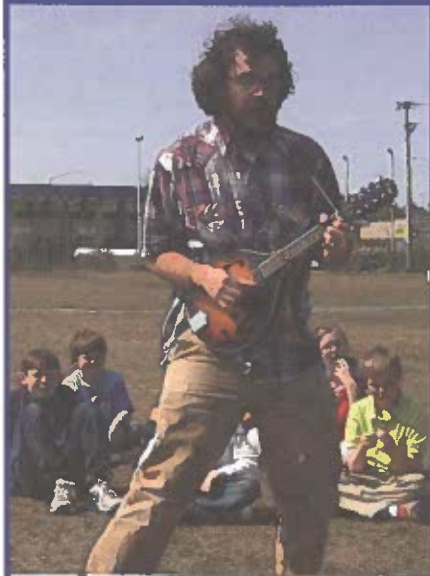
The Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) recently received word from Wells Fargo that we are the recipient of a \$10,000 gift for our building campaign. These funds will be used to renovate a historic building in downtown Soldotna that will be used as the KWF headquarters.

Wells Fargo established a \$350,000 annual environmental contribution matching fund in 2007 to support local community investments made with environmental organizations such as Kenai Watershed Forum. In Alaska, Wells Fargo has provided

(Continue on page 7)



Above: Wells Fargo presented KWF with a check at the December 1st Soldotna Chamber Luncheon. Pictured above are Judith Crotty, Kathy Gensel, John Hoyt, Kristy McCullough, Jeff Krsnak, Josselyn O'Connor, Tim Redder, and Pat Cowan.



**Working together
for
healthy watersheds
on the
Kenai Peninsula.**

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Welcome, Natasha!

Natasha Ala is the Executive Director of the Kenai Visitors & Cultural Center. Ala has been extensively involved in the arts and culture of the central Kenai Peninsula for many years. Ala received Bachelor's in Art, from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Ala also has over fifteen years experience in community coalition building in the nonprofit sector as well as mediation and building community dialog. We are happy to have Natasha join the KWF team.

KWF Calendar

- **December 19 - Kenai Convention & Visitors Bureau Christmas Tree Auction** - Come bid on KWF's tree!
- **January 22, 2010 - Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Public Work Session**
- **January 30, 2010 - Peninsula Winter Games** - Bring the kids down to the Soldotna Sports Center for an afternoon of fun. Don't forget to stop by KWF's activity booth!
- **February - Annual KWF Board of Directors Retreat**
- **April/May - Invasive Weeds Workshop** presented by Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area - focus will be on responsible use of herbicides for managing invasive species.
- **May 21-23, 2010 - Kenai Birding Celebration**
- **June 12 & 13, 2010 - 20th Kenai River Festival**
- **June 12, 2010 - Run for the River 5K and 10 Mile races** - online registration is open! Don't miss the early bird discount on registration fees.

good cheer • holiday cookies • warm apple cider • great company



The KWF Board of Directors and staff would like to wish all of our members, supporters, and friends the very best this holiday season. As 2009 comes to a close and families and friends gather near, we encourage you to take a step back and reflect on the importance the waters and watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula have meant to you and your family. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to live, play, and work in such a fantastic environment.

Happy Holidays

Education Partnership Rekindled

One of the key factors in the Kenai Watershed Forum's accomplishments is the ability to form long lasting and quality partnerships with local organizations and within the community. The successes of our Adopt A Stream programs are no exception.

Every month, participating teachers open their classrooms to education staff for in-class education, and then bravely lead students down to their adopted streams oftentimes with the help of parents who give their time and support. Perhaps the most important partnership is the one formed between education staff and students who are given the opportunity to experience scientific discovery through hands on practice in the field.

From cooperative teachers to involved parents to enthusiastic students, the Kenai Watershed Forum's Adopt A Stream program functions as an incredible opportunity offered to many Kenai Peninsula students. This year is a special year for the Adopt A Stream program as a partnership with an old ally to Adopt A Stream returns, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

From 1992-2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Kenai Field Office coordinated the Adopt-A-Stream program, but budget cuts ended the program until the Kenai Watershed Forum was able to step up and take over responsibilities for the program. With the coordination of the program under the leadership of KWF, beginning in fall 2006, the Adopt-A-Stream program expanded to more than double the amount of classrooms in previous years. As the program grew, so did the need for more assistance in classrooms and on field trips.

As the need grew for more staff time with the Adopt A Stream program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Kenai Field Office received funding for a Student Conservation Association intern, which allowed them the opportunity to rejoin the Adopt A Stream program. Now the USFWS and Kenai Watershed Forum are working together to continue providing quality Adopt A Stream programming to the Kenai Peninsula.

Although different offices and organizations have coordinated Adopt A Stream, the truth remains that whoever is running it offers wonderful educational opportunities to our most valuable resource on the Kenai Peninsula, our children.



BIG PFD NEWS - KWF receives \$1025!

For the first time this year, residents of Alaska receiving a Permanent Fund Dividend were able to donate all or a portion of their dividend to non-profit groups, educational institutions, and other similar organizations through Pick. Click. Give. The Kenai Watershed Forum was among those groups and we recently received notice that local Alaskans contributed \$1025 to our efforts! More than 5,500 Alaskans pledged more than \$545,000 through this program. We are thankful and excited to be a part of this program.

This opportunity was made possible by a state law passed in 2008 making this a new way to give possible for all Alaskans filing for their PFD on-line. If you missed the opportunity, don't worry! KWF is on the list again next year. So, consider pledging a portion or all of your 2010 PFD to KWF. This is the perfect way to support KWF, without taking a hit to your monthly budget!

When you go on-line to sign up for your dividend this January, you will see the option called "The Gift of Giving." Search for us by region and our name, Kenai Watershed Forum. Click and follow the instructions to make a new donation, or an additional gift. At the same time, please take the extra step you will see after you make your donation to provide your contact information to us. We want to acknowledge and recognize your generous support, and this is the only way we will know it's you making the gift.

You can find more information about the program, including frequently asked questions at www.PickClickGive.org. Or you may call us at 907-260-5449.

Pick.Click.Give.



Kenai Watershed Forum's Black Tie CHAIRity Ball

What an evening! The Kenai Watershed Forum's Black Tie CHAIRity Ball was a huge success! Many thanks to all those that joined us to celebrate our new building project. It was such a special evening because a diverse group of supporters came out to have fun. And there was no shortage of fun!!!

Each year KWF continues to advance its mission of working together for healthy watersheds. Through our Education, Restoration, and Research programs we have made great strides in preserving healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula. We are grateful to work and play in such a great place. The communities of the Kenai Peninsula have been so good to us and we look forward to providing you with good watershed related research, education, and restoration projects for many years to come.

This event helped us raise over \$20,000 for our building campaign. Each day we get closer to our goal. We are hopeful that construction can begin next spring.

If you would like to learn more about the Kenai Watershed Forum or our Capital Building Campaign, please give us a call.



Thank You!

A huge thanks goes out to **Betty Obendorf** and **Rosie Reeder** for working with us to bring such an over-the-top and special event to Soldotna and the Kenai Peninsula. There are a host of others to thank including Hutchings, Heavenly Delights Catering, Hooligan's, Bull Don & the Moose Nuggets, Snug Harbor Seafoods, Kassik's Kenai Brew Stop, and Country Liquor.

Door Prize Package Donors

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Wilderness Way
Coleman
Alpine Creek Lodge
Alaska Railroad Company
Rio Salvaje Lodge
Foot, Flair N Wear

Many thanks to all these businesses for their support of KWF. Our door prize packages were over-the-top and we appreciate their donations and dedication!
THANK YOU!



structures and activities that were in the setback zone prior to 1996. The code is administered by KPB staff at the Donald E. Gilman River Center.

In round numbers, the River Center has issued over 3,300 permits in 13 years. The majority of these permits have been for activities along the Kenai River. Of these 3,300 permits, 3,150 have been relatively straightforward, over-the-counter permits that do not require review of the planning commission. The remaining 150 were conditional use permit (CUP) requests that require a decision from the planning commission. Of those 150 requests, 85% were approved.

The beginning discussions of the ordinance review are starting to point to a number of “house-keeping” provisions that could improve the code, such as: provisions that allow for ADA access; reduction in the slopes that trigger additional setbacks; listing and defining allowable uses and activities, and more clear ties to other related sections of KPB code.

A couple of key findings related to enforcement were also identified in the review. Most notably voluntary compliance and the desire of most landowners to comply with this section of KPB code is very high. **MOST LANDOWNERS WANT TO DO THE RIGHT THING** and this code provides some guidance. However, the language of the code is often imprecise and subject to interpretation. This makes it challenging to evaluate if activities are in compliance, which, in-turn makes enforcement very difficult.

The related KPB enforcement process and ordinance language are outdated and there is no written policy to guide the code compliance officer in enforcement situations. In analyzing the permits and known violations, the documentation of those cases that are out-of-compliance with the code is not very complete. Implementing better record keeping is something the River Center staff have already started to correct. It is clear the Kenai Peninsula Borough has been relying on voluntary compliance as its single [most effective] method of enforcement. Since voluntary compliance to date is very high, this has been a positive. The records indicate 112 known cases of activities or uses that are out of compliance with the ordinance, 8 cases are open and there is 1 case in which a fine was issued and collected.

Currently, discussions have begun with members of the KPB Administration, Assembly, Planning Commission and the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board. While most of the house-keeping issues may quickly be addressed and remedied, much debate is likely to occur on the larger issues of appropriate habitat buffer width, whether all anadromous streams should be protected, and how to enforce the code in a consistent and meaningful way.

We will keep you informed and look forward to lively community discussion and participation. In the mean time, KWF has developed a 30-minute presentation on the ordinance review and would be happy to give that presentation to any interested organization, please contact our office.

KWF used GIS to help evaluate the effectiveness of the ordinance. A GIS database for the Kenai River below Skilak Lake was created and includes 50', 100' and 300' buffers on either side of the river (Figures 1 & 2), footprints from 1998 and 2002/03 imagery, and photos collected from the river from '07-'09 providing a river view perspective of structures (Figures 2 & 3). Permits issued are also tied to individual parcels adjacent to the river.

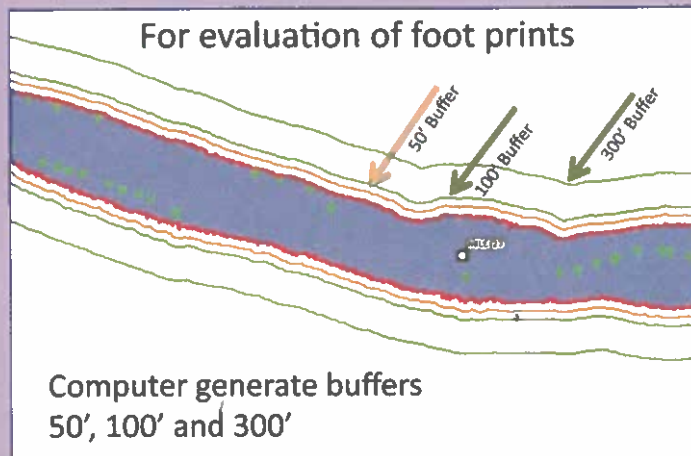


Figure 1: Buffers generated from imagery on either side of the Kenai River below Skilak.



Figure 2: 2002/03 imagery used to extract footprints within the buffers. Also showing track of boat collecting pictures during summer 2009.

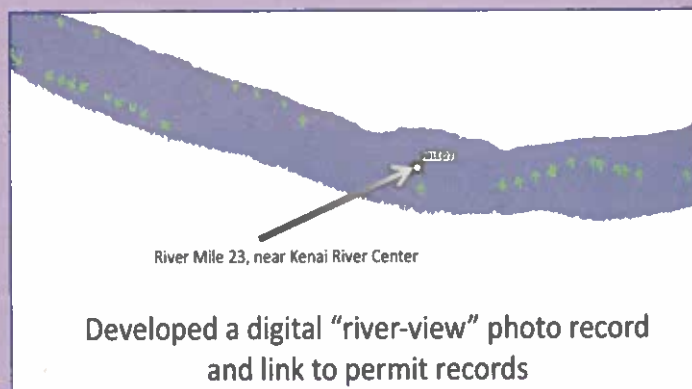


Figure 3: Boat track and direction of photos of structures collected during the 2009 field season.

a total of \$17,000 in environmental matching funds to Alaska Botanical Garden, Anchorage Neighborhood Housing, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, Eagle River Nature Center, Kenai Watershed Forum and Valley Community for Recycling Solutions.

"The health of our environment affects the health of our communities and our long-term business success," said Judith Crotty, Wells Fargo Alaska community development manager. "Our \$10,000 investment in the Kenai Watershed Forum is one way we are working with local community groups to conserve Alaska's bountiful natural resources and educate Alaskans about the importance of environmental stewardship. We applaud Kenai Watershed Forum for their exceptional community collaboration and youth education efforts."

Wells Fargo & Company is a diversified financial services company with \$1.2 trillion in assets, providing banking, insurance, investments, mortgage and consumer finance through more than 10,000 stores and 12,000 ATMs and the Internet (wellsfargo.com) across North America and internationally. In 2008, Wells Fargo gave \$226 million in grants to 14,000 nonprofits. Team members contributed 1.4 million volunteer hours and served on 16,000 nonprofit boards. Since 2006, the Company has provided \$5 billion in loans and investments for environmentally beneficial business opportunities, including \$1.6 billion for solar and wind projects and \$3 billion to support LEED-certified buildings. Wells Fargo ranks #1 among banks and insurance companies - and #13 overall - in Newsweek magazine's inaugural Green Rankings of the country's 500-largest companies. For more about Wells Fargo's environmental initiatives: www.wellsfargo.com/environment.

KWF Registers Building Project for LEED® Certification

The Kenai Watershed Forum is pleased to announce our board of directors recently committed to incorporate LEED® standard requirements into each phase of the building renovation of our new headquarters. As a first step toward LEED Green Building Certification, the Kenai Watershed Forum has registered this project with the U.S. Green Building Council.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that developed the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System. This system is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of high performance green buildings. An organization's participation in the voluntary and technically rigorous LEED process demonstrates leadership, innovation and environmental stewardship.

We are hoping this building serves as an educational opportunity for others renovating or building on the Kenai Peninsula. Sound building practices are easy and available in our area. There are only seven LEED Certified buildings in Alaska.

Working through the LEED certification process requires a LEED Accredited Professional be involved in the project from start to finish. We are pleased to be working with Denise Newbould from Aware Consulting as our LEED AP. Denise is 100% committed to this project and is donating her time and services. Many thanks to Denise and Aware Consulting and we look forward to working with you on this project!



To learn more about LEED visit www.usgbc.org.

LEED-certified buildings are designed to:

- Lower operating costs and increase asset value
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MEMBERSHIP and SUPPORTERS

Thank You! The following people have recently contributed to the Kenai Watershed Forum.

\$500

Tom & Stephanie Kobylarz

John & Glenda Landua

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Jim & Colleen Fassler

Mike Haggerty & Bonnie Nichols

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Kenai River Professional Guide Association

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THANK YOU!