



CURRENTS



Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Spring 2004

Silver Salmon Creek Restoration

What comes to mind when you hear about a river restoration project? The answer probably depends on where you live and recreate. People living near the Kenai River will likely think of bank stabilization and/or boardwalks that are designed to provide recreational access while also allowing vegetation to flourish. In Seward, one might think of a project designed to reduce the effects of flooding. It is a goal of KWF to get one more type of restoration project on the general public's radar, one that restores access to fish habitat.

In comparison to the flooding and bank stabilization projects, little attention and funding have been given to correct fish barriers that are usually caused by under-designed culverts. A single culvert can block dozens of miles of upstream habitat for juvenile salmonids – the best habitat in the world is of no value if fish can't get to it. The problem is complex, but water that flows

through a culvert that is smaller than its associated stream flows faster in the culvert barrel than it does in the stream. If the culvert is much smaller than the stream, water will flow so fast that it can prevent fish from migrating upstream. This condition can also change the stream channel and over time create a small waterfall, again a barrier to juvenile salmon.

The Department of Fish and Game recently completed a study that estimates over 70% of the culverts on the Kenai Peninsula are at least a partial barrier to juvenile salmon. This is a huge issue in the Pacific Northwest. Without increased awareness as the peninsula continues to grow, we are concerned that this, too, will become a significant issue as more streams are crossed.

This summer, KWF will complete our first restoration project that addresses fish passage. Where Silver Salmon Creek crosses Oil Well Road just outside of Ninilchik, we will restore 600 feet of damaged stream that resulted from the combination of the fall 2002 flood and a too small culvert. In this dramatic example on a major tributary of Deep Creek, more than 12 miles of excellent habitat will then be opened up to juvenile salmon.



Above: Problem culvert
Right: Silver Salmon Creek



MISSION

Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

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Blaney and Holt

Join KWF Team for the Summer

The Kenai Watershed Forum is very excited to introduce our two summer interns, Lee Blaney and Galen Holt!

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Lee Blaney has lived most of his life in the city; however, during his early childhood, his family moved to a new house with woods across the street. From that day, Lee's love of nature took hold. Currently, Lee studies environmental engineering at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA, where he is on the Dean's List. Lee spends a lot of time trying to raise awareness about environmental issues, ranging from green energy to water pollution from factory farming. He spends the rest of his free time biking, hiking, reading, writing, and trying to play the accordion.



Lee already hard at work on water quality data.

Galen Holt grew up in Kasilof and went to high school at Soldotna High School. Galen thinks the Kenai Peninsula is a wonderful place and is very happy to be returning. He is currently attending Williams College in western Massachusetts and will graduate on June 6 with a biology degree. He is writing an honors thesis about natural selection in a population of tadpoles in Isle Royale National Park, Michigan. Last year he participated in a study abroad program in which he sailed from Mexico to Hawaii. For recreation, Galen enjoys telemark skiing, kayaking, mountain biking, and hiking. Galen is planning on attending graduate school to study ecology in the near future. He will be joining us this month.

A special thanks to...

MITCH MICHAUD AND JANE FUERSTENAU

Mitch and Jane have opened up their home to Lee, one of our summer interns. Their generosity has allowed us to once again host an intern. We certainly appreciate their support and continued commitment to our efforts.

Wetlands Mapping to be Completed

In Homer, Mike Gracz and Karyn Noyes will soon finish mapping all the wetlands on the nearly 900,000 acre Kenai Lowland west of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Moose Range). This is a Kenai River Center funded project aimed at providing easily accessible wetland maps to everyone over the Kenai Peninsula Borough's Internet Map server web-site (www.borough.kenai.ak.us/gisdept/ims/disclaimer.htm). At this site users will be able to view lot lines, high-resolution aerial photographs, and wetlands simultaneously (along with other interactive map layers such as floodplains, subdivision names and roads). The wetlands will be linked to photographs and descriptions (currently available, in draft form, at www.kenaiwetlands.net).

In addition to completing the Lowland mapping, Mike and Karyn will also map the wetlands in the City of Homer this summer. The City received an EPA grant that included a wetland mapping component; through Mike and Karyn's work, the Kenai Watershed Forum won the wetland mapping contract. To assist with all of this mapping, two additional folks will be hired for two months this summer; Katherine Rice and Logan Sander. Both are recent ecology graduates--Katy from Carleton College and Logan from Oregon State University. Both have good field experience and plant knowledge. Katy has published a paper on tropical Liana ecology. Logan was raised in Homer, and has worked two field seasons with the Natural Resources Conservation Service mapping plants and soils along the Kuskokwim River.

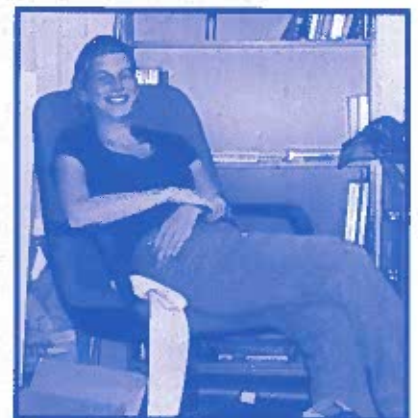


Project area -
Kenai Peninsula

The maps will show more than just locations of wetlands. By using computer mapping technology (Geographic Information System or GIS) they will form the foundation for a wetland management tool. Both the Lowland and Homer wetland maps are being created so that the wetlands are mapped in a way that can tell us how they function. Some examples of valuable wetland functions are fish and prairie habitat, water filtration, and flood control. Most of our Kenai wetlands are in good shape. Hopefully by learning from mistakes made in the lower 48, and with this proactive wetland management tool, we can avoid future costly wetland restoration.

Intern returns to work on Ph.D. research

In 2001, Miriam Jones completed a 6-month internship with the Kenai Watershed Forum sponsored by the Alaska Conservation Foundation. After taking a semester off between undergraduate and graduate school, Miriam is returning this summer to start her field work as part of pursuit of a doctorate degree from Columbia University. Her work will involve looking at wetlands and their role in processing carbon and nutrients that feed the base of the aquatic ecosystem. We wish her the best of luck this summer.



THANK YOU!

KENAI RIVER FESTIVAL 2004

A HUGE SUCCESS!



The Festival that celebrates our River!

TO OUR VOLUNTEERS . . .

for the many hours you donated, we thank you.
Your support helps make this festival GREAT!
We appreciate you!

AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

We couldn't have done it without you!

Bird Treatment & Learning Center
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SUMMER PROGRAM SERIES 2004

KWF's Summer Program is FREE and open to all! Please RSVP for the hikes/workshops you will be attending as a few offer limited space. As always, dress for the elements. For more information, to RSVP, or for further directions, contact Josselyn (907) 260-5449 or josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org. Enjoy!

Kenai River Festival

June 12 & 13 • 11 am-5 pm Daily

Fish Model Painting • Hands-on Science Tent • Fishing Clinics • Casting Practice • Artisan Booths • Live Music • Run for the River 5K • Salmon Dinners • and Much, Much, More!!! Spend the day eating great food, enjoying a variety of music, admiring (and buying!) the art of local artisans, and learning through educational activities about your river and its inhabitants. See you at the Kenai River Festival 2004!

Backyard Birding with Ken Marlow

June 17 • 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Learn to identify local birds by sight and sound with local river guide and birder, Ken Marlow. Bring your binoculars for an evening of birding! You should see a variety of warblers, waterfowl, and shorebirds. If time permits, Ken will also be giving a tour of the riverbank and side hill at either Bing's Landing or Morgan's Landing. Meet at 5:30 pm at Marlow's on the Kenai.

Tree Coring with Mike Gracz

June 24 • 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Trees can tell us much about history because they record events in their rings. You'll go on a hike and with an increment corer, (a device used to core into a tree) extract a small, soda straw core, boring across the rings of a tree. Mike will core several trees and you'll look at their ages and for signs of past events. You'll discover that many of the small trees in a forest are almost as old as Many of the taller trees, and that trees are



Birding at the Marlow's last summer

growing better than ever on the Kenai since the end of the little ice age. You might even find a fire scar and be able to date the burn. **Meeting place TBD. Stay posted!**

Silver Salmon Creek Restoration Project

Hike with Robert Ruffner

June 26 • 10:00 am – Noon

This spring and summer, KWF will be restoring a major section of Silver Salmon Creek near Ninilchik. The floods in Fall 2002 completely destroyed the area where Oil Well Road crosses Silver Salmon Creek. You will visit the site and hike the section downstream from the culvert failure. During your visit, Robert will talk about the events that led to the culvert failure and the reconstruction and restoration of the streambed. The site will be under construction, so bring rubber boots or hip boots. Meet at the culvert crossing on Oil Well Road (approx. 5 miles from the Sterling Hwy) at 10:00 am; bring a sack lunch.

Naturalist Hike on Summit Creek Trail

with Dominique Collet

July 3 • 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Get ready to hike!!! You will be hiking Summit Creek Trail with local naturalist and author of several willow guides, Dominique Collet. Meet at Summit Creek trailhead just south of Summit Lake on the Seward Highway. Bring a sack lunch, plenty of water, and good hiking gear. This is an all-day hike on an intermediate trail.

**Geology Tour from Soldotna to Skilak Lake
with Dick Reger**

July 10 • 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Join us as we walk back through history with Dick Reger and look at the last major glaciation and cutting of the Kenai River Valley. Dick, an expert geologist, will be giving an unforgettable tour explaining the geological dynamics of the area from all the way back to when this whole area was covered with ice to present. Car pool arrangements will be made to tour different lecture spots from the Soldotna Visitor Center to Skilak Lake Loop. Bring rubber boots, a sack lunch, and plenty of water. Meet at the Soldotna Visitor Center at 10:00 am.

**Invasive Plant Awareness Walk
with Janice Chumley**

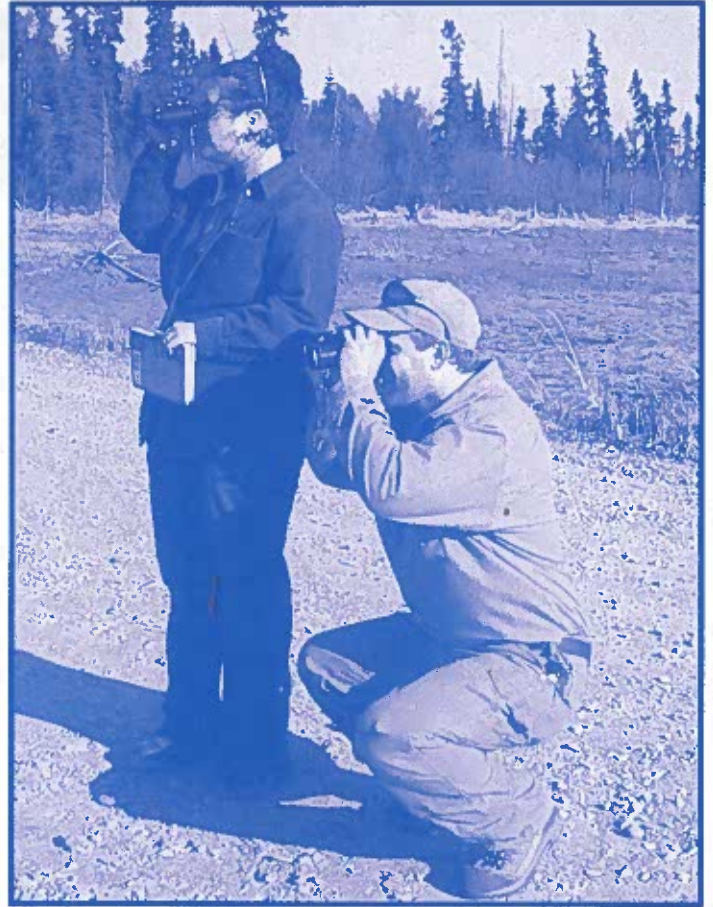
July 22 • 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Janice Chumley, IPM tech for UAF Cooperative Extension Service, will give a presentation on Invasive Plant Awareness. The discussion will cover how invasive plants change native plant communities, pathways, and vectors for introduction, invasive plants to watch out for on the Kenai Peninsula, and why it's important to recognize and control these species before they become established. Meeting place TBD. Stay tuned!

**Visit the Russian River Weir
with Patti Berkahn**

July 29 • 10:00 am – 2:30 pm

Visit the Russian River Falls and weir site! Patti Berkahn from ADF&G will be leading us up the Russian River trail (5 miles round trip) to the falls and the weir site. Patti is a Fishery Biologist and Project Leader for the sockeye salmon escape-ment study at the Russian River. She will explain the dynamics of the Russian River salmon runs. You will observe salmon jumping the falls and visit the remote field camp. Wear sturdy shoes and bring a sack lunch and rain gear. 15 people maximum, RSVP early! Directions and meeting instructions will be discussed upon RSVP.



Moose, Bears, & Wolves with Ted Bailey

August 12 • 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Ted Bailey, area biologist, will be giving a narrative of his work with mammals on the Kenai Peninsula. You will be walking the loop trails at the refuge headquarters and hopefully see some wildlife. Meet at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge headquarters at 5:45 pm.

**Mushroom Identification
with Dominique Collet**

August 29 • 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

If you ever wished you knew more about area mushrooms, this is your chance! Expert Dominique Collet will be helping you identify your backyard fungi. The first part of the program you will carpool to different areas to collect mushrooms and the second part you will be grouping and identifying your finds. Don't forget your mushroom identification guides. Meet at the Sterling Senior Center at 10:00 am.

KWF Membership

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

River Steward - \$100

Marge Mullen
Mitch Michaud &
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Tony & Sandra Lewis
Dennis & Kathryn Gease
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Chinook - \$50

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Glenda & Dave Feeken

John & Marta Czarnezki
Nedra & Jim Evenson

Sockeye - \$25

Jim Richardson
Mavis Blazy
Betty Smith
Bud & Sammy Crawford

Additional Contributions

George Kapolchok
Norcon - *In the name of Rodney Rost*
Austin & Jean Terrell
Cheri Edwards
Chris Degernes

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