



CURRENTS



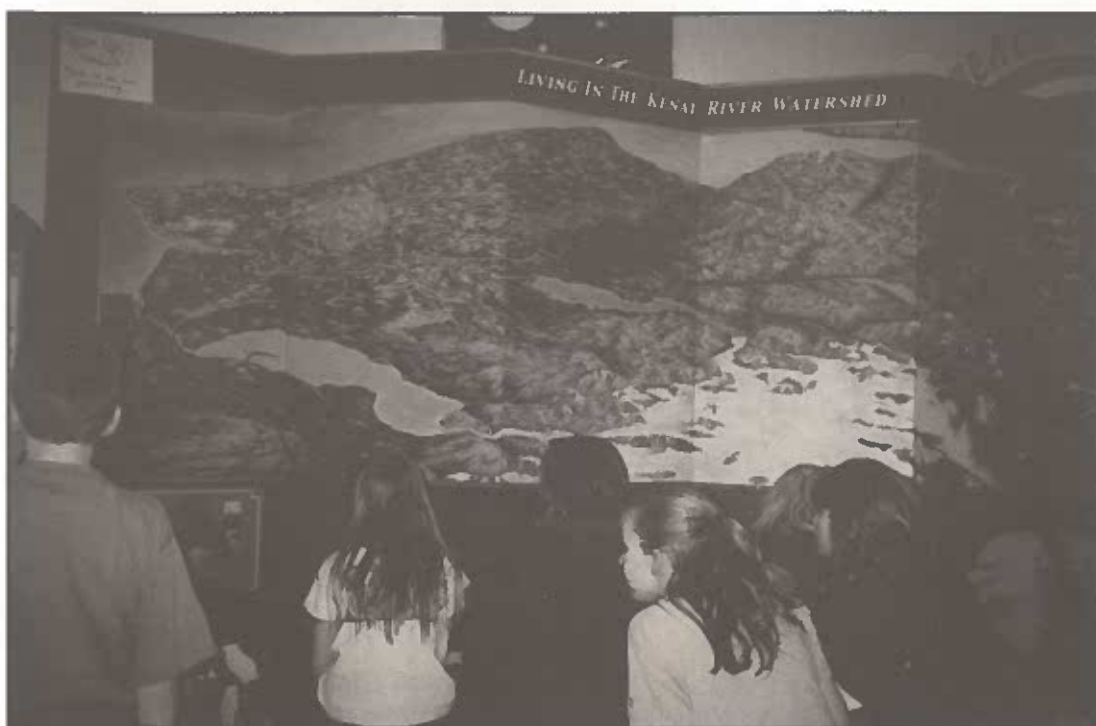
Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

Summer, 1999

HIGH ABOVE THE WATERSHED

Mural gives fresh perspective on source of Kenai's water



Students in Connie Tobin's K-Beach Elementary School class sketch their favorite part of the Kenai Watershed mural. The mural offers a view of the watershed not possible with a traditional map or photo. The painting is being used by local schools and other organizations to teach the importance of watersheds.

Bird's Eye View

From the highest peaks in the Kenai Mountains to the wetlands surrounding Swanson River, a new mural is giving school children a bird's-eye view of the Kenai watershed.

Standing more than four feet high and 16 feet long, the oil painting is the first Kenai watershed replica of its kind.

The mural is painted on six panels so it can be transported to schools and special events.

Special thanks go to Donna Rae, Jean Brockel and Vicki Davis of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge for putting this project together.

And thanks to the sponsors who made this unique painting possible: UnoCal, King Salmon Fund, Kenai River Festival, Kenai Watershed Forum, and The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Painters Learn Art of Cartography

Homer artists Jim Buncak and Mary Bee Kaufman had to brush up on their map-reading skills before painting the Kenai watershed mural.

Topographic and color-coded elevation maps provided much of the guidance for Buncak and Kaufman. When maps didn't provide enough information, they used books and photographs to piece together their two-dimensional portrait of the Kenai watershed.

In some places, the two discovered that the old maps were wrong. For example, several lakes shown on the maps have drained and are now dry.

What did they do when that happened?

"I just used my imagination like an artist would have 100 years ago," said Buncak.

FROM THE CHAIR

Catherine Cassidy, the first Chair of the Kenai Watershed Forum, forever deserves our thanks.

Catherine planted the seed that has sprouted into the growing organization we have inherited today. She nurtured the infant organization through the trials and tribulations that go with start up, and led us to establish a framework that has produced the results you see today. Because of Catherine's work, KWF is now an accepted and viable organization promoting the well-being of the Kenai watershed.

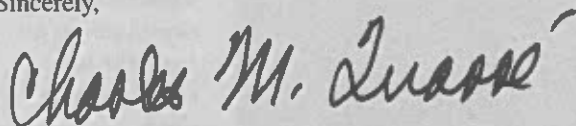
One of her greatest accomplishments was leading the effort to secure Robert Ruffner as our director. In very short time, Robert has transformed the fledgling organization into an effective working unit.

A case in point is the recent signing of a "Statement of Cooperation" with The Nature Conservancy and 14 other agencies and organizations to develop an approach for monitoring baseline water quality within the Kenai River system. This is a step forward from establishing a framework to actually implementing a water quality monitoring program.

Catherine continues as a member of the KWF Board. Although often out of the area, Catherine contributes her insight and knowledge at every Board meeting via the marvels of modern-day communication.

Thanks Catherine!

Sincerely,



Charles Quarre
KWF Chair

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.

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 2937, Soldotna, Ak 99669

PHONE NUMBER: 260-5449

FAX NUMBER: 260-5412

E-MAIL: robert@kenaiwatershed.org

WEB PAGE: <http://www.kenaiwatershed.org>

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

Don't Feed the Bears

If it stinks, the bears will come.

With the best sense of smell in the woods and an unending appetite, a bear follows its nose anywhere food is available.

In Kenai Peninsula neighborhoods – where a surprising number of black and brown bears roam – that means dog food, fish cleaning tables and garbage draw these wild animals into backyards and onto porches.

That's when trouble starts. Frequently, a dead bear is the result.

"Bears focus on location," says Alaska Fish and Game Biologist Ted Spraker. "They'll come back to the same spot time and time again regardless of the type of food."

Common sense will

help keep bears away from your home. If there's nothing near your house for a bear to eat, there's no reason for the bear to come.

Keeping bears away from our homes is a community project.

"If your neighbor has a mess in his yard, it's like everyone in your neighborhood has a mess in the yard," said Spraker.

So take it upon yourself to talk to your neighbors about this problem, especially if you've had bears in your area before. By communicating and working together, we can learn to live with bears.



COMMON BEAR ATTRACTORS

Fish and Clams: No surprise here.

Clean your daily catch at the river or beach, not at home.

Compost Piles: Composting fruit and vegetables is probably OK, but avoid putting fish carcasses into your garden soil.

Dog Food: Dispensers that keep the dog dish full at all times are a great treat for bears. Don't put out more food than your dog will eat immediately.

Bird Feeders: These are a big problem in Anchorage, but there's no reason Peninsula bears shouldn't be attracted to them, too.

Clean Up: If you do make a mess, be sure to clean it up. Ammonia-based cleaners or lime help kill bacteria and mask odors that attract bears.

PHOTO CONTEST CAPTURES LIFE ON THE KENAI



Above: Cindy Wentzlaff's photo of Mark Burdick teaching Allan Wentzlaff how to row a drift boat won first prize in the "People" category.

Below: Vanessa Gabel took second prize in the "People" category with this snapshot.



KWF's first annual photo contest was a hit. More than 100 photos were entered in the contest. Forty-four of the photographs were displayed at Kenai Peninsula College in March. If you missed the show, make a point of dropping in next year. You won't be disappointed. Below is a list of the winners. Thanks again to our sponsors – Frames and Things, Kmart, FotoQuick and Fred Meyer – who helped make this contest possible.

AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

People: 1st - Cindy Wentzlaff; 2nd - Vanessa Gabel; Honorable Mention - Bill Hutchinson, Greg Daniels

Scenery: 1st - John Tobin; 2nd - Karen Dorcas; Honorable Mention - John Demske, Greg Daniels

Animals: 1st - John Tobin; 2nd - Greg Daniels; Honorable Mention - David Rhode, John Toppenberg

Plants: 1st - Bill Hutchinson; 2nd - John Demske; Honorable Mention - Cindy Wentzlaff, Mike Howard

Thanks for the support

Our membership drive has been a huge success. Thanks to all those listed below (and others who wish to remain anonymous) for contributing to the Kenai Watershed Forum. The upcoming Kenai River Festival is just one of many events and activities supported by your contributions..

SMOLT (Under \$25)

Karen and Delbert Otter
David Rhode
Jean A. Romig

SOCKEYE (\$25)

Judy and Brannon Ames
Walt and Betty Arthur
Gerald Brookman
Michelle H. Brown
Alfred Clayton
Dominique Collet
John Czarneski
Jack and Betty Dean
Louise M. Dubois
Betty and Jack Essick
Deborah Gilcrest
Ron Gravenhorst
Suzanne Little and Mark Burgener
William Nelson
Megan O'Neill
Mary Price
Will Reamaeker
Jim Richardson
Jocelyn Scheffler-O'Neill
Terrie Stone
Adrian Stuart
John Toppenberg
Cathy Turner
Robin West

CHINOOK (\$50)

Dale Bondurant
Jean and Clayton Brockel
Chris Degernes
Nedra and Jim Evenson
Lyn and Tom Hodel
Mike and Susie Howard
Edward Jackinsky
Lori Landstrom and Terry Rude
Lisa Parker and Steve Horn
Laura Sievert
Bill and Molly Stockwell

RIVER STEWARD (\$100 and up)

Ole Andersson and Jane Handy
Sanne Berrig
Catherine Cassidy
Joe and Billie Hardy
Barbara Jewell
Glenda and John Landua
Tony and Sandra Lewis
Ken Marlow
Ron Martinelli
Peggy Mullen
Margaret Mullen
Mike Navarre
Phil North
Charles Quarre
Peter and Bernadine Raiskums
Robert A. and Tara Ruffner
Sheldon and Debbie Ruffner
Betty B. Smith
Brenda Stoops and Paul Dale
David and Kathleen Wartinbee



WE'RE MOVING

The River Festival will be located next to the City of Kenai Ball Fields on Main Street. this year. We're right across the Spur Highway from the Kenai Visitors and Cultural Center.

HELP NEEDED

If you would like to make a donation or help out at the River Festival, please call the KWF office at 260-5449. We have a particular need for the following volunteers: carpenters, sign painters, workers for food booth, and workers to set up and take down booths and tents.

Please consider joining us by filling out the enclosed envelope today!

RIVER FEST RETURNS JUNE 12, 13

FUN FOR EVERYONE!

Once again, the Kenai River Festival returns for another weekend of family fun to celebrate the magnificent Kenai River. The festival puts an emphasis on learning and kids activities. This year, there are puppet shows, kids fishing programs, arts and crafts, a costume parade and many other activities for the young at heart.

In addition, many of the government agencies involved in river management and studies will be on hand to answer questions about the river. Scientists will be on hand to demonstrate how they measure water flow and how water moves through the ground and into the Kenai. So come listen to music, eat good food and learn a little more about the river we all love.



LET'S DANCE

The Kenai River Festival is trying something new this year. On the Saturday evening of the festival (June 12), the Kenai River Folk Dancers are putting together a Contra dance. It's fun for the whole family. And like everything else at the River Festival, it's free.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Puppet Shows
- Fishing Demos for Kids
- Happy Camping
- Live Outdoor Music
- Live Birds (Golden Eagle ?)
- Contra Dance
- Scientific Demonstrations
- Kids Activities
- Food Booths



Indicators Project Keeps Tabs on our Community's Health

As a community, now and in the future, we face many difficult decisions. How do we protect our environment, meet everyone's basic needs, keep our economy healthy, create justice and well-being? How do we make hard trade-offs and balanced decisions that take all of our interests into account? What do we need to change, personally and collectively? How do we keep track of our progress?

Over the past several years, hundreds of volunteers nationwide have worked with such questions in order to improve their communities' capacity to assess its present well-being, and to make well-informed decisions about their future.

The Central Kenai Peninsula Indicators Project is a collaborative effort between the Kenai Watershed Forum and Healthy Communities/

Healthy People. A workgroup was recently formed to identify a larger group of stakeholders. We hope to obtain consensus in the Central Kenai Peninsula for the selection of a set of indicators that will reflect trends in the economic, social and environmental health of communities.

Indicators are bits of information that mirror the condition of larger systems - in this case the community. They are a way of seeing the "big picture" by looking at a smaller piece of it. They tell us which direction a system is going: up or down, forward or backward, getting better or worse or staying the same. Indicators of sustainability link issues together rather than thinking of them as separate. It is often defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs."

Our goal with the Indicator Project is to develop a "report card" to the community which will be developed and accepted by the people in the community, understandable to the community at large, based on reliable, timely information, and focus on the long-range view. In this way, we hope to alert the people of the Central Kenai Peninsula to the significant challenges we face and to ask them to get involved in finding solutions to our problems. We hope to inspire a renewed sense of citizenship and participation.

Meetings are held twice a month. For more information, contact Robert Ruffner at 260-5449, or Bonnie Nichols at 262-8129.

This article was written by Bonnie Nichols of Healthy Communities/Healthy People

Changing Weather May Hurt Wood Frogs

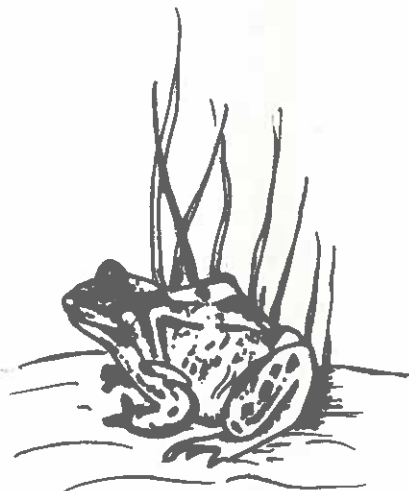
Warmer, drier seasons shrinking habitat

It may not seem like it this spring, but in recent years the weather on the Kenai Peninsula has been warmer and drier than normal.

That change makes for nicer picnics, but the trend may be hurting the local population of wood frogs.

These amphibians like to live in small, shallow ponds, which tend to melt earlier in the spring and protect frogs from predators. Those ponds have been drying up lately, shrinking the habitat available to the frogs.

If the frogs move to larger lakes, they may suffer. Fish and birds that live in the lakes will make meals of the tadpoles and adult frogs. Additionally, later thaws may prevent wood frogs from breeding early enough in the spring to assure their offspring make it to adulthood by the onset of winter.



Drawing and "Wood Frog Facts" courtesy of Fish and Game's Wildlife Notebook Series

WOOD FROG FACTS

Appearance: Smooth skin is usually light brown or gray.

Size: Adults grow to 3 inches.

Habitat: Prefer small, shallow ponds

Predators: Birds, fish and larger animals.

Surviving the winter:

Wood frogs hibernate in shallow ground depressions, using snow and vegetation for insulation.

Spring Fling: Males attract mates with a duck-

like call in early spring.

Staying Warm: The dark coloration of northern frogs absorbs the sun's heat and helps frogs stay active.

Diet: Primarily insects and small animals.



KWF volunteers test the waters of the unnamed creek at the base of the City of Kenai bluffs.

SPOTLIGHT ON "NO-NAME" CREEK

We called your attention to the unnamed creek near the mouth of the Kenai River in our last issue of *Currents*. Since then, a couple things have happened that impact the creek and the surrounding wetlands.

"No-name" creek, as it is commonly referred to, is used by juvenile salmon for rearing. Although salmon don't spawn in the stream, the waterway is one of the many pieces in the puzzle that make the Kenai a great river for salmon.

This spring, a volunteer with the Kenai Watershed Forum's Water Quality Monitoring Program noticed a large part of the Kenai bluff sloughed off and filled part of the wetlands below.

When wetlands are filled, they can't perform vital functions, such as filtering runoff, absorbing flood waters, and feeding creeks with a stable flow of clean water.

It turns out that the area of the bluff that slid is part of an old landfill.

The city of Kenai and other government agencies have decided not to remove the accidental fill. They worry that driving heavy equipment into the soft wetlands will do more damage than good.

This unfortunate incident reinforces the need to keep adequate buffers along streams and wetlands to ensure this type of thing won't happen in other places. Meanwhile, KWF is seeking money to help restore the area.

In addition to this accidental fill, the city of Kenai is filling in part of these same wetlands this summer in order to expand the nearby parking lot and sewage treatment facility.

The parking lot expansion is needed because of high dipnetter traffic to the area in the summer.

It's not all bad news for the wetlands, though. As part of the parking lot expansion, the city of Kenai will attempt to discourage four-wheeler and walking trails that criss-cross the marsh. City officials will reroute the traffic, restore and reseed damaged areas in the wetlands.

KWF does not oppose the parking lot and sewage treatment expansion into the wetlands. Sometimes fills are needed for a greater good. And from what we've heard, the city is committed to taking care of "No-Name" creek.

But it's important to remember that filling wetlands will change the water system. Too many changes, and the Kenai River will feel it.

TAKE A BOW

When we started our membership drive last fall, the folks at **Alaska Conservation Foundation** made us a deal. If 20 people donated \$100 to our organization, ACF would give us another \$2,000 as a matching grant.

We're happy to say that the Watershed Forum is \$2,000 richer because of that promise.

What's more, in addition to giving us the \$2,000 grant, ACF also donated a used copier to our office. We had been shopping around for one, and figure that donation saved us at least \$6,000. The money we saved can instead be used to support our many programs, such as water quality monitoring, the Kenai River Festival, Living with Bears forums, and our new field guide.

To the Alaska Conservation Foundation, we salute you.

We also want to thank **Lynden Transport** and **Gary Foster** for delivering the copy machine to our office.

CALENDAR

June 10 - "Whale Hunter" - a play to kick off the 1999 River Festival 3 - 4 pm Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center.

June 11 and 12 The 9th Annual Kenai River Festival Kenai City Ball Fields.

June 15 - Pick up your field guide from the Kenai Visitor Center. Cost is \$2.95 Initial printing is limited. Proceeds benefit Kenai Watershed Forum.

June 27 - Boyd Schaffer will lead a plant identification walk near the College. \$10 proceeds benefit the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust space is limited call Ole Anderson at 260-1999

KWF HOSTS PARTY

The Watershed Forum's annual party drew more than 100 people for the unveiling of the Kenai Watershed mural (see story on front page). Those who attended also had an opportunity to stroll through the photo exhibit and enjoy many of the snapshots entered into KWF's photo contest.

And of course there was good food and punch aplenty. If you missed the party this year, be sure to keep posted for next year's event. We'd love to see you there.



Above: Steve Horn inspects KWF's photo exhibit at Kenai Peninsula College.

Left: Party-goers mill around the photo exhibit, enjoying food and punch as they go.



FIELD GUIDE IDENTIFIES KENAI'S FLORA AND FAUNA

Until now, getting to know the Kenai's local plants and animals was an expensive endeavor.

You had to buy one book to identify birds, another for plants and yet another for animals like bears, rabbits and voles.

Not anymore.

KWF has teamed with Larry and Nancy Cherry Eifert to produce a

field guide to more than 100 common animals, birds and plants in the Kenai River watershed.

KWF funded the guide in an effort to help both residents and visitors develop a deeper appreciation of our magnificent watershed.

The guide will be available in June. It can be purchased for \$2.95 at the Soldotna Visitors Center or by calling KWF.

Kenai Watershed Forum
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