



CURRENTS



Citizens Working Together For Community Vitality In A Healthy Watershed

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

WINTER, 1999

KWF KEEPS AN EYE ON LITTLE-KNOWN TRIBUTARY

Stormwater runoff and heavy foot traffic could be putting a little-known Kenai River tributary at risk, threatening juvenile salmon that stop there on their way out to sea.

Biologists call it "Unnamed Creek". And in an effort to ensure it stays healthy, the Kenai Watershed Forum is keeping an eye on the creek through its Water Quality Monitoring program.

Although no one seems to know its name, many people know the tributary. It's the one that meanders through the flats below the City of Kenai bluff, where dipnetters swarm during sockeye salmon season. It empties into the Kenai River just before the river flows into Cook Inlet.

As far as biologists know, the creek doesn't support spawning salmon. Juvenile kings and silvers, however, use the creek for rearing. The creek doesn't support a lot of juvenile salmon, probably in the hundreds not thousands, but those numbers may be dwindling, which is cause for concern.

"It's the pieces of the pie that make up the whole," said Fish and Game biologist Gary Liepitz.

Liepitz recently oversaw a



A view of "Unnamed Creek" from the Kenai city bluffs. This Kenai River tributary provides a home for juvenile salmon before they head out to sea.

project to repair 100 feet of the creek's bank damaged by dipnetters walking to and from the neighboring beach. All-terrain vehicles are damaging wetlands in the area, which has led to efforts to block access into that important habitat.

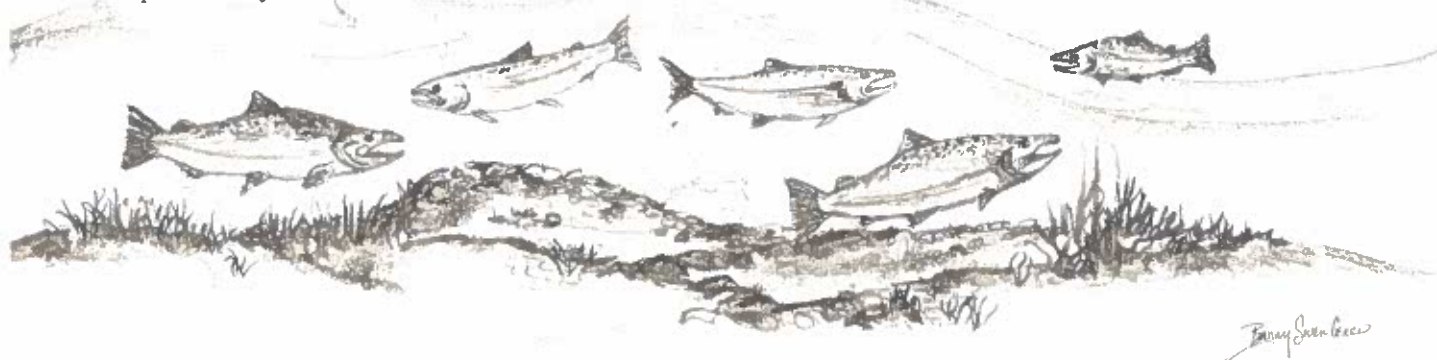
Unnamed Creek is also threatened by dirty water that runs into it from city streets.

The City of Kenai is paving more roads in the area, but is also installing equipment that should help clean oil, gasoline and other street

grime out of the stormwater before it empties into the creek.

Wetlands near the Kenai Airport are the creek's source. The creek supports moose, marten, mink, shorebirds, waterfowl and other animals that thrive in wetlands.

KWF has started monitoring the creek regularly, analyzing the water to make sure it is clean and can support the creek's juvenile salmon. By saving these little places, we will save the whole watershed.



SNOWSHOE HARES RUN WILD

You may not see them very often, but snowshoe hares are abundant these days in the Kenai Watershed.

Camouflaged in their white, winter coats, snowshoe hares are hard to find. Look in the snow, though, and there's a good chance you'll find the soft footprints they leave behind.

The Kenai's hare population runs on a fairly predictable, 10-year cycle. Right now, the furry mammals are at their peak.

Snowshoe hares have an uncanny ability to travel through even the deepest of snow. That's because their large, heavily furred feet act like snowshoes – hence their name.

Unfortunately for hares, they are not the only creatures of the forest specially outfitted for snowy winters. The lynx, the hare's primary predator, also has snowshoe-like feet, enabling the lynx to chase down its quarry.

Because lynx depend so heavily on snowshoe hares for food, the population of the wildcat closely follows that of the hare. When snowshoe hare numbers are high, so are lynx numbers. When hares are in decline, the lynx crash, too.

Snowshoe hares live in mixed spruce forests, wooded swamps and brushy areas. It's not known what causes their regular cycles of scarcity and abundance, but possible factors include overbrowsing, disease and predators.

Often called rabbits, there is a key difference between hares and their large-ear cousins. While newborn rabbits are born blind and hairless, hares are born fully furred and with their eyes open.



KWF measures change in quality of life

The Kenai Watershed Forum and Healthy Communities — Healthy People have partnered up to discuss creative ways to measure changes in our rapidly growing community.

Other Alaskan communities such as Sitka, Juneau, Cordova and Anchorage have recently developed a set of "indicators" to monitor changes and we would like to do something similar.

The idea is to pick certain variables, 15 or 20 of them, that will allow us to monitor changes specific to our area. For example, three measures Juneau chose were 1) Bank Deposits ... *a measure of steady growth*, 2) Food Stamp recipients ... *households in need*, and 3) Growth of Registered Sport Charter Vessels ... *where business and environment meet*. Much of this information is available, but no publication exists to present it to the general public, which in turn affects public policy.

We believe this information needs to be in the hands of the general public and we want to find a way to make it available. Over time this will help us ensure that we are molding our community in the manner that reflects the wishes of everyone's

future and their future generations.

The Kenai Watershed Forum recognizes that to have a healthy environment we need a healthy economy and healthy people - this is a new approach for conservation groups, and we want to be in the lead! If one of these three areas suffer, the other two are likely to suffer, too.

We are accustomed to looking at the environment, economy and health care as separate factors. Now we know they are interrelated and we must take this into consideration when we make decisions that will impact the future. This process is just getting started.

We are holding a public forum to discuss this idea with area businesses, the health care profession and citizens of our community on February 6, from 10am to 2pm, with a free lunch at the Kenai Visitors and Convention Center. We need input from everyone on if and how we should proceed with this program. For more information, you can call our office at 260-5449.

Charlie Quarre new KWF chair

Sterling resident traveled the world before settling in Alaska

He's a WWII veteran, a former rancher and a retired U.S. Merchant Marine engineer, now Charlie Quarre (pronounced Car-ray) has made it his mission to assist in the preservation of the Kenai River Watershed.

Charlie is the new chair of the Kenai Watershed Forum, replacing Catherine Cassidy.

An active Kenai River property owner, Charlie thinks KWF has proven in two short years to be an important link in community efforts to keep the Kenai River healthy.

"We're not just another group interested in the river. We don't have any special interest. We want to try to get all the special interest groups together," he said.

Charlie graduated from high school in 1942 and immediately enrolled in the Merchant Marine Cadet Corps. In 1944, he received his commission in the U.S. Navy and spent the next two years as an assistant engineering officer in the Pacific.

After the war, Charlie decided to go back to school and in 1950 earned a degree in animal science from the University of California Davis. For the next two decades he worked for a cattle company with ranches throughout the West. Although most of the time he worked in an office, Charlie occasionally found time to be a cowboy.

"I used to get out on a horse every once in a while," he said. "That was fun."

After moving to Alaska, Charlie Quarre traced his roots and discovered that his grandfather, Emile Quarre, was the mayor of Eagle, Alaska in 1900. An immigrant from Belgium, Emile was sent to Alaska in 1898 by the Alaska Exploration Company, which outfitted miners during the Klondike Gold Rush.

In 1976, Charlie went back to sea, this time as a marine engineer in the Merchant Marine. Although still a civilian, he worked on Navy ships, fueling combat vessels at sea and helping on research. Most of the time he was in the Pacific, but he spent some time in the



Charlie Quarre, pictured here outside his house overlooking the Kenai River, recently took over as KWF's chair.

Persian Gulf during the Iran hostage crisis.

Charlie retired from the Merchant Marine in 1990, when he started the Alaska Chapter of his life. After visiting several times, including a memorable day in Tok in the middle of the winter when the 60-below temperatures froze the anti-freeze in his radiator, Charlie settled on the Kenai Peninsula. He now lives on Mile 32.5 of the Kenai River, between Morgan's Landing and Sterling.

Charlie is an active member of the community. In addition to his new post with KWF, he works with the Food Bank and is on the board of the local unit of the American Cancer Society. He has also served as president of Hospice and president of the Resource Conservation and Development District. Charlie has four children and six grandchildren. All live in California.

"I think watersheds are important throughout the whole country. The river is not just the river. It's everything that happens around it," says Charlie. "Unless we protect the entire watershed, we're going to have negative influences on the river."

FUNNY RIVER MEETING PLANNED

KWF is sponsoring another community meeting in Funny River. This meeting, on Jan. 15, will focus on the paving of Funny River Road.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed concern that paving the road will lead to more development in the Funny River area. That development, in turn, could have negative impacts on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and local wildlife.

Participants at this meeting will be able to talk about changes that will probably occur after Funny River Road is paved. Additionally, there will be discussion on how to deal with those changes.

The meeting will be held at the Funny River Community Center from 7-9 p.m.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Our membership drive has been more successful than we hoped. In just a few months, more than 70 people have signed up as members and we have exceeded our goal of raising \$6,000.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

With that support, we will continue working hard to make the Kenai watershed a great place to live. Some of the things your membership pays for include:

- Currents — our quarterly newsletter.
- Educational material — like the "Living with Bears" pamphlet we recently helped produce.
- Kenai River Festival — the annual festival full of fun and information.
- Water Quality Monitoring Program — our efforts to ensure that the water flowing into the Kenai River is clean and healthy.
- Outreach to Schools — programs aimed at teaching our kids the importance of a healthy environment and healthy economy.
- Community Forums — right now, we're working with Funny River residents to help prepare for the future.

We have been fortunate in our first year to receive federal and state money to accomplish our work. That money will soon run dry. Without your help, we will not be able to continue these programs.

If you like what we're doing, please take the time to become a member by making a tax-deductible donation to KWF. Your membership gives you a role in shaping the future of the Kenai River watershed. You will also enjoy our newsletter and invitations to special events.

Thanks for your support

I want to become a member of the Kenai Watershed Forum. Please accept my tax-deductible donation.

Membership Levels

☐ \$5 — Smolt

☐ \$25 — Sockeye

☐ \$50 — Chinook

☐ \$100 — River Steward

☐ \$500 — Benefactor

\$____ — Other

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Please make checks payable to the Kenai Watershed Forum and mail to:
KWF, P.O. Box 2937, Soldotna, Ak 99669.

FROM THE CHAIR

The recently held Kenai Brown Bear Educational Festival considered managing habitat, viewing, human conflicts, harvesting and even photography – all for the edification of the public and those attending.

By far, the most enlightening presentation was the one given by Chuck Schwartz of the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Study Team. His talk was entitled, "Will Kenai Brown Bears Follow the Path of the Yellowstone Grizzly? Repeating History or Doing Things Right."

Like Yellowstone, the Kenai Peninsula is an isolated area where bears take advantage of winter-kill ungulates. In Yellowstone, it's elk. On the Kenai, moose.

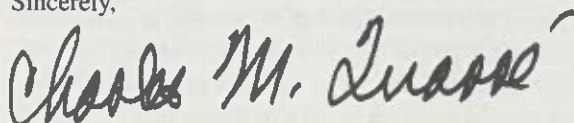
Recently, bears on the Kenai have been put on a special state list that identifies them as a "species of special concern." The next step would be to put the bears on the Endangered Species list. This can be prevented if all concerned act responsibly now.

Schwartz pointed out that a number of factors must be met before a species is listed under the Endangered Species Act. We are not there yet on the Kenai Peninsula, where the bear populations is still in reasonably good shape.

Since 1984, an interagency team has been studying the movement patterns, habitat use and resource requirements of Kenai's brown bears. Schwartz pointed out that we should learn from what happened in Yellowstone. Rather than spend millions of dollars trying to recover an endangered population, we should plan now to do what is right for bears. We must ensure that we use our environment in a way that is compatible with the bear population. It is easier to prevent problems than to bring the animals back, Schwartz said.

This spring, The Nature Conservancy together with the Kenai Watershed Forum and others will hold a conference on brown bears and how we can live with them on the Kenai Peninsula. It will be an educational meeting for residents, property owners, visitors, business, developers, government agencies and all others who have a concern about the future of brown bears and their interaction with people.

Sincerely,



Charles Quarre



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.



Calendar of Events

Jan. 15 — Funny River meeting at the Funny River Community Center from 7-9 p.m.

Feb. 5 — Deadline for photo contest (see details on back page)

Feb. 6 — Indicators Meeting, Kenai Visitors and Convention Center, 10a.m. to 2 p.m.

Feb. 16 - March 28 — Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings at the Central Peninsula Sports Center

Feb. 1 — Stream Ecology III class begins at KPC (contact KWF for scholarship information)

March — Photo contest winners on display at KPC

March 20 — Village Fair, Soldotna High School