

CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE KENAI WATERSHED FORUM



**KENAI
WATERSHED
FORUM**

Spring 2016

www.KenaiWatershed.org

907-260-5449

"Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula"

The 26th Annual Kenai River Festival is on!

Branden Bornemann, KWF GIS/Water Quality Specialist

This June 10, 11 and 12, the Kenai River Festival will be celebrated for the 26th consecutive year.

Wow! 26 years!

That means that the first Kenai River Festival, originally hosted in Kenai, was in 1991! A lot of things have changed in the past 26 years. Think about this: In 1991 the Cold War and the Gulf War (Desert Storm) came to an end, Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls won their first NBA championship, the first hand-held cell phone hit the consumer market, Nirvana's Nevermind was released, Magic Johnson announced he had HIV, it would be another five years until you could buy a DVD player, and I was seven years old!

I'm a "scientist" by trade, so why am I the Festival Coordinator? It's a pretty easy answer for me: I love the Kenai Watershed Forum and our dedicated staff and community, and I absolutely enjoy being a part of the Kenai River Festival. It's a great thing to be able to be involved in a 26-year-old festival that has grown, but not changed, from its original core values of providing a fun, free, educational and family-friendly festival to celebrate the lifeblood of our community—the Kenai River!

The origin of the festival is truly an Alaskan story: homesteaders of the area with their families, along with a few other locals, decided in 1991 that it was time the community came together and put on a festival to celebrate the many ways in

Continued on Page 7: FESTIVAL



Salmon painting in the KRF Kids Zone will return to this year's festival!

2015 Program Highlights and Accomplishments

KWF Staff

Research

Water Quality Monitoring— In July 2015, KWF completed its 16th year of monitoring of the Kenai River Watershed! Every April and July since 2000, water samples have been collected at 22 sites from Cooper Landing to the Cook Inlet. These data provide critical insight into the health of this vital watershed system. The data from this study are available to the general public online.

Salmon Stream Documentation— Over the 2015 field season, KWF was able to document and submit new salmon bearing streams to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Anadromous Waters Catalogue for listing and protection. KWF was able to confirm other smaller streams and lakes as salmon bearing, as well.

Watershed Mapping— KWF continued to lead an update of the USGS National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) on the Kenai Peninsula. During 2015 KWF partnered with St. Mary's University of Minnesota to validate edits made to the NHD from 2012-2014. This project should come to a close in 2016 and throughout the course of this project KWF and its partners have addressed editing needs for over

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Lovalaska Pick.Click.Give.

Earth and sky, woods and fields, lakes and rivers, the mountain and the sea, are excellent schoolmasters, and teach some of us more than we can ever learn from books.

- John Lubbock

THANK YOU to the 114 Alaskans who have already dedicated a portion of their 2016 PFD to the Kenai Watershed Forum. Your contribution allows us to continue working towards our mission of healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

It's not too late to join in supporting our efforts of Education, Restoration and Research for healthy habitats and strong salmon runs for future generations! Alaskans can add or change pick, click.give donations right up until August 31. Simply access your PFD application and click on the green button that says "Add or Change Your PickClickGive Donation."



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Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) is a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to maintaining the health of the watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska. KWF is recognized as the regional watershed organization of the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, successfully identifying and addressing the needs of the region by providing high quality EDUCATION, RESTORATION, and RESEARCH programs.

Our mission is "working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula". KWF is a dynamic and maturing organization that is poised to serve the Kenai Peninsula and the State of Alaska with increasing effectiveness in the near and distant future.

KWF Staff

Jack Sinclair
Robert Ruffner
Rhonda McCormick
Dan Pascucci
Branden Bornemann
Jeff Sires
Mike Gracz
Melissa Steritz
Kati Dutcher
Sarah Hobart

2016 KWF Interns

Luke Violette
Madison Perlick
Alice Main
Courtney Stroh

KWF Board of Directors

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Matt Pyhala, *Vice President*
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44129 Sterling Hwy
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(907) 260-5449

www.kenaiwatershed.org

Connect with us on:



A Message from KWF's Board President

Dear KWF Members, Supporters, and Friends,

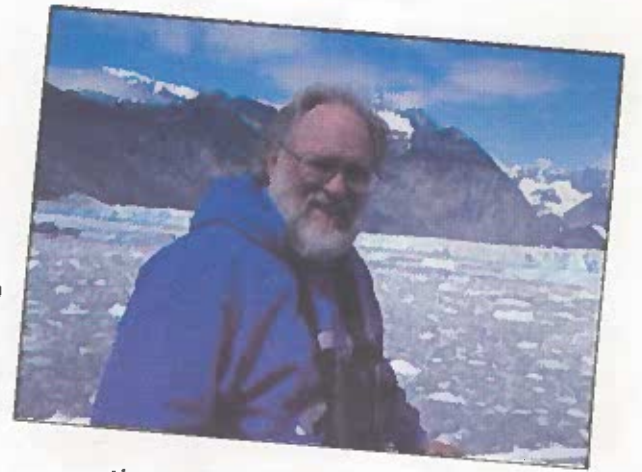
When the Kenai Watershed Forum first came into being about 18 years ago, there were hopes that this organization would become a vibrant and integral part of the community matrix. Those hopes have been realized with the KWF's status as a leader on environmental issues, by providing educational activities about watersheds, by supporting scientific research and monitoring of our valued waters, and by helping mitigate watershed problems that arise. Our talented and highly respected personnel have built this organization within the local community and throughout the state. As current Board President, I look with pride at the accomplishments of the Watershed Forum and look forward as we bring in new faces to continue the mission of working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

Personnel make any organization and we have been blessed with staff that have tirelessly followed the vision of working within the community to protect and improve our watersheds. A number of our staff have become synonymous with the name "Kenai Watershed Forum." Over the past two years, several of these leaders have decided to move on to new vistas, new family obligations, and new jobs. We wish them the very best and thank them for their longstanding service to KWF and the community. A number of very active Board Members have also moved on to new locations or other demands and we thank them for their well-reasoned guidance along the way.

There are some new faces at the Kenai Watershed Forum these days. We have some new Board members and some new staff members. There are a few more to arrive as we replace our "irreplaceables" with new and energetic staff. We want to thank those new staff members and new board members for joining this team and we look forward to working together. While there may be a transition of individuals in the office, our dream lives on and the mission remains focused on working within our community to ensure healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

David Wartinbee, PhD, JD

Kenai Watershed Forum Board President



KWF Calendar of Events

To learn more about any of the events listed, please visit www.KenaiWatershed.org!

June 4, 2016 • Stream Watch Ambassador Training (Cooper Landing)

Make a difference this summer: Become a Stream Watch Ambassador! Ambassadors provide a stewardship presence on the river by sharing information on ethical angling, bear safety and river health. Meet river enthusiasts from across the state, enjoy a volunteer campsite and make a difference by protecting local rivers.

June 10, 11, 12, 2016 • Kenai River Festival

Let's Celebrate! Free, Family Fun for Everyone! The 26th annual Kenai River Festival grew out of the Kenai Watershed Forum's desire to provide a free, fun setting for the community to celebrate the river that gives so much. Learn how to give back to the river keeping it healthy and productive for generations to come. Legendary festival highlights include world famous pioneer salmon dinners, Run for the River 5K/10 mile race, free riverside entertainment and more.

June 25, 2016 • Stream Watch Ambassador Orientation (Soldotna)

Make a difference this summer: Become a Stream Watch Ambassador! Ambassadors provide a stewardship presence on the river by sharing information on ethical angling, bear safety and river health. Meet river enthusiasts from across the state, enjoy a volunteer campsite and make a difference by protecting local rivers.

July 6-August 3, 2016 • 2016 Salmon Run Series

Come enjoy running and the Tsalteshi Trails this summer during the Salmon Run Series. A five-race series held at the Tsalteshi Trails Wednesday nights at 6:00pm beginning July 6th and continuing to August 3rd.

\$10 - Online registration - www.kenaiwatershed.org

\$15 - Race day registration

\$45 - 5 Race discount! Register for all 5 races and receive a discount!

Adapting to Change: KWF Starts a New Chapter

Jack Sinclair, KWF Executive Director

One of the more challenging tasks that every living thing must do at some point in their life is adapt to change.

It's an organic process that is inevitable. It applies to all living things and to every type of organization, family, business, societal and governmental unit. It's a recurring theme you read and hear about in every type of media. It can be good and it can be bad.

Change tells a story, but only if you're listening. That story can relate an important message about changes in the world around us. Changes that if understood early enough can be reckoned with, and perhaps even save us from some unnecessary hardship or allow us to make plans to avoid an even worse outcome had we not been listening.

A unique and important quality that the Kenai Watershed Forum has embodied throughout its existence is to be a good listener. That means we strive to comprehend the changes around us in this amazing system of watershed throughout the Kenai Peninsula, and as we discover new information, we bring it out in the open for all to see.

The Kenai Watershed Forum has matured from a small group of concerned individuals focused almost exclusively on the Kenai River drainage to include every watershed within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The complexity of the projects and programs that KWF now manages is formidable in size and scope. Taking on such herculean projects as the hydrocarbon issues on the Kenai River, to advocating for the Kenai Peninsula Borough's 50-foot habitat protection ordinance to the repair and replacement of dozens of culverts throughout the Kenai Peninsula to restore and reclaim critical salmon habitat reaches; the KWF has shown it has the chops to help improve our watersheds and communities.

Thanks

I step into this job in the wake of some wonderful and dynamic out-going staff that elevated every facet of work that they were involved in. While thanks will never be enough to give them for all of their contributions, I want to recognize them, again, here.

Thanks to former Streamwatch Coordinator Lisa Beranek, who pioneered this highly successful river steward program from a fledgling mission—assisting the Russian River confluence land managers with reaching and teaching a massive influx of anglers—to its current size that includes the middle and lower Kenai River as well as the annual throng of personal use dipnetters at the mouth of the Kasilof River! Lisa's ability to successfully organize, coordinate and manage a complex system of volunteers in some very challenging outdoor settings where people, fish and bears often gather was an impressive accomplishment! She never missed an opportunity to thank all of those that helped to make the program so successful. As she launches into her next venture as the PNW Volunteer Coordinator for Trout Unlimited, we wish Lisa every happiness in her personal and professional pursuits!

Farewell to Invasive Species Specialist Edgar Orejuela, who not only took on the management of an ongoing Reed Canary Grass treatment and removal program but also tackled a rapidly developing situation involving a pervasive invasive aquatic plant, Elodea (waterweed) that recently showed up in peninsula lakes. Through his tireless efforts working with the state, federal and borough governments, he was able to help in fully removing this nuisance weed from three large floatplane-accessible lakes. If allowed to grow unchecked, Elodea can and will make fishing and boating impossible and will out-compete other native aquatic

plants that offer natural habitat for juvenile salmon. Edgar accepted a job with the Florida State Department of Environmental Protection working with their water quality programs. We are deeply grateful for Edgar's work here and wish him well in his pursuits!!

Josselyn O'Connor brought enthusiasm and energy to every aspect of her work as our Development Director. "Joss" was one of those people that was fueled by inspiration and ideas; it quickly infected those around her. She was the dynamo behind many KWF fundraising events and programs. Her ability to organize an event to a "T" was and is legendary. Joss's level of expertise was obviously going to eventually take her places; she will shine wherever she goes. The community and KWF have benefitted greatly from her joyful presence here.

How do I thank Robert Ruffner? Robert was the first and only Executive Director the KWF has known since its creation. He provided vision, leadership and guidance on issues that seemed impossible to address and overcome. His ability to bring disparate groups together to solve a common problem is perhaps one of his most amazing skills. I am pretty sure I could dedicate this entire article to Robert and his accomplishments, but I may have to save that for another time. Suffice it to say that an attempt to acknowledge most of Robert's great deeds in this small space would be insufficient and futile. You probably noticed that Robert is still considered part of the staff here. He continues to be KWF's special project manager for ongoing culvert and bridge work!

Thanks also:

To the continuing support of active and engaged members, sponsors and an involved community;

To the thoughtful guidance and dedication of the KWF Board of Directors;

And, to the skillful and dedicated staff that

Continued on Page 7: JACK

Always a Good Time, Naturally!

Summertime is right around the corner, and if you are looking for something exciting for your 6-12 year olds this summer, you've found it!

We are happy to offer Fur, Fins, Feathers, Flowers, and Fun at Soldotna Creek Park. What better way for your child to spend a summer day than by exploring the banks of Soldotna Creek and searching for aquatic insects, flipping over logs in search of decomposition in action, or playing in a forest pretending to be a predator on the hunt?

Each week long session includes games, crafts, lessons, songs, and most importantly lots and lots of fun!

Participants will benefit from spending time outside with new friends exploring rivers and forests on the Kenai Peninsula.

Alaska is full of all sorts of adventures. Come explore Fur, Fins, Feathers, Flowers, and Fun with new friends this summer, and experience Alaska in exciting and educational ways!



Kenai Watershed Forum



FUR * FINS * FEATHERS * FLOWERS * FUN

REGISTRATION FOR 2016
OPEN NOW!

Mapping the Kenai's Water

How the Kenai Watershed Forum is improving stream and river mapping on the Kenai

Kacy Krieger, Alaska Hydrography Coordinator, Alaska Center for Conservation Science at UAA

The diverse, complex and rugged landscape of the Kenai Peninsula is a landscape defined by water. There are more than 6000 miles of streams and rivers, thousands of lakes, ponds and waterbodies, and expansive glaciers found across the Peninsula. However, until recently, mapping of these water resources was inaccurate and in need of being updated to meet modern applications and requirements. The Kenai Watershed Forum is changing that.

Working alongside partners, the Kenai Watershed forum is updating the surface water maps of the Kenai Peninsula using modern mapping techniques and new datasets. Updating the mapping of streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and other surface water features on the Kenai Peninsula is a significant contribution that will have a lasting impact for years to come.

Current and accurately mapped streams, rivers and lakes are essential for countless applications ranging from solving public and private property issues, to managing natural resources, to effective fish habitat management and conservation. However, on the Kenai Peninsula and throughout Alaska, agencies and organizations use less-than-accurate surface water mapping data that was originally created from 1950s-era USGS Historical Topographic Maps. A lot has changed in over the past 60 years.

The existing surface water maps for the Kenai Peninsula contained many errors including streams mapped outside their actual channels, misrepresentations of flow direction, missing streams and lakes, incorrect location of the coastline and poorly mapped lake shorelines. There is a pressing need to correct these issues and improve the surface water mapping to meet the needs of federal, state, and local groups and agencies.

The Kenai Watershed Forum is playing a critical role in updating the surface water mapping by seeking and securing necessary funding to complete the project, overseeing mapping activities, providing project management and offering local on-the-ground expertise and knowledge throughout the entire process.

Advances in technology, and the availability of quality and accurate data,

are key in this effort to map the Peninsula's surface waters. The Kenai Watershed Forum and its partners are taking advantage of the lidar dataset that was collected over the Peninsula in 2008. These high-resolution laser measurements of the earth's surface, along with new satellite and aerial imagery, advanced computing technology and familiarity with the landscape on the Kenai allow cartographers to map the streams, rivers and lakes to levels of detail that previously weren't possible.

Kenai Watershed Forum began the stream mapping project in 2012 with a preliminary round of updates and has since partnered with different groups to complete the project by the end of this year. Although the project will wrap up by then end of the year, there will likely be additional updates needed when major events change the flow of water or every few years.

Efforts to update water mapping on the Kenai Peninsula have received extensive support from Kenai Watershed Forum partners. Various local entities have provided editing oversight and contributions to this project. The Forum received technical contributions from the Alaska Hydrography Database, St. Mary's University of Minnesota, the USGS and the Alaska Hydrography Technical Working Group.

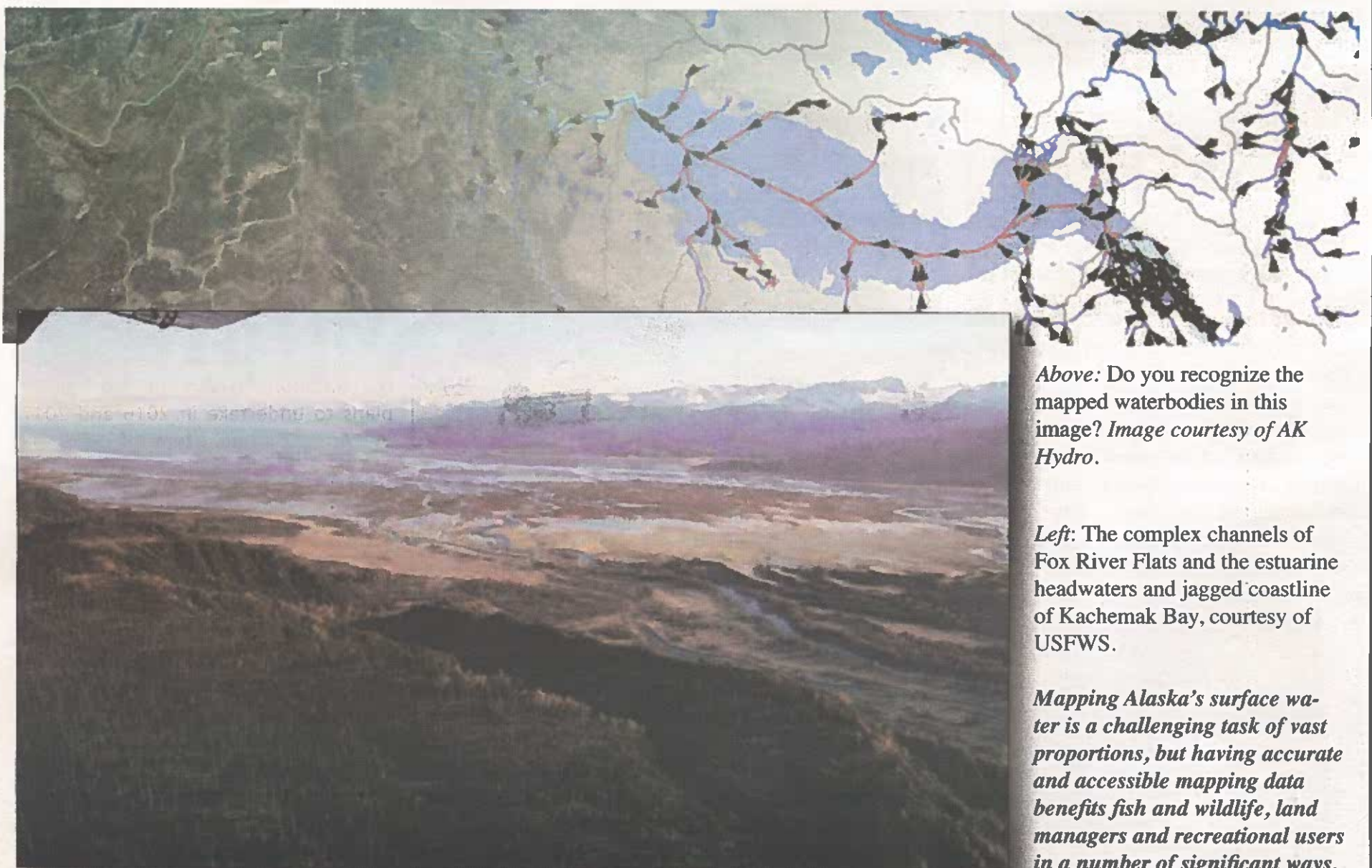
Kenai Watershed Forum is working directly with the Alaska Hydrography Technical Working Group on this project. This group oversees the maintenance, stewardship and use of updated mapping of Alaska's surface water resources. The group includes representatives from, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the University of Alaska.

The USGS, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Multi State Conservation Grant through the Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership, and the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership provided funding for this project.

Once the updates are complete, the new data will be made publicly available in the National Hydrography Dataset. This authoritative national surface water mapping dataset for the entire United States is managed by the USGS. To download the data or learn more about surface water mapping and the National Hydrography Dataset, please visit <http://nhd.usgs.gov/>.

What does NHD mapping look like?

The USGS NHD is a digital map of surface water in the U.S. and is an official record of drainage networks with features such as rivers, streams, canals, lakes, ponds, coastlines, dams and streamgages (<http://nhd.usgs.gov/>). Here you see what NHD looks like in a digital environment (right side of image) as compared to an aerial image of the same landscape (left side of image).



Above: Do you recognize the mapped waterbodies in this image? Image courtesy of AK Hydro.

Left: The complex channels of Fox River Flats and the estuarine headwaters and jagged coastline of Kachemak Bay, courtesy of USFWS.

Mapping Alaska's surface water is a challenging task of vast proportions, but having accurate and accessible mapping data benefits fish and wildlife, land managers and recreational users in a number of significant ways.

HIGHLIGHTS: Continued from Page 1

6,000 miles of rivers and streams, including approximately 3,000 miles of anadromous rivers and streams, over 4,300 lakes and 100 miles of coastline.

Water flow measurements— In cooperation with the University of Alaska, KWF is a participant in “Experimental Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research” (EPSCoR)-Alaska. EPSCoR is a state-federal collaboration to increase Alaska’s research capacity.

Alaska EPSCoR improves Alaska’s scientific capacity by engaging in research projects supported through National Science Foundation and state funds. The organization is engaged in a five-year project entitled “Alaska Adapting to Changing Environments,” which examines the mechanisms by which communities adapt to environmental and social change. Through a cooperative agreement with UA, KWF has continued to monitor water quality and water quantity (flow) on three major Peninsula watersheds: Beaver Creek, Ptarmigan Creek and Russian River. This work is especially important as KWF is currently collecting winter flow data, which is a long-identified data-gap in our scientific knowledge regarding winter hydrology on the Kenai Peninsula.

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership— KWF continued to play a critical role in developing and leading the National Fish Habitat Partnership Program. This program brings together members of similar interest groups in order increase communication, cooperation and area of influence. In addition together we raise awareness of fish initiatives, assign priorities, and generate congressional support to improve aquatic habitats.

Education and Community Outreach

Summer Camp— The summer camp program continued to be a success in its third year. Over 70 students participated in the Fur, Fins, Feathers, Flowers, and FUN Summer Camp! KWF was also excited to offer scholarships to campers to help make this experience affordable to all members of the community. The camp program moved closer towards financial self-sufficiency in 2015.

Adopt-A-Stream— The Kenai Watershed Forum Adopt A Stream program has finished the 2014/2015 school years with five strong months of Environmental Education. From January to May there were 143 classroom visits. In May, 16 different classes participated in community and creek clean ups as well. Also, the 3 & 4 grade classes at one school completed a yearlong service project with storm drain stenciling in Kenai. April saw the Adopt-A-Stream program visit Seldovia for a day-long visit with all of the classes at Susan B. English school and lessons on stream ecology and water monitoring. May included the ADF&G Salmon Celebration, which hosted 40 classes and over 800 students total. Adopt-A-Stream information was shared about fish handling and water quality monitoring. Additionally, a partnership was formed with the Kenai Community Library to include “Science



KWF staff and Joel Cooper of Kachemak Heritage Land Trust work on a spruce tree revetment (Stream Watch Stewardship project 2015)

with Mr. Dan” lessons. Lessons were taught about insects, birds, and watersheds. These lessons and field trips add an additional 5,408 contacts for the school for a total of 8,864 student contacts. This is the highest number of contacts Adopt-A-Stream has ever achieved in a school year, and far exceeds the goals set for school year 2014/15.

Kenai River Festival— KWF continued to be the host of this annual river celebration. The festival grew out of a desire to provide a free, fun setting for the community to learn more about the river, how we impact it by our activities, and what we can do to keep it healthy and productive for generations to come. Each year at the festival, information about our rivers and other unique local natural resources are shared through a wide variety of hands-on learning activities for youth.

Alaska Certified Erosion and Sediment Control Lead (AK-CESCL) class— Explains the erosion process and how to obtain and comply with the EPA NPDES Construction General



Festival goers enjoy great music and beautiful weather at last year's Kenai River Festival!

Permit. Offered at cost to community members, KWF recognizes that these opportunities for education are beneficial to the entire community and plans to continue making trainings like this available in the future.

Stream Watch— Founded by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service in 1994, Stream Watch is a national award-winning volunteer program that promotes river stewardship on the Kasilof, Kenai and Russian Rivers. Since expansion

of the program to new areas on the lower Kenai Peninsula last year, the program has experienced continued growth and success including additional funders and national recognition through the Great American Outdoors Initiative. In 2015, SW had 27,533 volunteer hours, 4,200 public contacts and removed 1,600 pounds of litter. They also installed two miles of river protection fencing and maintained three existing miles of fencing!

Community wellness projects— The KWF sponsors a community run series called the Salmon Run Series that we coordinate one day a week for six weeks each summer, which reaches over 800 adults and children.

Restoration

Culvert restoration— Our restoration focus is dedicated to reconnecting baby salmon (smolt) nurseries to the ocean. On the Kenai Peninsula there are a large number of roads with poorly designed or maintained culverts that prevent adult and juvenile salmon from accessing the habitat they need. Through our culvert assessment and replacement programs we continue to identify and restore these migration barriers.

Invasive Aquatic Plant Species— Reed canary grass was brought to the Kenai Peninsula for use as a soil stabilizer and as a forage crop. However, it has been identified as a threat to small volume salmon streams. In order prevent this grass from choking out valuable salmon habitat, KWF began efforts in 2008 to control reed canary grass near waterways. That work has continued through 2015.

KWF also tackled a rapidly developing situation in 2015 involving a pervasive invasive aquatic plant, Elodea (waterweed) that recently showed up in peninsula lakes. KWF worked with state, federal and borough governments, and were able to fully remove this nuisance weed from three large floatplane-accessible lakes. If allowed to grow unchecked, Elodea can and will make fishing and boating impossible and will out-compete other native aquatic plants that offer natural habitat for juvenile salmon.

Invasive fish— KWF assisted Fish and Game with native fish trapping in Soldotna Creek in preparation for the Rotenone treatment the Agency plans to undertake in 2016 and 2017 in “Area 2” (mainstem of Soldotna Creek, Tree Lake and Sevena Lake) of the Soldotna Creek drainage in order to rid the system of Northern Pike. “Area 1” (Union Lake, East and West Mackey Lakes and Derks Lake) of the drainage was treated with Rotenone in 2014 and the native fish trapped in Soldotna Creek in 2015 will be used to begin the process of restoring fish populations to the drainage.

None of this important work would be possible without the volunteers, sponsors, members and organizations that contribute time, money and other resources to make our programs and events so very successful. Working together is the only way to improve the health of watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula, and we are proud to be a part of that process.

Cook Inletkeeper: What Change do You Want to See?

Kaitlin Vadla, Central Peninsula Organizer, Cook Inletkeeper

Born only a few years apart, Cook Inletkeeper in 1995 and the Kenai Watershed Forum in 1997, our organizations have grown up together. We share the fundamental belief that healthy watersheds are the foundation of our thriving communities in both the Kenai watershed and the broader Cook Inlet watershed. Grateful for our shared growth and change, we look forward to what the future brings for our partnership!

With a 20-year track record of protecting Cook Inlet and the life it sustains, Inletkeeper continues to advocate for clean water, healthy salmon, and strong communities. From our science-based programs that focus on stream temperature monitoring to our Clean Boating Program that helps educate local boaters about best practices to minimize pollutants in our rivers, Inletkeeper is committed to ensuring that we have the best information available to make informed decisions to protect the watersheds that sustain us all.

New information about the resiliency of our local food systems recently sparked innovative changes in our local communities. Here in Alaska, "food security" has a meaning unlike any other place. A single cargo ship delayed from Seattle impacts the amount of food on our grocery store shelves. A changing climate is impacting migration patterns of caribou and moose and the delicate temperatures of our salmon streams, ultimately changing how we fill our freezers.

Despite all of our bounty, we are also very vulnerable. Because of this, and our ability to work together to find solutions to the problem, we are excited to take on this challenge as part of our work to strengthen local communities in the Cook Inlet.

The Kenai Peninsula Local Food Hub is one part of the solution. This pilot project will help source and distribute local food on the upper Kenai Peninsula and serve as a model for other regions. This online platform will be available this summer to connect individual and bulk buyers to local producers in order to build a stronger network and help strengthen our local food system. For more information on this project, contact Local Food Coordinator Robbi Mixon at robbi@inletkeeper.org.

Local food isn't the only way you can get involved. Cook Inletkeeper also believes that we have stronger communities when local residents have a voice in how our resources are managed. Building community by empowering citizens to use their voices is at the heart of what we do, and we can build community more effectively if we know what the community wants for itself.

With ears wide open, we've initiated a Community Listening Project to surface values and visions that locals have for their communities. In a conversational, face-to-face setting, we conduct one-on-one interviews. We ask five questions:

- 1) What do you deeply value (what drives you)?
- 2) What do you value about living in your community?
- 3) If only good things happen over the next 30 years, what does this place look like? What is your vision for your community?
- 4) How do you want to engage in your community to help realize your vision?
- 5) Who are thoughtful Alaskans who care about the future of this community? (List as many names as you'd like)

The goal of the project is to create spaces where we can envision long-term ideals for the future of where we live, to foster dialogues amongst

community members, and to ultimately work to build momentum and make things happen! What do you want to see—excellent learning experiences and job opportunities for our youth? A community arts, music and business incubator? More women and minorities serving in local government? Public gardens with salmon-fertilized raspberry bushes? Get in touch! If you have ideas about what changes you'd love to see in your community and would like to participate in the survey, email kaitlin@inletkeeper.org. Every voice matters. We want to reach as many people as possible, so if you'd like to help grow the listening project, we would love your help conducting interviews in the community! Contact Kaitlin at 252-6525.

If you'd like to be a part of a group that's already come together to create

positive change, the grassroots group KenaiChange continues to meet monthly to address local impacts of climate change. Join one of their subcommittees brainstorming solutions on local food, energy, infrastructure, environmental change, and community outreach. Check them out on Facebook or at kenaichange.org.

This year, 2016, will be a year full of exciting opportunities to work together to make positive change! For more information about Cook Inletkeeper and its programs, visit Inletkeeper.org.

P.S. I am incredibly grateful that the Kenai Watershed Forum allows me to work in their beautiful office near Soldotna Creek Park. They are like family and I'm so lucky to be surrounded by such kind, inspiring, community-minded people!



Yes! I want to support KWF!

Here is your chance to give something back! Help support our mission through a financial contribution. Everyone who lives and plays on the Kenai Peninsula benefits from remarkable natural resources. Your membership gift gives you a role in shaping the future of the Kenai Peninsula watersheds. You will enjoy our newsletter, Currents, invitations to special events, and many other unique benefits.

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Level

___ \$500 Benefactor ___ \$100 River Steward
___ \$50 Chinook ___ \$25 Sockeye
___ \$10 Smolt ___ \$Other _____

Payment

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Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____
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Mail to: Kenai Watershed Forum
44129 Sterling Hwy • Soldotna, AK 99669

Federal Tax ID: 91-1829284

___ Please keep my contribution anonymous.



JACK: Continued from Page 3

continue to keep the KWF's projects and programs successful and beneficial:

Branden Bornemann, our veteran Environmental Scientist, Water Quality Coordinator and GIS Specialist and, as of late, our Kenai River Festival Coordinator!

Mike Gracz, our Homer connection and Wetlands Project Manager.

Jeff Sires, Environmental Scientist; a jack-of-all-trades scientist that assists on a wide variety of research and monitoring programs.

Dan Pascucci, our extraordinary Environmental Education Specialist and Summer Camp Director.

Rhonda McCormick, Account and Administration Manager and our in-house defender and advocate of all things KWF!

A Little About Me

After graduating from California State University at Chico in Recreation Administration in 1980, I took the ferry north to Alaska (via Montana) to work as a seasonal Park Ranger with the National Park Service in Skagway, giving tours of and restoring the historic goldrush era buildings within the Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park. In 1984, much like a gold miner hearing about a new strike in the state, I headed off for the job-rich Kenai Peninsula with my wife, Diana, and our first daughter, Danae.

For the next 28 years I worked for the Alaska State Parks as a Technician, Ranger, District Ranger and then Superintendent, moving from Kenai to Seward to Sterling and then Ridgeway. It was an awesome opportunity to work in a wide variety of park units from the State Marine Parks of Prince William Sound to the Kenai River. I was involved with communities across the region, from Cordova to Homer and everywhere in between, working with advisory boards, Friends groups, city officials and every type of park user under the sun.

One of my strongest associations with KWF prior to being hired here was through my past work in helping to implement the outboard motor restriction on the Kenai River. This was the regulation that banned all older two-stroke engines from the entire length of the Kenai



River. The regulation was the result of KWF's five years of monitoring hydrocarbon levels on the lower river that ultimately led to the EPA declaring the lower Kenai River an impaired waterbody under the Clean Water Act. My first year as park superintendent of the Kenai Area was filled with discussions and meetings with the public, government officials and park staff on why these regulations were necessary, how would they be implemented, where would they be enforced and what would be the result of adopting such restrictions. It was one of the biggest changes to users of powerboats on the Kenai River since 1987. It was, indeed, the definition of what a "watershed" event truly is; it was a change that reverberated not only throughout the river, but also throughout the state. I was proud to play a small part in such an historic occasion for the Kenai River.

My interest throughout my career has been to work with communities and the world of natural resources. I was thrilled when the Kenai Watershed Forum Board of Directors decided to give me the opportunity to work with this unique and important organization. It is my privilege to carry on the mission of the KWF:

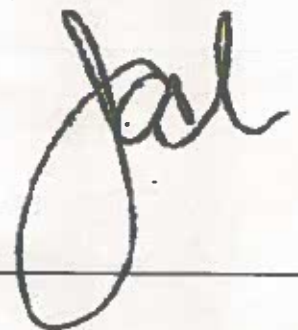
Working Together for Healthy Watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

That means, at least to me, gathering folks together, being inclusive, finding ways to keep the watersheds throughout the Kenai Peninsula healthy, healthful, biologically productive and dynamic.

And within that mission we will continue to...

- Seek ways to protect, restore, repair and maintain critical watershed habitat
- Conduct exceptional watershed science and research
- Train and manage dedicated river stewards
- Provide sensational summer camps and watershed-based school programs
- And host a great river celebration each year at the Kenai River Festival!

Wishing you all a positive and productive year,


FESTIVAL: Continued from Page 1

which we all benefit from the Kenai River. A lot of the people responsible for starting the Kenai River Festival are still involved today, along with countless other volunteers and community members who help make the festival what it is.

I am inviting all of our neighbors and friends of the Kenai River to take some ownership of the Kenai River Festival and help us put on this festival as a community. "It takes a village..." is how the old proverb begins and that certainly could apply to the Kenai River Festival, as we rely heavily on community volunteers to help us put on the festival year after year. Working with the scores of volunteers is always a treat and the type and amount of people stepping up to help us this year, so far, reflects the true spirit and focus of the festival. We LOVE our volunteers!

On behalf of the Kenai Watershed Forum "family" I'd like to extend our sincere gratitude (in advance) to the following people and organizations lending their hands to make the

2016 Kenai River Festival a success:

- **Rhonda McCormick** for once again proving you don't have to be a runner to put on one of the community's best known runs in "Run for the River";
- **Jack Sinclair** for taking on the Beer Garden and making sure the festival is well stocked with microbrews made within a few miles of the festival;
- **Dan Pascucci** for organizing a great slate of Alaskan musicians for us all to enjoy;
- **Jeff Sires** for being the festival's "Renaissance man" this year;
- Board of Directors' **Terri Carter** and her assistant/husband **John Carter** for coordinating the festival's education activities aka the "Kids Zone";
- Board President **David Wartinbee** for inspiring our staff and welcoming people at the festival entrance;
- **Jenna Miller** for generously giving us her time to organize a great variety of Alaskan food

and art vendors;

- The **Soldotna Chamber of Commerce** for their immeasurable help in recruiting festival volunteers;

- The **Rotary Club of Soldotna** for helping to make sure our "world-famous" Salmon Booth is well-staffed and that no one will get heat exhaustion at the BBQ grill!;

- And finally the many corporate sponsors that step up year after year with critical monetary and in-kind donations—be sure to look at the long list of published donors who will be officially recognized in our River Festival Special Section, due in May as an insert in the Peninsula Clarion.

The support we've received this year from our community has once again proven to be invaluable and we look forward to working with all of you to put on this great festival in celebration of the Kenai River. We hope to continue this tradition for another 26 years and more!

KWF Support • Help Shape our Future

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

It is more important now than ever to become engaged and help shape the future of our watersheds. Everyone that lives and plays on the Kenai Peninsula is responsible for its future. Support for the Kenai Watershed Forum gives you an opportunity to help shape the future of our watersheds and celebrate KWF's ongoing commitment to healthy natural resources. Please participate and support KWF; become

part of the largest community united by a common mission of "working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula."

We encourage you do your part and make a financial contribution to KWF. We continue to provide quality education, restoration, and research to the residents and visitors to the Kenai Peninsula and need your help to continue serving our communities.

THANK YOU

JAMES TOUSSAINT
MICHAEL BURNHAM
MICHELLE MARTIN
STEPHANIE KOBYLARZ
DENNIS RANDA
FREDERICK KLOUDA
ANGELA NELSON
JACK SINCLAIR
SPENCER SMITH
BRUCE VADLA
CAROLYN OSTRANDER
STEPHANIE QUEEN
KARL KIRCHER
WILLIAM HIGHTOWER
MONTINE HIGHTOWER
AMBER KRAXBERGER-LINSON
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DOHN CHO
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ANGELA COLEMAN

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PAUL SEATON
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ROBERT RUFFNER
SOPHIA MICCICHE
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CORA O'CONNOR
JOSSELYN O'CONNOR

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& GIVING IN 2015!**

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JUST BY SHOPPING WITH YOUR FRED MEYER REWARDS CARD!**



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- Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Kenai Watershed Forum at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. You can search for us by our name or by our non-profit number 84194.
- Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping Kenai Watershed Forum earn a donation!
- You still earn your Rewards Points, Fuel Points, and Rebates, just as you do today.
- If you do not have a Rewards Card, they are available at the Customer Service desk of any Fred Meyer store.
- For more information, please visit www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards.