

CURRENTS

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum • Spring 2005



Flowing into Baseline Sampling

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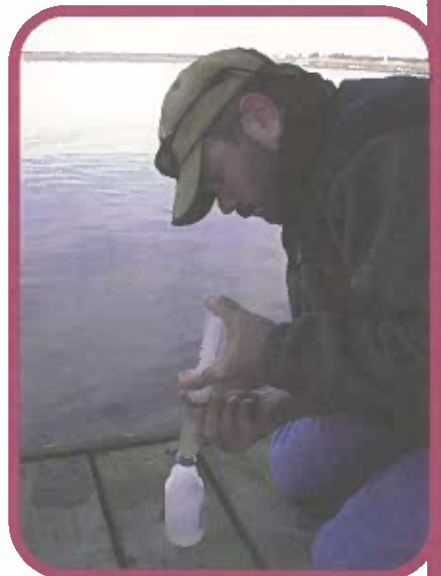
This April, KWF completed its 5th year of baseline sampling of the Kenai River Watershed. Every April and again in each July since 2000, water samples have been collected at 21 sites from Cooper Landing to Cook Inlet.



Julie Laker and Lynnda Kahn on the Kenai River

Our plan has been successfully carried out by having numerous agencies dividing up the workload to cover a big watershed. Six sampling teams each collect a sample from 2 to 4 sites, depending how hard they are to access. This strategy covers all 21 index sites in a single day. Each water sample is then evaluated at a 30% discount by Analytica Laboratory in Anchorage. Our coordination and multiple agency participation have combined to create a data set to use as a starting point for assessing the health of the Kenai River by looking at the concentrations of metals, nutrients, hydrocarbons, and bacteria. We will continue this monitoring effort as long as funding is available to do this important work.

We'd like to thank our many partners in this project: Brad Olson, and his team from Analytica Group Testing Lab in Anchorage; Rick Wood and the City of Soldotna for making their lab facilities available to us; and John Morhorcich, Glenda Landua, and Brenda Trefon for helping out at the lab on test day. Our field crews, many who've followed this project from nearly the beginning, include Fred Macvie, Jerry Potter, Ed O'Connor, Doug Palmer, Julie Laker, Lynnda Kahn, Ginny Litchfield, Jade Gamble, Cathy Cline, Linda Noyd, Don Barber, Tim Stevens, Ryan Gosse, Ruth D'Amico, and Alice Hall. Funders of the sampling program include: Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc., Kenaitze Indian Tribe, U.S. Forest Service, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, Alaska Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. Many others behind the scenes are invaluable. No agency or non-profit has the ability to do this alone so we Thank You!



Ed O'Connor testing at the City of Kenai Dock

FREE
Summer
Activities
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MISSION

Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

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KWF Welcomes Summer Interns

Adam McCullough, Krista Holman, Jennifer McCard



Born and raised in Fresno, California, Adam graduated in the class of 2000 and attended Fresno State University for a year. After that, Adam transferred to Humboldt State and will be finishing his bachelor's degree in GIS and Remote Sensing in December. His favorite book and movie are *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and his favorite flavor of ice cream is Tin Roof Sundae. Adam's hobbies include playing guitar, hiking, and reading. His career goal is to get a healthy dose of outdoor data collection mixed with indoor analysis time.

Although originally from Germany, Krista spent a large portion of her life growing up in Ohio. Currently a Master's student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, she is studying Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. Krista's most recent research work focuses on the effects of contamination on marine aquatic plants off the island of San Salvador, Bahamas. She has two degrees under her belt, a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry from Denison University in Granville, Ohio and a M.Ed. from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Krista is currently teaching high school biology at Talawanda City Schools in Oxford, Ohio. She is looking forward to spending this summer working with the Kenai Watershed Forum and hopes she can contribute to the conservation of the Kenai Peninsula watersheds.



Having grown up in Alaska, Jennifer is very familiar with the local wildlife and fish species. In 2001, she was the fifth place winner in the Caring for the Kenai competition with an entry regarding the interaction of pike and salmon. A 2003 graduate of Soldotna High School, Jennifer is a junior at the University of Southern California and pursuing a degree in Environmental Studies. During the school year, she works in a laboratory at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, where she has gained extensive computer skills and knowledge regarding DNA analysis. In her spare time, Jennifer enjoys hiking, biking, reading, and spending time with friends. Jennifer's ultimate career goal is to work with the Environmental Protection Agency in research, conservation, restoration, and/or advocacy programs. She is excited about the opportunity to work with the Kenai Watershed Forum's research regarding water quality, habitat restoration, and education programs this summer.

Coming Soon to a Computer Near You: Real Time Water Quality Data

Thanks to the generosity of Hach Environmental and Remote Data Inc., KWF will soon have hourly updates posted on the internet in near real time for several key water quality measures. From your computer, you'll be able to see the temperature, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and pH of the Lower Kenai River starting this summer.

A buoy will support a platform with a Hydrolab measuring device, solar panel and radio equipment that will send data on a regular schedule to a satellite and on to our website, showing measurements around the clock in 15 minute intervals.

This information will complement the twice per year sampling described on page 1 where we collect samples that must be sent to a laboratory for analysis. This project will expand our knowledge of daily, seasonal, and year-to-year fluctuations in the water quality of the Kenai River. This data set will be used in schools to augment our adopt-a-school water quality curriculums and focus attention on the water quality of the Kenai River.

Hach Environmental donated over \$4000 in upgrades to our Hydrolab measuring device and Remote Data provided a huge discount on the equipment that relays data to the internet. We're excited about this new project and the information that it will provide us for maintaining the health of the Kenai River.

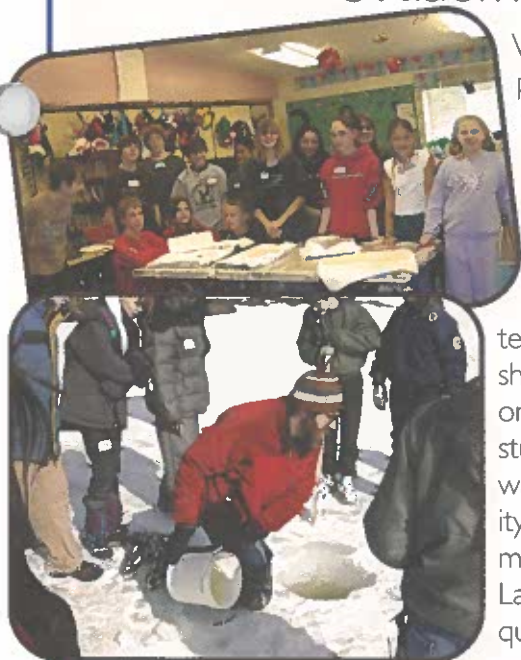
Students Dive in to Water Quality

Working with the youth on the Kenai Peninsula is one of the most rewarding parts of our jobs. Seeing students excited about science makes everything worth the time and effort. This past spring, we had the opportunity to work with Mrs. Barnes and her 6th grade class at Nikiski North Star Elementary.

We worked with the class on three consecutive days. The first day we focused on the definition of a watershed, maps, watershed delineation and system flow. The students constructed their own watershed models using butcher paper and rocks. The second day we took the curriculum underground and studied groundwater. We also touched on pollution, water safety, and water monitoring test kits. The activity this day was to make a groundwater simulator model. The final day we walked the class down to Lake Arness for water quality testing. The lake was quite frozen but after several minutes with an ice auger, we finally broke through.

Samples were collected and taken back to the classroom for testing. The class tested dissolved oxygen, pH, color, and turbidity. Meredith McCool, who runs the Adopt-A-Stream program for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, joined us on the lake visit and helped with the testing back at the classroom.

Starting this fall, we will be expanding our curriculum to be similar to the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Adopt-A-Stream program. We will work with a class for an entire school year. We are looking forward to spending a whole school year with one class!





June 11 & 12 • 11-5 daily • Kenai Green Strip

On Stage...

Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum

Bunny Swan • Mike Morgan

Totem • Nancy Anderson

Katie Skrha and The Couzins

JD Uponen & Don Weller

Mabrey Brothers Band • Sentio

Joe Ray Skrha • Melissa Smith

Southern Comfort Band

plus many more to come!

KENAI RIVER
FUN & IN



Kids Activities

Salmon Hats
 Hooked on Fishing
 Pathways to Fishing
 Puppet Shows
 Storytelling
 Face Painting
 Salmon Parade
 Wooden Fish Models
 Clay Seals
 Live Birds
 Make your own Buttons
 Education Tent
 T-Shirt Stamping

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FESTIVAL
INSPIRATION



Photos courtesy of Merrill Sikorski

Summer Program 2005

Presented by the Kenai Watershed Forum

This year's Summer Program is one of the most diverse and interesting to date! After taking suggestions from interested members and attendees from last year's program, we have assembled a fantastic group of local experts to lead the hikes and workshops. KWF's Summer Program is FREE and open to all! We do ask that you RSVP for the hikes/workshops you will be attending, as there are a few with limited space. Contact Josselyn at (907) 260-5449 or josselyn@kenaiwatershed.org for more information and to RSVP.

May 13 & 14 • Kenai Shorebird Celebration & Workshop

This two-day celebration and workshop was designed for the beginner as well as the advanced birder. The central Kenai Peninsula offers many fantastic areas to bird. We explored the wonders of birding in our own backyard. The event included a series of classroom discussions as well as in-the-field birding expeditions. Most of the time was spent in the field with a host of local experts ready to introduce the birds of Kenai while enhancing birding skills.



May 22 • Dandelion Sundae • 1-4pm

Dandelions along with many other invasive plants have made their way to the Kenai Peninsula and will begin posing quite a problem if we don't take care of this issue soon. Invasive plants displace native vegetation, degrade wildlife habitat, and negatively affect human health, the economy, and the environment. "Dandelion Sundae" is for everyone. Each person who brings a plastic grocery bag full of dandelion flowers and seed heads will receive an **ice cream sundae**! We will be at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge headquarters from 1-4pm.

June 2 • Exploring Bear, Moose and their Habitat with Ted Bailey • 5:30pm

Ted Bailey, area biologist, will give a narrative on his work with the mammals on the Kenai Peninsula. We will walk to the overlook area on the Vista Trail at Upper Skilak Campground. Meet at the shelter/picnic area near the public restrooms and parking lot at the Upper Skilak Campground at 5:30. Bring binoculars and wear your hiking shoes.

June 4 • Raft the Kenai River Canyon with expert geologist Dick Reger

The Kenai Watershed Forum is offering a unique, seven-hour raft trip with area geologist, Dick Reger. This is a full day exploration of the upper Kenai River from Cooper Landing through the Kenai River Canyon, ending at Skilak Lake. The trip will feature a wonderful discussion of the history of the upper Kenai River valley during the past 25,000 years, including the cutting of the Kenai River canyon through bedrock, and the cause of episodic outburst floods and the resulting effects on the river. Dick has a PhD in Geology and has been researching the area for over 43 years. This trip is a must for those interested in area geology and history and has been made possible by the generous donation of Alaska Wildland Adventures. For information and reservations, please call the Kenai Watershed Forum office at 260-5449. Space is limited. Proceeds benefit the Kenai Watershed Forum. **Sorry this trip is FULL.**



June 11 & 12 • 15th Annual Kenai River Festival

The Festival that celebrates our River! 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. Activities include: Fish Model Painting • Hands-on Science Booth • Fishing Clinics • Casting Practice • Artisan Booths • Live Music • Run for the River 5K • Salmon Dinners • and Much, Much, More!!! Come share the FUN & INSPIRATION at the 15th Annual Kenai River Festival!

July 14 • Weed Pull at Cunningham Park with Janice Chumley • 5:30pm

Janice Chumley, IPM tech for UAF Cooperative Extension Service will give a presentation on invasive plants. The discussion will cover how invasive plants change native plant communities, pathways and vectors for introduction, plants to be on the lookout for on the Kenai Peninsula and why it's important to recognize and control these species before they become established. Meet at Cunningham Park, on the banks of the Kenai River.

July (TBA) • Naturalist Hike with Dominique Collet

Get ready to hike!!! We will be hiking a local trail with local naturalist and author of several willow guides, Dominique Collet. Dominique enjoys taking us off the beaten path, so be ready to hike. This is an all-day hike on an intermediate trail. Bring a lunch, plenty of water and good hiking gear. Trail, meeting place, and time to be announced.



July 21 • Russian River Hike with Patty Berkhahn • 10am - 2pm

Visit the Russian River Falls and weir site! Patti Berkhahn 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 sock-eye salmon escapement 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, bring a sack lunch/snack and don't forget your rain gear. Meet at the upper trailhead parking lot at 10:00am. This program is limited to 15, RSVP early!

August 11 • Habitat Restoration Discussion with Brie Darr and Dean Hughes • 5:30pm-7pm

Brie Darr, habitat biologist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, along with Dean Hughes from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, will be leading a discussion on bank restoration and stabilization for landowners. During this discussion, Brie will address potential problems and offer simple techniques to help keep your bank in place for years to come. Meet at Morgan's Landing at the headquarters office at 5:30 for a short hike down to the River for the discussion.

Late August (TBA) • Mushroom Identification with Dominique Collet

If you ever wished you knew more about area mushrooms, this is your chance! Expert Dominique Collet will help you identify your backyard fungi. For the first part of the workshop you will carpool to different areas to collect mushrooms; for the second part you will group and identify your finds. Don't forget your mushroom identification guides. Meeting place and time to be announced.

KWF Membership

As of 5/20/2005

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

River Steward - \$100

Sanne Berrig
Tom Seggerman
Great Alaska Adventure Lodge
Tony Lewis
Alaska's Last Frontier
Dennis & Kathryn Gease
Jay Parker & Peggie Bensch
Susan & Bill Larned
Mitch Michaud & Jane Fuerstenaue
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Peggy Mullen
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Chinook - \$50

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Loretta Flanders
Barbara Jewell
Dave & Glenda Feeken
John & Pauline Simmons
John & Glenda Landua
John & Marta Czamezki
Shannon Donnelly

Sockeye - \$25

Ken Lancaster
Robin Veluce
Mark Luttrell
Bud & Sammy Crawford
Jim Richardson
Ann Rappoport
Dorothy Barker
Cheryl Schey

Additional Contributions

Cheri Edwards
Catherine Cassidy



Stephanie & Josselyn brushing up on their water sampling.

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