



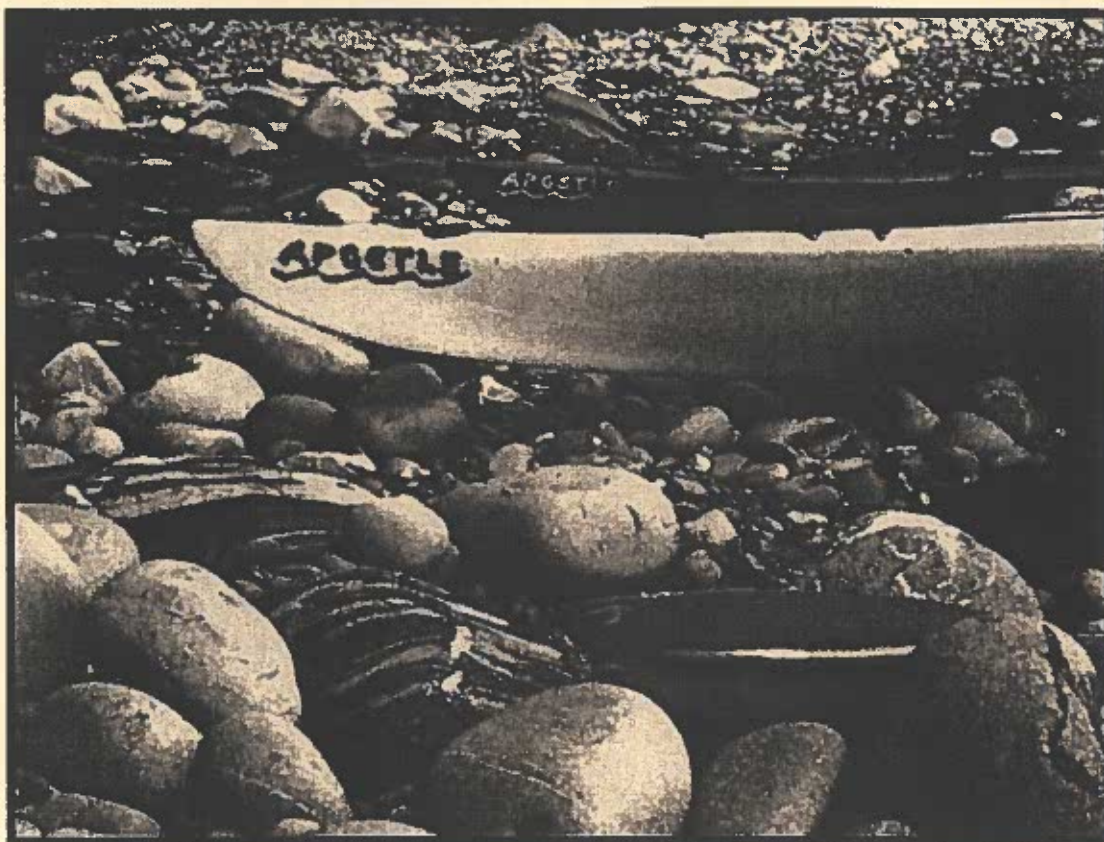
CURRENTS



Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

SPRING, 2001



Around the Bend

KWF director kayaks from Seward to Homer

By Robert Ruffner

I was quite surprised when over 70 people showed up on a Thursday night in January to check out a slide show from one of last summer's kayak adventures. Sea kayaking from Seward to Homer from mid to late August was quite a thrill for Kevin Schrier and I. The trip was close to 200 miles in length, lasting 14 days and there was not a single second that we didn't want to be out there. If you were around last summer you'll remember what fantastic weather we had, no rain and lots of sunny days.

Highlights of the trip included catching fish to supplement our larder of freeze dried goodies, watching puffins outmaneu-

ver gulls for herring, glimpses of humpback whales and seeing a few lazy otters everyday. One of the most memorable spots for me was when I paddled around one of the many points on day 12 and Mount Redoubt was in plain sight. At that moment, it hit me, we'd made it!

The slide show took in over \$300 with our suggested donation of \$5 at the door. This is enough money to refill 4 of our water quality kits that kids at area schools have worn out over the past 12 months.

I hope to have some slides from this coming summer's adventure to share next winter.

WHO IS KWF?

The Key Players

Board of Directors

Charles Quarre' — Chair
Lisa Parker - Sec./Treasurer
Ken Marlow - Vice Chair
Mona Painter
Dr. Todd Boling
Benjamin Jackinsky
Dr. David Wartinbee

Advisory Board

Catherine Cassidy
Peggy Mullen
Sanne Berrig
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.

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

Testing the water just got a little more scientific

The Kenai Watershed Forum's water quality program just became a little more high-tech.

With the help of a \$5,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and a \$2,000 discount from Hydrolab Corporation, KWF recently purchased a professional-grade instrument to monitor the Kenai River's water. The new machine, known as the Hydrolab, will replace the old and awkward chemical kits that had been used previously.

Science teachers will be instructed how to use the Hydrolab and will be able to use it on field trips to measure conductivity, dissolved oxygen, nitrate levels and other indicators of clean water.

The new instrument also will provide KWF with a more complete picture of the river's health. The Hydrolab can be placed in the river and left for weeks at a time. A computer in the machine can be programmed to test the river on a regular basis. The computer stores that information for later retrieval. It's like having a person stationed along the river 24 hours per day.

That feature will be valuable particularly when spring runoff pours into the river. That is a time when a winter's buildup of oil, grease and other urban waste is swept up by melting snow and into the river. Because the melt happens relatively quickly, it's difficult to measure manually. With the Hydrolab, we will be ready.

Volunteers will continue to play a vital role in our efforts to monitor the Kenai's water quality. They allow us to take snapshots of the river's health at many different locations throughout the year. The Hydrolab will supplement that information, providing us with what amounts to a moving picture of data, but only at one location at a time.

Class tutors teachers on Hydrolab

Teachers who use KWF's new Hydrolab will be trained to use the machine at a weekend course at Kenai Peninsula College, March 31 and April 1st.

It's a "stream ecology class for educators," said Dr. David Wartinbee, who will lead the course. He will show the teachers how to present data from the Hydrolab using graphs and statistical analysis. In addition, the class will offer information about bank restoration, hydrology, salmon, roles of different government agencies and how to find funding for projects.

Wartinbee expects about 20 elementary, middle and high school teachers to enroll in the class.

Michelle Brown bids farewell

The Nature Conservancy ponders its role on the Kenai

The Nature Conservancy has had a string of successes since Michelle Brown opened a Soldotna office for the organization in 1995.

With Michelle's help, the Kenai Watershed Forum got its start, the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust opened a branch office in the Kenai River area, and government agencies are cooperatively funding water quality monitoring on the Kenai, to name a few of the Conservancy's accomplishments.

It wasn't always easy for Michelle, though. When she first came to town, she was met with distrust. Many people viewed The Nature Conservancy as an environmental organization bent on buying up as much land as possible and locking it up in preserves.

Now as she is leaving after six years on the Kenai Peninsula, Michelle feels good about what she and The Nature Conservancy have accomplished. The Nature Conservancy did recently purchase about 100 acres along the Killey River to protect brown bear habitat, but Michelle believes she will be remembered most for her peacemaking efforts.

"I think now people feel confident that what I'm saying is true," said Michelle. "There's an obvious love for the river and people are looking beyond their needs and interests to see what the whole community needs."

Michelle leaves the Kenai with mixed emotions. She is heading for Albuquerque, New Mexico, to do public relations work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The federal agency is re-introducing the Mexican wolf into the Gila National Forest on the border of Mexico and Arizona. Michelle's job will be to work with ranchers, hunters and environmentalists to make the program a success.

Her real reason for leaving the Kenai, though, is to be closer to her family.

"If I have to leave Alaska, then New Mexico is the place to go," she said. "I'll miss smoked salmon, but I'll be glad to get good Mexican food."

Michelle believes that her biggest accomplishment with The Nature Conservancy was helping the Kenai Watershed Forum



Michelle Brown is leaving her post at The Nature Conservancy's Kenai River office after six years on the job.

get started. She said KWF has established itself as a trustworthy and important organization by using good information and science, spending time to get to know the river's various interest groups, and finding issues that can bring people together.

Now Michelle and the Conservancy are working with KWF to refine the Conservancy's role in the watershed as Michelle departs and KWF expands its programs. Should the Conservancy continue to focus on resolving community conflicts or should it become more involved in science and research? Should it maintain full-time staff or focus resources towards growing KWF programs?

"We want to both maintain our commitment to the Kenai River and the watershed's human communities and help KWF reach its full potential. The shape of the future program will reflect those two goals," Michelle said.

"The communities are at the heart of both organization's programs. I really enjoyed working here and being part of the communities of the Kenai River," Michelle said. "It's going to be hard to leave."

Anglers Pull Pike From Lakes

Anglers using spears and poles hauled in 53 pike from local lakes during February's fishing derby.

The derby, sponsored jointly by Soldotna Trustworthy Hardware, was the first of its kind in the area. Biologists worry that the introduced pike are gobbling up native salmon and trout. The derby helps identify where the pike are residing while making a dent in the predator's population.

The contest yielded some new information. Pike were caught in two lakes, Arc Lake and Watson Lake, where they had not been recorded before. Most of the pike were caught in Sevena Lake.

Mackey Lake and Union Lake also produced fish..

The biggest pike, 6.77 pounds, was caught by Joe Rybak Jr. using a rod and reel. Shane Blakely recorded the biggest speared fish, weighing 5.95 pounds.

Spearmen had the most success, bringing in 45 of the 53 pike caught. The pike averaged about 3 pounds.

The stomachs of the fish were removed and high school biology classes will analyze the contents to find out what the pike are eating.

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)

Tom Seggerman - TDS Construction
Alaska Wildland Adventures
Mitch Michaud and Jane Fuerstenau
Mike Navarre
Lauren Schmitz
Marge Mullen
Ole Andersson
Joe and Billie Hardy
Allan Norville
Dr. Todd Boling
Jan Wallace
Sanne Berrig
Dennis and Janet Randa

CHINOOK (\$50-\$99)

Jerry and Kathy Herring
Jean and Clayton Brockel
Betty Obendorf
Sheldon and Debbie Ruffner
Michael and Judy Blair
Loretta Flanders and Richard Hahn
Louis Bregou
Willie and Lorraine Davis
Cami and Mark Dalton
Lisa Parker and Steve Horn
Suzanne Little and Mark Burgener
Ed Jackinsky

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Brannon and Judy Ames

Warren Hoflich

Jack and Betty Dean

Ron Gravenhorst

Walt and Betty Arthur

Benjamin Jackinsky

Barbara Jewell

Linda Story - Woody Bird Circle B&B

Mavis Blazy - Blazy Apts/Laurawood Arms

SMOLT (\$10-\$24)

Jim Bennett

Gerald Brookman

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Austin and Jean Terrell

Cheri Edwards

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Robin Veluce (Gift Membership)

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