

CURRENTS

Working Together For Healthy Watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula

Newsletter of the Kenai Watershed Forum

WINTER 2004

"The Future looks Bright"

KWF board of directors meet to discuss the next five years

The Kenai Watershed Forum was founded in 1997 by a diverse group of individuals concerned about the future of the Kenai River Watershed. They sought to better understand this great watershed and to take steps to ensure its future health. Under the direction of Robert Ruffner, KWF executive director, a dedicated board of directors, and strong supporters the organization began its quest.

One of the first steps was to formulate a game plan. What did KWF want to accomplish in the next five years? And how was it going to get there? KWF hired a professional consultant to help develop a strategic plan that would take the organization through the year



Benjamin Jackinsky and David Watrinbee, KWF Board Members at the Strategic Planning Retreat in February.

KWF Goals

Maintain the health of the Kenai Peninsula watersheds

Ensure quality of life for the community

Seek solutions to local environmental and community issues

Enhance & expand learning opportunities

Improve understanding of the Kenai Peninsula watersheds

2003. Numerous supporters, volunteers, and concerned citizens met, discussed, and planned. The outcome of that meeting was a five-year comprehensive plan outlining goals and objectives in detail.

Because KWF was a new organization, many of the first objectives dealt with developing and implementing business processes and policies to enable KWF to begin operations and to build a solid foundation to support its goals. Other objectives included building relationships and alliances; developing organizational capacity and broadening its organizational base; and establishing a water quality monitoring program. All of these objectives would play a key role in reaching goals, and ensuring a long and healthy life, for KWF. (Continue on Page 3, Future)

-Mission-

Working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.

-Board of Directors-

Dr. David Wartinbee
Ken Marlow
Benjamin Jackinsky
Jeff King
Dennis Gease
Lori Konoske
Jay Parker

-Advisory Board-

Catherine Cassidy
Peggy Mullen
Dan Chay
Mike Sweeney
Dick Toeger
Warren Hoflich
Will Josey
Sanne Berrig

-Staff-

Robert Ruffner
Ole Andersson
Josselyn Burke
Jan Yaeger
Mike Gracz
Karyn Noyes
Stephanie Sims

We're interested in hearing from you. Write, call, fax, e-mail, or stop by! We are located on the second floor of the Blazy Mall in Soldotna.

Kenai Watershed Forum
PO Box 2937
Soldotna, AK 99669
907-260-5449
907-260-5412 (fax)
robert@kenaiwatershed.org
www.kenaiwatershed.org

New face at KWF...

STEPHANIE SIMS

Stephanie Sims joined the KWF staff in January and is working as the coordinator for the Cumulative Effects Model Project (see page 5). Stephanie grew up in the Black Hills of South Dakota and is a recent transplant to the Soldotna area. After receiving her B.S. in Biology from Montana State University she eventually enrolled at San Francisco State University where she plans to finish her M.A. in Geography. She'll be working on coordinating interagency participation and customizing the ALCES model to the Kenai Peninsula.



Help Needed - We're looking for Lodging!

The Kenai Watershed Forum has been home to an intern for the past three summers. These interns have come to us from MIT, Columbia University, and Middleberry College. While in our area, the interns have worked on such projects as habitat fragmentation, gratewalk study, water quality, and the Kenai River Festival. Part of the internship agreement is that we will provide housing for our intern. We are looking for a place to house our summer intern for 2004. The intern usually arrives in early June and stays through the end of August. KWF provides a car for use during the summer; therefore transportation is not an issue. In the past, interns have held regular office hours working Monday through Friday. If you are interested in hosting our 2004 summer intern or know of someone who might be interested, please call Robert or Josselyn! If we can't find housing, we will not be able to offer an internship to a student this summer. **Please consider hosting a summer intern.**

Many thanks to *The Leavens Foundation* for making a \$5000 donation/grant to the Kenai Watershed Forum. These funds will be used for our water quality program and for enhancing our outreach and education program. We appreciate their dedication to this community and healthy watersheds.

(Future, from page 1)

Has KWF fulfilled its long-term objectives and met its goals?

Since 1997, KWF's highlights include development of a sophisticated and productive Water Quality Monitoring Program. Data from this program recorded contamination from road salt that was leaching into vital spawning and rearing tributaries, which led to the removal of the contaminating salt pile! KWF's water quality program is responsible for discovering high levels of hydrocarbons in the Kenai River. This will continue to be an important topic. Our program is the first of its kind in the central Kenai Peninsula area and has brought together over fifty volunteer monitors, various state and federal agencies, private organizations, and a host of supporters. Although there has been recent cutbacks in funding, KWF's water quality program continues to be strong.

KWF has organized and facilitated public forums on such topics as contaminated sites, ATV use and its effects, and oil and gas leases. One direct impact of these forums includes a partnership between recreational user groups and DNR to restore trails.

The Kenai Watershed Forum has grown from an organization employing one full-time employee in 1997 to five full-time, and two 3/4-time staff members. A solid administrative foundation is in place to allow future expansion if necessary to further our goals.

A Willows of Southcentral Alaska field guide was published in the winter of 2003. We have received an overwhelming response for this guide. Folks as far as New Zealand have requested a copy. Publishing this guide has led to the development of other field guides, Wetland Sedges is ready to go to the printer and Insects of Southcentral Alaska is now under development.

Board reviews last five years

In February, the KWF board of directors took a working weekend retreat to assess how well we have met our goals and objectives outlined in our five-year comprehensive plan and what direction the organization will take in the next five years. The consensus of the board is that KWF has done an outstanding job at developing research and education programs, while also developing the necessary business administration capacity to support our work.

"Time very well spent. KWF is doing more good work than you can possibly imagine."

Benjamin Jackinsky on the
Strategic Planning Session

What's in store for the Future?

One major outcome of the meeting was the decision to formalize the decision to expand our geographic scope to include all watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula. Through recent projects, including facilitating meetings in Seward related to flooding issues, restoration of Silver Salmon Creek in Ninilchik, Wetland Mapping Project, and Cumulative Effects Model development for the entire Peninsula, KWF has already begun to shift focus on a much broader area. Our decision to expand our (continue on Page 4, Future)



Board on a visit to the Alaska Islands & Oceans Visitor Center and Kachemak Bay Research Reserve

(Future, from page 3) geographic scope was based on our desire to use what we've learned from working primarily on the Kenai River over the past six years and to increase awareness and understanding of watershed issues peninsula wide. KWF will seek to gain representation from other areas of the peninsula allowing for information to be shared and peninsula issues examined and addressed.

We will continue to focus on our core programs including research, restoration, education and outreach efforts that include community forums and building public relations. The board agreed that past forums



David Wartinbee and Lori Konoske on a visit to the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve with Coowie Walker

have proven to be valuable to the community and that they enhanced the outreach activities of the organization. As a result, you can expect to see more community forums on important topics. Topics slated for discussion are Kenai River hydrocarbon contamination, habitat fragmentation, and subdivision regulations and permitting.

What's new?

One new and exciting objective coming from the board retreat includes planning to acquire a building for KWF. Our vision is to be housed in our own building. Owning our own facility will reduce our overhead costs and allow us to build capital. This large task requires planning and some special assistance. Our plan will layout our needs, anticipated timeline, and way the options of new construction versus purchasing an existing structure. Finally, with options and cost estimates established, we will raise the funding.

The board and staff are looking forward to another 5 years of success with the help of our members and supporters. If you are interested in getting more involved in our organization, please contact us – email, phone, mail or just stop by the Blazy Mall and see what we're up to.

FUN & INSPIRATION

Kenai River Festival • June 12 & 13, 2004

At the Green Strip • Kenai, AK

We are currently accepting applications for **Artisan Booths** at the festival. If you are interested in reserving space or would like more information, please visit our web site at www.kenaiwatershed.org. We are also beginning to round up volunteers for the event. If you appreciated the value of the Kenai River Festival to the community and would like to help, please contact Josselyn or Robert at 907-260-5449.

KWF begins work on Cumulative Effects Model Project

Federal, state, and local governmental agencies often collect and analyze data independent from each other and other organizations. These distinct datasets often prove to be useful when used in conjunction with each other, especially when incorporated into an inclusive model. A cumulative effects model tracking economic, social, and environmental changes in land use practices and natural processes centralizes the data and provides a more comprehensive approach to resource planning and long-term monitoring.

The Kenai Peninsula has been progressively influenced by a number of human influences and natural processes. These include increasing population, development, and gas production, along with global climate change and the spread of the spruce bark beetle infestations. Changes are not only occurring in these land uses and natural processes, but the economic base is shifting from mainly resource-extraction to tourism and recreation.

KWF's Robert Ruffner, Dr. John Morton with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and Phil North with the US Environmental Protection Agency recognized the utility of such a model on the Kenai Peninsula. With funding from Senator Ted Stevens, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, and the US EPA, development of a model addressing issues on the peninsula was possible. Additional funding sources are currently being pursued to cover the balance needed to complete the project.

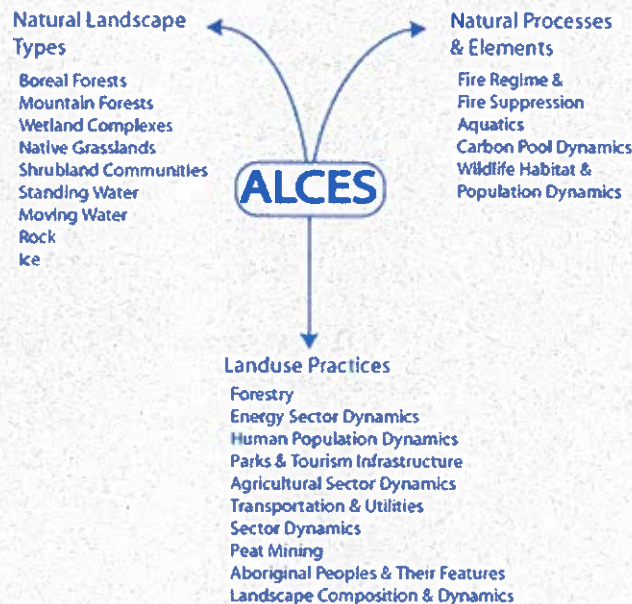
This interagency effort led to the development of a cumulative effects model for the entire Kenai Pen-

insula, which is currently in progress. ALCES (Alaska Landscape Cumulative Effects Simulator), developed by Dr. Brad Stelfox, was the model chosen for customization and application to the peninsula. It is a holistic tool incorporating human influences and natural processes that are acting over the landscape of the Kenai Peninsula.

The model is being developed in several steps. Our coordinator, Stephanie Sims, is currently compiling a Geographic Information System of the entire peninsula, which should be completed by Fall 2004. The data will then be pulled into the ALCES model where it will be customized for the peninsula with input from working groups. These working groups, composed of experts from local governments; tribes; and industries will provide input on issues relevant to the peninsula. Upon model completion, interested users will then be trained and issued a copy.

Development of the model is proceeding with the collaboration of many of the local land holding agencies and other interested parties. While not yet formalized, these entities will form the ALCES Consortium and include the Chugach National Forest, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, Kenai Fjords National Park, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Ninilchik Traditional Council, Port Graham Village Council, Seldovia Village Tribe, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Kenai Watershed Forum.

What does ALCES track?



riverWeb

Web sites worth checking out...

www.kenaiwatershed.org

If you haven't been to our site, it's about time you check it out. New this month: we've added information about the Cumulative Effects Model Project and the Kenai River Festival 2004!

www.borough.kenai.ak.us/KenaiRiverCenter/

The Kenai River Center is a multi-agency permitting, information and education center. These agencies work cooperatively to protect the rivers of the Kenai Peninsula, its watersheds, and its fish and wildlife resources -- lots of great information on this site, with a new look and a more user-friendly format.

www.kenaiwetlands.net

This website is dedicated to the wetlands mapping project. Population and human activities are increasing rapidly on the Kenai Peninsula. Wetlands are important resources for a number of reasons from fish habitat support to flood control. Various groups wanted a map of all the wetlands likely to be affected by increasing human activities, and that could help explain which functions these wetlands provide to society. To read more about this project, visit their site.

www.foremtech.com

Forem Technologies is a small specialized company that is dedicated to developing computer software models that assist in sustainable resource and landscape management. ALCES® is a fast user-friendly landscape simulator that enables resource managers, society, and the scientific community to explore and quantify dynamic landscapes subjected to single or multiple human land use practices and various natural disturbance regimes. KWF will be using this in the Cumulative Effects Model Project just getting started.

UPDATE: ADEC FUNDING

Last summer we received the disappointing news from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), that they were not going to fund our 14 member partnership to monitor the Kenai River. The process ADEC used in deciding which projects to fund was somewhat controversial. ADEC did hire a for-profit contractor in a noncompetitive bid that verified the hydrocarbon results that our broader partnership had presented to the local community for the past few years.

After some re-negotiation with their federal partner EPA (funding source), the ADEC reissued a request for proposals (RFP) that span FY04 and FY05, similar to the above mentioned RFP in which our partnership received the second highest score in a statewide competitive process, as scored by representatives from ADF&G, ADNR, and ADEC. While our proposal should have been funded according to the last year's published RFP rules, it wasn't. If you are interested in how and why this occurred, you can see a paper trail on how this happened at <http://www.alaska-watersheds.org>

The essential elements of our proposal submitted on Friday 2/13/04 are:

- 1) Monitor the river for fecal coliform this spring, fall and next spring - concentrating on the Middle and Lower River;**
- 2) More carefully evaluate the lowest 10 miles of the river, following up on ADEC's contracted work where they stopped their regular sampling near the Chinook Sonar (Mile 8.2);**
- 3) At a new boat ramp, being installed at the new Kenai Landing (Wards cannery), work with KSRMA advisory board and launch owner John Faulkner to develop and test a pilot project with a launching fee structure that rewards lower polluting recreational activities (4-strokes, drift boats etc).**

Our request is more modest than last year's as we appreciate the belt tightening everyone is experiencing.

FY 04 - \$14,518 with 11,261 in non-federal match

FY 05 - \$53,865 with \$43,225 in non-federal match

This is a perfect example of how partnerships should be working at the local level to solve environmental concerns prior to regulatory action.

KWF MEMBERSHIP

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

A special thanks to **Ken & Sara Hepner** for making a \$1000 donation to our water quality program. This is the largest donation from an individual to the water quality program!!! Many Thanks, Ken and Sara!

RIVER STEWARD (\$100-\$499)

Dale and Byron Bondurant
Lori Konoske
Jay Parker
John & Glenda Landua
Peter & Bernadine Raiskums
Peggy Mullen
Chris Degernes & Bill Shuster
Liz Schmitt & Bob Correia
Todd Boling
Dominique Collet
Great Alaska Adventure Lodge
Jean & Clay Brockel
Jim & Colleen Fassler
Ken & Judy Marlow
Curt Wilcox & Laura Sievert
Dennis & Janet Randa
Catherine Cassidy & Erik Huebsch
Bob Baldwin
Tom Seggerman
Ed Berg
Ron Martinelli
Bill & Molly Stockwell
Calvin & Janie Fair
Paul Dale & Brenda Stoops
David Carey

CHINOOK (\$50-\$99)

Louis Bregou
Mike & Judy Blair
Dick Hahn & Loretta Flanders
Camilla & Mark Dalton
John and Pauline Simmons
Bill & Becky Hutchinson

Barbara Jewell
Nathan Baily
Mr. & Mrs. Sheldon Ruffner
Lisa Parker & Steve Horn
Linda Snow
Avery & Kimberly Hansen
Clifford & Holly Norwood
Tom & Lyn Hodel
Pam Houston
Bob Shavelson
Joe & Billie Hardy
Betty Obendorf
Ancel Johnson
Charles Quarre
Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Mary Bozza

SOCKEYE (\$25-\$49)

Ann Rappoport
Joel Cooper
Ron Gravenhorst
Robin Veluce-Tanguy
Betty Harris
Betty & Jack Dean
Brian Ison
James Bennett
Gary Stackhouse
Betty & Byron Bondurant
William & Barb Burke
Dale Bondurant
David & Patricia Peach
Terrence Shea
Louise DuBois
Warren Hoflich
Mark Luttrell

Leta Simons
Paul Moses
Pete Sprague
Jocelyn Scheffler-O'Neill
Marge Hayes
Robin & Shannon West
Mike & Susie Howard
Mary Price
Kris Shine
George McDowell
Bill Nelson

SMOLT (\$10-\$24)

Michael Scott
Jerry Dixon
Dan & Jen Sharp
Jean Romig
Janice Rodes
Gerald Brookman
James Fisher
Laraine Hanson

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Austin & Jean Terrell
Cheri Edwards

THANK YOU!

Living on the Edge: Coastal Dynamics on the Western Kenai Peninsula

March 17, 2004

Mark your calendar... Scientific and public policy experts specializing in coastal issues will give talks about coastal processes and the economic and ecological issues involved in living along coasts. Each talk will be followed by a question-and-answer session. Anyone with an interest in coastal issues is encouraged to attend. Meetings will be held at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center auditorium in Homer. If you would like more information, please contact Jan Yaeger at the Kenai River Center (260-4882 ext. 238).

Willow Cutting Day • Volunteer Opportunity

Friday, March 12 • Meet at KWF at 8:30am

KWF will be cutting willows for a restoration project on Friday, March 12. The willows will be used for the Silver Salmon Creek Restoration project later the spring. If you would like to help for the day, we could use the help. Meet at the KWF Office (Blazy Mall) at 8:30 a.m. We will be carpooling to the Cooper Landing area. If you would like more information, give us a call at (907) 260-5449.

Kenai Watershed Forum
PO Box 2937
Soldotna, AK 99669

Nonprofit Org. US Postage PAID Anchorage, AK Permit #537
